

Clothes as a Store of Value: second-hand trade in a Swedish small town 1830–1900

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Today, our society is balancing on the tightrope between a throwaway life style and a rising consciousness of natural resources being limited. Reuse and recycling is advocated by both politicians and environmental organizations. Recycling clothes for sustainability is gaining ground. However, recycling is not a new concept. Before cheap fabrics and the industrial production of ready-made clothes paved the way for a throwaway culture, clothes took up a large part of the household budget. This made clothes important as assets in a society with a shortage of liquidity. Clothes could, under these circumstances, be used as a store of value and a medium of exchange. How easily their value could be realised was dependent on the existence of second-hand markets, and also if the clothes were seen as attractive items.

In Sweden, the monetization of the economy increased during the 1800s, and the formal credit market expanded, especially during the second half of the century. However, as in other parts of Europe, most women and lower socioeconomic groups did not have access to this expanding credit market. As a consequence, many households still were dependent on other sources to cover their need for credit. Objects could fill the same functions as money, that is, as a store of value, medium of exchange and means of payment.

The aim is to study the use of clothes and textiles as a ‘store of value’ during the early industrialisation in Sweden 1830–1900. How did the development of credit markets and the mechanization of production, as well as the introduction of more ‘breakable’ fabrics such as cotton, affect the use of clothes as store of value. By studying second-hand trade at auctions in a small Swedish town, Västerås, we want to problematize the meaning that second-hand trade had for different groups in society. In this paper we present preliminary results from cross-sectional studies of auction sale in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898.

The value of second-hand clothes in a historical perspective

In a society with little production, consumption is low and the recycling of resources high. Recycling is then an adaption to scarcity. It can also be a response to the uncertainty of future earnings or cultural norms such as thrift being regarded as a virtue. Changes in consumption and the recycling of goods can be a result of rising income in society, a redistribution of income to groups more likely to consume, or to changes in preferences. The consumption of goods is also highly connected to altered relative prices, due to supply side changes (e.g., new technology).

The dual nature of clothes, the necessity to protect the body against rain and cold and the consumption of clothes as a medium of socio-cultural expression, makes them especially interesting for studies concerning changes in value and the establishment of second-hand markets. Clothes have both use value and exchange value. ‘Value in use’ only exists when the object is valued by the user for its ability to satisfy human needs or wants, whereas ‘value in exchange’ only exists when there is a market for the object, either to be bartered for other commodities or to be exchanged for money (Smith 2005[1776]:30). In this way, clothes have both an economic and immaterial value (Miller 2008).

Depending on different intrinsic properties and the number of people specialising in different goods, an object is more or less likely to be used as a medium of exchange (Kiyotaki & Wright 1989). In a society with a poorly developed credit market, clothes could serve this purpose. They are easy to store and transport without high transaction costs or loss of worth. However, people’s willingness to accept a certain commodity depends on beliefs about other traders’ willingness to accept them as a medium of exchange, or the existence of a second-hand market. Crucial in the evolution of a certain medium of exchange is that a learning process takes place over time (Kiyotaki & Wright 1989; Lou 2012:180).

According to the life-cycle theory, individuals strive to maintain the same level of consumption throughout their lifetimes (Modigliani & Brumberg 1980 [1954]). Values stored in commodities bought during periods of economic surplus can be realised when income decreases. The purchase of clothes can be regarded as consumption, an investment or a kind of savings, depending on varying economic circumstances and needs over the life cycle.

When the value of clothing is relatively stable, it could be used as an economic asset, possible to realise in difficult times during an individual’s life cycle. In the 18th century clothes were highly valued. Production was trying and time-consuming. Clothes were mainly handmade. Even in the late 19th century, people in general had just a few garments. This meant that clothes were cared for and taken care of. Clothes and linens were often accumulated in young adulthood and then used during an individual’s life-time. Their high value also meant that they were common as payment in kind (Lemire 1988; Turnau 1994; Harnesk 1986). Clothes were also often stolen, because of their value at the second-hand market (Styles 1994; Lemire 1997; Toplis 2010). However, the value of wardrobes seems to have varied over time. Consumption was also a gendered pursuit (e.g., Vickery 2009; Ferris

Motz & Browne 1988; Ulväng 2012). This, together with gendered access to the credit market, may have affected how important the values in the wardrobe were for men and women in need of cash and credit.

The life cycle of clothes has been seen as being rapidly altered due to a shift in preferences towards new manufactured goods with an ‘industrious revolution’ from the 17th century (de Vries 2008) or a ‘consumption revolution’ in the 18th century (McKendrick et al. 1982; McCracken 1988; Weaterill 1988; Shamma 1990). Both views emphasise the importance of changes in preferences towards manufactured and more ‘breakable’ fabrics, such as thin cotton fabrics instead of linen and wool, which highly stimulated industrialization.

The value of second-hand clothes is affected by both supply and demand side changes. With more ‘breakable’ and cheap fabrics, faster changes in fashion, and increasing affluence, the value of cast-off garments should be expected to fall. According to Lemire (1988:22) the demand for second-hand clothes declined in the 1870s, when industrialization made new and fashionable clothes affordable also for lower classes. However, recycling was still profitable. The demand for rags for the paper industry was high and increasing until the introduction of cellulose fibre in the production in the 1880s (Zimring 2009:23; 2004:82–83).

The market for second-hand clothes is also sensitive to changes in people’s perception of thrift, recycling, and waste. According to Topolis (2010) the second-hand trade with clothes was in decline in London from the 1830s, because people no longer wanted to wear ‘old clothes’. Altered attitudes to used goods as ‘dirty’, stigmatising the handling of them, could have vast influence on the demand (Strasser 2000:69–110; Zimring 2004:81 and 95–96). Furthermore, a society rich in liquidity, and a more developed credit market, would decrease the need to use clothes as a store of value.

