

## Gendered Money

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*Gendered Money*

Pernilla Jonsson and Silke Neunsinger

**GENDERED MONEY**  
*Financial Organization in Women's Movements,  
1880–1933*

Pernilla Jonsson and Silke Neunsinger



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## ABBREVIATIONS

|      |  |
|------|--|
| ABF  | Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (Worker's Educational Federation)                          |
| FBA  | Fredrika Bremer Association (Fredrika Bremer Förbundet)                                |
| BDF  | Bund Deutscher Frauenverein  |
| FVO  | Fattigvårdsförbundet (Charity Organization Society)                                    |
| CCF  | Co-operative Commonwealth Federation   |
| ICW  | International Council of Women   |
| LSI  | Labour and Socialist International   |
| SSKF | Sveriges Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbund (Social Democratic Women's Federation)       |
| SPD  | Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands  |
| LO   | Swedish Trade Union Confederation  |
| LKPR | Landsföreningen för kvinnans politiska rösträtt (Swedish Women's Suffrage Association) |
| WLL  | Women's Labour League  |
| WTU  | Women's Trade Union (Kvinnornas Fackförbund)   |

## SWEDISH TERMS

*Akademiskt bildade kvinnors förening* – Academic Women's Association  
*Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* – National Council of Women of  
Germany

*Arbetarnas bildningsförbund* – Workers' Educational Federation

*Fattigvårdsförbundet* – Charity Organization Society

*Föreningen Ekonomiföreståndarinnor vid större anstalter* – Association for  
Female Heads of Economy

*Föreningen Kvinnor i statens tjänst* – Association for Female State Employees

*Fredrika Bremer förbundet* – Fredrika Bremer Association

*Frisinnade folkpartiets kvinnogrupp* – Liberal Party's Women Group

*Föreningen för gift kvinnas eganderätt* – The Association for Married  
Women's Property Rights

*Handarbetets vänner* – Friends of Needlework

*Husmodersförbundet* – Housewife Association

*Hushållningsällskap* – Regional agricultural societies

*Kommittén för den kvinnliga agitationen* – Committee for Agitation among  
Women

*Kvinnliga kontoristföreningen i Stockholm* – Stockholm's Association for  
Women Secretaries

*Kvinnliga Medborgarskolan (Fogelstad)* – Female Citizen's School

*Kvinnliga telefontjänstemannaföreningen* – Association of Women Operators

*Kvinnornas Fackförbund* – The Women's Trade Union

*Kvinnornas Uppbåd* – The Women's Troop

*Läkarsällskapet* – Medical Academic Association

*Landsorganisationen* – Swedish Trade Union Confederation

*Landsföreningen för kvinnans politiska rösträtt* – Swedish Women's Suffrage  
Association

*Patriotiska sällskapet* – Patriotic Society

*Riksantikvarieämbetet* – National Heritage Board

*Riksdag* – Swedish Parliament

*Röda korset* – Red Cross

*Samarbetskommittén* – Committee for Cooperation

*Svenska Kvinnors Nationalförbund* – National Council of Women of Sweden

*Sveriges Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbund* – Social Democratic Women's Federation

*Stockholms läsesalong* – Stockholm's Reading Room

*Stockholms allmänna kvinnoklubb* – Stockholm's Women's Club

*Stockholms fackliga centralorganisationens kvinnosektion* – Women's section of the Central Trade Union Organization of Stockholm

*Sveriges folkskollärarinneförbund* – Swedish Elementary Teachers Association

*Svenska fornskriftssällskapet* – Swedish Runic Association

*Svenska kvinnors medborgarförbund* – Swedish Women's Citizens Association

*Svenska kvinnors vänsterförbund* – Left Women's Organization

*Svenska Open-Door gruppen* – Swedish section of Open-Door International

*Svenska sektionen av internationella kvinnoförbundet för fred och frihet* – Swedish section of the International League for Peace and Freedom

*Svenska skolkökslärarinnornas förening* – Association of Swedish Kitchen Teachers

*Svenska Sällskapet för Nykterhet och Folkuppföstran* – Swedish Association for Temperance and People's Education

*Svensk slöjdförening* – Swedish Handicraft Alliance

*Svenska sjuksköterskornas pensionsförening* – Swedish Nurses' Pension Association

*Telegrafverkets kvinnliga kontorspersonals förening* – Association of Female Office Staff at the Swedish Telegraph Service

*Vita Bandet* – Swedish branch of The White Ribbon

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# INTRODUCTION

## Funding Women's Political Struggle – a Matter of Gender and Class?

*Pernilla Jonsson & Silke Neunsinger*

This is a book about women's organizing, and what is rarely mentioned in relation to women's organizing: money and other resources. We want to know how access and the strategic use of resources over time have mattered for women's struggle for equality. We want to find out what kinds of resources were available for the early liberal and social democratic women's movement and how they were used. We also want to know if any class- or gender-specific financial strategies can be discerned and, if so, how they mattered for women's organizing. This book is also a contribution to the discussion on the importance of class and gender perspectives in social movement theory.

