Changing Sex, Changing Gender
Lumberjacks, Female Cooks and Occupational Safety

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Good occupational safety has been desirable for several groups in industrial society.[1] For the workers themselves it has been a question of self-preservation, to maintain their most important power resource in the labour market – labour. For the employers it has been a way of keeping the work force efficient and healthy and to keep it loyal to the company. The government has also had interests in occupational safety, especially since the welfare state had been established. It has been a way of fulfilling the state's obligation to take care of its citizens, to bring stability and order to the country and to maintain a balance between different interests in society. But there has always been a conflict regarding the level of safety and the costs for it.

In Sweden the development of occupational safety from the 1940s has been an interaction between legislation by the parliament and voluntary agreements between the parties on the labour market. It has been a vital component of the "Swedish model", a way of dealing with conflict of interests on the labour market. This model can be said to have worked well from the late 1930s to the early 1970s. Before that period, however, the initiative to improve occupational safety mostly came from the state and the public authorities. In 1889, during the years of the "take-off" in the Swedish industrialisation, the first general Occupational Hazards Act was passed.[2] At the same time a Labour Inspectorate was established. The aim of this initiative was very modest and the results were, accordingly, insignificant. In 1912 a new and more detailed Worker Protection Act was adopted and at the same time the Labour Inspectorate was reorganised and expanded. The head of the Inspectorate became the newly organised National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), one of the most central public institutions in the further development of the Swedish welfare state. Among other things, some specialised inspectors were appointed for certain branches of industry, as well as for female workers.[3]

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[1] I want to express my gratitude to my colleagues Christina Florin, Annette Thörnquist and Bill Sund, for their valuable comments on the text.

[2] There had previously been legislation that prohibited child labour and in the beginning of the 20th century there was a law against women's night-work. See for example Wikander, Kessler-Harris and Lewis eds (1995).

[3] For the development of the Swedish Labour Inspectorate, see *Från yrkesfara till arbetsmiljö. Yrkesinspektionen 100 år 1990* and de Kazinczy (1996). For the Female Factory Inspectorate, see Åkerblom (1998).

There were three ways the Inspectorate could exercise its authority over occupational safety. One was through issuing directions and recommendations on how the law should be implemented. These could be instructions on how machines or engines should be constructed, how resting-places should be arranged or which equipment or protection should be used in certain work tasks. The second way was through inspections of workplaces. Employers who did not comply with the regulations could be fined. But the policy of the Inspectorate was very cautious and here the third way of promoting occupational safety emerged: information and propaganda. A guiding principal was to persuade and convince the employers that the care for the workers' health and well-being was important for their own benefit, i e to change their attitude towards occupational safety. Not only the employers' viewpoint had to be altered. The workers also had to change their attitude towards their working behaviour – they had to learn to work in a safer way.

In short, for those institutions and leading persons who were engaged in occupational safety, one of the main ways to improve conditions for workers at the workplace, and probably also to reform society as a whole, was to change peoples' attitudes and alter their behaviour. And their ambitions were sometimes far-reaching. One interesting attempt to change even the division of labour between the sexes and, as we would express it today, the construction of gender, was achieved in Swedish forestry during the interwar period. The means was to substitute individual cooking by forest workers with female cooks for groups of workers.

The aim of this essay is to apply a gender perspective on this attempt to change the division of labour between the sexes in order to promote occupational safety.[4] I will first focus on sex and gender in the forested parts of Sweden where the main workplaces for the forest workers were situated. I will then deal with the organisation of forestry work and the conditions the Inspectorate identified as problems for the workers. Then the innovation of female cooks in log cabins and the aims and hopes of the Forest Labour Inspectorate will be discussed. Finally I will sum up what the outcomes were for the workers and for the construction of gender.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my discussion has two important parts, common to many historians who have examined the relation between the sexes. The first is the concept of *gender*. In this essay I see gender primarily as a construction of

[4] This essay is partly based on my book *Arbetarskyddet i skogsbruket – från tjugotalet till åttiotalet* (1993). For my discussion on gender I owe a great dept of gratitude to one of my students, Helén Rönnqvist (1997), who has written an interesting paper *"Skogsarbetare bilda gemensamma hushåll å arbetsplatserna!" – en studie av skogsarbetarnas ändrade matförhållanden*.

power relations.[5] I see it as the perceived differences between men and women, as something humanly and societally constructed through tradition and lived experience. One could see it as a structuring principle that orders a society, closely connected to other analytical categories such as class and ethnicity. Men and women are attributed certain qualities, abilities and interests that give them a distinct position in the societal hierarchy. These attributions are constructions made by men and women and are therefore also changeable. They also differ from time to time and from place to place.