The life cycle of clothes and textile recycling seems to be intertwined with changes in technology, demand, alternative use, norms and the establishment of new material cultures or sub-cultures.

Development and change in second-hand demand

Second-hand trade provides an opportunity to realise the value of cast-off garments. Markets for second-hand clothes facilitated credit and opened up opportunities for new ways to consume.

Several studies have highlighted the development of a second-hand market for clothes. The recycling of clothes in the 18th and 19th centuries was an important part of the second-hand market (Lemire 1988, 1997; Charpy 2008; Styles 1994; Lambert 2004; Flavin 2011; Stobart & Hann 2004; Stobart & van Damme 2010). However, earlier studies of Swedish auctions have shown a decrease in the share of textile and clothes in the auction sales (Ulväng 2013:129 and 142). This could indicate that textile and clothes became less usable as store of value, or that the second-hand trade moved to other markets.

Several studies give evidence of an increasingly complex distribution of second-hand clothing during the 18th century (Lambert 2004; Charpy 2008). In the late 18th and early 19th centuries private and charity pawn broking expanded in many European and American countries, providing fixed-term loans with deposited possessions as security. Clothes and textiles were important goods pledged at pawnbrokers (McCant 2007:221; Francois 2004:345–347) and pawn broking was common among poor persons. However, all kinds of households were actors on this market, except those totally without means (Francois 2004:360). To be able to pledge, you must have possessions you could do without. Not everyone who pledged managed to reclaim their pawn. Widows and poor households were overrepresented among those who had problems with collecting their pawned goods (McCant 2007:227–230). The amount pledged for was partly an economic appreciation and partly an idea of the sentimental value of the item for the pledger. The latter was most important and guaranteed that the object was redeemed. At the end of the 19th century the number of pawnbrokers decreased in England as their services no longer were needed to the same extent as before. This development was probably a result of cheaper clothes (that no longer could be pledged), rising real wages, and a growing number of credit institutions (Tebutt 1983).

In Sweden the second-hand trade in clothes was one of a few areas of petty trade put aside for ‘needy women’, but also peddlers and rag-and-bone men dealt with second-hand clothes. Women were common among the clothes brokers in Stockholm, at least until the 1840s, and they often also served as pawnbrokers (Wottle 2010; Bladh 1991). In the second half of the 19th century a growing number of private pawnbrokers established themselves in many Swedish towns, and more and more of these actors were private companies or were organized by the municipality (Ellsberger 2004:71). Auctions were also an important second-hand market, at least from the late 17th century. Auction houses were established to provide an

opportunity to realise values stored in possessions, goods or the estate of deceased persons (Murhem, Ulväng & Lilja 2013:29–41). They could also be used by minute and wholesalers to get liquidity, and avoid costs for storage and transport. Public auctions were often used to sell forfeits. In Sweden, as well as in in England, excess returned over the amount lent plus interest was at least from 1884 the property of the pledger. Bidding was an established praxis to achieve a maximum price (Cohen 1971:504; Sandgren 2010:264–268; Ulväng & Lilja 2013:102).

Over time the second-hand trade became more regulated, both on the local and national levels. In Sweden, before the 1864 trade regulation, the second-hand trade was less regulated than other trades, but it was illegal for drapers to sell both new and used clothes (Wottle 2010:19–36). In 1885 professional mortgage lending businesses, pawnbrokers, were regulated. National regulations for second-hand trade in general were introduced first in 1918 (Ellsberger 2004:71; Sjöstrand 2014).

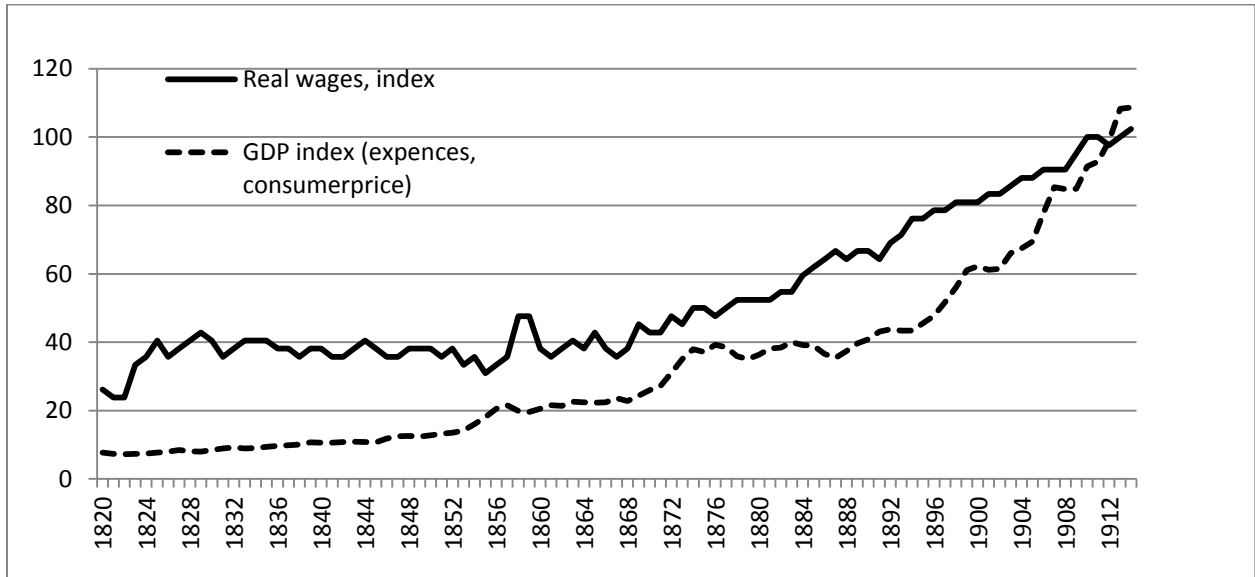
The Swedish case

Sweden is interesting as a late-comer. In the Nordic countries, industrialization and changes in consumption were piecemeal and patchy (see e.g. Hutchison 2012:207–251). The first industrial boom with the establishment of mechanised factories was seen in Sweden in the 1850s. However, as shown in figure 1, real industrial take-off took place in the 1890s. The early industrialization was mainly spurred by foreign demand for sawed wood and iron, while the later was fuelled by both domestic demand for consumption goods and international demand for more advanced industrial products, such as paper, pulp, and mechanical engineering (Schön 2010:142–155).

