

Household Economy in the Nordics (16th to 20th centuries)

Lund University, 4th and 5th of June 2024

In June 2024 we organize a workshop that explores household finance in the past, with a specific focus on the Nordic countries. The so-called Nordic model represents a unique amalgamation of economic efficiency, welfare policies, and political stability. This system, prevalent in the north of Europe (especially in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland) integrates free market capitalism with strong welfare states. The strength of this system lies in its prioritization of both individual and collective needs, intending to minimize income disparities, foster economic security, and improve living standards for all citizens. The very characteristics of the Nordic model had critical effects on households' financial behaviour. The high level of trust, the supportive role of the government, and the extent of consumer credit markets affected general saving levels, which are historically low. Moreover, the general ratio of household debt to income is high compared to other countries, increasing the vulnerability of the household sector and its sensitivity to the evolution of interest rates.

These features characterize the Scandinavian countries in the most recent part of their history, but is it possible to trace the roots of the Nordic model and craft a comprehensive history of household finance in the Nordics? How did households in the past organize their finances, manage payments, credit, and savings? Were there specific institutional arrangements supporting households – among which formal or informal set of rules, institutions & organizations, norms and conventions, and so forth? Despite a broad literature devoted to this topic, there are still gaps that need to be filled. Only a few studies focus on the household level, while most of them relies on aggregate data. In many cases, we lack a perspective on how household organized their economy and how they managed several basic functions like payments, savings, and credit. We invite all papers that focus on household finance in the Nordic areas in the past. We would like to emphasize several issues, among which:

- Balancing irregular incomes and expenditures
- Household participation in the credit market
- Savings strategies
- Coping with financial uncertainty
- The role of formal or informal welfare in supporting vulnerable households
- The role of both women and men in the household economy

The workshop emphasizes a comparative dimension and a long-term perspective across different places and periods, aiming to develop a shared framework that allows comparison between the Nordic countries from the 16th to the 20th centuries. We welcome all papers that focus on one or several Nordic countries. We especially – but not exclusively – encourage young researchers (PhD students, postdocs,

and junior lecturers) to participate. If you are interested, please submit an abstract of 300-500 words, along with your affiliation and contact information, to the organizers (**both**) at the following email addresses:

Matteo Pompermaier matteo.pompermaier@unibs.it

Martin Dackling martin.dackling@hist.lu.se

The submission deadline is set for **February 17th, 2024**. For additional details about the workshop, do not hesitate to reach out to us through the same email addresses.