The power relations based on gender should therefore not be looked upon as an immovable and stable order. But it has some permanence. The Swedish gender historian Yvonne Hirdman has developed the concept "gender contract" as a way to get around the functionalist limitations of system theories. The contract approach emphasises that the power relations to a certain degree are maintained by both sexes and can be seen as a tacit temporary agreement between men and women.[6]

Yvonne Hirdman has found that the ordering of the sexes through gender seems to be guided by hierarchy – the masculine man is the norm for man in general – and by "keeping-apart" – that is, to have strict borders between the masculine and the feminine domains. This is obvious when we come to the second concept, the *division of labour between the sexes*. In this connection I see sex in a very simplified way, as biological men and women. This division of labour has been the object of many studies in recent decades, in Sweden as well as in other countries.[7] From these we have obtained many interesting results on how this division is constructed, how it is maintained and how it changes. One striking result is the strong constructive element in the attribution of qualities and abilities to the sexes. The studies also clearly show the dynamics of gender, for example when professions and work tasks change sex.[8]

As I see it, gender and the division of labour between the sexes work, and can be analysed, on different analytical levels. They can be seen as a gender order for the whole society founded in laws and institutions, but also as orders that work in segments of societies, for example in certain classes and strata or in different geographical areas. These segments can often be based on certain ways of production or ways of living.

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[5] Scott, (1988), Hirdman (1990, 1993 and 1994).
[6] Hirdman (1993).
[7] For example Wikander (1988 and 1999), Bradley (1989).
[8] Sommestad (1992), Wikander (1988) and Florin (1987).

Forest Work, the Division of Labour between the Sexes and the Construction of Gender

Swedish industrialisation has largely been founded on the exploitation of two basic domestic resources: forests and iron ore. With the emergence of an engineering industry in the late 19th century, based on innovations and improvements in technology, Sweden entered a period of rapid industrialisation. At the end of the 19th century the number of people employed in agriculture began to decrease in absolute figures, but Sweden was still a rural country. It was not until the middle of the 1930s that the people living in more densely populated areas exceeded those living in the countryside. In other words, until the post-war boom Sweden was an industrialised, but rather rural country.

Since its appearance in the middle of the 19th century, the modern Swedish lumber industry has had its centre in the northern, pine forested part of the country. This is a region that reaches from the county of Värmland by the Norwegian border to the mouth of the river Dalälven between the counties Gästrikland and Uppland by the Gulf of Bothnia. For the sake of simplicity I will here call it the forest region. It covers two thirds of the Swedish land surface, but is sparsely populated. The inhabitants have mostly lived along the great rivers and around some of the great lakes. In this region one makes a distinction between these settled parts (Sw. *bygd*) and the rest (forests, mires, mountains etc). People have also lived in the forests, but they have usually been poor and on the fringes of society.

The conditions for the emerging lumber industry were in many respects favourable. The companies had raw materials in the form of large forests that could be bought rather cheaply from the peasants since the trees had only a minor value for them. For the peasants the most important resources in the forests were pasturage, haymaking, hunting and fishing. Another advantage for the industry was that the rivers offered good transportation possibilities. The timber was floated on the rivers to the industries by the river mouths, and from there the sawed products, the pulp and the paper were easily carried by boat to the markets on the Continent. The companies also had a sufficient supply of labour, partly from the inhabitants that wanted the supplementary income from forest work, and partly from migrant workers who travelled around looking for jobs. The companies could also use traditional organisational forms – work teams and entrepreneurial forms – found in the local communities for the arrangement of the logging and transport of the timber.[9]

The people in the forest region welcomed the income from forest work. Many scholars who have studied the forest region have emphasised the egalitarian nature of the population, or at least the egalitarian ideology found among it. Still it was stratified. There were landed peasants and non-land-owning groups such as

[9] For forest work and the organisation of forestry, see Persson (1991) and Östlund (1992).

crofters, tenants and cottars, and workers. Common for the agricultural population, including the peasants, was that the growing of cereals played a minor part for its subsistence. The climate and the short summer season in the forest region were often unfavourable for that kind of cultivation. Raising stock was far more important. All people, landed as well as those without land, lived in complex economies, composed of several different tasks where each one was needed for survival. Each person had a compositionally diversified working year and in that year the forest work, carried out in the winter months, offered income at a time when there was no farming and few opportunities for doing wage labour.

