

Active women within the “Passive defence”

The renegotiation of women’s roles for the Civil defence during the national preparedness in Sweden, 1939-1945

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Abstract

During the national preparedness in Sweden, 1939-1945, the new dimensions of the “Total war” pushed for a build-up of a Civil defence that could help to reduce effects on the civil population if Sweden were put under attack.

This thesis poses the question of how women’s roles in the Civil defence were motivated and driven by the state and women’s defence organisations. It aims to further give knowledge to how social and economic constraints have shaped renegotiation processes of women’s roles in times of national crisis.

It finds that the state and women’s defence organisations both evoked and dismissed women’s engagement in the Civil defence. Women were expected to contribute to specific assignments but were not admitted and obliged to the duties on the same terms as men. Women’s roles in the Civil defence changed over time; this can be derived from the increased threat of war and the augmented pressure to provide reserve labour to industries and the defence.

Keywords: National preparedness, Civil defence, Total war, “Air protection”, “Passive Defence”, Renegotiation processes, World War II, Sweden

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Abbreviations:

NCSA (National Compulsory Service Act)

WOPC (Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee)

SWVDO (The Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization, The Swedish Lotta Corps)

API (Air Protection Inspectorate)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and research problem

This thesis researches the mobilisation of women for the Civil defence during the national preparedness of 1939-1945 in Sweden. Through the framing of how meanings regarding women's efforts in the Civil defence were motivated and driven, it aims to give a broader understanding of how social and economic constraints have shaped renegotiation processes of women's roles in times of national crisis.

During World War II, the urge for mobilisation in Sweden grew in speed with the imminent threat of war. Women made up for a potential reserve workforce. Still, their intended roles did not always match society's upheld beliefs of what women's roles ought to be during war or in times when states planned for their national preparedness. Both from an international and national perspective, it has been claimed that reformations of the status of women's roles could occur in tandem with economic and social change.¹ With new needs and conditions, the narratives of women's thought-out roles could help form new agreements and understandings of women's statuses. Though scholars have realised this process, those processes have not necessarily been given adequate consideration. For the case of Sweden, it has been acknowledged that women increasingly came to take on assignments in the industry and within the labour market and took on military work, too, due to shortages in military personnel. This change must be put in a local context. Sweden did not have a plan for mobilisation ready regarding women's work or voluntary participation when war broke out.² Women's involvement was negotiated and rested on the reasoning that it would allow men to enter into preparations for war. New demands were put on women, and new assignments became open to them successively.³

Women's participation in the labour market and their contribution to military work in Sweden between 1939-1945 have been researched. Johanna Overud has looked at how the threat of war shaped the plans for women's assignments and duties within the labour market.⁴ Likewise, Fia

¹ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 26; Connell, Raewyn, *Om genus*, 2., utvidgade och omarb. uppl., Daidalos, Göteborg, 2009, p. 26; Yvonne Hirdman. *Genussystemet – reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning*, p. 54. <http://ub016045.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/tgv/article/viewFile/1490/1303%20> (downloaded 29/11 2021).

² Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 226

³ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 57.

⁴ Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005.

Sundevall's dissertation "The last male bastion in the labour market: gender and military work in Sweden 1865-1989", explores women's receiving's of economic citizenship with access to salaried military work.⁵

This thesis problematises yet another aspect that has not been given much attention, namely, the participation and organisation of women for the Civil defence. As tendencies point to that a renegotiation of women's roles for the Civil defence did occur,⁶ it has not been studied how this renegotiation did happen. Was it state-led? What resistance was it met with? And how was this changed and renegotiated throughout the years 1939-1945?

I motivate this study predominantly by the fact that the civil aspect bears contradictory meanings that were negotiated during the time of national preparedness when the Civil defence was taken into consideration. These meanings could have come to challenge the understandings of women's obligations and roles. Further on, two reflections are brought forward on the theme of women's participation during the national defence preparedness from 1939-1945. These reflections earn as background and help to place this study into context.

Reflection 1: Women made up of a majority of a potential reserve workforce. The state did, to some extent, carry out plans for women's mobilisation if Sweden were to be dragged into war. But for the most part, women's mobilisation was driven by the initiatives of women themselves.

This reflection captures the mismatched relationship between women's upheld roles and wars strengthened demands for reserve workforce, where the upheld ideas of women did not correspond to the needs for mobilisation. This phenomenon has been researched before. A seemingly puzzling extension of this phenomenon is realised with the fact that Sweden did not mobilise women to a greater extent. Women were likewise not taken into duty by the "National Compulsory Service Act" (NCSA)⁷ introduced in December 1939, obliging women to work in the labour market if Sweden was to be drawn into war.⁸ Instead, initiatives for women's work within both the labour market and for the military was taken by women's voluntary organisations. Those were taken by The Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization

⁵ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, introduction page.

⁶ Fia Sundevall has found that a Civil defence duty regulation was implemented in 1944 and that the pressure of the threat during the national preparedness was what drove women's stretched obligations for the Civil defence matter, Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 61

⁷ Tjänstepliktslagen, translation by author

⁸ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 249.

(The Swedish Lotta Corps)⁹ that was founded in 1924, the Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee (WOPC),¹⁰ which was established a year before the outbreak of the war in 1938, and other organisations such as Stockholm's Female Automobile Corps¹¹ and "The Blue star."¹² In the U.S and Britain, the state took initiatives to broaden women's tasks in war. Unlike Sweden that stayed neutral throughout the years of war, both Britain (during the outbreak of war) and the U.S (entering the war in 1941) came to be directly affected by it. Both Britain and the U.S presented plans and used propaganda figures to mobilise women into the war effort. Mobilisations did, to a broader extent, include women and addressed what assignments they should take on.¹³ While in Sweden, women's mobilisation within the labour market as well as for the military, was to a large part, dependent on women's own efforts.

Reflection 2: Realising wars new dimension and considerable effects on the civil population, while looking to the mobilisation of women, shows paradoxical pictures of how women's roles and the defence matter was thought of.

In Sweden, the Civil defence was strengthened and reformulated during the national preparedness. As the war had gained new dimensions where new military means also came to a broader extent effect the civilians, it could be assumed that women came to engage more widely in defence matters. The contradictory meanings that portray women as the ones who should be protected,¹⁴ while making up of the majority of a potential (reserve) workforce problematise how women's roles were thought of and negotiated. Never throughout the national preparedness was Sweden convinced that war would never hit. On the contrary, during the most critical periods, Sweden was threatened by two sides. Both The Soviet Union and Germany were considered the enemies when war stood closest.

⁹ Lottakåren

¹⁰ Kvinnoföreningarnas beredskapskommitté, KBK

¹¹ Stockholms kvinnliga bilkår

¹² Translates to "Blå stjärnan"; Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Løjal: bebovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, introduction page.

¹³ Rupp, Leila J., *Mobilizing women for war: German and American propaganda, 1939-1945*, Princeton U.P., Princeton, 1978, p. 167; Summerfield, Penny & Peniston-Bird, C. M., *Contesting home defence: men, women and the Home Guard in the Second World War*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

¹⁴ Enloe has pointed out the produced and upheld meanings of women as the protected (by men) through the concept "Womenandchildren". Enloe, Cynthia, "Womenandchildren: making feminist sense of the persian golf crisis". *The village voice*, 25 sept, 1990; Enloe, Cynthia, *The morning after: sexual politics at the end of the Cold war*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

1.2 Aim and research question

In a contemporary perspective, the question of how states solve and renegotiate gender roles of wartime also sheds light on how states of today think and rethink gender roles in parallel with crisis as well as social and economic change. As Sweden is strengthening its civil defence today, as the level of threats has increased in its nearby vicinity,¹⁵ this study is interesting for the perspective of how the national security is being organised and built and how gender relations are being thought of and negotiated within that context. Threats of today are neither unambiguous nor merely territorially focused. A more complex picture must perhaps be brought up as the basis for understanding how national security is thought of and planned for.¹⁶ Looking closer at the process of how the war affected predeveloped understandings of women's roles and how new pictures and representations have been shaped provides further insights into how such renegotiation processes have been changed and challenged.

The aim of this thesis is to deepen our knowledge of how social and economic constraints have shaped renegotiation processes of women's roles in times of national crisis.

The research question is posed as:

How were women's participation and mobilisation within The Swedish Civil Defence driven, motivated and formulated by the state and by the women's defence organisations during the time of the national preparedness, throughout 1939-1945?

1.2.1 Why exploring the case of Sweden?

As this single-case study is exploring the gender division in Sweden and its changes during crisis, the renegotiation processes of women's roles has been presented as an international and universal phenomenon.¹⁷ I argue that exploring the setting and the terms on which those

¹⁵ Regeringen, *Inriktning för Försvarsmakten 2021-2025*,

https://www.regeringen.se/4afb7c/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/beslut-30-inriktning-for-forsvarsmakten-2021_2025.pdf. (downloaded 2021-10-27).

¹⁶ Försvarsmakten, *Militärstrategisk doktrin MSD 16*, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/4-om-myndigheten/dokumentfiler/doktriner/militarstrategisk-doktrin-2016-ny.pdf>, p. 29. (downloaded 2021-10-27).

¹⁷ The renegotiation of women's roles during war have been further researched, though such research has mainly explored this phenomenon in states that came to be directly affected by the war. See e.g. Rupp, Leila J., *Mobilizing women for war: German and American propaganda, 1939-1945*, Princeton U.P., Princeton, 1978, p. 167; Summerfield, Penny & Peniston-Bird, C. M., *Contesting home defence: men, women and the Home Guard in the Second World War*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007; Chafe, William Henry, *The American woman: her changing social, economic, and political roles, 1920-1970*, Oxford U. P., London, 1974.

processes have been shaped in one country is essential to outline theories regarding such phenomenon in a broader perspective. Therefore the case of Sweden can say something about how those processes have been shaped. It can not forthrightly theorise upon such processes in general. But without the perspective of the one state, such processes can not be read out at all.

The Civil defence was an important and critical concern, as the state needed to seek out how it could protect a population from a potential war. Sweden is a crucial case to cover since the threat of war was imminent throughout the national preparedness. Both the Soviet Union and Germany were considered potential occupiers.¹⁸ That Sweden was threatened by war motivates the exploration of how gender roles were made sense of for the upbringing of a Civil defence.

Sweden declared in 2014, as the first country in the world, that it launched the enforcement of a feminist foreign policy.¹⁹ A gender perspective of historical processes is therefore also motivated for the case of Sweden as it could tell of how roles and statuses of gender have developed through time and give further insights into how Sweden have come to be portrayed as a country that is at the forefront in the work of gender equality.

