**Dissertation plan:**

*Regional Wages and Labour Market Integration in Sweden, 1860-1990*

Kristoffer Collin*

**Introduction**

It is often described that as economies mature, their labour markets become better integrated both geographically, and between the rural and urban sectors. Generally improved information flows, declining transport costs, and declining institutional obstacles to migration are emphasised as reasons for an increase in labour mobility. Boyer & Hatton (1994: 84) underline that this results in that regionally segmented labour markets become increasingly integrated at the national or even international level.

The point of departure in research is often the pronounced economic integration that originated in the late 19th century and early 20th century with the spread of new technologies, such as railroads, telegraph, and steamships on transatlantic routes, within and between western countries (e.g. Williamson 1996). Williamson and his colleagues have in numerous publications calculated the effects on growth and income distribution of the integration process in various markets from the mid-1800s to the First World War. Williamson often regards this development as a result of integration within the global market. Lundh et al. (2005: 72) calls attention to whether this development is reflected in an integration of the domestic market, they underline the assumption that a functioning domestic market is a prerequisite for international integration.

The majority of research on labour market integration has been conducted on national level, with focus on wage convergence and migration between nations as the important variables in the analysis. Studies that emphasise the regional perspective in integration analysis is less common, even though economic historians have pointed out, and frequently viewed the formation of regional or national labour markets as the uniting of distinct, previously stable “local” labour markets (Margo 1999: 141).

* Department of Economic History, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg. E-mail: Kristoffer.Collin@econhist.gu.se
The changing geography of product and financial markets is well researched internationally from a regional perspective, and an existing consensus prevails about timing and degree. When it comes to the labour market, most researchers agree that the time periods are often incomplete and sometimes contradictory. Establishing the timing and degree of integration in labour markets is often put forward as an important question for the understanding of economic development.

The International literature has analysed the wage development in perspective of market enlargement and market integration. Focus has been on establishing tendencies of wage convergence and divergence between economic sectors, usually between agriculture and industry (Hatton & Williamson 1991; Boyer & Hatton 1997; Borodkin et al 2008), and between regions within a country (Williamson 1987; Siscic 1995; Collins 1999; Margo 1999; Rosenbloom 1996, 1998, 2002). Periods of convergence or divergence have been explained with factors such as, trade, migration, institutions, and policy.

The Swedish literature has mainly been concerned with the period before 1913 with focus on convergence and divergence between agriculture and industry, convergence between countries and convergence in regional manufacturing wages (Bengtsson & Jörberg 1981; Söderberg 1985, 1987; Lundh et al 2005), methodology questions (Ljunberg 1996; Prado 2008) or the postwar period (Edin & Holmlund 1995; Hibbs & Locking 2000).

Sweden is interesting to study from a labour market integration perspective since the mid-19th century Swedish economy was characterised by agriculture and raw material, but in a few decades the economy transformed into an industrial economy. The mobility of capital and labour is a key in this transformation, and without this mobility both the structural and technological change would not have happened in such rapid pace (Lund et al 2005: 73). We know very little about this process as well as the distribution of incomes before the interwar period. Regional wage convergence can be seen as an indicator of income equalisation, and some evidence exists of declining wage dispersion because of data in the agricultural sector, which shows a clear tendency of convergence up to 1914 (e.g. Bengtsson & Jörberg 1981). But we know very little about the potential convergence between manufacturing workers, except for some work that’s been done by Lundh et al (2005). We do not know if regional wages for agricultural workers and manufacturing workers is correlated.

It is possible to build a simple theoretic model about labour market integration and wage convergence. Plausible assumptions are that it existed several regional labour markets that were clearly distinct since information and resource flows between regions were limited in the 1860s. That the industrialisation during this period was characterised by geographical
unevenness, and that it existed growth centres were a surplus demand in the labour market resulted in that wages increased more in growth centres than in other regions. That it existed sluggishness in labour flow between sectors in a region, and wage differential between occupations in the manufacturing industry and traditional occupations, such as agriculture. It is also possible to assume that a overall increased labour market integration made the wage dispersion decrease over time.

