

# On spatializing history

– the household as spatial unit in Early  
Modern Swedish towns

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The article discusses the differences between history and archaeology, especially when approaching space as a category of analysis. The authors are advocating better mutual understandings from both disciplines and refer to an ongoing project on artisan households and workshops and the relationship between physical space and household as well the connection between residence and workshop. The case-studies comes from Early modern Kalmar and Jönköping, where large scale archaeological excavations recently have taken place, and where historical records about the inhabitants and the plot owners have been scrutinized. When historical and archaeological observations are combined, household, residence, and work appear as a much more complicated and diverse matter than often assumed. It also stands clear that materiality and space are necessary dimensions of household and work analyses. The combination of historical and archaeological evidence also provokes new questions and promotes new types of conclusions.

## Introduction

One of many different aspects of the contextual meeting of history and archaeology is the challenge of making history take place. When we compare the agendas of history and archaeology, we tend to have many aspects of agency and social practice in common. But when it comes to the use of space as a methodological instrument, there are tremendous differences. In archaeology, space is one of the core fields of analyzing past times, combining agency and social practice theory with spatial analysis, to understand who has done what

and where. Also among historians, we have for several years now witnessed a rising interest in space and materiality. We have seen references to a spatial as well as a material turn. But we should nevertheless remember that it is still rare that historians systematically include space and materiality in their analyses (e.g. Gunn & Morris 2001; Thompson 2003; Postles 2004; Stobart, Hann & Morgan 2007; Harvey 2009; Sennefelt 2011; Forsberg & Sennefelt 2014).

Confronting archaeological evidence with information collected from the type of written sources historians

commonly use helps us to raise new questions, it provokes new perspectives and it will provide us with new types of results in the analyses of early modern urban households.

The aim of this article is to discuss the methodological framework of making history and archaeology meet, and implications for combining different sets of data. The focus and case studies will be on artisan households, artisan workshops, the relationship between physical space and household, as well as the often assumed connection between residence and workshop. This is a field where it becomes obvious that a combination of archaeological and historical approaches will advance and enhance our understandings of social and economic conditions in early modern towns.

### The household in previous research

The household has been one of the key concepts of early modern social and cultural history. Many Swedish historians identify the household as a fundamental unit of early modern social and economic organization. In many cases the household has also been identified as a basic unit of production. Historians often have strived at identifying the household and the family as distinct and well defined units. A typical and classical definition is the one presented by Peter Laslett as “the co-resident

domestic group”, i.e. “those who share the same physical space for the purpose of eating, sleeping, taking rest and leisure, growing up, child-rearing, and procreating” (Laslett 1972, pp. 23–28). Other historians have focused more on the functions of the early modern family and the household. According to Michael Mitterauer it was not genealogical connections but rather the functional context that linked the family together. Taking part together in specific common everyday activities like work, leisure, eating at the same table and sleeping under the same roof, constituted the early modern family. Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder have emphasized also the multifunctional aspects of the early modern family, and one of the most significant roles was that of being the main unit of production (Mitterauer & Sieder 1982, pp. 71–92; Mitterauer 1984, p. 7f). Laslett on the other hand was skeptical about the early modern family and household as a necessarily coherent work group. He discussed a number of possible situations where residence and work were spatially separated (Laslett 1983). However, historians have rarely analyzed the spatial dimensions of households, co-habitation and work, especially not concerning artisans’ households and workshops.

Also in archaeology, the functional and structural aspects of the households have been very much discussed. Theoretical discussions as well



Figure 1. Aerial photo from the 2008 excavation at the Ansvaret block, Jönköping. The caissons of the plots are visible. Photo: National Heritage Board (RAÄ UV Öst).

as analyses based on empirical observations now tend to take place in dynamic intersections where new approaches tend to combine social organization and agency with spatial and material dimensions. The household as a unit for organizing property, production and consumption is confronted with the household as ideology, discourse and manifestation. The relationship between the physical house and the household as a social unit is no longer evident and has to be discussed. This makes possible new per-

spectives; emphasizing the complex structure of households, gender and agency, household cycles and family history as well as alternative models of households (Beaudry 1999; Allison ed. 1999; Barile & Brandon 2004; Kowaleski & Goldberg 2008).