1.3 Definitions

The term Civil defence²⁰ has been given new meanings over time. Civil defence was understood through the term “Air protection”²¹ during the national preparedness.²² It was later reformulated with the push of strengthening demands for the protection of civilians and came to adopt the name “Civil defence”.²³ It was organised towards reducing the effects and repercussions of airstrikes.²⁴ The framing of the Civil defence has been outlined in the analysis, section 6.1 and 6.1.1.

Further on, will both the term “Civil defence” as well as “Air protection” be used when speaking about the concept embracing the defence by and protection of the civil population during the national preparedness.

¹⁸ It has been narrated that Sweden laid in the shadow of the two enemies air force, Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 38.

¹⁹ Regeringen, [handbook---swedens-feminist-foreign-policy---english.pdf \(government.se\)](#) (downloaded 10/11-21)

²⁰ Civil defence is today realised as an integral part of the total defence, built on collaborations between many different actors and associations. Regeringen, [Totalförsvaret 2021 - 2025 \(regeringen.se\)](#) (retrieved 7/12-21); MSB, [Totalförsvaret och civilt försvar \(msb.se\)](#) (retrieved 7/12-21)

²¹ Luftskyddet

²² Sjölin, Vilhelm, *I skuggan av kriget: svenskt civilförsvar 1937-1996*, Instant Book, Stockholm, 2014, p. 71.

²³ Ibid., p. 71.

²⁴ Nordisk Familjebok, [116 \(Nordisk familjeboks månadskrönika / Första årgången. 1938\) \(runeberg.org\)](#) (downloaded 10/11-21)

1.4 Delimitations

As this thesis have focused broadly on the engagement and motivation of women's efforts in the Civil defence. It have mainly focused on the organisations that controlled women's recruitments or in other ways were part in their engagements for it.

This thesis have therefore, mainly focused on WOPC (Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee)²⁵, as they coordinated the work of other women's organisations and were active in the recruitment of women for the Civil defence. The Air protection Inspectorate have also been focused on, as they controlled the organisation and personnel enrolments within the Civil defence. This has led to that other organisations and actors have been excluded in the analysis. For example have not the Swedish Red Cross or SWVDO (The Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization, The Swedish Lotta Corps) been studied as methodically.

This thesis is consistently exploring women's engagements in the "Civil defence". It does not look to other civil assignments, within e.g. the labour market or any other tasks within the military, other when such activities are compared to the those within the Civil defence.

The air surveillance was not placed under the Civil defence but under the military. Even if the tasks of air surveillance coincided with the assignments of the Civil defence, and the air surveillance was open for women, even dominated by women during periods of time, this thesis does not analyse women's participation in the air surveillance in Sweden.²⁶

1.5 Structure of thesis

In the next chapter (2), previous research is presented. It will lay out the themes of renegotiation processes, womens movements and the matter of the Civil defence during World War II. In chapter 3, the theoretical framework is presented, concerned with the concepts of "Gender order" and "Gender contract". It is followed by chapter 4, explaining both what methodological considerations are taken into account and what method is applied to investigate the research question as well as what sources are used. The empirical analysis is following in chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents the findings and also what is left for future research.

²⁵ Kvinnoföreningarnas beredskapskommitté, KBK

²⁶ Fredholm, Anna & Kronberg, Klas, *Sömmerskor, tornsvalor och soldater: kvinnors försvarsarbete i Sverige sedan första världskriget*, Armémuseum, Stockholm, 2016, p. 64-68.

2. Previous research – entering into a discussion

As women's participation for the Civil defence in Sweden, is a somewhat non-explored subject, this research is entering into the discussion of women's work in Sweden during the national preparedness and from the broader viewpoint of renegotiations processes of women's roles. Such research has mainly dealt with women's efforts in the labour market and in the military. On a more abstract level will the research of renegotiation processes in an international perspective help to position the analysis.

I also argue that a historical perspective is needed to understand continuity and change, as it could paint a more holistic picture of historical processes. If not looking behind and to the upbringings of processes that preceded change, I find that we don't get to explore phenomena in its fullest experience. With that conviction, my study does not take off from the advent of World War II, but rather from the history that preceded the industrial era.

Cynthia Enloe has argued that the military has been dependent on women but has not necessarily gained recognition for their efforts.²⁷ Maria Sjöberg has further researched women's participation in war during the early modern period. She stresses that women were not made visible in the statistics, even though it was common for both women and children to follow in the fields during wars.²⁸ Sjöberg believes that the idea of the military as a manly sphere is a relatively modern phenomenon. Her research instead points out that such endeavours have been challenging to achieve and that women have been part of the earlier military organisations.²⁹

2.1 Renegotiation processes of women's roles during World War II

Women's reshaped statuses and roles for war was first raised and researched during the 70s. The first studies pointed to that the social premises during war made it possible for progressive change, which fuelled women's movements. Latter research has rather questioned those results and called for a more nuanced interpretation of the relationship of wars constraints concerning women's progressions in the labour market. Research has pointed both to that war did not carry a permanent change of women's advanced positions during war,³⁰ but also enhanced that wars unstable conditions together with the many different processes of change and reformations

²⁷ Cynthia Enloe cited in Lidestad, Madelene, *Uppbåd, uppgifter, undantag: om genusarbetsdelning i Sverige under första världskriget*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, s. 148.

²⁸ Sjöberg, Maria, *Kvinnor i fält: 1550–1850*, Möklinta: Gidlunds, 2008, s. 9–11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, s. 11.

³⁰ As argued by Rupp, 1978 cited in Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 23.

during war can not forthrightly point to an inclusive picture of the outcomes and effects of women's statuses and positions.³¹

I agree with the meanings that speak of wars complexity and its tendencies to leave smog over the processes of change and that this could affect our interpretations of it. Thus, I withhold that a historical perspective could facilitate for such processes to be read out. To call for a local and a deeper historical perspective, at both structure as well as the actor level, could in some aspects help to bridge uncertainties of historical processes and leave space for a more coherent and comprehensive picture.³²

As scholars have previously acknowledged, war has affected the status of women and has led to renegotiations about women's roles and their intended assignments. How women came to be mobilised speaks about those effects.³³ From an international perspective, how long-termed or permanent those effects have been has been widely debated. In Britain, it has been acknowledged that the first years of war led to the wakening of a stagnated women's movement that drove the upbringings of new women's associations which enabled new breakthroughs. However, those are considered to have had a limited political effect. In the U.S., war fuelled women's organisations to grow and, to some extent, came to lay the foundations of a second-wave women's movement.³⁴ But in many cases, those progressions led to the return to the positions women had before war within the labour market, as housewives, or they came to take on semi-professional employments. In France, U.S., Britain, Canada and Germany, researchers have claimed that women's organisation was not influential nor sufficiently organised to hold on to the once won gains during war.³⁵

Leila Rupp has looked deeper into how U.S and Germany chose to mobilise women. Even though both countries realised that women made up of a large part of the available reserve

³¹ As brought forward by Summerfield 1997, cited in Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 23.

³² Nina Almgren has argued that women's roles is an empirical question. In her dissertation, women's interests, both shared and contradictory ambitions are analysed in relation to the established gender orders. Almgren, Nina, *Kvinnorörelsen och efterkrigsplaneringen: statsfeminism i svensk arbetsmarknadspolitik under och kort efter andra världskriget*, institutionen för historiska studier, Umeå universitet, Diss. Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2006, Umeå, 2006, <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:144456>, p. 13, (downloaded 2021-10-29); Emma Rosengren have argued that gender is made through historical processes, Rosengren, Emma, *Förnuft, känsla och kärnvapen: svensk nedrustningspolitik ur ett feministiskt perspektiv*, Santérus Förlag, 2021, p. 12.

³³ Rupp, Leila J., *Mobilizing women for war: German and American propaganda, 1939-1945*, Princeton U.P., Princeton, 1978, p. 3.

³⁴ Almgren, Nina, *Kvinnorörelsen och efterkrigsplaneringen: statsfeminism i svensk arbetsmarknadspolitik under och kort efter andra världskriget*, institutionen för historiska studier, Umeå universitet, Diss. Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2006, Umeå, 2006, <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:144456>, p. 31.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

workforce, none of them introduced them into a conscription system and encouraged women to enter into the labour force. Propaganda was carried out in both countries, but with different means and aims, to compel women to participate in the war effort. In Germany, women were important workers, but they still upheld their status as mothers and housewives, bearing the cultural heritage as well, and were therefore not urged into the efforts of war. In the U.S. the efforts were made to provoke a new women's ideal quickly. The state used widespread propaganda that was supported by the advertisement industry.³⁶ American propaganda did, on the contrary, diminish women's roles as wives and mothers while emphasising her new war tasks. According to Leila Rupp "mobilisation propaganda, in both countries, made use of pre-war images when possible, created new images when necessary, but intended no permanent change in ideas about "woman's place".³⁷

For the case of Britain, Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have argued that the wartime rhetoric was imperative when making sense of how the Civil defence was formed and built. They stress that World War II was a critical historical event that had to be made sense of and justified at the same time as it played out in order to sustain the commitment by the public audience.³⁸ In the same way Fia Sundevall has found that a gender division of labour within the military was reshaped. She acknowledges that such a process was pushed for with external needs, where the strained crisis during World War II increased the acceptance of women's tasks for the military defence.³⁹ A telling example of how women's roles were made sense of and renegotiated during world war II in Sweden have been realised by women's contribution to the air surveillance in Sweden, which included weapons training. Fia Sundevall has pointed out that authorities made efforts rhetorically, to change the gender coding of specific assignments when it was needed. The tasks of air surveillance were previously accredited to men but were redrawn to attract more women to military work. According to Sundevall those efforts were made in order to legitimise the recruitment of women to such work.⁴⁰

³⁶ Rupp, Leila J., *Mobilizing women for war: German and American propaganda, 1939-1945*, Princeton U.P., Princeton, 1978, p. 166-167, p. 174-175.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

³⁸ Summerfield, Penny & Peniston-Bird, C. M., *Contesting home defence: men, women and the Home Guard in the Second World War*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 7-8.

³⁹ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 56-57.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

2.2 The women's movements and the matter of the Civil defence in the advent of war

When studying the time of national preparedness in Sweden, one realises that the separation between military and Civil defence has not always been distinct. Maria Sjöberg has, with her research "Sammanflätat: civilt och militärt i det tidigmoderna Sverige", problematised the distinctions of the concepts of civil and military. Since the early modern period, civil and military defence has, from time to another, strove towards integration.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the dividing lines between the two terms are reinforced by their gender coding, as the term civil has been associated with women and women's duties, while military defence has been accredited to men.⁴²

Johanna Overud has found that the concern for the defence issues in Sweden were, at least during the early years of war, in many cases anchored with social democratic held values and the peace movement. While the peace movement activists⁴³ shared the same concerns as the defence-friendly organisations, fearing a total war affecting Sweden and its civil population, they instead concentrated on protesting against military engagement to solve an impending conflict.⁴⁴ It was not only the urges for peaceful solutions to war that was carried out by the women but also messages that insisted on counteractions against the upbringing of a *Civil defence*.⁴⁵ As war stood by the front door in Europe, it was likewise from the case of the Civil defence that women acted for the opposite engagements, namely *in support for* a strengthened national defence by the contribution of women.