With new data from the Historical Wage Database (HILD) a research situation opens up, and it is possible to contribute to the Swedish wage history in a couple of ways. I will focus on that it does not exist county-level wage series for the manufacturing industry during the period 1860-1990. Theses series will be the basis for studying regional labour market integration.
Defining labour market integration

The fundamental characteristics of an integrated labour market is often described as a labour market where information flows freely and quickly between job-seekers and employers in one location, and that the market participants are able to respond quickly to any imbalances in supply and demand that might occur in one location (Rosenbloom: 1998; Lundh et al.: 2005). The flow of information and the reaction of market participants to this information cannot be directly observed (Rosenbloom 1998). Instead it is common in empirical studies of labour market integration to rely on an indirect measure, which is based primarily on the performance of wages at different locations.

Theoretically in this system a “one price” law applies, which means that the price for the same/similar goods is the same in all parts of the market. However, this prerequisite for price equalisation is never fulfilled in the real world, “since obstacles to the flow of goods, factors of production and information creates costs” (Lundh et al. 2005: 74). This results in that the process of market integration will remove obstacles and reduce costs for information and resource flows in the market.

Rosenbloom (1998: 290, 2002: 115) illustrates with a simple model the difficulties to apply the “law for one price”. Lets say that we have a case with two geographically distinct, but in all other aspects similar, labour markets that are integrated with each other. In both locations a single category of homogenous labour is employed and the workers can move costlessly between the two places. If information about wages is available to all workers in both places, a difference in wage would encourage workers with low wages to migrate to the other location were wages is higher. This would lead to that the labour supply increases in the location were wages are higher and decreases in the location were wages are lower, resulting in that the differences “… in wages will fall until real wages in the two places are precisely equalized” (Rosenbloom 1998: 290). Rosenbloom explains that a corollary implication in this simple model is that a shock that effect wages in one of the places will have an identical effect on wages in the other place. Another unrealistic assumption is that workers have full access to information about wages in both locations and that moving between these locations is costlessly. A number of transaction costs in addition to transportation occurs and are likely to affect potential migrants, such as cost of collecting information and financing migration, but also psychic costs. “So long as these costs of moving are greater than zero, economically motivated migration will continue only until the point at which the difference in wage just equals the cost of movement” (Rosenbloom 1998: 290). Thus, wage equalisation will not occur to a full extent, and external shocks that have an impact on wages in one location will
only have an impact on wages in the other location if they generate a wage differential that is greater than the combined costs of movement between places. These places will be fully integrated the greater the costs of movement are.

However, wage equalisation by itself is not necessary or sufficient to establish the existence of market integration. This is due to the fact that migrants are not only concerned with income but also with their overall well-being. It is possible that wages may differ across locations and that they show no sign of convergence even in a well-integrated labour market “… if there are significant differences in locational amenities, working conditions, or other nonwage aspects of the employment relationship” (Rosenbloom 1998: 291). The composition of the labour force may differ across locations, and these differences may also produce continuous differences in observed average wages.

As we have seen, measurement problems arises that cannot be eliminated. The solution to this, argues Rosenbloom, is to minimize their influence through wage comparisons within homogenous groups and by adjusting for geographic differences in the cost of living, but also by controlling for other factors that may influence the well-being.

The process of market integration as we have seen removes obstacles and reduce costs for information and resource flows in the market. But, technological and structural change may lead to shocks/imbalances or new costs for integration. Lundh et al. (2005: 74) assert that the “… long-run process can be seen as the result of institutional and technological change”. In a better integrated market the flow of information and resources are freer and cheaper, and the price differentials between parts of the market are lower. Price differentials, in this case is wage differentials in the labour market, becomes a measure of combined effect of “… technologically and institutionally determined costs for labour force mobility” (ibid: 74). It is important to point out that wage convergence not equals market integration straight off. This has been put forward by many researchers in the field (e.g. Lundh et al. 2005; Boyer & Hatton 1997), but also that divergent trends should be considered as these probably is a result of differences in degree and type of structural change.