The division of labour between the sexes was, just as the working year, an important part of the subsistence economy. And the forest work fitted well into the gender order. It is not the easiest task to reconstruct a gender order historically, especially not within social strata that have left us few historical sources. Here I rely on relatively recent historical studies done in Sweden that focus on rural areas, especially the northern forest region in pre-industrial times and the 19th century.[10] Many of these studies emphasise that the division of labour between the sexes varies from place to place and over time, and that one should be cautious about making firm statements.[11] Still, there are some general features that should be valid for the forest region at the beginning of the 20th century and that are relevant for all social groups that were occupied with forest work.[12]

There seems to have been a rather strict division of labour between men and women. One could characterise men's work as project orientated, with a clear separation between working time and rest. Women's work, on the other hand, was continuous and orientated towards the care of people and animals. The sexes were viewed as complementary, but the relation between them must still be regarded as hierarchical, even apart from the judicial and political inequality that is obvious.[13] Women got their full political rights and majority in 1921. For men and women alike in this region, knowledge and the ability to work were worth more and more highly valued than property.

There was no strict division between indoor and outdoor work, as was common among farmers in the more agricultural regions of southern Sweden. Still most of the work tasks were regarded as either men's or women's work. The horse and the forest work were for example masculine, while the cow and the milking was feminine. But even if there was a clear division, the gender order nevertheless was flexible. When circumstances demanded it, the boundaries

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[10] Johansson (1989 and 1994), Löfgren (1982), Kaldal (2000), Götebo Johannesson (1996), Lundgren (1993), Lövkrona (1999), Sogner (1998), Niskanen (1998), Ericsson-Trenter (1995).

[11] This is obvious in a Nordic perspective, in spite of the many similarities in the way of living in the forested parts of the different countries. See Kaldal et al (2000).

[12] Here I rely mostly on Johansson (1989 and 1994), Löfgren (1982), Sogner (1998).

[13] Maria Sjöberg has stressed the importance of this, see *Historisk tidskrift* 1996, pp 363–397.

could be exceeded. It was foremost the women who took over men's work, in many cases the younger women. Rather common activities for men during the working year were journeys for trade, haulage and seasonal work. During those periods it was regarded as natural that women took over men's work. It must also have been common that the men managed their own housekeeping during their absence; either they had food with them from their own household or they bought food.

The traditional forest work, i e providing firewood and cutting trees for tool making and house building, was thus a part of this division of labour. This was, as has been mentioned, by tradition regarded as men's work, and when men were away from home women took over the resident household themselves. But with the coming of modern "industrial" forest work there were some changes. For most men it made the periods of absence longer and more regular, and it became an integral part of the working year. As a consequence of this, both sexes must have had to exceed the boundaries for their own sex more than before. It gave the sexes a higher degree of autonomy, and since the benefit from the forest work was ready money it could not all together have been regarded as something bad by the men and women involved. Maybe it was even seen as desirable, analogous to the high esteem of men's ability to work and manage by themselves. Ella Johansson has in her doctoral thesis stressed that there was a great reluctance among the forest workers to unite and form a temporary household in the working team and to cook food together. She interprets this in terms of individualism and gender: to form a household was regarded as unmanly.[14]

Forest Work and Occupational Safety

The working conditions, and also the dangers, for the workers in forestry before Second Word War in Sweden were rather different from those one could find in industry at the same time. They also differed from those found in forest work in many other countries, where there was a higher level of mechanisation and where forestry depended on a working force recruited from outside the local community, often gathered in big camps at the logging places. I will therefore give an account of how the forest work was organised and the labour process.[15] The special conditions for Swedish forestry at this time concerned among other things the way to hire and pay labour, the seasonal character of work and the low technological level of the labour process.

The sawmill and pulp companies organised the logging and the log driving on the rivers as subcontracting systems. In logging the company contracted a sleigh-hauler who was expected to take the full responsibility for the logging in a certain

[14] Johansson (1994) pp 78–79.
[15] Persson (1991); Östlund (1992), Törnlund & Östlund eds (2000).

piece of woodland and for the transportation of the timber to a watercourse. The sleigh-hauler in his turn hired and paid the cutters he needed to get the trees cut down. The sleigh-hauler was often a farmer, since horses were necessary for the transportation of the timber. In log driving an entrepreneur contracted the floating of the timber for a section of a watercourse and hired and paid the workers he needed. In log driving the work teams were larger than in logging. The work contracts were mostly put out for auction or tenders to the lowest bidder, and this subcontracting system was heavily criticised by the workers. It increased the competition between the workers and cut the wages.