Nonetheless, a steady growth in the demand and production of consumption goods could be traced in Sweden from the 1820s. The first mechanized cotton weaving mill was established in 1837, but a more wide spread mechanisation did not emerge until the late 1850s. Modern mechanised factories emerged alongside older proto-industries concentrated to certain specialised regions, and even in the mid-19th century a large share of production took place in the home (Schön 1979; Hutchison 2012). With the mechanization of cotton weaving, the output increased radically. Between 1850 and 1875 the Swedish production increased almost 20 times (Schön 1979:43–44, 57–58 and 123; Jonsson 2000:63–64). For a long time, however, clothes remained hand-made and custom-made, keeping their relative price high.

Only in the 1850s did seamstresses begin using sewing machines in Sweden. and it was not until the 1870s that the production of shirts and other garments was mechanised (Waldén 1990).

Figure 1. Real wages and GDP in consumer prices, Sweden 1820–1914 (index 1910–1914 = 100)



Sources: Edvinsson & Söderberg 2010:447; Söderberg 2010:474–475.

A study of total textile consumption including factory industry, domestic industry, and domestic crafts shows that only a small proportion of the increase in per capita textile consumption can be explained by the falling relative prices of fabrics. Instead the growth was fuelled by an increase in relative incomes (figure 1). During the early phase, the growth of consumption was dominated by the more well-to-do classes, including freeholders. In the late 1850s also lower classes could increase their consumption, when the relative prices of cotton fabrics decreased due to the mechanization of weaving (Schön 1979; Schön 1982:57–71). In late 19th century prices for cloth were rising (Jörberg 1972:449–453 and 456–457). Between 1870 and 1910 the growth rate of real wages in Sweden was high (figure 1), which favoured workers due to a labour shortage after mass emigration. In 1870 Swedish real wages were only half of Britain’s, but by 1914 Swedish wage labour had caught up (O’Rourke & Williamson 1995:172).

The 1870s also meant a breakthrough for the Swedish credit market. Before that, society was characterised by a low degree of monetization. The supply of money increased after the introduction of the silver standard in 1834, by an average of 1.7 percent annually. Between

1870 and 1913, the annual growth of circulation was 4.6 percent. Parallel to this the financial sector in general grew, with the establishment of savings banks, commercial banks and insurance institutions (Lilja 2010:41–63; Ögren 2010:1–11). However, only part of the services of those institutions was accessible to women and lower socioeconomic groups even in the late 19th century (Hollis & Sweetman 1998; Lilja 2004:47; Jonsson 2009:166).

Method and sources

To be able to trace activities on the often elusive second-hand market, we have chosen to limit our study to a Swedish small town, Västerås. The town industrialised early in the Swedish context and had a differentiated socioeconomic structure. The choice also benefits from a relatively well-preserved source material.

Cross-sectional studies for the years 1837, 1860, 1885 and 1898 provide an opportunity to catch fluctuations over the century. The 1830s have been chosen as a starting point, before the first take-off of Swedish industrialization. In 1837 the first mechanised cotton weaving mill was established in Sweden. In both 1860 and 1885 the level of economic activity was high, while 1898 represents a year in a phase when the economy had turned upwards after a long period of recession. The years for the cross-sectional studies have been chosen as they avoid extremes in the business cycle relatively well. In relation to the short-term business cycles, the cross-sectional studies are in a similar phase, just before a downturn, except for 1898 (Edvinsson & Söderberg 2010:447). By 1900, Sweden was on the edge of consumerism and a modernised society

To capture the use of second-hand textiles and clothes as store of value and to problematize the meaning of second-hand trade for different groups in society, we have used auction records. Auction sales of real estate, crops on root, and leases of land are excluded. The value of total sales and the number of sellers are identified for the studied years. However, the focus of this paper is the sale of textiles and clothes. As we are especially interested in studying the use of textile and clothes as a store of value, clothes and textile items put up for sale at the auctions are of most interest and also their relation to other auction sale. This means that the sale of textile and clothes have been studied in detail. To analyse if the store of value and the use of second-hand sale of textile and clothes have changed over time we have chosen to study: the total value of textile and clothes sales, their average value, and variation in price for certain selected garments and textiles that were common in the sale.

An advantage of using auction records is that it is possible to study the market value of goods, rather than their estimated value as found in for example probate inventories. However, the quality and fabric of textile goods are not always available in the auction records. Thus, the price should still be regarded an estimate. Nonetheless, the auction records provide a unique opportunity to study what kinds of textiles and clothes were sold and at what prices, and how this changed over the 19th century.

The source material allows us to study the sale of the estates of the deceased, individual actors, and pawnbrokers or other businesses/institutions separately. Since there is detailed information about the seller, we have also been able to study the sales with respect to gender and to socioeconomic status, based on occupation and marital status. We have chosen to use only four socioeconomic groups: 1. Nobility, higher civil servants and manufacturers; 2. Merchants, artisans, and lower civil servants; 3. Skilled labourer including journeymen and apprentices; and 4. Unskilled labourer and servants.¹ To trace the seller's age, family and living conditions, population registers (Mantalslängder) have been used in addition to the auction records. So far this has only been carried out for 1860, but it will be done for the other studied years later on.²

It should be noted that the auctions records covers a shorter periods in 1885 (January-April) and 1898 (January-October). This means that the uncertainty regarding sales at auctions is higher for the end of the century.