This is a topic where bringing space and materiality into the perspectives of social and economic history would certainly promote new perspectives and interpretations. David Warren Sabean argues that the com-

mon understanding of households involves a number of shortcomings as an analytical tool, especially when the household is conceived as a coherent and delimited unit. This approach will tend to conceal the actual permeability of the household, the hierarchical dependencies between families, and the varied nature of different individuals' integration in the household (Sabeau 1990, pp. 97–101).

Also other historians have argued for a more open and flexible understanding of family, house, and household. Naomi Tadmor and Joachim Eibach both emphasize the dynamic and flexible character of family and household (Tadmor 1996; Eibach 2011). Especially Eibach has included the spatial dimension in his analyses of the early modern house as an open entity. In a critical dialogue with Otto Brunner's concept 'das ganze Haus' where the house is understood as a coherent but also rather closed entity, Eibach has introduced the concept of open house ('das offene Haus').

Taken together, there are several perspectives that point in the direction of early modern households being more open, vague, flexible and permeable than we usually assume. It is important here to consider other forms of social organization and other contexts of social practices than the family and the household as we usually understand them. When information from written

sources is combined with archaeological evidence and when spatial and material aspects of living and working are taken into consideration, it is certainly clear that this is a way to develop, and in many aspects reconsider, our understandings of early modern urban households.

### Household, agency and gender

One of the major issues when discussing households and their spatial setting is the correlations of the physical structures on the plot, the social structure of the people owning and living on the plots, and the actors and network of actors involved in the physical and social changes on the plots. One major obstacle in doing this kind of studies is often the problems of getting a firm chronological framework, necessary to allow these different sets of data to meet.

At the three plots at the Ansvaret block in Jönköping a very propitious source material is at hand, thanks to extremely good preservation conditions for timber and thus suitable conditions for building a firm chronology based on dendro-dating. The excavation in 2008 took place in the center of the town, in the street Smedjegatan, an urban zone known for housing artisans and workshops, and revealed that these three plots had been successively built out, by timber constructions, in the nearby lake Munksjön, in-

cluding new houses and courtyards, thus increasing the spatial plot, both vertically and horizontally (Stribéus 2012; 2014). The details in this chronology make it possible to discuss different strategies on how this was done, using different sets of data. We may discern periods of building new constructions and buildings, as well as sets of buildings and constructions; we can also discern changes in the plot structure. On the other hand, by a firm chronology it is also possible to grasp the periods of not changing the built environment, periods of successive use and continuity (Tagesson 2014:112ff).

The historical record allows us to reconstruct the households connected to these three plots in a very detailed way (fig. 2), showing that both the owners and the people living on the plots were connected to each other in both social and professional clusters. It seems to be obvious that on two of the plots, there were lots of people with the same occupation living together, both relatives and people with just professional connections. The figures are an attempt to show the chronology of the physical as well as the social construction of the plots. The different stages of constructions are shown as steps in a staircase, including the timber superstructures, caissons, as well as the houses. The successively extended plots are constructed both as timber foundations, acting as quays on the water-front, and timber houses constructed on the previous quays.

On the other hand we see the social connections between the people living and owning the plots. The small boxes indicate one single person, a way of graphically grasping a somewhat intriguing history, with married couples and sons and daughters. In lots of cases, when a man died, the widow often remarried a new man, sometimes a person with the same profession, like an apprentice. When the former widow died, her younger husband remarried a younger woman, who successively remarried a new and younger man after the death of her older husband, and so on. For both of the plots, we can reconstruct chains of family histories, making a detailed picture of the social development (Tagesson 2014:118ff).