Collins (1999: 259) argues that the concept of “labour market integration” is somewhat ambiguous in the historical literature for two reasons. Firstly, whether market integration is applied to commodities or factors, it is inherently relative. This means that it do not exists a criterion for determining the extent of a market, and Rosenbloom (1996: 628) propose that integration instead is a matter of degree. The concept only takes on empirical meaning if comparisons are made across places or over time. Secondly, Collins explains that different researchers emphasized different integrating mechanisms. For instance, Rosenbloom
emphasises the geographic mobility in the labour market integration, as we have seen. Other researchers, according to Collins, argues that trade in commodities could substitute for factor mobility.

A couple of underlying causes of integration has been put forward. A common way to assess the evolution of labour market integration is to use wage data. We have also seen that focus is on how the geographic distribution/dispersion of wages changes over time; another approach would be to focus on if wage movements in different regions are positive correlated. The distribution/ dispersion approach is more closely associated to the convergence literature (macroeconomic) than to commodity market integration. The fundamental difference between them is that the convergence approach accentuates the changes in geographic distribution of wages, while the market integration approach emphasise the correlation degree between time series for different places (Collins 1999: 259).

Lundh et al. (2005:75) argues that wage convergence becomes a measure of the net effect of integration, and a new obstacle that may occur to the flow is a result from a new structural tension. Consequently, labour market integration does not have to coincide with wage convergence. But, on the other hand is wage convergence an indication of increased labour market integration.

**Measuring regional labour market integration**

As seen so far, a number of problems arise when trying to assess the evolution of labour market integration. We have also seen that it is not possible to directly observe the flow of information, and the reaction of market actors. This leads to that it is common to use an indirect measure/inferences: the performance/behaviour of wages at different locations. In the literature that are concerned with the long-run evolution of labour market integration as can be revealed in the long-run movements of wages, two measures of convergence is used to indicate integration (now a convention of Robert Barro & Xavier Sala-i-Martin). The “σ-convergence” (sigma-convergence) refers to declining cross-section dispersion of wages over time, and the “β -convergence” (beta-convergence) refers to a tendency of initially lower wages to grow more quickly than initially higher wages. The sigma-convergence is often measured by the coefficient of variation. In the case of measuring beta-convergence the nonlinear least-square estimates of the annual growth rate over the period is regularly applied.
To study the forces/causes for regional labour market integration, or as it is expressed in some cases as the forces of regional convergence or divergence (e.g. Collins 1999; Rosés & Sánchez-Alonso 2004) they all employs a battery of questions for exploring the development empirically, such as: Was there regional differences in real wages? Did regional labour markets become more integrated? Did it exist one or many market? Did the intra- and interregional dispersion of wage rate decline? Did the price of labour converge as communication technology changed? If there was convergence, was it driven by factor migration or by interregional trade?

These questions are answered with statistical measures built upon statistical significance. A general critique against statistical significance as a guide for decisions in science has been put forward by McCloskey many times, and have resulted in articles and books co-authored with Stephen Ziliak (e.g. 1996, 2008). Instead of significance as guidance for science they argues that the question: how big is big? should be asked in regards to the coefficient to create substantial interesting meaning. McCloskey and Zecher (1976, 1984) created a scale instead of relaying on statistical significance to assess how the gold standard worked.

A scale is also possible to create for exploring the evolution of labour market integration. One way of doing this is to use a period or place which researchers agree on in the literature shows an integrated labour market measured by wage convergence, and another period which researchers agrees on show a non-integrated labour market measured by lack of wage convergence. With this it is possible to construct a scale, the scale can be thought of as a thermometer where, 0 = freezing, 100 = boiling point of water, e.g. 0 = no labour market integration, 100 = market integration.