The importance of auctions as a second-hand market

The total numbers of auctions, the number of individuals selling at the auctions, as well as total sales, indicate that the importance of auctions and their contribution to a flourishing second-hand market changed over time (table 1). In 1860, about 5 per cent of the population in Västerås sold goods at the auctions. If the shorter period covered by the auction records in 1885 and 1898 is taken into account, the value of sales as well as the number of auctions expanded until 1885 (table 1, see also note 1). After that the importance of auctions seems to

¹ The classification is based on Norman 1974:325–330. Women are placed in their husband's category. If the woman only had a title such as for example madam and miss, Carlsson's (1977:16) discussion regarding the title's supposed status in Sweden in the 19th century is used for placing the female person in the correct category.

² The register of population 1862 (covers the population in 1861) is used since earlier registers are missing in the archive. It means that some of the individuals in the sample could have moved or deceased since 1860.

have decreased. In 1898 only about forty persons out of 11 000 inhabitants had sold items at auctions (Nilsson 1992).

Table 1. Auction sales in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885 and 1898, number and SEK real price

	1837	1860	1885*	1898**
Total value of auction sale	43,292	40,646	22,454	22,423
Number of auctions sales studied	115	163	65	75
Period record covers	Jan – Dec	Jan – Dec	Jan – April	Jan – Oct

Sources: Auction records 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, *Västerås auktionskammares arkiv*, the Regional State Archive Uppsala (Landsarkivet Uppsala (ULA)).

Note: 1. *= only part of year, January to April. ** = only part of year, January to October.

2. The value of sale is converted to SEK from Riksdaler Banco and Riksdaler Riksmünt and deflated with the CPI according to Edvinsson & Söderberg (2010:447).

During the 19th century, there was a radical shift in who sold items at auctions in Västerås when we exclude the sale of estates of the deceased. In 1837 a wide variety of actors of both sexes and from different socioeconomic groups sold at the auctions, but male traders and craftsmen were overrepresented. At the end of the century pawnbrokers, institutions, and male traders were the main actors. In 1898 bankruptcy liquidation sales made up a large part of all sales. In contrast to studies of auctions in other Swedish towns, lower socioeconomic groups did not expand their share of sales in the late 19th century (see Ulväng & Lilja 2013:115). Table 2 shows that the number of individual actors decreased, while businesses and institutions, especially pawnbrokers, became more common as sellers. The main reason could be that Västerås developed a more complex and segmented second-hand market at the end of the 19th century. This means that the auctions in Västerås seem to have become a less important second-hand market for individuals in need of credit or cash, persons who might have turned to pawnbrokers or petty trade. Instead, auctions had become an arena to serve businessmen and institutions to realise values in stock and to sell estates of the deceased.

Table 2. Number of unique sellers at auctions in Västeraås (excluding sales of estates), divided by gender and socioeconomic groups 1837, 1860, 1885 and 1898

Socioeconomic group	1837		1860		1885*		1898**	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Nobility, higher civil servants and manufacturers	7	1	17	3	3	0	5	0
Merchants, artisans, and lower civil servants	45	13	76	10	22	7	18	6
Skilled labourer including journeymen and apprentices	1	1	11	2	11	0	2	0
Unskilled labourer and servants	8	2	8	2	4	1	0	0
Unknown	1	0	9	1	0	1	1	0
N	61	17	121	18	39	9	26	6
Pawnbrokers/Institution	1		9		5		7	
Total	79		148		53		39	

Sources: See table 1.

Note: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

Women, workers, servants and craftsmen were underrepresented as sellers at auctions in relation to their share of the population. Table 2 shows that only between 13 and 22 per cent of all sellers were women. These women were mainly widows of traders and craftsmen. Some of them might have been clothes brokers and living on petty trade. This remains to be studied in more detail.

However, the low share of women and lower socioeconomic groups at the auctions does not have to indicate that they were not active in the second-hand market for textiles and clothes. Their activities might be livelier in other segments of the second-hand market. The increase in pawnbrokers' activities at auctions at the end of the century could have been a result of an intensified pledging among women and lower socioeconomic groups, who according to other studies were groups that were often less able to reclaim their pawns (McCant 2007:227–228).

Individuals from higher socioeconomic groups dominated as sellers at the auctions, in this case as well as in other studies of auctions in Sweden (Ulväng & Lilja 2013:91-125). This was especially pronounced in the case of those who were recurrent as sellers, i.e. sellers who sold items at auctions on several occasions during the same year. This kind of auction sale could, on the one hand, represent important actors on the second-hand market such as traders in need of short-term credit to oil the machinery of their business. On the other hand, it could be an example of how individuals of high rank maintained affluent lifestyles and material culture by realising values stored in some of their possessions (Francois 2004:326; Husz 2008:22–31; 2004:328; Lilja, Murhem & Ulväng 2009:197–198). Table 3 shows that, besides institutions and pawnbrokers, about 10 per cent of the sellers recurred several times during a year. These actors accounted for a large share of the total auction sales both in 1837 and 1860. Only one or two women in total sold second-hand goods more than once during the studied years, and in 1898 none.

Table 3. Recurrent actors and their sale at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, in number and per cent (excluding business and institutions)

Year	Number of auction sales	Number of unique sellers	Recurrent sellers as share of total number of sellers (%)	Recurrent sellers share of value of sale (%)
1838	115	96	11	41 (41)
1860	163	120	14	19 (19)
1885*	65	48	11	28 (5)
1898**	75	59	7	30 (3)

Source: See table 1.