When put together, family history based on written records, and the construction of the physical plots, we may see a pattern, that the new physical constructions of the plots, including both single constructions as well as sets of constructions and major changes in plot structure, often coincide with the coming of the new male person in the household. The chronological pattern, with contemporary new constructions, and the changes in the family structure seems to be a repetitive pattern, suggesting that in these cases it is the new man who is building or having it built.

This pattern seems to be clear, both when it comes to the repetitive pat-

tern of extending the plot with new quays and timber structures, as well as new houses within the overall plot structure, as well as changes in the overall plot structure. This is clearly indicated in the 1740's and 1750's when the plot structure has been totally altered, dependent on the fact that the new male persons arriving at the plots had a different profession. These men were merchants and thus in need of a different sort of spatial layout, with a larger courtyard and buildings with different functions. Also when it comes to these major changes in the physical surroundings it is clear that they may be studied in connection to new agents, inscribed into a different historical context, i.e. the coming of the merchandising economy of the 18th century.

Another important result to be discussed is the gender aspect. The overall pattern of the active male agents has its counterpart in an image of passive women in the households, indicating no examples of constructions or changes in the physically built plots being in connection with women. So the question is, are the males the only agents, and is the definition of agents solely based on the coincidence of physical building? There are some important episodes, where the widow is stated to have continued the business of the workshop together with once a daughter, once an apprentice, without a new legal male person in the household (cf. Lindström 2012),

but there is not a single example of physical rearrangements on the plots connected to these situations. These women seem to be keeping the standard of the plot in status quo.

On the contrary, we must not underestimate this absence. There is a general pattern of connecting and linking functions of the women in the households. The women have a profound function in the chain of extending the workshops and the households, as being the strong link between the persons in these chains. In these particular examples, there seems to have been an important strategy for continuity of the workshop, to keep the business in the family and thus make a living for the offspring. This act of continuity may be interpreted as a strategy carried out by the women, and an alternative act of agency. Once realizing this, we have to reconsider our concept of agency in the archaeological records. Periods of non-change in the built environment may be considered as periods of alternative ways of agency.

It stands out, that more attention has to be paid to the concepts of agency and households. Changes in the built environment can not be explained solely on the basis of the male front figure (c.f. Spencer-Wood 1999:163). The examples from Jönköping point out the need for a gendered analysis of the household, its function and social struc-