Lets say that the literature on wage convergence in Sweden agrees on that wages had converged in manufacturing industry the most in Stockholm county by 1860. Lets also say that wages in Malmöhus county had converged the least at this time. On a scale Stockholm = 100, Malmöhus = 0. Then the other counties or regions is compared to the scale, and it is possible to rank regions labour market integration on this scale, and get a actual measure of labour market integration. It should be possible to follow the scale over time as well to see the changes. The most important is to think of the scale as a thermometer, where wage convergence is compared relative to a full wage convergence or not. It is also fruitful to think of it as a feeling thermometer for a president candidate used in political science to place an individual feeling on a scale for a president candidate.
As wage convergence not is a state, but rather a process, it makes sense to treat it like that as well.

**Aim and research tasks**

This is a study of regional wage development for industrial workers in Sweden, between 1860 and 1990, with focus on regional wage dispersion. Periods of labour market integration and dis-integration will be identified and the determinants discussed. Convergence is interpreted as labour market integration, and divergence as dis-integration. In order to be able to this I have to answer a number of questions, both of empirical and analytical character.

One key question is to determine what role internal migration has for labour market integration? From a labour mobility perspective wage convergence is seen as a process that moves towards equilibrium. But internal migration does not always result in wage convergence; sometimes the result is divergence. When high-wage areas attract workers without a decrease in wages: economies of scale and dynamic factors prevent convergence. Another key question to consider is what role new technologies and communication such as railroads, telegraph, and cars played for integration? Finally, questions about which labour market institution promoted geographic mobility during the industrialisation process has to be taking in to account.

In order to study labour market integration from a historical perspective, the following research tasks are central for getting started with the dissertation project:

- Creating homogeneous nominal wage series for economic sectors, branches, occupations and employment categories by county.

- Adjusting for the geographic variations in cost of living by creating regional retail price indices or by using existing series.
Material

Swedish historical public statistics are generally seen as good, with population statistics dating back to the middle of the 18th century and industrial statistics from the middle of 19th century. However, this is not the case for wage statistics.

The Department of Economic History in Gothenburg, Sweden, has in a project called: “The Historical Wage Database” (HILD) gathered wage statistics and created a wage database by digitalising the printed unprocessed wage statistics. The wage database opens up many opportunities and possibilities to study wage development in Sweden during 1913-1990. It is also possible to extend the wage statistics back in time to the 1860.

The wage database is already in use, in a research project called: ”Swedish Wages in Comparative Perspective, 1860-2010”, which focuses on wage levels and changes in Sweden, in the perspective of market enlargement and market integration. A central part of the project is to establish periods of wage convergence and wage divergence, and interactions between wages, migration, trade, and institutions. The approach is comparative and includes comparisons between occupational groups, industries and economic sectors, men and women, white-collar workers and blue-collar workers. It makes comparison with wage conditions in U.S., U.K. and Germany. My research will differ from this project by a clear regional perspective.

The database contains information on wages for agricultural and industrial workers on a national level and is also divided according to occupation, branch, and county, from 1913 to 1990. Information is also available on a lower degree of aggregation, and workers are divided into white/blue collar and men/women.

The official statistics started to report industrial wages in 1913 and the statistics remain deficient up to 1921. The official statistics does not report wages by region until 1930 and it has a gap during the 1950s for some reason. In order to deal with this gap, benchmarks year has been decided and constructed for 1922 and 1955, by transcribing all the original forms that companies reported to the public statistics authority (socialstyrelsen). The official statistic in HILD goes up to 1990 at this point, but it is possible to extend the period to 2010.

The lack of wage data for industrial workers prior to 1913 is compensated by statistics from a number of sources. Among these is the Tariff Commission (Tullkommitten). They made a study in 1879 by gathering wages statistics from companies, and asked for wage statistics back to 1860. The report has been transcribed. Available information is where the factory was located, type of worker men/women or girls/boys, number of workers, occupational group, and daily earnings.
For the gap between the Tariff Commission and the official statistics, information comes from the Swedish Metal Trades Employers Association (Sveriges Verkstadsföreningen), about 120 to 160 companies were members. Wage statistics have been transcribed for the year 1910, 1912, and 1913. It gives the company’s name, where it was located, occupational group, working time and earnings for the different occupational groups.