Note: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

Recurring sellers at the auctions in 1860 have been studied more thoroughly. Their sales accounted for nearly a fifth of the value of the auctions during the studied year. Seventeen of the twenty-two sellers could be traced in other archives (register of population [Mantalslängder] 1862). They were mainly men in their fifties and almost exclusively from higher socioeconomic groups: mostly traders, civil servants, and masters in crafts. One can

assume that they were better off than most. Eight out of seventeen owned the property where they lived or rented out properties in other parts of the town. One out of two had underage children in the household (register of population [Mantalslängder] 1862). This could be interpreted as that they used auctions to handle the life-cycle squeezes that occurred when the breadwinners were in their late fifties. At this age the individual entered a period in life where income decreased and costs for adolescents increased. It is probable that most persons at this stage in life also tried to repay debts and prepare for old age (Bäcklund & Lilja forthcoming).

Textiles and clothes in the second-hand sale

Clothes and textiles were common goods at the studied auctions in Västerås. From table 4 it can be seen that they accounted for more than 30 per cent of the total value of auction sales during the studied years, with the exception of 1860. That year had much fewer textiles and clothes on sale, but differed also in other ways, having for example fewer estate sales and a larger share of cereals and different kind of victuals in the sales. When the estate sales are excluded, a slight drop in the share of textiles and clothes put up for sale could be discerned between 1885 and 1890. However, when the sales are studied in more detail, a radical shift can be noted regarding what kind of items that were sold, the purpose of the sale, and who sold the objects.

Over time there was a drop in the put up for sale of textiles, while even at the end of the 19th century clothes were common objects when the sellers choose to sell goods during their lifetimes (table 4). In 1837 and 1860 bedclothes, fabrics, linen, cloths and napkins were common at the auction sales, both sale of estates of the deceased and other kind of sale. In the mid-19th century, the cult of the domestic was wide-spread in the European and North American upper and middle class (for example Cott 1977; Ryan 1981; Shammass 1990:169–170 and 179). Also in Sweden a large share of the household's production was dedicated to home textiles (Schön 1979). The linen cupboards became well filled and decorative clothes, carpets and curtains more common (Hazelius-Berg 1962:60; Nylén 1995:88–89). Nonetheless, in 1898 textiles were less common in the sales at the auctions than earlier studied years. Fabrics were mainly evident at the sales of bankruptcy stocks.

Table 4. The sale of textiles and clothes at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885 and 1898, number and SEK real price and per cent

	1837	1860	1885*	1898**
Value of textiles and clothes sale	14,462	6,332	6,530	8,575
Number of auctioned textiles and clothes	2,063	1,103	1,074	1,912
Share of textiles and clothes in total sale	33	16	29	38
Share of clothes put up for sale (excluding estates), %	14	3	31	24
Share of textiles in put in sale (excluding estates), %	24	11	12	6

Source: See table 1.

Note: 1: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

2. The value of sales is converted to SEK from Riksdaler Banco and Riksdaler Riksmünt and deflated with the CPI according to Edvinsson & Söderberg (2010:447).

Table 4 shows that textiles and clothes remained important goods at the second-hand market in Västerås. However, these objects were especially important in the sales of certain groups of actors. The share of textiles and clothes was higher when the seller who had chosen to put up an item for sale at the second-hand market was from lower socioeconomic groups, or was a woman.³ The share of textiles and clothes was also high in the sales by pawnbrokers, where the possessors had not reclaimed their pawn. In 1885 and 1898, pawnbrokers selling forfeits became the main actors at the auctions. This kind of seller accounted for nearly two-fifths of the total sales of textiles and clothes. In 1898, nearly 60 per cent of pawned items sold at auctions were clothes. This year the share of textiles and clothes was also high in the sale of recurring actors, especially in the sales of traders.⁴

The high share of traders in the sales at auctions emphasise the need to problematize the concept of second-hand trade. The objects sold at auctions could be, e.g., worn cast-off garments or new goods from a trader's stock. However, in our study there are few signs that the goods sold by traders were mainly new clothes from their inventories. In the sale of bankruptcy estates there were mostly one or two garments sold and no larger quantities that

³ This was not the case in 1860, but as was mentioned above this year was 'special' considering that cereals and food were also sold.

⁴ In 1898 traders in the sample comprised 80%.

could indicate stock sales of new clothes. On the other hand, when traders put fabrics up for sale, there were clearly ‘new’ goods.

Second-hand clothes – a good store of value until the late 19th century

This shift from textiles to clothes in the second-hand trade could be a result of the expansion of cheaper and more breakable cotton in the production of bed linens and other home textiles. The development of prices could be a good indicator of how stable the value of second-hand textiles and clothes was.

According to our study, second-hand clothes were a good store of value until the last decade of the 19th century. Table 5 shows that the prices fluctuated over time. The difference in price for the same type of garment within the same year was also great. This could be an effect of changes in the quality and fabrics of the garment. However, there are few indications of a decrease in value due to low quality or thinner and more “breakable” fabrics until 1885. Most items except for sheets and dresses had a higher average real worth in 1885 than in 1837. Between 1885 and 1898 the real prices declined between 25 and 70 per cent. This means that in 1898, the second-hand prices plunged at the same time as the prices of new cotton and woollen cloths increased (Jörberg 1972). Second-hand garments seem to have become less useful as stores of value, due to either a shift to less expensive fabrics or a decrease in demand for used goods.

Table 5. Prices per garment at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, in real value SEK (Rd rmt)

		Mean value	1st quartile	Median	3d quartile	N
<i>Coat</i>	1837	12,12	17,02	8,21	4,86	41
	1860	7,37	9,34	5,09	2,09	52
	1885	13,76	20,10	13,36	6,68	93*
	1898	8,24	10,82	6,88	3,54	308
<i>Shawl</i>	1837	5,03	6,84	3,85	2,43	41
	1860	6,58	8,96	5,75	1,68	26
	1885	7,10	7,63	5,48	2,92	16*
	1898	2,51	3,34	1,67	0,90	58

Trousers	1837	5,46	6,72	4,20	2,53	76
	1860	4,38	5,92	2,02	1,26	51
	1885	6,63	9,01	6,81	5,34	17*
	1898	4,17	6,39	3,08	1,74	119
Dress	1837	4,12	5,24	3,52	2,43	98
	1860	4,42	5,68	4,14	2,58	48
	1885	3,80	4,61	4,07	2,14	29*
	1898	3,66	6,10	2,75	1,54	41
Sheets	1837	5,12	6,69	4,86	3,42	199
	1860	3,75	5,05	4,03	2,52	68
	1885	4,27	5,54	4,41	2,80	85*
	1898	3,22	4,23	3,34	2,20	88

Sources: See table 1.