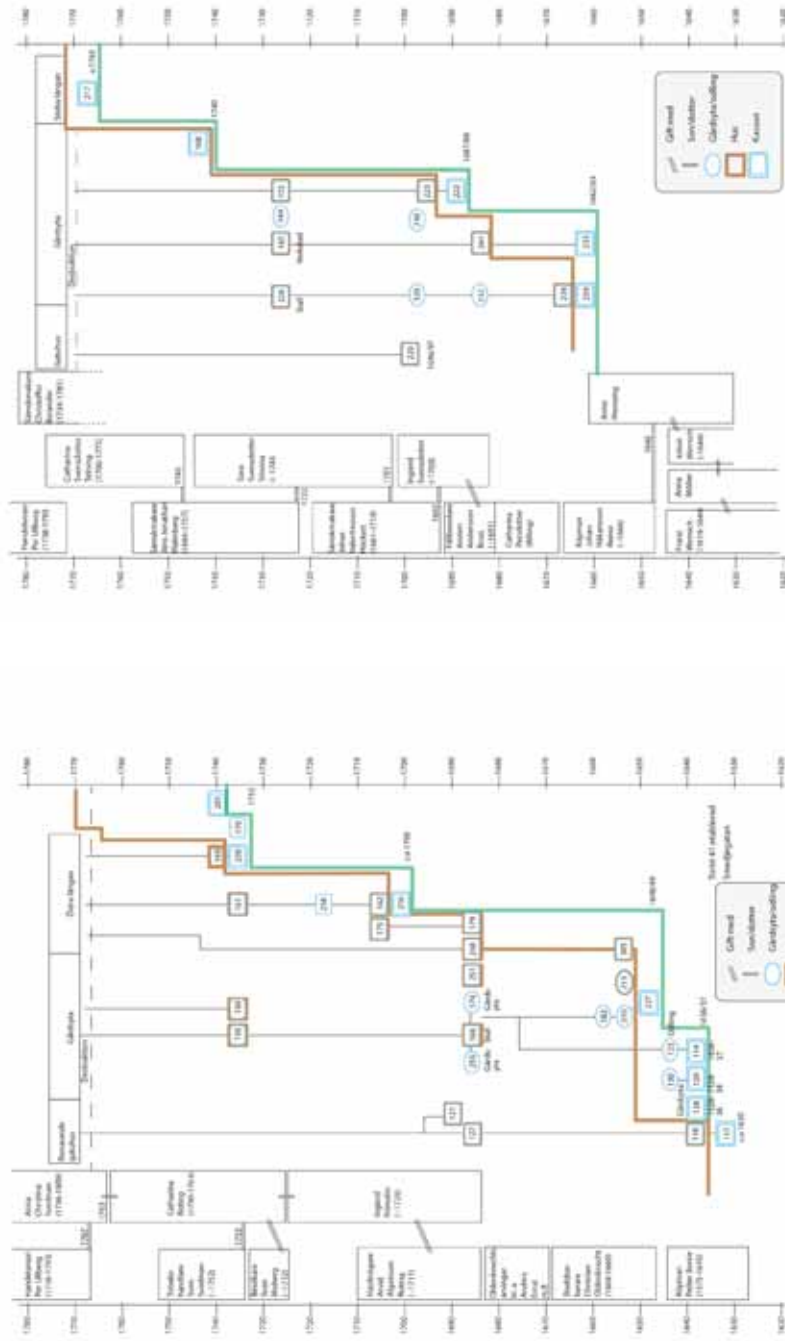


Figure 2. The Ansvaret block, Jönköping, plot no. 40 (2a) and no. 41 (2b). The family members in the households to the left, and the physical extensions of the plots, the caissons and the houses to the right (after Tagesson 2014).

ture. The relationship between the household and the physical house and the plot is not static. Instead, spatial changes must be understood as a complex interplay between the social and gender structure of the household as well as the economic possibilities, social demands, and practical needs in the household. Thus, it seems to be more fruitful to discuss the agency of the household, in all its complexity, instead of discussing agency as the deeds and doings of individuals (Allison 1999; Brandon & Barile 2004).

The Ansvaret case also asks for discussions of the particular history of these plots against the chronology of the town, as well as the contemporary society itself. Are these changes and the acts of agency to be seen in the context of the town itself, its ups and downs, dependent on political agendas in the Early Modern period, or the different periods of economic ups and downs, especially noticeable in a town like Jönköping, highly dependent on the war industry?

### Households as spatial unity

Another central aspect of the prevalent interpretations is the unity of living and work which makes the household an entity of social, economic as well as spatial unity. Evidence from Kalmar clearly challenges the idea of a simple and clear unity of artisan households and

workshops (Carelli & Tagesson in press; Lindström 2014). Four types of observations relevant to this discussion will now be presented.

First we do have several cases where we have on the same plot evidence of artisans and artisan activities in both archaeological and historical documentation. But this does not necessarily imply that everything is simple and clear cut. On plot no. 236 (the Mästaren block), for example, there are remains of a forge from the late 17th century. Soon after, the workshop seems to have been changed into a shoemaker's shop, with traces of shoe production (Tagesson & Nordström 2012:53ff).

It has not been possible to identify the blacksmith in the written sources. A shoemaker, Zacharias Danielsson, can however be identified in 1704. Zacharias died in 1711 and his widow, Anna Larsdotter, married another master shoemaker in 1712, Johan Skytt. Anna and Johan lived on the same plot until 1715. No. 236 is still identified as Zacharias Danielsson's in a tax record from 1716, but Johan Skytt is identified as the owner. In October 1715 he sold no. 236 to a widow, Margareta Aspegren. In 1723 it was sold to a tailor, Olof Lindqvist, who lived there with his wife until 1730 (Lindström 2012b).