Overud has further explored how the Swedish defence-friendly women's organisations were founded. The initiative to let numerous Swedish women organisations cooperate regarding the defence issue was first taken by the Swedish Air Defence Association.⁴⁶ A women's committee was initiated through it, led by the two founders Birgit Carell and Ruth Stjernstedt. The

⁴¹ Sjöberg, Maria (red.), *Sammanflätat: civilt och militärt i det tidigmoderna Sverige*, Historiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet, Uppsala, 2009, p. 5.

⁴² Sjöberg, Maria (red.), *Sammanflätat: civilt och militärt i det tidigmoderna Sverige*, Historiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet, Uppsala, 2009, p. 5.

⁴³ In 1919, after World War I had ended, IKFF (Internationella kvinnoförbundet för fred och frihet) was founded. They represented the International Women's Organisation "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom" and was represented by the journalist Elin Wägner, among others. During the 1920s and 1930s, many more similar peace organisations were raised, Marie Liss & Louise Ricknert, "Elin Wägner värgar gasmask", *fred och frihet* nr 2-3 augusti (2015), p. 8-10.

⁴⁴ Karlsson 1996 and Andersson 2001, cited in Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Andersson, Irene, *Kvinnor mot krig: aktioner och nätverk för fred 1914-1940*, Team offset & media, Diss. Lund : Univ., 2001, Lund, 2001, p. 271.

⁴⁶ Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 72.

Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee (WOPC),⁴⁷ which was founded a year before the outbreak of the war, in 1938, strove to encourage other women's organisations to unite under the committee, hoping that women's participation for the national preparedness would grow with greater force. Ruth Stjernstedt explains in her memoirs, that it, however, was after the Munich crisis that they managed to get the support they had hoped for. But their efforts were even then met with scepticism. By other authorities, the committee was told that the whole thing was unnecessary and that, in case of an attack, it would clearly be settled and resolved by the state.⁴⁸ However, Overud has found, that the state did not present any prepared mobilisation plans for how women should participate in the build-up for the national defence at the time being.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kvinnoföreningarnas beredskapskommitté, KBK

⁴⁸ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 224.

⁴⁹ Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 34-35.

3. Theory

3.1 Theoretical framework

This study is motivated and conducted with the realisation that renegotiation processes regarding the change and continuity of women's roles bear many different characteristics. I find that those characteristics must be acknowledged when trying to make sense of such processes. This study draws from feminist theories, while it is motivated by a historical approach. As this section will address, I consider that both are needed to make the journey across both time and space.

Firstly, this thesis will outline what fundamental understandings this thesis is based on. Further, will the concepts "Gender order" and "Gender contract" be discussed, as those earns as theoretical frameworks, where they more specifically position the analysis.

Feminist researchers argue that there is no one feminism. There are many feminisms, as there is no settled and all-agreed to understanding of what constitutes women's subordination and how to reach beyond it.⁵⁰ This thesis conforms to the fundamental understanding, put forward by many before, that gender is socially constructed and that it interacts with other social categories such as nationality, class, sexuality and power.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the perceptions of gender and the making of it is multidimensional and intersectional, it must be able to speak about all of those things together and at the same time.⁵² With those convictions presented, this study takes the point of departure from the concepts of the "Gender order" and "Gender contract".

The Gender order and Gender contract:

Raewyn Connell finds that the Gender order is the overarching structure that dictates how the practice of gender is made. However, it is reshaped all the time.⁵³ Even if it is based on the practice of how gender is done, it is not isolated from the dynamics and structures that an existing gender order has already settled, which means that the systems and the change are intertwined and operate in the same dynamic.⁵⁴ Connell finds that changed social strains can change gender relations but that those also, by themselves, have internal potential for being reshaped.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ See e.g. Hudson, H. (2005). 'Doing' Security As Though Humans Matter: A Feminist Perspective on Gender and the Politics of Human Security. *Security Dialogue*, 36(2), 155–174. Hudson p. 158.

⁵¹ See e.g. Connell, Raewyn, *Om genus*, 2., utvidgade och omarb. uppl., Daidalos, Göteborg, 2009, p. 26.

⁵² Connell, Raewyn, *Om genus*, 2., utvidgade och omarb. uppl., Daidalos, Göteborg, 2009, p. 26.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁴ Connell, Raewyn, *Om genus*, 2., utvidgade och omarb. uppl., Daidalos, Göteborg, 2009, p. 103-104.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

If the Gender order speaks of hierarchical structures. It could be complemented by the theory of “Gender contract”, explaining how relations are being produced and reproduced.

Yvonne Hirdman has defined the Gender contract as regulating a social norm of how women and men should act and behave. The gender contract have existed at different times and draws on how gender is produced in relation to characteristics, places and occupations. It is a relationship between genders, that regulates their mutual conceptions. Hirdman stresses that this invisible contract is not an active and mutual agreement of the roles and duties of men and women. Instead, this arrangement tends to be assigned by the party that defines the other. The contract exists on different levels where it dictates the relationships own premises both on the actor level and on a more abstract level. It systematically reproduces the conceptions of masculinities and femininities, both culturally and socially.⁵⁶ At the same time, Hirdman stresses that the contract could change, not least with changing social conditions.⁵⁷ Grey zones can be found within the arrangement, where the contracts barriers are less distinct and where conflicts are more likely to emerge when the actors are willing to test how far the barriers of the contract can be stretched.⁵⁸

How the theories are used for this thesis:

The theories of Gender order and Gender contract acknowledge hierarchical levels of power, realising the subordination of women on many levels, and that it is bound by many factors. Viewing such an order as a system, while realising that the change is intertwined with the structures that have already been settled, set the overall standard for how this thesis is approaching its research question.

Nonetheless, the theories are explicitly identified, but more implicitly used, as they are not operationalised, in order to be tested. As this analysis does answer to an interpretivist approach, with the ambition to capture meanings and understandings, it is not interested in *explaining* the phenomenon of women’s changed roles during strained crises, as I find that this is not possible to *explain* with analysing a single case, in the local context of Sweden. The theories are used in order to push for a more (feminist) critical interpretation, and likewise, be able to bring questions to light, that otherwise would not be identified. Even if it can not help to fully explain the total

⁵⁶ Yvonne Hirdman. Genussystemet – *reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning*, p. 54.
<http://ub016045.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/tgv/article/viewFile/1490/1303%20> (downloaded 29/11 2021).

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 50–51

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 54-56.

experiences of women's changed roles, it could nevertheless strive to understand what premises such negotiation processes were bound by.

Realising that the Gender contract is an arrangement, that is built on understandings of how gender function and that the conditions of the contract have dictated women's and men's statuses and roles in relation to characteristics, places and occupations over time, makes it possible to explore how such settlements have looked like. Recognising the contract's existence on many levels, both on an abstract level, as well as on the actor level, likewise facilitates for a more receptive and critical approach when studying the process of change and continuity. In that sense the theoretical framework allows for openness towards the research material, but also helps to critically question the understandings and perceptions, on several levels. Another reason to why the theories are used mainly as a way of pushing for a critical approach, and not as hypotheses, is because the process of change neither is consistent, nor is considered to be uniform.

Fia Sundevall have argued that the negotiation processes of women's roles should not be considered linear. There has not been theories presented that have forthrightly and inclusively pointed to how those processes have been shaped.⁵⁹ Sundevall have found that an interaction takes place between both actors and institutions, where both norms and regulations have driven processes of change.⁶⁰ I agree with this meaning, but stress that this does not imply that such processes should not be acknowledged or realised as impossible to theorise upon. As outlined previously I see that the research of specific historical events could be a facilitator in this sense. As we get the chance to bring new pieces of puzzle into the bigger picture. Entering into the discussion of how negotiation processes of women looked like in the Civil defence is therefore important since it likewise can help to make sense of the bigger processes (both in the past and in the future), as I see the process of change and continuity is part of both short- and long-termed courses and progressions. The theories of Gender order and Gender contract helps to grab hold of those and view such processes more critical. It takes hold on the *interaction, reasoning and motivations* of such processes. Those processes will likewise be recognised through both external and internal pressures.

How this will be done more practically, is outlined in the coming section.

⁵⁹ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

4. Research design

As the theories are anchored with understandings of upheld hierarchies through and between men and women that has both been changed as well as preserved. The methodological framework of this thesis adheres to the interpretivist approach, as I find that it is able to provide enough space and enables reflexivity when exploring meanings and perceptions. More practically this is done with the help of frames, where both the “dominant narrative” and the “alternative interpretations” are sought after. Those terms are further defined in the method section.

4.1 Methodology

Interpretivist methodology as a support pillar for the research

Interpretivist approaches do not concede pre-determined inferences about endeavours beforehand. Even thought-out hypotheses are considered to hinder researchers from entering into a research problem with enough curiosity and reflexivity, it has been acknowledged.⁶¹ At the same time, as I have shown in the previous section, I enter into the exploration with a point of departure. Predominantly motivated by the reflections regarding the assumptions of women’s roles and the change and continuity of those, anchored with a feminist critical and historical perspective.

This research is by those standards acknowledging that those processes are entangled in gendered power orders, (therefore feminist critical) and learning that phenomenon can not be explored unconnected from the societal and historical context that they are developed in, but has to be explained in a broader as well as deeper setting, (therefore historical).

In this manner, the interpretivist approach makes up of the broader framework that speaks ontologically of what assumptions and points of view lie behind the means of exploration. With this ontological framework, this study takes hold of an abductive way of wanting to understand. As Peregrine Schwartz and Dvora Yanow posits, the abductive point of departure is the puzzle or surprise. From there it strives to search for alternative understandings that could make it less remarkable. It does not seek to catch general guidelines or laws but takes the form of a non-

⁶¹ Paul Lichterman has argued that pre-developed hypotheses risk missing lived experiences as they are not comprehensive and reflexive enough to capture such experiences. Lichterman 2002, cited in Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, and Dvora Yanow. *Interpretive Research Design : Concepts and Processes*. Routledge, 2012. *EBSCOhost*, search-ebSCOhost-com.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=451106&site=ehost-live. p. 28.

linear (or circular) pattern for where the puzzle needs to be compared with the many pieces simultaneously.⁶²

This will be done by critically asking questions of how women's roles were changed and challenged during the national preparedness. While obtaining a historical and feminist perspective, I posit that we get the chance to ask new and critical questions. This is made more practically by identifying and framing both the dominant and the alternative interpretations.