During the nineteenth century women all around the Western world joined associations to work for reforms at a time when they had access to neither full political nor economic citizenship.<sup>1</sup> During a time when few could imagine individualism separated from gender or a right to work not conditioned by gender, some women began to mobilize for emancipation. However, lack of economic rights and higher education, and limited access to the labour market, gave women's organizing special obstacles to overcome in their political struggle.

Resources and especially money, as well as the strategic use of them, are of particular interest from a gender perspective since access, but also the very concept of it, is highly gendered.<sup>2</sup> As well, resources matter for organizing, although how much is under discussion.<sup>3</sup> Despite these special restraints of money in relation to women, just a few studies have dealt with the subject.<sup>4</sup> Most of the feminist research has for a long time been concerned with legal restrictions, and recently even with women's use of

networks under the influence of Bourdieu's theoretical concept. Although his model suggests four different forms of capital, economic capital has not been at the centre of these studies. The lack of interest in money in women's organizing may as well be a result of the belief that women should not 'sully their hands' with money and that, as Gilla Dölle puts it, scholars like to associate the women's movement with a superior goal rather than with the 'schnöden Mammon'.<sup>5</sup> It might, as well, have to do with an idea of money as connected to a male sphere and a gendered concept of money and business, where women are not defined as financial agents.<sup>6</sup>

Similar to the disappearance of class in historical feminist studies, this can be regarded as the result of the cultural turn in feminist history.<sup>7</sup> Since the breakthrough of the linguistic turn in feminist history, less and less research has been concerned with the material realities that men and women were confronted with. Our starting point is that we need to take both the material realities and the cultural constructions into account if we want to explain historical change and continuities.

### **Collective Action and Resources – Earlier Research**

Social movements have to rely on a mass base of people with grievances. However, grievances are not sufficient to induce organizing. Mobilizing implies a range of problems, which social movements have to solve in order to make their political action successful. Social movements adopt in many ways the same survival strategies as more accepted and institutionalized organizations. They need to recruit new members and keep up commitment and solidarity among members. As well, they have to face the process of mobilization in order to gain attention and in the best of all worlds even consensus on an issue, not only among their own members but also among the general public. However, mass mobilization might not develop by the force of oppression and grievance alone.<sup>8</sup> Instead the process of insurgency is shaped by broad social processes, usually over a longer period of time, through political opportunities, mobilizing structures and the repertoire of contention.<sup>9</sup> At the centre of all these processes of insurgency are communication and legitimacy. Communication is dependent on mobilization structures, resources and legitimacy.

Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the need for interjection of resources. Increased strain is necessary, but also the number of social resources available to the aggrieved groups is decisive for social movements to evolve.<sup>10</sup> Every attempt to engage in collective action – whether the action is a street demonstration, a petition, or practical social work – demands some kind of resources. Since the 1970s, resource mobilization

theory has emphasized resources when discussing variation in social movement activity.<sup>11</sup> Resources are regarded as crucial for organizations to make their voices heard. Resources are needed for mobilizing and to keep an organization going. Resources play an important role for the use of power. Access to resources also has an impact on an organization's external strength.<sup>12</sup> However, the volume of resources available is not sufficient to build a movement. Decisions on how to use and invest resources,<sup>13</sup> key strategies<sup>14</sup> and framing,<sup>15</sup> as well as external factors such as the political context,<sup>16</sup> have been stated as crucial. Resource mobilization theory has been criticized for the vagueness of the definition of the concept of resources, incorporating anything that could affect an organization. As well, the model fails to acknowledge the political capabilities of a movement's mass base and risks overemphasizing the importance of influential allies. The risk of co-optation, where the established elite tries to neutralize the insurgency, is not discussed. Even in the case of moderate reform movements, support from groups possessing sufficient politico-economic resources to ensure that their interests are routinely taken into account in decision-making processes could be detrimental to the goals of the movement in the long run. It could be expressed as '... the lower the share of membership contributions to an organization's budget, the more autonomous it is with respect to its members and the greater the likelihood that goals which are not of immediate concern to its members are playing an important role in the considerations of the organization's dominate coalition'.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the strength of the ties between an organization and its individual members also has consequences for the payment of membership fees; strong ties will create a good payment discipline.<sup>18</sup> And even though resources from outside to support collective protests have been the key to success for some movements, elite involvement often proves to occur as a response to the threat posed by the generation of a mass-based social movement.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, political process theory emphasizes the resources within the oppressed group. Mobilization is dependent on the level of organization within the aggrieved population (readiness); collective assessment of the prospects for successful insurgency within the same population (insurgent consciousness); and the political alignment of groups within the larger political environment (structure of political opportunities).<sup>20</sup> The social movement could increase its opportunities by expanding its repertoire of collective actions. The strength gained is a result of the fact that each new form of collective action finds authorities unprepared. Collective actions could also expand the opportunities of other groups by placing new frames of meaning on the agenda as the notion of rights. On the other hand, collective actions create opportunities for opponents' counter-mobilization.