According to the poll tax registers, no. 236 was uninhabited in the ear-



ly years of the 1730's. It was bought in 1730 by a former military officer, Anders Björkman, but the records indicate that he and his wife did not live there before 1732. The archaeological evidence also indicates that in the 1730's the former workshop was changed into a residential building, and this marks the end of artisan production on this plot. This example demonstrates a significant discontinuity in artisan activities and workshop structure. Within about 40 years a forge was built, then turned into a shoemaker's shop and later probably into a tailor's shop, and at the end it was remodelled into a living space.

On plot no. 284 (the Gesällen block) remains of a forge have also been found. In addition to this we also have written sources confirming the presence of a master blacksmith. But also in this case things are not as

simple as they may seem. Archaeologically the forge has been dated to the 1730's or 1740's (Tagesson ed. 2014:88). The blacksmith, Anders Hallberg, on the other hand didn't move in until 1758 or 1759 according to the written sources. He died in 1763, and the probate also mentions a forge on the plot (Lindström 2014:21).

In a register from 1742 Hallberg is identified as a blacksmith in the countryside outside Kalmar, but in 1750 he was counted among the master blacksmiths of Kalmar. These sources don't deliver any waterproof evidence of Anders Hallberg's whereabouts, but they definitely indicate that he lived in Kalmar many years before he moved to plot no. 284. There seems thus to have been a time lap here between the building of the forge and the presence of a blacksmith living on the same plot.



Figure 3. The smithy on plot no. 284. Photo: National Heritage Board (RAÄ UV Öst).

(see. Kalmar rådhusrätts och magistrats 1600-1830 arkiv, D XVI, borgarlängder, 1742; Berättelser om handlande och hantverkare 1750, Årsberättelser, Kammarkontoret, Kommerskollegium, Riksarkivet.)

Between 1724 and 1744 only one person can be connected to plot no. 284. That is Tore Ring's widow. She was the owner, and according to the poll tax registers she was the only person living there. In 1744 the plot was sold to a tobacco spinner, Jöns Runn. He never lived there himself and soon (probably already in 1745) he sold it to the burgomaster Casper Hoppenstedt. He (who – the latter?) died shortly afterwards and his widow, Emerentia, inherited the plot. The Hoppenstedt family was among the richer and most influential of the Kalmar burgers and they of course never lived in the far from fancy house on plot no. 284.

We don't know how long Emerentia Hoppenstedt kept this plot and if someone else owned it before Hallberg bought it, but for several years (1748–1752) the tax records indicate it as uninhabited. We don't know the exact history of the forge either, but it may possibly have been Hoppenstedt who had it built. It was definitely a reason to invest in the plot, and it was an obvious reason for Hallberg to buy it. After the death of Hallberg there are no more signs of forging activities on this plot. Two potters can be identified though: Westlander, who probably rented rooms from Hallberg and his

widow 1760–1764, and Johan Ekelund, who married the daughter of a former owner in 1798. But there are no obvious remains of a pottery workshop. Also in this case there are obvious discontinuities, and we don't have a simple match between material traces of artisan production and written documentations of artisans' presence.

The second type would be when we have archaeological evidence of workshops but no written documentation of a corresponding artisan living on the same plot. On plot no. 233 there are traces of a kiln, which was first interpreted as being for pottery production because of some adjacent refuse material. This is not voluminous and probably does not represent a very long continuity (Tagesson & Nordström 2012:29).

In this case we have no written documentation of a master potter living there. For a few years (1773–1785) this plot was certainly owned by a master potter, Peter Matias Sjöholm, but he never lived there. In the poll tax records we instead find Sjöholm and his family on no. 130. Sjöholm bought no. 233 from his father-in-law in 1783. Among the former owners we also find “fru Hoppenstedt”, which probably refers to Emerentia Hoppenstedt, mentioned above. She never lived on no. 233 either, but according to tax records it belonged to her at least from 1765 to 1760 (Lindström 2012b, pp. 3–8).