4.2 Method

Framing the dominant and the alternative interpretations

Alice Kessler-Harris finds that we need to unravel what appears to be natural claims to see what function they have in the real world, as she finds that knowledge is created within systems that limit our abilities to think and understand.⁶³ In order to understand processes unbound by the assumptions and limitations that controlled those at that time being, this thesis will be concerned with finding and framing the perceived conceptions of women's roles during the national preparedness in Sweden and critically question those. This thesis recognises those conceptions by the term "dominant narratives".

The dominant narratives are according to Cecelia Lynch upheld and reproduced by the ones that possess power. Therefore they have great influence on how we understand and realise phenomenon's.⁶⁴ In order to question those, we must realise their existence. This thesis also realises that the dominant narratives have been created and are upheld by the ideals and norms that were present at the time being. They have been formed by the historical events and processes they have been part of. Studying a phenomenon eighty years later gives us opportunity to question those upheld ideals by asking critical questions about their upbringings while striving to find the alternative interpretations. Cecelia Lynch has argued that, to frame requires an engagement that considers both the dominant narratives but also the alternative interpretations at once.⁶⁵ The alternative interpretations are in that sense the understandings we strive to

⁶² Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, and Dvora Yanow. *Interpretive Research Design : Concepts and Processes*. Routledge, 2012. [EBSCOhost, search-ebscohost-com.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=451106&site=ehost-live](https://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=451106&site=ehost-live). p. 28.

⁶³ Alice Kessler Harris 1990, cited in Wikander, Ulla, *Delat arbete, delad makt: om kvinnors underordning i och genom arbete : en historisk essä*, Univ., Uppsala, 1991, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Cecelia Lynch. Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements. In Dvora Yanow, and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. *Interpretation and Method : Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Vol. Second edition. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015. [https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xww&AN=961428&site=ehost-live](https://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xww&AN=961428&site=ehost-live), p. 303

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 304

discover, when we question the dominant narratives. They help to discern what other considerations could lie behind actions made, or meanings expressed.

Fia Sundevall has argued that the study of the process of change and continuity of women's roles should not solely strive to explore what positions women held, but how actors resonated with those. She has positioned gender perceptions as a central part of her research.⁶⁶ I find that this is imperative when wanting to figure out what motivations were placed behind actions, and meanings that were circulated. Reasoning and argumentation of how gender roles were perceived are therefore important for this research. In order to frame both the dominant narratives and the alternative interpretations this thesis is placing motivations, actions and reasonings at its forefront. At the same time we must be able to look to those interpretations on the many levels.

As previously outlined, and as Maud Eduards have posited, feminist theory should be analysed on several levels, where the experiences on both actors and structures level must be acknowledged.⁶⁷ I agree to that such a method could paint a more holistic picture over historical events, as such an approach does make room for the analysis to consider many different views and perspectives on various hierarchical levels. In practice, I see that it requires for a "follow the documents where it takes us-logic", as pre-determined contemplations could hinder for meanings to be read out. Therefore, various sources in the form of archival research have come to be used for this thesis in order to capture interactions and the frames of how meanings were made.

4.3 Material and the selection of primary sources

This section further discusses what material has been analysed, how primary sources have been selected, technicalities regarding the source material, and how transparency and source criticism are taken into consideration for the research.

Primary Sources and how to make us of them:

Both official documents in the forms of acts and declarations, propositions and handbooks given out by authorities and state officials are used to understand how women's participation was regulated, officially. Further, has archival research been made, where annual reports and

⁶⁶ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 31-32.

⁶⁷ Eduards 1992, cited in Almgren, Nina, *Kvinnorörelsen och efterkrigsplaneringen: statsfeminism i svensk arbetsmarknadspolitik under och kort efter andra världskriget*, institutionen för historiska studier, Umeå universitet, Diss. Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2006, Umeå, 2006, <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:144456>, p. 13.

protocols written by authorities and women's defence organisations have been analysed. Memoirs have also, to some extent been used, as they have helped give a broader understanding of how things were perceived and looked at by actors themselves. Articles from newspapers published at the time have also been considered valuable. They have facilitated for understanding meanings produced and been able to give context to historical events and public policy that was implemented.

What have guided the search and selection of primary sources:

The analysis has been made by the abductive research method. It has required for a sensitive and pragmatic approach to the primary sources, that echoes back to the chosen methodology, and the interpretivist approach, that urges for reflexivity when researching phenomenon's. The time period of 1939-1945, a past historical event, that took place nearly eighty years ago, also requires for a more selective and critical attitude towards the sources used. At the same time, the research needs to take many different perspective into account, as actors could have both interpreted and expressed events and meanings differently. It demands for receptiveness and curiosity in order to find what materials to turn to.

Practically, this has required for broader readings of nearly all of the protocols produced by the Air Protection Inspectorate (API) and The Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee (WOPC) between 1939-1945. From there, have meanings and argumentation by the organisations guided the further analysis and the explorations of other material. The protocols have been a good starting point. Those have more than once pointed out collaborations, regulations or correspondence regarding women's roles in the Civil defence. It has led to that other documents, such as letters, propositions and other material, have been searched for in order to trace what motivations was placed behind decisions or what negotiations led to. The "follow the documents where it takes us-logic", and the way of maintaining an openness and critical standpoint towards the material, has therefore been useful throughout the analysis process.

What concerns the articles used, they have also been selected with the help of the readings of the protocols, but also been chosen by other variables, where the time period or a specific event has guided the search of those. In other cases have keywords been valuable. I have searched for content that surrounds the theme of women and the Civil defence and also been able to select certain time periods for those searches. Also in this case has the information found often led back to protocols, or other documents. The empirical material has in this manner steered the

guidance of the further analysis. It has required for skipping back and forth between a wide range of materials.

As I am exploring events that occurred many years ago, it has been important to select and analyse primary sources that have been produced as close in time as possible to the events taking place. The awareness of source criticism and the consistent use of it, has been helpful during the analysis process. Realising that the documents represent meanings held by other people,⁶⁸ we likewise must be able to critically question not only what they conclude of, but also of what purpose they have been made. The protocols are tendentious sources, where perceptions have been dominant. This is not considered to be aggravating, since such meanings is considered useful for this study as motivations and the reasonings are important for this study to capture. By looking to such meanings I find that frames could be found of both the dominant narratives as well as the alternatives interpretations, when questioning the biases represented by such material.

⁶⁸ Cecelia Lynch has argued that we must realise that the sources we want to analyse are repositories of understandings produced by others, Cecelia Lynch in “Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements”, in Dvora Yanow, and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Vol. Second edition.

5. The different Acts that was pushed before and during the outbreak of the war

Before entering into the analysis, it is motivated to outline the different acts concerning the Civil defence declared in Sweden before or during World War II. Enrolments of personnel to the Civil defence during the years 1939-1945 was decided and planned to be regulated with these acts. For this study, the acts are important to outline since women's and men's efforts in war and peacetime were often spoken about with regards to the directives that was regulated by those acts.

The Air Protection Act 1937 – compulsion for men and volunteering women

1936 an air protection investigation was appointed, which led to the establishment of the Air Protection Act in June 1937.⁶⁹ The Air Protection Act made it possible for the County Administrative Board⁷⁰ to withdraw personnel to the service for the Civil defence, with the exception of men under eighteen and over sixty, as well as with the exception of women. Women were only to be included if such efforts were taken voluntarily by women themselves.⁷¹

The National Compulsory Service Act (NCSA) – compulsion for both men and women

The National Compulsory Service Act⁷² was contemplated for the first time during World War I, as questions for obligatory and enforced work were raised. The proposal included an obligation for both men *and* women aged fifteen to sixty, to contribute to the maintenance of production within the industries, to cover the needs of the households, and oblige to the needs of the Armed Forces.⁷³ The Act came to be reinforced on December 30th 1939, as World War II necessitated extensive preparedness in different areas of society for the country. It regulated principally *compulsory* work for men and women, on the labour market and was prolonged every year until 1947, and was restructured 1943 and 1944.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm.

⁷⁰ Länsstyrelsen

⁷¹ SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm, 22 §, p. 153.

⁷² Tjänstepliktslagen

⁷³ SOU 1958:16 *Betänkande med förslag till allmän tjänstepliktslag m.m.* (1958). Stockholm, p. 21.

⁷⁴ SOU 1958:16 *Betänkande med förslag till allmän tjänstepliktslag m.m.* (1958). Stockholm, p. 21.

The Disposal Rights Act

The Disposal Rights Act was to be used together with the Air Protection Act, if the state official ordered air protection permission.⁷⁵ It regulated the allocation of personnel to the assignments. Men between the ages of eighteen to sixty were to be enrolled within the service. Women were only to be included if they voluntarily would sign up for the service or if the staffing needs could not be filled.⁷⁶

The Civil Defence Act

An investigation was appointed in 1943 regarding a new act for an obligated duty for the Civil defence. A Civil defence duty won legal force in 1944, and it compelled both men and women between the ages 15-70 to participate in the Civil defence.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Luftskyddstillstånd

⁷⁶ Malmström, Erik (red.), *Medborgarboken om folkförsvaret*, Generalstabens litografiska anstalt, Stockholm, 1939, p. 314.

⁷⁷ SOU 1944:5, *Betänkande med förslag till civilförsvarens m.m.* (1944). Stockholm, 10 §, p. 8

6. Empirical Analysis

6.1 Framing Civil defence

When World War II hit Europe, Sweden anticipated the risks of being withdrawn in war, though it explicitly stated it wanted to stay neutral. Nevertheless, the new dimensions of war, recognised through the term “Total war”, as approaching from the air in the forms of airstrikes, was considered affecting the whole of society. It pushed for a Civil defence build-up that could stand against those perceived threats.⁷⁸

This first chapter will further point to that there has been a process of reformation of the concept “Civil defence” during the national preparedness, that likewise must be recognised for understanding how women were part of this negotiation process and how their experiences featured into it.

As this thesis will point out, women’s efforts were dependent and shaped by the needs built on the conceptualisation of the defence. As Civil defence was newly characterised, meanings were based on and legitimised with understandings about its acuteness. This framing is fundamental and will be further discussed in the coming section.