Forest work was seasonal. The logging period took place in winter, from January to April. The log driving began in early spring when the ices on the rivers melted and the work lasted from some weeks to some months. The temporality was due to the possibilities available for transportation. The logging operation needed snow for transportation. The sleigh-hauler hired two or three cutters who felled the trees, trimmed the branches, striped the bark and cut the logs in appropriate lengths. The timber was loaded on a horse-drawn sleigh and transported to a watercourse. When the ice on the watercourses began to crack in the spring, the log driving began. It was a matter of making use of the spring flood. Dams collected the water from the melting snow so it could be used in the driving. Log flume took the timber past parts of the rivers that were unsuitable for driving and the log drivers supervised the log's way down the rivers. When a log got stuck on stones and similar hindrances it was the log driver's duty to pull it free with his floating-hook. Sometimes jams of floating logs formed. Then the log drivers had as quickly as possible to loosen it. This was a very dangerous task and sometimes the only way to loosen a jam was to blow it up with dynamite.

Forest work in Sweden before Second World War was manual and the technological level was rather low. The common working tools in logging were the axe, the saw and the barking iron. For the sleigh-hauler it was the sleigh and different lifting tools that were used to load the sleigh. In log driving the floating-hook and the boat were the universal working tools. A large work force was therefore needed in forestry and it depended on an abundant supply of cheap labour. The labour was formally unskilled; knowledge of the logging process was common property among the male people in the forest region. But to make good earnings you had to be skilful and experienced.

The wage form for those who were hired by the entrepreneurs was generally straight piecework, for example a price for each tree cut down, taking into account its dimension and length, or a price for each log floated. There was also an elaborate system of fines for "badly performed work", which could lower the earnings of both the entrepreneur and the workers. The working hours were unregulated. Forest work, like agriculture, was not included in the new Working Hours Act from 1919, which stipulated a working week of 48 hours. Cutters and sleigh-haulers worked as long as daylight permitted. The workers in the log dri-

ving often worked more than 24 hours without rest, just to be able to use the temporary high water level in the small watercourses.

The forest work in itself was hard and often dangerous. The climate in the winters was cold and the ground was often covered with more than meter-deep snow. The cutters had to dig themselves through the snow to be able to cut the trees at ground level, since there were heavy fines for leaving high stumps. There was always a risk of getting crushed under a falling tree, whether the cutter was oneself or a fellow-worker. If a tree got stuck in another tree during the felling operation, it was hard to get it down without taking risks. The axe and the saw often caused injuries; injuries that sometimes became seriously infected. The sleigh-haulers ran the risk of getting pinned under a log when loading a sleigh or under an overturning loaded sleigh during transportation.

In the early spring during the log driving the workers often had to wade in ice-cold water to do their work. In log driving there was always the risk that one could drown in the water or get hit by a floating log. The hard labour in forest work also often caused muscle strains, rheumatic diseases and general wear and tear. Another problem was that since the working places in both logging and log driving mostly were situated far from inhabited areas, the work force had to live in temporary cabins, often erected by the workers themselves. These cabins were often in miserable condition. In log driving in small watercourses the workers sometimes did not even use cabins, but rested and slept in the open air.

The dangers and the bad working conditions in forest work aroused attention among the authorities that were responsible for occupational safety and among liberal and labour politicians. Forest work was included in the Worker Protection Act of 1912, but the housing for workers in temporary work places, such as in the forests, was not. In 1919 the parliament therefore established laws for the lodgings used in logging, river floating and charcoal making. To implement and supervise these laws the parliament established a special Labour Inspectorate. The first Inspector to be appointed was a young and very competent forest officer, Oscar Wallner. The Inspectorate began its work in 1920, and five years later it was commissioned to supervise all occupational safety in forest work.[16] Wallner was the sole Inspector for the first ten years. Then the Inspectorate was expanded and he became its head. He retired in 1958. During this time he exerted a great influence on occupational safety in forestry.[17]

The issues that the Forest Labour Inspectorate focused on were the poor nutrition of the workers, the bad housing conditions and the high level of accidents, including those with a fatal end. The first two issues were not generally in focus for a factory Inspectorate, since they were not connected with the work itself but

[16] The name of the Inspectorate changed over the years; here I have chosen to call it the Forest Labour Inspectorate. For most of the time, the Swedish name was *Skogsyrkesinspektionen*.

[17] Most of the specialised Inspectorates were abolished in 1974, among them the one for forest work. Henceforth they were parts of the general Factory Inspectorate.

with the way the workers lived while they were not working. These living conditions resembled those of some other workers who work at places away from home, such as sailors, construction workers and oilrig workers.[18] In comparison with those groups, however, the connection to the employer regarding food and housing were vaguer for the forest workers.