Note: 1: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

2. The value of sales is converted to SEK from Riksdaler Banco and Riksdaler Riksmünt and deflated with the CPI according to Edvinsson & Söderberg (2010:447).

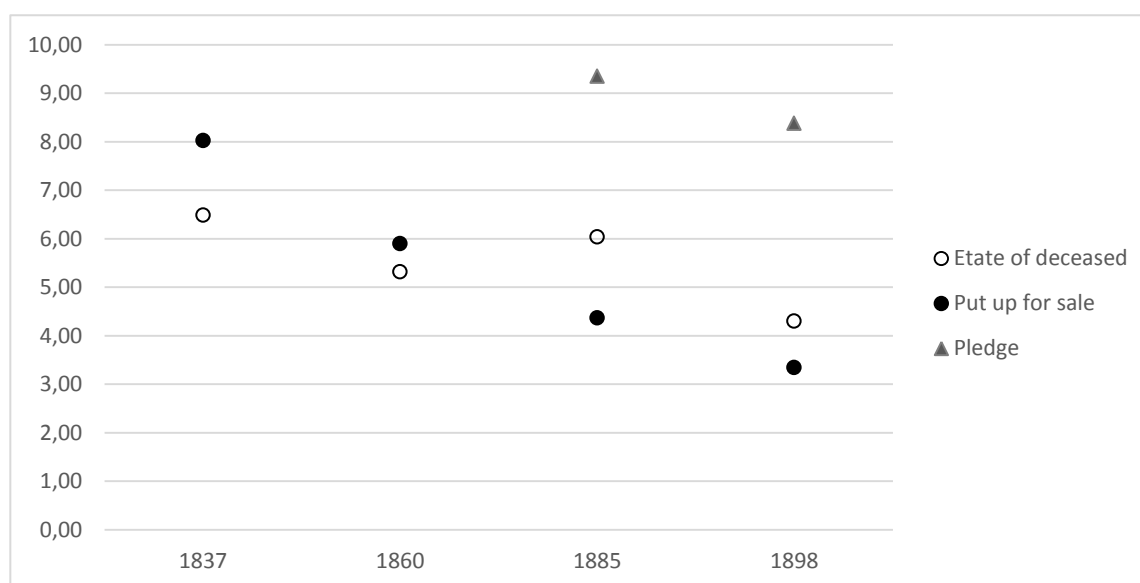
There are other indicators of an uncertainty about the value of second-hand clothes in the late 19th century, or that the relation between pledgers and pawnbrokers changed. In 1898, one-fourth of the items sold by pawnbrokers was bought back. In these cases the value of items was 22 to 35 per cent lower than the average for the same items sold at the auctions, except in the case of coats. This could indicate that pawnbrokers who wished to sell the forfeits essentially had to buy them back or that the price offered at the auction was lower than a minimum price that the pawnbroker accepted. However, the sales were unreliable in terms of profit especially during periods with falling prices. Instead it was ‘in the interest of the pawnbroker to restore items even when past the date of forfeit and to seek profit primarily from interest’ (Coggin Womack 2012:454).

Thus, second-hand clothes remained a large share of the trade at the auctions, but their value seems to have been less stable in the late 19th century. This may indicate a shift in how second-hand clothes and textiles were perceived, but could at the same time have been a result of increasing real wages.

Differences in value between estate, sale and pledge

Even though the value of second-hand textiles and clothes decreased at the auctions at the end of the 19th century, not everyone faced a low price for the item they choose to sell. Instead, figure 2 shows a pattern over time where the mean value per item fell in both the estate sales, and in the sale of items people themselves had chosen to put up for sale. This was also the case in the auction sale of forfeits not redeemed to the pledger. However, these items were sold at a much higher average price than other textiles and clothes, suggesting that the textiles and clothes selected for pawning, were strategically chosen to maximise the yield of cash or credit.

Figure 2. Average price in the sale of clothes and textiles at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, divided between the sale of estates, individual sales, and pawns, in real value SEK



Sources: See table 1.

Note: 1: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

2. The value of sales is converted to SEK from Riksdaler Banco and Riksdaler Riksmünt and deflated with the CPI according to Edvinsson & Söderberg (2010:447).

3. Bankrupt's estate is excluded.

The most common choice of garments and textile items to sell

When individuals themselves chose to put up their possessions for sale at auctions, the sale was concentrated to a few garments and textile items. As can be seen in table 6, the five most common goods accounted for more than half of the value of these sales of textiles and clothes during the studied years (not including sale of estates or of bankruptcy estates). In 1837, expensive bedclothes and coats and trousers dominated. Home furnishing textiles were added to the list in 1860. Valuable garment such as coats and jackets were the main items put up for sale at auctions at the end of the 19th century. Shawls, dresses, skirts, and stockings were among the most common items offered at auctions until 1885. However, in 1898 a few valuable male garments accounted for the lion's share. In the sale of pawned goods, the concentration of more valuable garments, often made of wool or other more expensive fabrics, was even more pronounced. When estates of deceased were sold, the mix of items was more differentiated, and linen and other textiles made up a larger share. Cheap fabrics such as cotton, and maybe also what could be referred to as intimate personal goods, for example underwear, seem to have been avoided in the late 19th century.