6.1.1 The state and the organisations controlling the Civil Defence

As was stated in the proposition for the Air Protection Act in 1936, the strategic aims in war could only be met if the resistance by the whole of the population was disrupted.⁷⁹ As discussed earlier, Sweden saw that military operations by air force would play a significant role if the war would hit, as it could effectively succeed in achieving such destabilisation of the population. Military pressures would primarily target the production apparatus by aiming at industries that would hinder continued material supply for the society and the Armed forces, which would affect the population’s will and possibilities to uphold resistance. Therefore the need for a regulated Air Protection Act was highly motivated to push for.⁸⁰

During World War I, the state used the term “Air Defence” when making sense of the relatively newly emerged need to protect the civil population. The organisation caring for the protection of

⁷⁸ SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm; Malmström, Erik (red.), *Medborgarboken om folkförsvaret*, Generalstabens litografiska anstalt, Stockholm, 1939, p. 10.

⁷⁹ SOU 1936:57 41 ”*Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen*” (1936). Stockholm, p. 41.

⁸⁰ SOU 1936:57 41 ”*Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen*” (1936). Stockholm, p. 41-42. It was through the air and not by the sea that Sweden anticipated how an attack would play out, as invasions by the sea had not been proved effective during the world wars as long as an enemy was not able to debark on an opponent’s coast, Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 36.

civilians was called “The Air Defence Organisation”.⁸¹ In 1937 a new act was established, which led to a re-arrangement of the air defence, as it was retitled to “Air protection”⁸² and came under control by ”The Air Protection Inspectorate. It was not before the end of World War II that a defence for the population came to go under the title “Civil defence” in Sweden.⁸³ As late as the year 1944, this change was made.⁸⁴

In other words, before World War II, there were no collective terms that explicitly referred to the protection of the civil population, even if meanings during this time pushed for the need for such a term. Those needs were highly linked with the threats of airstrikes that were considered to have the most significant effect on a civil population.⁸⁵ This shows that there has not only existed vague boundaries between the military and Civil defence, as Maria Sjöberg has brought forward, but that the understanding for what does belong to the Civil defence and what it has implicated has also changed over time.⁸⁶

During the end of the 1940s, expressions of the “Total Defence” was emphasised in Sweden, and Civil defence came to be understood as an integrated part of the build-up of the “Total defence”.⁸⁷ Implications have been made that it was nuclear bombings that drove and incited new initiatives for the retransformation of the Civil defence for the case of the “Total defence” at the end of World War II.⁸⁸ Even if such an assertion stretches beyond this study, it points further to that a reformation of the Civil defence has been present and was ongoing during the national preparedness, and it shows that it went alongside, and likewise was altered, with how threats were realised.

The planning and preparation for the defence during the national preparedness were categorised and separated within civil “Air protection”, (Civila luftskyddet) and military “Air defence” (Militära luftförsvaret). As the Air Protection Inspectorate controlled the Civil Air Protection Service, it functioned under the Ministry of Social Affairs. For the management of Air

⁸¹ Luftförsvaret

⁸² Luftskyddet

⁸³ Sjölin, Vilhelm, *I skuggan av kriget: svenskt civilförsvaret 1937-1996*, Instant Book, Stockholm, 2014, p. 9.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 221.

⁸⁵ Ideas of that threats was, predominantly military and aimed from the sky, in the forms of airstrikes, precision targeting and strategic bombing from aircraft speaks of why the civil defence was thought of (only) in terms of air protection by the beginning of World War II. Conversely, the air protection service was, of non-military nature, aimed at making airstrikes more difficult or limiting the effects of such attacks as pointed out by Sjölin, Vilhelm, *I skuggan av kriget: svenskt civilförsvaret 1937-1996*, Instant Book, Stockholm, 2014, p. 9.

⁸⁷ Sjölin, Vilhelm, *I skuggan av kriget: svenskt civilförsvaret 1937-1996*, Instant Book, Stockholm, 2014, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Sweden maintained a robust and self-contained program as this other Nordic countries, for its total defence, where only Switzerland upheld a comparable preparation plan, Sjölin, Vilhelm, *I skuggan av kriget: svenskt civilförsvaret 1937-1996*, Instant Book, Stockholm, 2014, p. 10, p. 14.

protection, the municipalities were divided into Air Protection Zones, controlled by individual Air Protection Chiefs.⁸⁹

The service within the civil “Air protection”, (Luftskyddet) differed considerably from the service within the military “Air defence” as the Air protection was aimed at reducing the effects and repercussions of airstrikes.⁹⁰ This was done by alerting the population during an impending attack and making the orientation of airstrikes more complicated by planning for the preparation and implementation of blackouts and evacuations. Gas detection and neutralisation, firefighting, maintenance of the accessibility of traffic, and medical services were also included in the Air protection. To a greater part, it was planned to be carried out by the civil population.⁹¹ Nonetheless, even if women contributed to the protection of civilians, it was regulated with the Air Protection Act that mainly men were expected to act for the air protection service during peacetime.⁹² This will be further discussed in the next section.

6.2 The first initiatives - Calling for reserve workforce

This section will explore how the Air protection Inspectorate planned to draw personnel to the needed tasks when the threat of war became more acute in 1939. It will further frame what considerations the Inspectorate had regarding women’s enrolment.

On the 5th of October 1939, one month after the outbreak of the war, the Air Protection Inspectorate⁹³ (API), discussed how personnel should be addressed to the duties of the air protection service. The representatives emphasised the need to recruit enough personnel. The Air Protection Chief of Inspector A. Zetterquist stressed that if the requirements were not met, the organisation would be forced to act for the insertion of the National Compulsory Service Act (NCSA) during peacetime.⁹⁴

As has been outlined under section 5, the Compulsory Service Act did, unlike the Air Protection Act, compel both men *and* women aged fifteen to sixty, to contribute within the labour market as well as for the defence.⁹⁵ The Air Protection Act was already put in use, but it was not as strict and only concerned the Air Protection Service. It was not universal, as men over sixty and under

⁸⁹ Malmström, Erik (red.), *Medborgarboken om folkförsvaret*, Generalstabens litografiska anstalt, Stockholm, 1939, p. 293.

⁹⁰ Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 42.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹² SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm.

⁹³ Luftskyddsinspektionen

⁹⁴ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 5 oktober 1939 KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

⁹⁵ SOU 1958:16 *Betänkande med förslag till allmän tjänstepliktslag m.m.* (1958). Stockholm, p. 21.

eighteen were not obliged to work. Women were not obliged as well, no more than if such efforts were taken voluntarily by women.⁹⁶

The Air Protection Inspectorate argued that a Compulsory Service Act could be needed, as such a law could help bring sufficient and suitable workers to the positions. At the same time, the organisation expressed its concerns for such a compulsion, as it would force workers to the posts. On the other hand, a voluntary enrolment was suggested to lead to legal complications where the positions held within the Air protection and on the labour market could end up in an uneconomically and competitive situation if Sweden were put under attack and the efforts was needed on both fields.

It was mainly factory workers and builders that the Air Protection Inspectorate considered for covering the staffing needs, but also workers who had been released from military service were to be considered.⁹⁷ Women were not explicitly brought up with regard to those needs. Likewise, was the Inspectorate not explicitly mentioning men either but used the term “personnel”. Alluding to factory-workers and builders mainly does nevertheless imply that it was men who were intended for the service since they were the ones who primarily occupied those positions at the time.

To why the Inspectorate did not explicitly mention women workers to the assignments within the Air Protection Service is somewhat a puzzling remark. As the Inspectorate wanted to avoid forcing personnel from positions on the labour market that also were considered needed during the war, women had the potential to appear as a potential reserve workforce as women were not assigned to permanent positions on the labour market to the same extent that men were. Accordingly, they did not risk being dragged from posts that were important to uphold in times of war or crises.

The silence regarding women workers could be argued to have rested with the notions that they were needed elsewhere, or were not identified to be suited for the assignments. But as we will come to see, women were already, to some degree, included in the service of Air protection, as women’s defence organisations entered into individual, voluntary agreements with the authority.⁹⁸ That would nevertheless not hinder the Inspectorate from including women in a

⁹⁶ SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm, 22 §, p. 153.

⁹⁷ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 5 oktober 1939 KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

⁹⁸ This was regulated with the air protection act, SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet avgivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm.

general enrolment for the air protection, as such initiatives could have facilitated the increased need for a reserve workforce.

That the Air Protection Inspectorate saw that women's efforts should be limited and did not consider women for compulsory work within the Civil defence by this time could also be read out in the request that the Inspectorate sent to WOPC just a day after wars outbreak. On the second of September 1939, The Air Protection Inspectorate asked if the committee could help out with evacuation plans if it were to be put in use. The request did not concern a more extensive recruitment of women. Instead the committee was urged to make up plans and give suggestions for the needed household equipment and to help procure such equipment. They were also asked to help recruit household staff.⁹⁹

In this first section, we have come to see that women's actions were only taken voluntarily, during the beginning of the war. Women were not obligated to participate in the Civil defence.¹⁰⁰ The need of a reserve workforce was nevertheless asked for as the API (Air Protections Inspectorate) argued that they could be willing to push for the activation of a Compulsory Service Act in peacetime. Such an act would oblige personnel, both men and women, to serve in the Civil defence.

6.3 What about women? Framing women's initiatives

This section will outline what initiatives the women's organisations took and how such initiatives were motivated during the advent of war.

When WOPC (Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee) initiated their work in 1938, they courted both state officials, such as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence, to present their organisation. Authorities were also contacted, among those the Air Protection Inspectorate.¹⁰¹ As the committee expressed, they saw that they needed to seek cooperation with the authorities, since they then could earn recognition and gain financial support from the state.¹⁰² It shows that the committee hoped to broaden their duties and act for a more permanent organisation. It likewise indicates that the organisation found reason to initiate their work themselves. The decision to court the Air Protection Inspectorate (API) before wars outbreak

⁹⁹ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Protokoll 3 september 1939, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 5 oktober 1939 KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

¹⁰¹ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Verksamhetsberättelse 27 februari 1939, 1/11 1938-27/2 1939, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹⁰² Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Verksamhetsberättelse 27 februari 1939, 1/11 1938-27/2 1939, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

could have been taken since there were no explicitly declared plans for how women should be included within the Air Protection Service at the time.