In order to create wage series for the whole period and cover the gap between 1880 and 1910, I am going to use wage series from the monographic section of “Wages in Sweden” (Bagge et al. 1933/35), and probably other wage series from monographic firm or branch specific studies.

All of these sources together create a good foundation for historical wages studies. It covers the major institutional change that that occurred in the Swedish labour market with changing labour market regimes and wage formation system as consequence (Lundh 2005). It should be mentioned that the HILD database do not include homogeneous wage series for various occupational and worker categories and regions. It is a digitalised version of the printed unprocessed wage statistics.

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Table 1, is a rough picture of the different sources that I am going to use, described in the text above. I do not have county-level wages for every year, as it looks likes in the table. But I should be able to establish benchmarks for the period before 1931, and during the 1950s. My first research task is to construct regional wage series, which will result in paper one.
**Paper 1:**

**Regional Nominal Wages in Sweden, 1860-1990**

The general idea is that this will be a methodological paper, which explains how the regional wage series are constructed. It will serve as a documentation of the construction process and as a paper which references can be done to for the future papers. The paper will also descriptively explain the nominal wage development. It will probably be published as a working paper and on the “Historical Wage Data Base” homepage.

In Sweden has researchers mainly been concerned with the period before 1913 (Bengtsson & Jörberg 1981; Söderberg 1985, 1987; Lundh et al 2005). I will investigate alternative techniques for constructing wage series. A similar wage series as the one I am going to construct was constructed by Lund, Schön & Svensson in 2005, which resulted in a book chapter on how they did it, and in a published article which were more analytic and used regional wages to address labour market integration in Sweden, 1861-1913. They constructed their wage series from the monographic section of “Wages in Sweden”. They also used wage series from monographic firm and branch studies, a study made by Mats Larsson, and one by Bo Gustafsson. Information for wages in the 1860s and 1870s where obtained from the archive of the Tariff Commission of 1876 (Tullkommitten). A total of 606 local series constitute the basis for the construction of 9 regional wage series for the period 1861-1913.

By using different and new sources, in this case the HILD database (official statistics), and the statistics from the Metal Trades Employers’ Association, as well as monographic studies, and the Tariff Commission that has been used before I will be able to create long-run wage series. I believe that the wage series will be richer in content than existing series since more wage information has been gathered, and I will be able to create county-level series, in contrast to the existing 9 series (Lundh et al 2005). This is good since other types of data are available at county-level, such as prices, demographic, and administrative statistics. The series will also stretch over a longer time period than the existing ones.

When these regional wage series are created they open up for the possible to study the geographical/spatial aspect of wage development over the long run. For instance in the research fields of:

- Convergence/divergence
- Labour mobility
- Labour market integration
The construction of regional nominal wage series will also result in a second paper.

**Paper 2:**

**Regional Wages and Labour Market Integration in Sweden, 1860-1990**

This paper charts the development of regional real wages for workers in industry in Sweden and analyses the context of patterns of wage convergence and divergence. The paper links up with similar studies in other countries and presents for the first time results for Sweden for a 130-year period.

The movement from local labour markets to broader regional, national, or even international markets has been an important factor in the process of economic development. In order to understand this process, the literature often puts forward that technological change in the area of communications broke barriers of distance and made the transferring of information, transporting goods, and people a lot easier, which enabled labour mobility. It is also common to view institutional changes as a cause for labour market integration, by decreasing wage dispersion and barriers between occupational groups. And that internal migration is a cause for intraregional convergence by migration from low-wage areas to high-wage areas equalises wages. In this paper the context of wage dispersion refers to possible drivers explained above; internal migration, labour market institutions, and technology changes.