Once again we find Hoppenstedt as the owner of a plot with a possible workshop. Although Sjöholm never lived on no. 233 himself, we do find one of his journeymen listed in the poll tax registers. He only appears for one year though (1784). Around 1785 a master baker, Jonas Fröling, moved in. We don't know if he also bought no.233 at that time, but later he can be established as the owner. Fröling stayed for many years and to the end of the 1780's his household grew and came to include as many as nine people with maids and apprentices. In this case we have strong indications of a master artisan, the potter Sjöholm, living on one plot (no. 130) and probably, at least for some time, had a workshop on another plot (no. 233). Maybe this was a short term project, and maybe it was not very successful, and it is possible that the kiln was later changed into a baker's oven.

As a third type, we have plots with historical records indicating the presence of artisans but without any archaeological evidence of artisan production. On no. 245 (the Mästaren block) a number of artisans can be identified among the inhabitants: a master copper (Johan Holm, from the late 1760's to the early 1770's), a master carpenter (Lars Morin, in 1771), a master blacksmith (Gustaf Sandberg, 1770–1771), and a master painter (Johan Lundgren, from 1773 to 1804). On this plot there are no archaeological observations of their workshops, probably be-

cause only the most southern, inner part of the plot was excavated. It is, of course, risky to base conclusions on the absence of evidence, but there are many similar examples, and these indications support skepticism against any assumption about workshops necessarily being located adjacent to the artisans' homes (Tagesson & Nordström 2012: Lindström 2012b, p. 20–23).

A fourth type of important observations point in a similar direction. Many artisans moved frequently, and lived only a few years in the same place. On plot no. 285 for example lived a potter Glans (1754), a shoemaker Kötke (1755), and a tailor Hagrelius (1761-65). The cooper Haglund lived on plot no. 286 from 1769 to 1772. It is, furthermore, not uncommon to find several master artisans of different occupations on the very same plot. The master goldsmith Peter Britt bought plot no. 287 probably in 1774 or 1775. He also lived there, at least from 1775 to 1788. During that time also a wigmaker Beckstadius (1775) and a saddler Ridström (1778-79) lived on the same plot.

From 1794 this plot belonged to the shoemaker Åström who also lived there, and from 1792 to 1795 there was also a potter Scharin living there. These are also strong indications that the often assumed spatial connection between residence and workshop may not always have been that self-evident. (Lindström 2014)

The overall picture of the twelve totally documented and extremely well preserved plots of the Gesäl-  
len block certainly indicates mostly residential functions and hardly any examples of professional workshops at all. Among the many examples of professions of the inhabitants of the plots no. 280–290 mentioned in the records, many of them can hardly have been practiced at home; as military personnel, lower official personnel, seamen, workmen and widows. One important question for future research is the general function of the plots as exclusively residential, which indicates an ongoing process of spatial separation between residential and professional functions. In comparison with the previously mentioned examples from Jönköping, one must also discuss different attitudes, strategies and processes of change in different towns, as well as different parts of the towns.

### Conclusions

When historical and archaeological observations are combined, household, residence, and work appear as a much more complicated and diverse matter than often assumed. It is also clear that materiality and space are necessary dimensions of household and work analyses. The combination of historical and archaeological evidence also provokes new questions and promotes new types of conclusions. The question of artisans' residence and work-

shops, as well as the households and the concepts of agency and gender, demonstrates this exemplarily.

The commonly expected spatial unity of residence and workshop wasn't always there, and we cannot even presume that artisans necessarily owned their workshops. It seems also that some workshops could be quite easily transformed from one kind to another, and some workshops were inherited and in use for many generations. The 'workshop' concept itself appears as less simple and evident. What do we actually mean by a workshop? Is it the organizational combination of master, journeymen and apprentices? Is it a specific place: a building or a certain room? Or is it perhaps to be understood as something much more abstract; a workshop is whatever context (social, material, and spatial) where artisan production takes place, and these contexts can have had a large number of different characteristics and a variety of different constitutions.

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