As I have previously argued, this thesis acknowledge that there has existed contradictive meanings existed surrounding the understandings of Civil defence and women's tasks in war. Women were understood to be the ones to protect and not take on the roles of protectors.¹⁰³ At the same time, as has been shown in the previous section, the threat of war demanded more personnel to the air protection service (the Civil defence). This, on the one hand, urged for more robust *protection of civilians*. As the warring states capacity and resources were re-aimed directly at the whole of societies, it thus, in the same breath, implied the need for a strengthened *commitment by civilians*.¹⁰⁴

If the state had to gather all possible resources for its need to keep up the production apparatus for the case that personnel was needed by the front, it could be assumed that women's reserve workforce would become a significant and a necessary resource that the state had to make the most of. But as has been pointed out in the previous section, the idea of mobilisation of women to the Civil defence was not explicitly planned for or regulated by the state when war broke out in Europe.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Sweden never entered into war and women's efforts could have been needed elsewhere. This section will thus point to that positions within the Air protection service nevertheless were held by women even before wars outbreak¹⁰⁶

By the end of 1939 "Östermalms Air Protection Association" (Östermalms luftskyddsförening) had educated 4.563 men and women to home protection leaders,¹⁰⁷ fire watches¹⁰⁸ and Samaritans. The majority of those were women. (1 218 were men and 2635 were women).¹⁰⁹ In Malmö, the trend was similar, 5416 people were trained. 3062 were women, and 2354 were men.¹¹⁰ Even if the statistics of personnel who were educated within the Air Protection Service

¹⁰³ In an article 8/12 1938 it was expressed that it was unfortunate that the peaceful people, such as women and children, were to be affected by means of war, "Luftskyddet är populärt i vår stad". *Arbetet*, 8 December 1938.

¹⁰⁴ In an article in the beginning of 1939, women representing the voluntary defence organisations argued that the Civil defence had to be sought out for the people, but it likewise could only be managed by the people. "Försvarsappell". *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 February 1939.

¹⁰⁵ As Overud has claimed, no mobilisation plans regarding women's efforts were drawn up when war hit Europe, Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 226

¹⁰⁶ In an article published 8th of December 1938, it was stated that both men and women were trained for Home protection leaders every Sunday morning and some weekday evenings, "Luftskyddet är populärt i vår stad". *Arbetet*, 8 December 1938.

¹⁰⁷ hemskyddsledare

¹⁰⁸ brandvakter

¹⁰⁹ Östermalms luftskyddsförening, Protokoll 20 januari 1940, bilaga Orientering över Östermalms luftskyddsförningsverksamhet under 2:dra halvåret 1939, Östermalms civilförsvarsförnings-arkiv, Protokoll, Volym 1.

¹¹⁰ "Skyddsrumbyrå till god nytta". *Arbetet*, 10 January 1940.

point to that both men and women were educated, there was a significant difference in what education was given to men and what education was given to women. 1020 women had during the end of 1939 been educated to “Samaritans”. The work of the Samaritans were mainly focused on health care services. Only sixteen men had signed up for the same education.¹¹¹ That many of the assignments of Air protection were placed within medical and health care service, could further explain why women held positions within the Air Protection Service, as such assignment already were occupied by women at the time.

But efforts for the Air Protection Service, other than those within medical care were also taken on by women. They were also educated as Home protection leaders.¹¹² The Home protection leaders were trained to act responsible for the individual houses, in the cities, in the event of an attack. They would act as heads of the corps.¹¹³ It was thus recommended by the Air Protection Inspectorate that women who had custody of underage children should not commit to such a participation.¹¹⁴ This regulation points to the fact that women were expected to be responsible for children. It could be assumed that the state saw risks that women would not be able to care for children while serving in the Civil defence.

After the Munich crisis, in 1938, WOPC came to gain influence on a broader scale.¹¹⁵ As the war hit Europe, they had succeeded in enlisting over 800 000 women between the ages seventeen to sixty-five.¹¹⁶ Service within the Civil defence was one of the activities that women could sign up for. With the help of registering cards, the organisation noted what assignments women were willing and able to take on themselves.¹¹⁷ By November 1939, two hundred local committees had been founded and listed under WOPC.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Östermalms luftskyddsförening, Protokoll 20 januari 1940, bilaga Orientering över Östermalms luftskyddsförningsverksamhet under 2:dra halvåret 1939, Östermalms civilförsvarsförnings-arkiv, Protokoll, Volym 1.

¹¹² Östermalms luftskyddsförening, Protokoll 20 januari 1940, bilaga Orientering över Östermalms luftskyddsförningsverksamhet under 2:dra halvåret 1939, Östermalms civilförsvarsförnings-arkiv, Protokoll, Volym 1; “Luftskyddet är populärt i vår stad”. *Arbetet*, 8 December 1938.

¹¹³ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Till Fru Ingrid Andrén 31 maj 1940, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹¹⁴ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Till Fru Ingrid Andrén 31 maj 1940, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹¹⁵ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 224; This seemed to be the situation for other women’s preparedness organisations as well. The Bureau for Women’s Preparedness explicitly stressed in an article that it was with strained threats of war that women joined the bureau, “Kvinnorna bör även se till att uppfylla sin beredskapsjänst”. *Arbetet*, 8 September 1939.

¹¹⁶ Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 85.

¹¹⁷ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 232.

¹¹⁸ ”Vem är hon? Birgit Carell”. *Dagens Nyheter*, 29 November 1939.

Nevertheless, women's efforts within the Air protection did not seem to reach the expectations. The Stockholm Air Protection Association stressed in 1938 that the numbers of Home protection leaders and personnel for the Air Protection Service that signed up voluntarily was not enough.¹¹⁹ WOPC underlined that it was a disappointment to see that women had not been able to go through with the courses as Home protection leaders. Through a protocol, WOPC claimed that the aim was to have a balance where women made up of 70% of the educated Home protection leaders. In 1938, 44% were women and the rest made up of men. In Stockholm, twenty-four of the educated were women and 843 were men.¹²⁰

On September 9th Ebon Andersson, the representative of the newly founded organisation "The Agency for female preparedness services", argued that women too had to make an effort in the Civil defence, whether they liked it or not. If men were to be placed elsewhere, it was required by the women to make everyday life still function at home. It was women's simple duty, she expressed. The organisation encouraged women to sign up for the duties within the general and the individual Air Protection Service. Mothers with small children were also urged to sign up, thus they were not to be taken into the efforts firstly. Women over fifty-five years would be considered lastly to the efforts in the Civil defence, thereafter would women with children under twelve years be considered, and firstly would other women who could make themselves available be considered for the duties. Ebon Andersson was surprised to see that only a thousand applications came in. This changed when war broke out, as tens of thousands of applications suddenly streamed in.¹²¹

That women needed to sign up for the duties within the Civil defence was urged for by the initiator of WOPC, Birgit Carell, even before the war broke out. 7th of February 1938, she stressed through an appeal in the newspaper that the training for the Individual Air Protection Service should embrace all the people. Both men and women. Only then could it be made effective. Initiatives must be taken in the matter, she urged.¹²² When the leaders of the women's committees urged women to participate in the Civil defence, they motivated such choices with regards to the aspects of duty and obligation. It could have been the upheld meanings of women's responsibilities of the homes that legitimised, even expected women to participate in the efforts of the build-up of the Civil defence.

¹¹⁹ Stockholmsområdets luftskyddsförbund, Protokoll 22/9 1941, Bilaga Dagorder nr. 134, Stockholmsområdets Civilförsvarsförbunds-arkiv, Protokoll med bilagor, A1:1.

¹²⁰ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Protokoll 8 september 1939, p. 3. 3§, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹²¹ "Kvinnorna bör även se till att uppfylla sin beredskapstjänst". *Arbetet*, 8 September 1939.

¹²² "Försvarsappell", *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 February 1939.

At the same time, Birgit Carell also stressed that that women should not *only* be active within the Civil defence, but that women needed to expand their commitment on many more arenas for the sake of the defence matter.¹²³ The director also expressed that she hoped that women's efforts would not only be asked for during strained times but that women always should be able to stand ready for the country.¹²⁴ The fact that the founder expressed that Air protection was not the only thing that women should get involved in suggests that it was in this arena that women initially held recognised positions or realised that they could be admitted to such commitments. It likewise implies that the Civil defence became somewhat a platform to act on for women, even if they were admitted to such duties voluntarily, not by compulsion, and initiated such efforts themselves.

As Johanna Overud and Fia Sundevall have found through their research, women drove campaigns themselves also within the labour market and within the military. To a large extent the campaigns also for the Civil defence were driven and motivated by women themselves. This section has showed that there existed expectations of women's entering into the Civil defence, that perhaps were more explicitly announced than in other fields. The next section will make sense of how the state legitimised women's participation in the Civil defence and further explore how women's experiences featured into that legitimisation.

6.4 The framing of the "Passive defence"

When WOPC (Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee) started their committee it was for the cause of the "Passive defence" they argued.¹²⁵ The "Passive defence" became a dominant narrative that was reproduced, when addressing the duties of women.¹²⁶ It could be interpreted as the idea of the "Passive defence" in contrast to a "active", legitimised women's work for the defence issue. In an article it was phrased that women should take a stand for the "Passive defence". It pointed to women's duty in the matter. As WOPC initiated their work they presented a film for their members titled "The women and the Passive defence".¹²⁷ It pointed

¹²³ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdams kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 223.

¹²⁴ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Protokoll 31 oktober 1938, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹²⁵ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Protokoll 31 oktober 1938, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

¹²⁶ See e.g. "Försvarsappell". *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 February 1939; Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Protokoll 31 oktober 1938, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1; Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 139; Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdams kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 223.

¹²⁷ During a meeting, WOPC showed a propaganda film to its members, titled: "The women and the passive defence", "Försvarsappell". *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 February 1939.

out women's intended tasks for the Civil defence, where tasks for the medical and health care service was emphasised as well as women's responsibilities for the air raid shelters.¹²⁸

In the handbook "Flyganfall! Hur ska jag handla?",¹²⁹ which was given out by the Police Air Defence Department in 1939; a chapter was dedicated to women's expected duties for the Air Protection. It argued for women's commitment to Air Protection, though it expressed that it was mainly for the "Individual Air Protection Service" that women had their given roles.¹³⁰ The chapter presented what should be the duties submitted to women, but also a distinct division for what should not. It stated that caring for "The Passive defence" was a woman's matter. It explained further that the medical service, to care for the wounded was a particular assignment that women would naturally manage.¹³¹ Firefighting in the homes and the arrangement of blackouts was also to be carried out by women. Gas-, reparation-, clearance-, decontamination- and reconnaissance service were thus assigned to men, it was stated in the handbook.¹³²

As the greater part of the male population was going to be placed within the production service or taken into military service if war were to hit, it could be read out that the expected duties for the Civil defence in the individual homes were not only what *could* be carried out by women, but what *had* to be carried out by women. This was also stated in the handbook, as it explained that the duties within the homes naturally would fall under women's care.¹³³ The handbook ensured that a woman who had a habit of looking to her man when dangers were approaching was not going to be able to commit to such duties. Women would have to be able to keep their cool, it stated. It was also advised that women should create an atmosphere of comfort. If air raid warnings were addressed, their expected efforts within the shelters were commented, "*Here a caring housewife can accomplish a lot.*"¹³⁴ The perceptions of women's obligations as mothers were also avowed, as they therefore were expected to instruct children about how to behave during air raid warnings.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ [AMF Arkiv - Kvinnorna och den passiva försvarsberedskapen](https://amfarkiv.se/post/402880485f2e659f015f2f6d0bf6050a/kvinnorna-och-den-passiva-forsvarsberedskapen) (Television). Stockholm: AMF Arkiv. 1939. <https://amfarkiv.se/post/402880485f2e659f015f2f6d0bf6050a/kvinnorna-och-den-passiva-forsvarsberedskapen>

¹²⁹ "Air raid" How should I act?", translation by author

¹³⁰ Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 139.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 141; Fia Sundevall has also pointed to that the tasks that women were expected to manage were not admitted to women because of their expertise, but because men would not be able to carry out those tasks, Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 62.