The forest worker's diet was the earliest issue. Local physicians in northern Sweden noticed already at the end of the 19th century that the diet of the forest workers was very unvaried. The typical menu consisted of "charcoal cake" (*kolbulle*, i e grease, wheat flour and water mixed together and fried in a pan), very fat "American bacon" and black coffee with sugar. To the physicians – the modern society's bold knights of rationalism – science and hygiene, this diet caused deficiency diseases and bad stomachs. For most of the people in the forest region, however, this was a diet of most delicious and luxurious food that was necessary for the hard work and could be afforded thanks to the cash earnings from forest work.[19] Another aspect of the food in the log cabins was the individuality in housekeeping among the workers. Each worker had his own frying pan and coffee kettle, and each worker cooked his own food with the provisions he had brought with him. This way of housekeeping seemed very irrational to many observers.

The bad housing conditions have already been mentioned. Workers involved in the logging usually erected the cabins themselves as soon as they arrived at the work place. They were built of timber and often had just one room with a fireplace in the middle or in one corner. Around the walls were the bunks where the workers slept, rested, ate, sharpened their tools, mended their clothes and kept their belongings. The cabins were often crowded, smoky, draughty and dirty. The physicians who criticised the bad housing meant that they not only caused diseases and physical weakness, but that they also spread apathy, indifference and carelessness. The new laws of 1919 were one step on the road to better cabins, but the prescriptions were very modest and the implementation slow.

The third issue was the high level of accidents in forest work. When the Forest Labour Inspectorate took over all occupational safety in 1925, one of its first steps was to get a grip on statistics. The figures showed that the number of lost working days, the number of accidents and the number of accidents ending in a fatality were higher in forestry compared to the rest of industry, figured proportionately to the number of workers involved.[20] In fact, forest work was one of the most dangerous jobs of all. When Inspector Wallner discussed these high levels, he expressed his opinion that they were caused chiefly by bad working habits. In

[18] See for example Bursell (1984).

[19] Johansson (1994).

[20] The exact comparative figures are the numbers in relations to the number of workers in a year and worked hours. This way of calculation is necessary since forest work was seasonal.

logging the workers wounded themselves with their tools in different ways (septicaemia was a very common cause of death), they felled trees over each other because of lack of attention or they injured their backs by lifting the logs in a wrong manner. Wallner's thoughts lay in the main stream of international occupational safety at this time. The American "Safety Movement" had a great influence on the Swedish Labour Inspectorate. This movement, which was a part of the new industrial management ideology, stressed that also the employers had much to win from better occupational safety. It was in fact in the long term a way of increasing production.[21] The way to lower work-related risks was through education, propaganda, advice and recommendations. It was a matter of changing bad behaviour in work, in short: to do things correctly and safely.

With this policy the worker and the work was put in the centre of the doings of the Labour Inspectorate. Wages, employment conditions and working-time were regarded as being outside the Inspectorate's area of responsibility. Those issues were to be handled by the parties on the labour market: the trade unions and the employers' associations. The subcontracting system in forest work, which made the employer's responsibility opaque and uncertain, and the piece-work system, which increased the tempo, were defined as non-issues in the practice of the Labour Inspectorate.

An ideal situation was if one could achieve a working co-operation between the employers, the workers and the Labour Inspectorate. But the conditions for such a co-operation in forestry were not present at this time. One major obstacle was that the labour market was so badly organised.[22] The employers were very reluctant to form employer's organisations. They refused to bargain with the workers to make collective agreements, and they feared that having their own organisation would facilitate for the workers to insist on an abolishment of the subcontracting system. The workers themselves had great difficulty in forming trade unions. Only a third of the workers were organised. The obstacles were many. The social division between them was deep, the work lasted only a short time of the year and the competition between the workers for job opportunities was great.

The local work regarding occupational safety in the forest companies and in the work places was very poorly developed at this time. The conditions were better in industry. The Worker Protection Act had been revised several times during the inter-war period and a rudimentary local organisation for occupational safety had emerged in some industrial companies.[23] In 1932 the Social Democratic Party had formed a government and come to an agreement with the Farmers' Party regarding economic policy. In 1938 the Swedish Trade Union Confedera-

[21] Sund (1993).
[22] Persson (1991).
[23] Bjerregaard (1993), Sund (1992) and Thörnquist (1993).

tion (LO) and the Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF) came to an important agreement establishing industrial peace on the labour market, the so-called Saltsjöbad agreement named after the place where it was signed. These two agreements mark the beginning of the social democratic welfare project in Sweden, the Swedish model.

In 1942 the LO and the SAF reached an agreement on labour safety, regulating local efforts regarding occupational safety and creating a firm organisation for this work. But the trade unions and the employers in forestry did not follow this example, and a similar agreement for this branch was not made until 1969.[24]

Thus the lack of a local organisation for occupational safety in forest work meant that the Forest Labour Inspectorate came to play the leading role in the development of occupational safety for a long time. The chief Inspector Wallner was no revolutionary, but he had a strong belief in co-operation and enlightenment as a way to alter man's behaviour and to improve the workers' conditions.