The research plan is to utilize the nominal wage series and to construct regional real wage series for Sweden during the period 1860-1990. This means that the nominal wages has to be deflated with the geographical variations in cost of living index/consumer price index for each county. Svante Prado at the Department of Economic History, University of Gothenburg, has created such regional consumer baskets from 1860-1945, which will be used. In a second step when the behavior of wages in counties will be explored and analyzed, the standard measure for revealing convergence and divergence will be applied. These are the ‘‘σ-convergence’’ which measures declining cross-section dispersion of wages over time, and the ‘‘β-convergence’’ which measures the tendency of initially lower wages to grow more quickly than initially higher wages. The third step will be to explain the patterns of wage convergence and divergence with drivers such as, migration, institutions, and technology.

This paper will be Co-authored with Christer Lundh and Svante Prado at the Department of Economic History, University of Gothenburg.
**Paper 3:**

**The Gender Wage Gap in Sweden, 1860-1990 – Exploring Regional Inequalities**

A considerable amount of research has been done on the gender wage gap in a historical context, both in an international and Swedish context. Most of the Swedish research has been done at a national level for the manufacturing sector from 1913 and onward (e.g. Svensson 1995, 1997), some research exists for a lower aggregate, such as wage information from a specific industry or single factory (Stanfors & Karlsson 2011).

Changes in the gender wage gap over time are often modelled as a function of human capital characteristics; these changes are unlikely to be linked to macro explanations in the economic literature. I have come across one paper, which applies a geographical approach to the gender gap (McCall 1998). McCall used data that allowed her to control for human capital variables such as, income, education etc. She showed that geography, or as she called it “spatial routes” explained a considerable amount of the gender wage gap, but also that these gender wage inequalities were linked to class (measured by college degree). A stream of research exists which links a decaling gender wage gap to institutional settings and especially social reforms that have stabilised relations on the labour market (e.g. Lundqvist & Roman 2008; Löfström 1997).

The general picture in the literature is that women’s labour market participation increased in a rapid pace during the postwar period. Goldin (1990:10) argues that women’s labour market activity decreased slightly before the famous increase during the postwar period in the United States. This increase is well researched in Europe (e.g. Tilly & Scott 1989), and in Sweden women’s labour market participation rose rapidly, especially during the 1960s (Löfström 1997).

Goldin (1990) argues that the increase in women’s paid work in the United States during the second phase of the 1900s is an increase that begun during the 1800s. We know quite a lot about the declining gender wage gap in Sweden from 1913 and onward in manufacturing industry. The decrease in gender wage gap took place in three phases according to Svensson (1995, 1997). In the first phase between 1919-1920 the wage reduces with 10 percentage units in industry. During the second phase 1944-1949 increases women’s wages from 58 to 67 percentages of men’s wages. In the third period 1961-1980 women’s wages increases from 70 to 86 percentages of men’s wages. A similar wage trend occurred for female white-collar workers in industry, but on a lower level.
But we know very little about women’s paid work before 1913. What we know is that women always have worked and been a part of the labour market, especially in the agricultural sector, and that women has been invisible in the statistics (Nyberg 1987). Few women were employed in the manufacturing industry in the beginning of the industrialisation; the ones how worked in the manufacturing industry is likely to be found in the textile and food industry.

This paper will link the historical gender inequalities with geographic investigations of wage differentials across labour markets. I expect that adding geography could tell us something about the development of the gender wage gap, since it existed large geographical variation, especially in the early period and through a period of labour market integration, this difference should also be reflected in the gender wage gap. By adding a geographical perspective it is possible to find that the gender wage gap was smaller in growth centres. I think that a regional decrease in wage dispersion could explain decreasing differences in female-to-male wages.

The wage information that I have, do not contains any information on the individual level. But I do have county-level information on branch and occupations, and will be able to create benchmark years, for both men and women. I will compare female and male wages within the same branch and county. It is also possible to compare with agricultural wages up to 1945, by doing this it is possible to see if wage differentials inherits from the agricultural sector, and say something about the relationship between the sectors.

Possible research question would be: is it possible to explain parts of the gender wage gap over time by studying regional differences instead of only looking at industry level? How does the gender wage gap develop across regions and industry? Does it exist a relationship between the agricultural and industry sector?
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