¹³⁴ Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 141.

¹³⁵ Kretz, Åke, *Flyganfall!: hur skall jag handla?*, 1. uppl., Luftskyddsförlaget, Göteborg, 1939, p. 142.

The state's reproduced narratives, separating women's and men's different tasks has also been outlined for the case of Britain, where similar considerations regarding women's participation were brought forward. In the summer of 1940, the Home defence needed all personnel it could find. Women were allowed, but the state took on an irresolute position regarding whether women were allowed as combatants or submitted as an auxiliary force.¹³⁶ Women raised voices, claiming that the propaganda carried out by the state, averring "we will never surrender", in fact, excluded women from the term "we" as women were not obliged to participate on the same terms as men.¹³⁷ In a similar way, the state of Sweden had problems in concluding on what women's efforts should consist of, where the lines for such participation should be drawn, and to what degree their participation should be enrolled by compulsion. We have already found out that the Civil defence efforts were not universal. Women's duties were not regulated on the same terms as men's. The Air Protection Act obliged men between eighteen to sixty to the Air Protection Service. Women, on the other hand, was taken into account by volunteering for it. The state both evoked and dismissed women's duties within the Civil defence, and when addressing women to such efforts the term "Passive defence" was used both by actors and authorities.

6.5 Civil defence as both an opportunity and an unwanted constraint

"Mädchen für alles"

Previous research has pointed to that there existed resilience not only against the cause for a Civil defence, but also against the acts that would regulate women's participation in the Civil defence. The movements led by Elin Wägner claimed that the new acts constituted an extended part of conscription, where the whole of society was forced to participate in war.¹³⁸ Elin Wägner planned for new demonstrations to protest the new Air Protection Act and the Disposal Rights Act.¹³⁹ She was inspired by international organisations such as those formed in England and Switzerland and urged for protests against Air protection exercises. In Switzerland, those protests prohibited people from turning off lights during blackout regulations or actively lit them

¹³⁶ Summerfield, Penny & Peniston-Bird, C. M., *Contesting home defence: men, women and the Home Guard in the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007, p. 63.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 64-65.

¹³⁸ Andersson, Irene, *Kvinnor mot krig: aktioner och nätverk för fred 1914-1940*, Team offset & media, Diss. Lund : Univ., 2001, Lund, 2001, p. 268.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 268-269.

during those practices. She sympathised with the idea that the authorities did not have constitutionally right to force the civil population to such exercises.¹⁴⁰

During the same time, WOPC (Women's Organisations Preparedness Committee) drove campaigns to recruit women to both the individual and the General Air Protection Service. Nonetheless, requests regarding broader assignments for women's participation were also raised both within the committee and other women's defence organisations. As with consultations executed within WOPC, it had been found what assignments were considered most essential to address women.¹⁴¹ Service for the Air protection covered the most pronounced need that women should help to cover, together with medical service, childcare, housework, sewing service, farming, expedition service, and engagements for the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization (The Swedish Lotta Corps).¹⁴² Voices were raised within WOPC and within the organisations listed under it against the fact that women should deal only with what appeared to be the more "simple tasks" that those assignments were perceived to be.¹⁴³

As previously argued, the fact that women's organisations raised such objections shows that there existed motives to advance women's positions. The national preparedness could have appeared to some women to signify a possible opportunity for such a progression. It does not suit women to be "*mädchen fur alles*" women under the committee expressed.¹⁴⁴ The criticism was mainly aimed towards the unpretentiousness of the duties.¹⁴⁵ The founder of WOPC, Birgit Carell's, previously made requests regarding that women should not only take place within the Air Protection Service, but try to gain influence on many more domains, also points to that there existed ideas about women's progression through the national defence matter and that assignments solely for the Civil defence, was not sought-after by some women.¹⁴⁶ What domains the founder referred to could have been both within the military and on the labour market.

Johanna Overud has found that the state, on the contrary, advocated women to take on what was understood to be the "simple tasks". Overud has claimed that the national defence gained recognition with the increased threat of war that Sweden faced and that it pushed for new propositions regarding women's participation in wartime. Within the National Commission for

¹⁴⁰ Andersson, Irene, *Kvinnor mot krig: aktioner och nätverk för fred 1914-1940*, Team offset & media, Diss. Lund : Univ., 2001, Lund, 2001, p. 271.

¹⁴¹ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 231.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁴⁴ Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 231. "*mädchen fur alles*" translates to "the girl for everything"

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1956, p. 223.

Economic Defence Preparedness,¹⁴⁷ such a proposal suggested that women had to be incorporated within the national defence also in peacetime, in order to make use of women's labour workforce as far as possible.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the proposers changed this just before it was presented at the end of 1938. The proposers declared that women's activities, after all, should comply with the positions that women *naturally* held during peacetime. Such duties implied healthcare services, sales assistant and expedition services, educational work, traffic service and farming.¹⁴⁹ This further implies that the Civil defence was a well-suited domain for women to enter into, as the Civil defence assignments did, to a greater part, match those that women already held.

6.6 The negotiation proceeds - Women in between and shortages in personnel

This section will point out that the participation of women in the Civil defence was reinforced during the later years where obligation for it was discussed and, later, even implemented.

27th October 1938, almost one year before the outbreak of World War II, the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation (SWVDO) sent a letter to the Air Protection Inspectorate. The letter raised objections regarding the organisation's impossibilities to participate in the training courses for the Civil defence. Before October 1938, 1500 women were educated to Samaritans (who were trained in medical and health care services) under the control of the Red Cross. As the education later came to be placed under the Air Protection Inspectorate (API), the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization (SWVDO) sought cooperation with the Air Protection Chiefs in the separate counties, as proposed by the new Air Protection Act.¹⁵⁰ The members of the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation was replied that their efforts were not needed, no more than as additional personnel. The Organisation expressed that this response aroused bewilderment and sadness among the women.¹⁵¹

The Disposal Rights Act allowed the County Administration to select women for the service of Air protection voluntarily. Still, it was also formulated that women could be chosen with

¹⁴⁷ Rikskommissionen för ekonomisk försvarsberedskap (RKE), translation by author.

¹⁴⁸ Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Lojal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁵⁰ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 24 januari 1940, bilaga 1: P.M. Angående uttagning av landstormskvinnor till luftskyddstjänst, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

¹⁵¹ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 24 januari 1940, bilaga 1: P.M. Angående uttagning av landstormskvinnor till luftskyddstjänst, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

compulsion if the staffing need were not satisfactorily met.¹⁵² The dispute with the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation rested on the formal difficulty of letting the members undertake work for the Air Protection Service while at the same time being called up for military service. As many women of the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation were taken into military duty by this time, this hindered the members from entering into such agreements while at the same time participating in the service of Air protection. At the same time, it hindered women who already had undergone education for the Civil defence to carry on their work for it. It could be understood that the women's voluntary efforts were threatened to be cramped between the military and the Civil defence matter.

The Air Inspectorate expressed through a letter in January 1940 that they wished that the female personnel who had undergone exercise for the Air protection should be permitted to carry on their work without risking being taken into account for the military defence. Until this matter was authoritatively solved, the Inspectorate pleaded that the Civil defence assignments would be equivalent valued to military tasks and that personnel that were either by contract or through education committed to the Air Protection Service were allowed to take up and carry on such work.¹⁵³ The letter from the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization regarding their difficulties in training for the Civil defence was sent in October 1938, though it seems as it was not before January 1940 that the Inspectorate tried to solve the situation. It could have been the more strained situation that augmented the Inspectorate's concern in the matter. Finland was invaded by The Soviet Union only one month before the Inspectorate interfered in the case, and Denmark and Norway were invaded by Germany only three months later. A couple of months later, after the occupation of Denmark and Norway was initiated, a letter from the Air Protection Chief in Jönköping stressed that women had a specific role to fill within the Civil defence, especially within medical care, but also for the Home protection and the General Air Protection. The Air Protection Chief stressed that they had to consider every situation, not to risk competition of personnel.¹⁵⁴ A year later, the Air Protection chief of Stockholm issued a general order on the 15th of September 1941. He declared that, since the personnel were hard to find,

¹⁵² SOU 1936:57, *Betänkande angående det civila luftskyddet angivet av civila luftskyddsutredningen* (1936). Stockholm; Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 24 januari 1940, bilaga 1: P.M. Angående uttagning av landstormskvinnor till luftskyddstjänst, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

¹⁵³ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 24 januari 1940, bilaga 1: P.M. Angående uttagning av landstormskvinnor till luftskyddstjänst, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:1.

¹⁵⁴ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Till Fru Ingrid Andrén 31 maj 1940, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

women with underage children should nevertheless be included in the Civil defence selection, even if it had previously been recommended that they should not.¹⁵⁵

The considerations to include more women in the Civil defence were reinforced on a higher level in the years to come. That they came to be admitted to a wider extent, could have been due to that 320 000 men were summoned after Germany attacked Norway and Denmark in April 1940.¹⁵⁶ In a protocol addressed in May 1943, the Inspectorate raised the question regarding more formal and regulated plans to draw reserve personnel to the Civil defence. The problem seemed to be resting with the legal difficulties to conscript a reserve workforce that the Inspectorate now realised was highly needed. The Inspectorate suggested that compulsion was necessary to fill the staffing requirements. Extensive propaganda through radio was proposed to be carried out to motivate people to participate in it.¹⁵⁷

Through a letter to the County Administrative Board¹⁵⁸ sent on March 5th 1943, the King addressed that if war was to hit Sweden, the Air protection chiefs were allowed to act individually, to conscript enough personnel to the needed efforts.¹⁵⁹ This appeal did not seem adequate, as the situation appears to have worsened a couple of months later. On the 13th of October 1943, the Air Protection Inspector stated that the problem required a “bottom scraping” of the personnel. He stressed that the means of war had shown that the airstrikes necessitated all available methods to acquire a reserve workforce.¹⁶⁰

By the end of 1943, the state initiated a proposal for regulated enrolment to the Civil defence for both men and women. This seems to have changed the situation dramatically. It was instituted under the King’s order in October 1943 and came into force in February 1944.¹⁶¹ Every citizen, both men and women between the ages of fifteen to seventy, were by the Civil Defence Act obliged to serve in the Civil defence.¹⁶² The distinction between what was military and what was civil had been almost erased with the effects of war, the act stated. The civil population ran equal

¹⁵⁵ Stockholmsområdets luftskyddsförbund, Protokoll 22/9 1941, Bilaga Dagorder 5/9 1941 nr. 134, Stockholmsområdets Civilförsvarfsförbunds-arkiv, A1:1.