In one sense, one could perhaps say that the emphasis on changing people's behaviour in the Safety First movement was also rather suitable for forest work, since the responsibility of the employer was replaced by the responsibility of the entrepreneur and the worker.

The Introduction of the Female Cook

Inspector Wallner realised that there was no short cut for improving occupational safety for the forest workers. But almost upon taking up his duties he got an idea that he thought would lessen the unhealthiness of the work and diminish many of its risks – and during the following decades he tried to put this idea into practice. This was that the forest workers should maintain co-operative housekeeping. The men in each cabin should join together and hire a female cook who would live with them in the cabin through the working season and prepare their food. This arrangement became for Wallner something of a *panacea* for health and safety in forest work.

Wallner's reasoning was as follows. Joint housekeeping with a hired female cook would mean that the workers would return from the day's work to an already warm and clean cabin. They would be served warm, nutritious and cheap food. Because of this they would feel more comfortable not only physically, but also psychologically. They would get more time for rest and for mending their clothes, equipment and tools. That would further their working capacity and at the same time lessen the risks for accidents caused by badly maintained tools. Warm food and cleanliness in the cabin would also make it more pleasant and cosy, and that would further enhance the workers' way of life. Even the general

[24] Persson (1993) p 100.

standard of the cabins would improve, because no woman would accept wretched hovels and poor stoves.

The workers would gain more self-esteem, and the presence of a woman would make them more careful about their own tidiness. Wallner meant that they would take these qualities, this carefulness and orderliness, with them to the work place, working more safely and properly and paying more attention to the dangers in the work. If they were unlucky and an accident occurred, the female cook, who should have some training in the elementary treatment of wounds, would give them first aid.

This idea was present from the start of Wallner's work for occupational health. He may have got it from a one of the local physicians in northern Sweden, Dr Adolf Hassler from Frostviken in Jämtland county, who wrote an article about it. Wallner's first thought was that the workers should hire an elderly woman or a man who was not quite fit for regular work. But this thought gave way for the idea of the more professional female cook. It was obvious that it was the female presence that would be a pressure on the men to improve their own working conditions.

The way of diffusing and implementing this idea was through information and propaganda. The employers as well as the trade unions had a positive attitude toward the idea and supported the efforts to implement it. The Forest Labour Inspection drew up drafts for menus and initiated instruction courses for female cooks. They also made a propaganda film for the idea, one of the first propaganda films for occupational safety in Sweden. From 1937 the state gave grants to the cook courses, and from 1942 a special adviser was appointed at the Forest Labour Inspectorate. She – it was of course a she – was to organise the education of the female cooks and also travel around and visit them in the cabins and give good advice in all matters. This part of the Inspectorate expanded and at most there were ten advisers working at the same time.

The Outcome

The outcome of these efforts can be regarded in two ways. One is to look at the "measurable" results in the form of the diffusion of joint housekeeping with hired female cooks and improved occupational safety in forest work. The other is to look at men and women, the division of labour between the sexes and a potential change in the gender order. I will start with the "measurable" results.

The diffusion of Wallner's idea could be described as a success story. During the 1920s it was adopted slowly, but from the 1930s and particularly during World War II the diffusion was rapid. State support played an important role. The new Social Democratic government had a strong resolve to improve conditions

for workers, not least for those in rural areas.[25] The state support for female cooks came partly through financial funds for the cook courses. But the state also promoted the spread of female cooks by the great logging operations it initiated during the war, to reduce the shortage of fuel caused by the war blockade. The state was eager to offer satisfactory housing conditions for the workers, and female cooks were standard at these work places.

The period with better cabins and female cooks lasted a few decades. With the coming of the 1950s, a rapid and radical change in the labour process in forestry began. Forest work was mechanised. Log driving was replaced by the transportation of wood by truck, and the road network in the forests expanded swiftly. The boom after the war and the rising standard of living made it possible for the forest workers to buy mopeds and motorbikes – even cars. Thus they could go home for the night and the cosy cabin with the female cook made way for ordinary resting sheds. A new and very dangerous tool, the chain saw, replaced the traditional axe and saw. For many years, reducing the dangers of this tool became the dominant issue for occupational safety.