Table 6. The most common textiles and garments sold, excluding sale of estates of deceased, at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, rank by value of sale

Most common item	1837	1860	1885*	1898**
No. 1	Fabrics	Carpets	Coats	Coats
No. 2	Coats [rock & kapprock]	Pillows	Towels	Fabrics
No. 3	Cushions [dyna]	Cushions	Table cloths	Trousers
No. 4	Trousers	Curtains	Trousers	Jackets
No. 5	Pillows	Bed quilts	Shawls	Suits
Share of total value of textiles and clothes sale	55%	62%	51%	66%

Sources: See table 1.

Note: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

Overcoming a poor and gendered wardrobe

Swedish research has indicated that the value stored in women's wardrobes decreased in the 19th century, while the value of men's clothes remained high. Cotton and less valuable garments such as coats, jackets, and shawls became more common in women's clothing. In the male wardrobe, the number of coats made of manufactured fabrics, and furs, increased. Even men in rather poor circumstances could have significant values stored in their wardrobe. A crofter in 1870 could hand down several coats made of expensive fabrics such as broadcloth and doffel upon his death (Ulväng 2012: 153–165, 194–203 and 237).

Table 7 shows that in most cases textiles and clothes made up a larger part of the sale of estates of the deceased in lower socioeconomic groups than in higher. No significant difference between men and women could be discerned. However, the number of cases is low and the margin of error large.

Table 7. The share of textiles and clothes in the sale of estates of the deceased divided by gender and socioeconomic group at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, in per cent

	1837		1860		1885*		1898**	
	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women
Nobility, higher civil servants & manufacturers	33	5	7	-	17	-	28	28
Merchants, artisans & lower civil servants	23	34	45	46	47	39	63	35
Skilled labourer including journeymen & apprentices	39	-	41	-	-	-	40	57

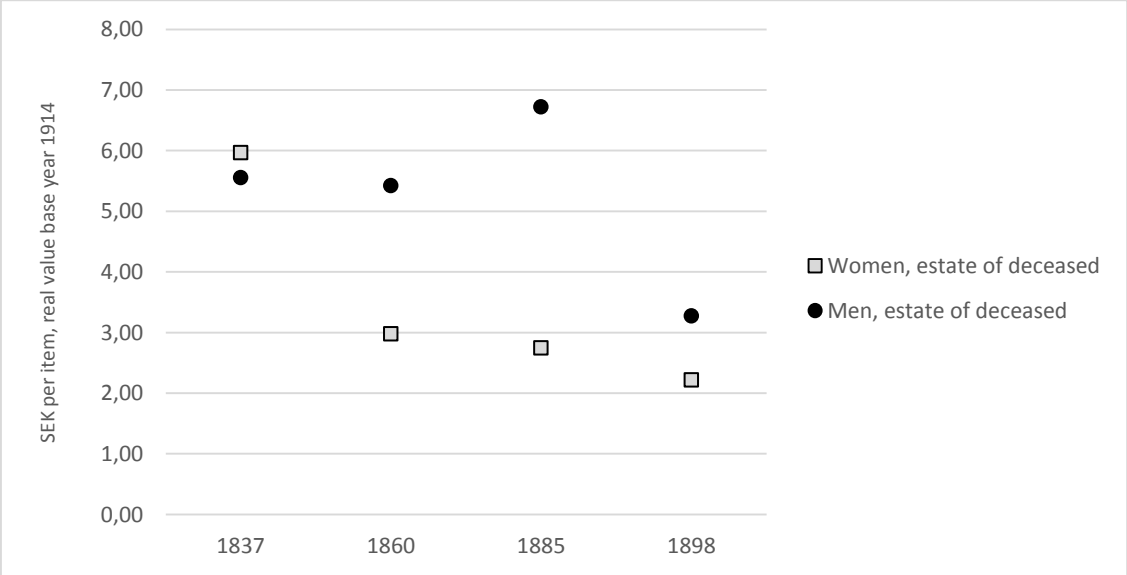
Unskilled labourer & servants	50	54	56	62	-	-	41	27
Unknown	20	44	-	-	46	41	27	28
N	36	16	15	6	10	4	19	7

Source: See table 1.

Note: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

However, in figure 3 an increasing difference between the average price of the textiles and clothes in the sale of estates of deceased men and women could be discerned. In 1837 there was no gendered difference. In 1860 and 1885 the value per item was on average double or more in the male wardrobe. At the end of the century the average prices had fallen drastically for both men’s and women’s clothes. The gender gap persisted, but had levelled out.

Figure 3. Average price of clothes and textiles in the sale of estates of deceased at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, divided between men and women, in real value SEK



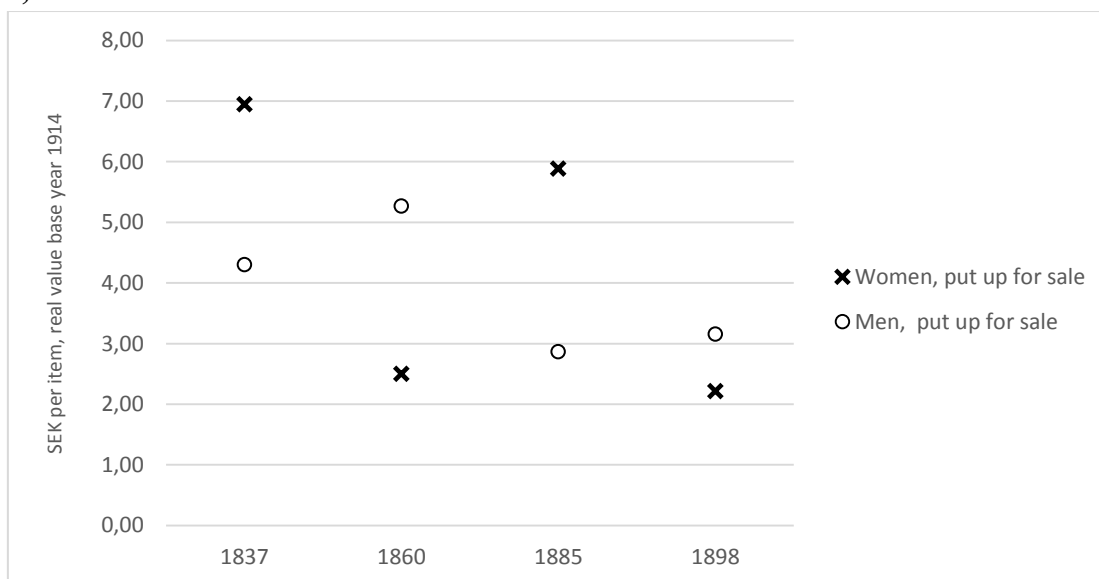
Source: See table 1.