¹⁵⁶ Overud, Johanna, *I beredskap med Fru Løjal: behovet av kvinnlig arbetskraft i Sverige under andra världskriget*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2005, Stockholm, 2005, p. 226.

¹⁵⁷ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 24 maj 1943, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:3.

¹⁵⁸ Länsstyrelsen

¹⁵⁹ Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 13 oktober 1943, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:3, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ It was mainly for the air protection of industries, such as the collapse of buildings during airstrikes, that the Inspectorate expressed that personnel were needed for, Luftskyddsinspektionen, Protokoll 13 oktober 1943, KrA, Luftskyddsinspektionens arkiv, A1:3.

¹⁶¹ ”Till herr statsråd rubbestad” Civilförvarsutredningen 1943, pärm 784

¹⁶² SOU 1944:5, *Betänkande med förslag till civilförvar m.m.* (1944). Stockholm, 3 kap, 10 & 11§, p. 8.

risks as the soldiers by the front.¹⁶³ The fears of not being able to draw enough personnel to the positions had thus already been raised by women's defence organisations one year previously.

In 1942 women drove a campaign that pushed for the initiation of an investigation that would also consider women to be enrolled in a mandatory registration. During a conference in March 1942, the subject of women's participation in the Civil defence was loudly debated. It surrounded the question of whether it should be voluntary or obligatory for women to participate during both war and peace.¹⁶⁴ It was the limited supplying's and the increased summonses to the defence that, as the director of WOPC stated, "had opened the eyes for women's indispensability".¹⁶⁵ The director also stressed that the efforts of increasing the participation of women had been met with stiff resistance. Not the least from women. The committees put forward two motions. One regarding the mandatory registration for all women aged sixteen to seventy and another motion regarding a compulsory registration of women that could come to be taken into duty by the National Compulsory Service Act (NCSA). They also urged for a more extensive education for women during peacetime. If women were not educated, Ebon Andersson, the director of "The Agency for female preparedness services" stated, it was no meaning with the Compulsory Service Act,¹⁶⁶ as no one would know how to put it to use.¹⁶⁷ But the question regarding obligatory registration of both men and women had been up for deliberation before.

Only two months after the outbreak of the war, the director Ruth Stjernstedt was called to the Ministry of Social Affairs, as he considered to push for the initiation of a formal registration process by the start of 1940. Nonetheless, he concluded that such a registration should be implemented after the Compulsory Service Act was initiated. As it was not a problem to find enough workers by this time, the minister stressed.¹⁶⁸ As the question was pushed for three years later by WOPC, points out that women's registration was not placed under the state's care

¹⁶³ SOU 1944:5, *Betänkande med förslag till civilförsvar m.m.* (1944). Stockholm, p. 47.

¹⁶⁴ "Hela havet stormar". *Aftonbladet*, 20 March 1942.

¹⁶⁵ "Hela havet stormar". *Aftonbladet*, 20 March 1942; The Lotta movement also expressed that the organisation had grown tremendously and that it was not only due to the awakening among women, but because the organisation had been entrusted with many new assignments over the past years and were able to put their members to work. The tasks for the Armed Forces and within the Home Guard constituted their most significant assignments at the time, LK-rådet, Lottakår-rådets sammanträde 24-25 april 1942, Riksförbundet Sveriges Lottakårer, A:1:1 s. 3; Stockholm's female automobile corps, witnessed that requests for their tasks as reserve chauffeurs increased with the more strained situation. They also expressed that it was the summons of men that pushed authorities and private companies to consider their participation, SKB, Protokoll 9/8 1943 KrA, SKB-arkiv, A2:1.

¹⁶⁶ Tjänstepliktslagen, translation by author

¹⁶⁷ "Hela havet stormar". *Aftonbladet*, 20 March 1942.

¹⁶⁸ Kvinnoföreningarnas Beredskapskommitté, Protokoll 31 oktober 1939, KrA, KBK-arkiv, protokoll, vol. 1.

during those years, it likewise discerns that women's participation was dependent on whether staffing requirements could be filled or not.

During the conference in March 1942, the organisations expressed that they had difficulties caring for and maintaining the registration of women to the defence. As women organisations handled the registrations system themselves, it was impossible to effectively update the registration cards with women's changed living conditions.¹⁶⁹ But it seems that not only the technical issues concerned WOPC, but also the difficulties of engaging enough women, as Stjernstedt stressed that the voluntary recruitment of women had become ineffective. Stjernstedt accounted for that WOPC, therefore, found themselves forced to argue for the insertion of the National Compulsory Service Act.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ "Hela havet stormar". *Aftonbladet*, 20 March 1942.

¹⁷⁰ From the Labour Market Commission, Stjernstedt was told that it was odd that KBK, after they so intensively had advocated for women voluntary efforts, now urged for compulsory participation of women. Both Britain and Finland became examples that they used to point to the effectiveness of such an insertion, Stjernstedt, Ruth, *Ringdans kring fru Justitia*, Fritze, Stockholm, 1956, p. 268-269.

7. Concluding discussion

This thesis has looked at how women's participation in the Civil defence in Sweden was driven and motivated when the threat of war pushed for the build-up of national preparedness. It has looked both to women's defence organisations and state agencies and their interaction to trace how women's roles were motivated and if those came to change during 1939-1945. Through the explorations of frames, the search for both dominant narratives and alternative interpretations have been searched to understand how women's roles were negotiated. The aim is to deepen our knowledge of how social and economic constraints have shaped renegotiation processes of women's roles in times of national crisis.

The thesis posed the question:

How were women's participation and mobilisation within The Swedish Civil Defence driven, motivated and formulated by the state and by the women's defence organisations during the time of the national preparedness, throughout 1939-1945?

The theories of the gender Gender contract and the Gender order were used in order to understand how dynamics of power structures were upheld and potentially changed throughout the national preparedness. As Raewyn Connell has argued, the Gender order is reshaped all the time, but it is not disconnected from the existing Gender order.¹⁷¹ Yvonne Hirdman finds that the Gender contract could be changed when actors are willing to test how far the barriers of the contract can be stretched.¹⁷² I have interpreted the framework of Total war as a potential external factor that pushed for a renegotiation of the obligations of the civil population. Through this, I find that actors were motivated to stretch and renegotiate pre-held ideas of women's roles in war. Both actors and institutions highlighted the impact of "Total war" on the society and urged for the whole population's efforts in the Civil defence. The state and women's organisations both evoked and dismissed the participation of women.

In contrast to what previous research have pointed out, women's preparedness efforts in Sweden, within the Civil defence, was an arena in which women were *expected* to participate early on during World War II. It was thus primarily assignments that women already held, or was associated with, that women mainly contributed to. To care for the Individual Air Protection and the preparations in the homes were seen as a woman's duty. Likewise were the tasks within

¹⁷¹ Connell, Raewyn, *Om genus*, 2., utvidgade och omarb. uppl., Daidalos, Göteborg, 2009, p. 103-104.

¹⁷² Yvonne Hirdman. *Genussystemet – reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning*, p. 54-56.
<http://ub016045.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/tgv/article/viewFile/1490/1303%20> (downloaded 29/11 2021).

healthcare associated with women, and the assignments of Home protection leaders were admitted to women in the early years of the national preparedness.

Women's commitment to the Civil defence was driven, mainly, by women themselves and their contribution to it was conditional on pre-held ideas of women's capabilities. It spoke of both what they should take on themselves but also what they should not, with regards to that aspect. It also spoke of *which* women were admitted to the duties, as women with underage children were not encouraged to take on such efforts. The negotiation of women's roles in the Civil defence was made both in hierarchies; between institutions and women's organisations, as well as on a horizontal level; between women and women's organisations. The term "Passive defence" was used when making sense of women's commitment in the defence matter. When WOPC started their organisation, it was for the cause of the "Passive defence", they stated. This term was used when addressing women's commitment to the Civil defence, not the least by women themselves.

As this thesis has pointed to, duties for the Individual Air Protection Service was urged for, but those assignments were also necessary; they likewise *had* to be carried out by women when men were summoned elsewhere. Women came to be acknowledged as a critical workforce, but at the same time, not admitted to specific positions and not allowed to function on the same terms as men. The insertion of the Civil Defence Act changed this, as both men and women were obliged to serve in the Civil defence during the last year of the war. This thesis has identified that the threat of war and the augmented pressure to provide reserve labour to industries and the defence stretched the boundaries of women's roles.

As Sundevall has argued, the processes of change are not linear.¹⁷³ This thesis interprets external stimulations together with actors pushes as a complex and engaging process. The interaction between actors and institutions makes such processes complicated to read out. But by analysing historical events and stripping down processes that shaped them, I see that we could, with the result we get, be able to paint a more holistic picture of the greater courses as well. I consider that this thesis has contributed with a piece of puzzle to the understanding of the shaping of gender roles. Even if it is only a small part of how such processes function, I find that it is through the details that we can see the greater patterns as well. Realising that the Civil defence was somewhat a platform on which women acted, in some sense, was assigned to, say something about both the challenges and change of the shifting of gender roles in times of crisis. Further,

¹⁷³ Sundevall, Fia, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865-1989*, Makadam, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2011, Stockholm, 2011, p. 29.

could the single-case research be used to test if this phenomenon also was present in another local context, where it can help to theorise more broadly on the renegotiation processes of women's statuses during crisis or war.

7.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

As this research has focused mainly on the Air Protection Inspectorate and the WOPC, as I find those have been central to the research question. I have not been able to concentrate on other actors that could have further contributed with meanings that might have been important to consider. By asking additional questions, there might appear new dynamics and narratives of how the negotiation of women's roles should be understood. A fascinating aspect that has emerged through this study is the issue of competition. Both between the military and the civil sphere, as well as between actors and organisations, it has been discerned that the needs to provide enough staff in the different domains led to competition and formal difficulties. For future research, it could be of value to explore what affected those, and what consequences it might have led to. It could also be of interest to explore how the Civil Defence Act was reinforced and put in use, after the end of World War II, to see if women's activities led to a return or progression in the context of the Cold War.

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