It is harder to say anything definite regarding the aim of Wallner's idea, the improvement of working conditions and the lessening of perils and an unhealthy environment. The conditions in the cabins became better of course, as did the food. One may suppose that the comfort and the well being of the workers also improved. If this also meant a more careful and cautious way of working is unclear. The rate of accidents in forest work, proportionately to the workers involved, rose steadily until the middle of the 1930s, and so did the rate of those ending in fatalities. From then on the rate of accidents remained on the same level, whereas the rate for those with a fatal end decreased to a lower level. There were still some very high apexes during the last years of Word War II, but they can be explained by the extraordinarily large logging operations, which included many inexperienced workers, during these years.[26] This check in, and even reduction of accidents, could indicate that the diffusion of female cooks in fact had the favourable consequences Inspector Wallner hoped for. One contributory element was probably also the massive propaganda for a safer way of working, which was continuously distributed by the Forest Labour Inspectorate.

The successful introduction of women into the forest work also changed the division of labour between the sexes in the forest region. In the earlier division there was a rather sharp boundary between men's work and women's work. This division had also a geographical dimension, but it was the work that was gendered, not the place.[27] Men and women were kept apart in work when they were at

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[25] Persson (1991) pp 173–175.

[26] They employed for example factory workers, white-collar workers and also war refugees.

[27] I feel that this is important if one is to be able to understand gender in the forested area. Some scholars mean that in certain societies even places can be gendered: for example the

their farms or houses in the settled part of the region – they did different things. But when they were really far from each other, e g the man working in the forest and the woman keeping up the household at home, then they could – and had to – do each other's task. The woman did hard agricultural work and work on the houses and fences, while the man cooked his food and mended his cloths. Maybe it was the keeping-apart that made it possible for the men to do women's work. With only men in the cabin, all doing the same, no one had to be ashamed. Men could not form households together, but they could manage household tasks individually when they needed to.[28]

The new division of labour Wallner wanted to introduce was not a reestablishment of the division that was common in settled parts of the forest region, when men and women were at home together. No, he wished, as far I understand, to create a new one. And to realise that new division of labour, both men and women had to be educated into it and habituated to it.

The woman was to become a modern professional housekeeper, well acquainted with the latest knowledge on cooking, nutrition and household economy. These were still the traditional tasks for women, but women who wanted to be *cooks* had to be educated, and in some sense also supervised, even if the control aspect on the part of the advisors seems to have been small. This new woman was an equivalent to the modern rational housewife and the professional working woman you could find in other places in society at that time.[29]

The male forest workers had to be convinced of how good it was with joint housekeeping and female cooks, and they were therefore subjected to propaganda from the Inspectorate, their own unions and their employers. Once they had decided to engage a woman, she was in herself an anomaly in the forest work and a way to break old behaviour. The fact that she was a professional housekeeper announced that it was not the old order that had been established. This was not the same as being back in the village with wives, mothers and daughters. At the same time this professional knowledge was the only way to convince the men that this was a good order, and the very basic argument was used: cheap and tasty food. With this new female person, and this new division of labour between the sexes, the men had to change themselves.

A new masculinity was formed, that stressed that men should be clean and tidy, careful and dutiful, and good workers. In some ways this masculinity resembles the ideal of conscientiousness (*skötsamhet*) that historian Ronny Ambjörnsson has found among men in the labour movement and the temperance

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cow-house is female and the stable is male. This is a good example of showing gender construction. The keeping apart is the important thing, but the forms can vary infinitely.

[28] Cf Johansson (1994).

[29] For the rationalisation of household work, se Hirdman (1992), Lövgren (1993) and Götebo (1996).

movement in Sweden in the beginning of the 20th century.[30] This ideal stressed good work ethics, order and planing, but also democratic argument, a respect for other's opinions, fairness, and class-consciousness. Ambjörnsson says this was a Swedish mentality during these years.

There was a lot of reluctance towards the idea that a lone woman should camp for weeks in a cabin together with a group of men, far from inhabited areas. Moral considerations were mixed with concern for the women, and these doubts were found foremost among people from outside the forest region. But these fears come to nought. All accounts of the conditions in the cabins were positive, almost idyllic.[31] The men cared for their cook. She usually lived in her own section of the cabin – sometime only shielded by a hanging cloth. The men helped her with carrying firewood and water and supervised each other so no one was favoured by her or took liberties with her. Maybe also the sanction from a public authority gave her a certain position. The cook seemed to have had a strong position in "her" cabin.

Changing Sex, Changing Gender – Some Reflections

This account has shown that it was possible to change both sex and gender in forest work. And through this, behaviour that was regarded as bad for the health and comfort for the workers could be changed as well.

Female cooks took over the cooking for the workers and created better conditions for them in the cabins, through performing a professional job based on traditional female knowledge and ability. There seems to have been no shortage of women for these jobs or training programs. Farms were being closed down and "the flight from the countryside" was increasing. Sweden was on its way to becoming a modern urban industrial society. There were few job opportunities for married and unmarried women in the forest region. Cooking could be an alternative to moving south or to towns.