Note: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

The same pattern is not clearly discerned when men and women put up second-hand textiles and clothes for sale at auctions. As mentioned above, the mean value per item was

fluctuating, and for both men and women much lower in 1898 than in 1837. However, in figure 4 it can be seen that in some years women sold second-hand clothes and textiles for higher average prices per item than men. In 1837, this could be an effect of most female sellers at the auctions that year belonging to higher socioeconomic groups. In 1885, the discrepancy seems rather to be a result of differences in the choice of garments for sale. That year female sellers to a much greater extent put up more valuable clothes such as coats, shirts, trousers and vests for sale. Male sellers put up a much more diversified selection, including household textiles and a wide range of clothes. These gender differences in goods put up for sale could not be seen in 1837. In 1898 female sellers were few and the difference between male and female sellers had levelled out. Thus women may have overcome the gender difference in the value of possessions by making strategically choices, but these results are uncertain.

Figure 4. Average price of clothes and textiles (excluding estate of deceased, business/institution) at auctions in Västerås 1837, 1860, 1885, and 1898, male and female sales, in real value SEK



Source: See table 1.

Note 1.: *= only part of the year, January to April. ** = only part of the year, January to October.

Note 2.: Number of women/male sellers 1837=17/62, 1860=18/115, 1885=9/37, 1898=6/27

There are no clear cut results regarding the prices per item in the sales of different socioeconomic groups. The average prices did not strictly follow socioeconomic rank. In

1837 skilled labourers sold textiles and clothes for an average value twice that of traders, craftsmen and lower civil servants. In 1885 and 1898 most of the earlier differences in the average price per clothes and textile items put up for sale by different socioeconomic groups had disappeared. However, over time the auction sale also became totally dominated by businessmen (traders and craftsmen) or pawnbrokers and institutions.

Conclusion

Despite major changes in society and, from the mid-19th century, an industrial breakthrough in textile production, with falling relative prices and a shift to more breakable fabrics, second-hand clothes retained its position as store of value. Textile and clothes remained important goods at the studied auctions in a Swedish small town, Västerås. The late and patchy Swedish industrialization seems to have meant that clothes retained their store of value until the last decades of the 19th century. However, there was a shift in what kind of objects that were traded in this market and who used it as a store of value.

First around the turn of 1900, auctions seem to have lost much of their importance as second-hand markets for individual sellers. At this time the auctions in Västerås mainly served pawnbrokers and other businessmen and institutions, to realise values in stock, and for the sale of the estates of the deceased. It is probable that the auctions were used to facilitate for creditors to settle liabilities. This does not mean that it is likely that the need to realise the value of second-hand clothes had decreased. Instead, the change could rather be a result of individual sellers moving to other segments of the second-hand market, such as pawnbrokers. It is most likely that the second-hand market at the end of the 19th century had become more diversified than before, aiming for different groups of actors and different kind of objects.

Already in 1860 there was a shift from putting up textiles and clothes for sale to mainly choosing to sell clothes. At the end of the 19th century textiles had almost disappeared from the auction sales. Falling relative prices and a shift to consume more of more breakable fabrics, such as cotton, may have affected the second-hand value of textiles. Somewhere between 1885 and 1898 the real prices of second-hand clothes decreased, indicating a break in their store of value at this time. In general textiles as well as clothes had become less capable of being used as economic assets that could be realised for money or credit when needed. This corresponds rather well to an idea that industrialisation and rising real wages meant that new textiles and clothes became affordable for a growing number of persons, and as a consequence

some second-hand objects became unattractive and difficult to sell. Clothes continued to have a large share of the sale, but became more concentrated to a few expensive garments such as coats and jackets. At the same time ‘personal objects’ became rarer.

Data show that women’s wardrobes decreased more in value than men’s. This could be a result of women over time filling their wardrobes with more garments, but made of cheaper and more breakable fabrics, such as cotton. Nonetheless, the possibility to sell clothes at a second hand market continued to be of great importance for especially women and lower socioeconomic groups. By the end of the 19th century, it was almost solely these groups that put up clothes for sale at the auctions at. Especially less well-off women and men continued to mainly sell clothes and textiles when they chose to act as sellers at auctions. These groups may also have been the pledgers who never managed to reclaim their pawned good, and in that way contributed to a high share of clothes in the sale of pawnbrokers at the auctions at the end of the century.

The average value per garment and textile object was considerably higher when individuals chose to submit goods for auction than in the sale of estates of the deceased. Our preliminary results indicate that those persons who still at the end of the 19th century used the auctions to sell clothes managed to choose items that maximised the credit, or cash, earned. In the need for credit the obstacle of having a less valuable wardrobe was overcome by strategically selecting valuable garments. Both men and women chose to sell men's clothes with high value. This was probably a way to compensate for the falling average prices for textiles and clothes during the late 19th century. However, the loss of the store of value in second-hand clothes around the turn of 1900 might have hit women and less wealthy persons harder and made them more vulnerable, as they did not have the same access to financial institutions as more well-off men.

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