The doubtfulness felt by the forest workers toward joint housekeeping seemed in the long run to have given way to an appreciation of its benefits. The individual cooking was partly cultural, partly an expression of the inequality between the workers. We do not know how the workers reasoned when they decided to hire a cook. Did they realise that it could have advantages that superseded the costs of losing their independence? Was it pressure from the employers? Had the rising standard of living made the workers more equal economically so they could afford a joint household? Had the spread of trade unions increased the workers' solidarity with each other?

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[30] Ambjörnsson (1988).

[31] This applies to reports from the Inspectorate, the advisers and the memoirs of cooks and workers.

The Forest Inspectorate, and through it the state, was the driving force in this process and probably played a decisive role for its success. Its aim was to change gender through sex. Through the presence of a woman, men would change their behaviour. Similar reasoning regarding sex and gender are known from for example the debate on suffrage. In new settlements women's suffrage was seen as a way of diffusing women's characteristics, like order and virtue, and of taming men's savagery and violence.[32] This "contagion theory" was not quite as valid in the case of forest work. Wallner's idea was that the interaction between men and women would bring out the best in the men, or at least something better. And that would also make men more careful in their work.

This process towards integration into a more modern division of labour between the sexes was probably inevitable, since the transformation of the forest region was already at hand. Wage work for men and women alike, a monetary economy and "capitalistic" relations between people replaced the old way of living.[33] But the Inspectorate forced the change in the cabins. I think that the success of this change is due to the Inspectorate being an outside force; it was not involved in the relations within the local community. It also had backing from the workers' trade unions and the employers, a backing that probably was important. There was something of an "iron triangle", in the modern corporate sense, that made its influence felt on the forest workers. In this sense one should not perhaps be surprised at this attempt to change people's behaviour. It is rather typical for Sweden in the era of the Swedish Model: the state together with the organised interests in the labour market trying to make the world a better place for the citizens, even if the citizens had not always asked for this special solution.

Finally, I would like to present some thoughts on theory. In the pre-industrial societies in the forest region the division of labour between men and women was rather distinct. This corresponds well with the postulate that the keeping apart of men and women is a fundamental part of a gender order. But it was not an entirely tight and inflexible order: circumstances and imperative necessities now and again forced crossovers. Crossovers were also standard during the recurrent periods when men and women were separated because of work or travel. One could therefore say that crossovers were a part of the gender order, even if in a limited way.

The introduction of female cooks in the forest broke the old division of labour between the sexes. The bringing together of men and women, even if was just one woman, forced a new division of labour. And this must be regarded as a division of labour quite different from the pre-industrial one. If it also was a new

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[32] Therborn (1980), Björkenlid (1982), Manns (1997) and Rönnbäck (2001).

[33] The dramatic change of the forested region with the coming of the modern forest industry is studied in a multidisciplinary research project funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. It is called "Flexibility as tradition. Culture and subsistence in the boreal forests of Northern Sweden". Se http://www.svek.slu.se/Project/Project.htm

gender order can be argued. To some extent it was. It presupposed that both sexes would be working for money in a labour market that was separate from the household economy. This was the case even if it sometimes was the wives and daughters of the workers who were hired as cooks. In this way it was a more modern order, adjusted to Swedish welfare capitalism. Men as well as women worked, on more equal conditions, both professionals. But the new order rested on the idea that men and women were different.

This new order did not allow any crossovers, like the old one. Men did what men should do, women what they should do. Thus one could not say that the new order introduced by the Forest Inspectorate was more equal than the old. On the contrary it stressed that women belonged to the household sphere, but now as professionals and wage earners. In this sense it made men less capable, more vulnerable and more dependent on women's care. The division of labour between the sexes became in this way more firm in the developed capitalistic welfare state, at least in its first phase.[34]

For women the work as cooks was an opportunity to get an education, an income of her own and thence probably also greater independence. But even if it was work in a labour market, the market itself was very segmented between men and women.

The introduction of the female cooks in forest work can thus be seen as an important part of the integration of the people in the North into modern welfare capitalism. There were both gains and losses for the sexes in this process. In any case, the introduction of female cooks seems to have had some good effect on occupational safety in forest work.

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[34] That the industrial society often led to a more rigid division of labour between the sexes has been stressed by many scholars. See for example Wikander (1988 and 1999) and Hirdman (1993 and 1994).

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Wearing protective gear, a woman works with lead in a battery factory. Can she live up to the new guidelines for women only? Source: *Oskarshamns-Tidningen*, 1992-11-14. Photographer : Olle Nilsson.