To succeed, a social movement has to be able to convert a favorable structure of political opportunities into an organized campaign of social protest.<sup>21</sup>

The choices that are made to pursue change have consequences for its ability to raise material resources, mobilize, and achieve legitimacy in society. It could involve the choice of protest repertoires as well as organizational forms.<sup>22</sup> The choices are affected by the political, cultural and social structures of the surrounding society. On the one hand, a closed society could encourage less formal organizing and a confrontational protest repertoire. On the other hand, an open society facilitates social movements to operate largely within institutional channels, which could encourage more formal organizing and centralized professional interest groups within the movement.<sup>23</sup>

Studies of social movements have emphasized ‘frames’ and ‘cultures’, rather than access to resources to explain outcomes of organizations. However, new approaches have stressed that frames and political opportunities can be created by activists; here a more dynamic model has been suggested instead of the earlier static model that listed a number of ingredients.<sup>24</sup> Social movements are embedded in all aspects of society. Individuals in the movement act in relation to what is culturally given. The existing cultural context provides the limits of the thinkable, even if the thinkable is a reaction against the dominating culture. Meaning and collective identity are constructed through public discourse, persuasive communication, rituals and political symbols.<sup>25</sup> Networks of friends and kinship are often important in the early phase of recruitment and in facilitating the forming of a collective identity.<sup>26</sup> This shaping of a collective identity and how it is communicated is decisive. To be successful, culturally acquired understandings of which models are appropriate to which actors and situations are needed. Habitus, or a repertoire of rules and internalized disposition, of individuals who may provide support could facilitate or restrict the forming of collective action.<sup>27</sup> This means that we, as well as differences in access to resources, can also expect variation in both the use of these resources and forms and developments of collective action depending on gender, class and ethnicity of those mobilized and the historical context.

### **Women’s Mobilizing, Class, Resources and Political Opportunities – our Theoretical Point of Departure**

Social movement theory has been concerned with the rise and fall of social movements, starting with grassroots mobilization and ending with the demobilization of movements when the struggle was over. Our study is

limited to the stage when the mobilization of consensus is not enough to reach any political change, but when long-term strategies are needed and part of a movement begins to transform into one or several more formal organizations. Moreover, social movement theory and especially resource mobilization theory have, for a number of years, been dealing with the importance of resources for political action, but gender and class have not been at the centre of its explanations. We assume, similar to Dorothy Sue Cobble in her introduction to *The Other Women's Movement*, that class differences affect the lives of women and men and that their demands for reforms were shaped through this. Class is, therefore, not the only difference between people, but as long as economic differences matter for definitions of ourselves and others and transfer into cultural expressions of class, this affects our lives.<sup>28</sup>

Susan E. Marshall states that the notion of gendered class position in the women's movement highlights the contradictory effects of class – both opportunities and constraints – on the behaviour of women.<sup>29</sup> The first wave of the women's movement was divided into socialist and middle-class liberal or more conservative wings.<sup>30</sup> The division between 'bourgeois' and 'socialist' wings of the women's movement is a historical construction initiated by socialist women's leader Clara Zetkin. Recently Marilyn Boxer has criticized feminist historians for using this concept uncritically even for later periods and, by this, creating a theoretical division that did not exist in reality.<sup>31</sup>

It could be questioned to what extent the women active in the different women's organizations, and women walking in and out of different organizations and sometimes even cooperating in the same organizations, defined themselves or could be fitted into this dichotomy. At the same time this dichotomy indicates that multiple forms of feminism existed at the same time and that they included different strategies on how to reach equality. Although the historicization and validation of the use of these concepts is an important task for every historian, we still use the terms 'bourgeois' and 'socialist' in citation marks in this book.<sup>32</sup> The reason for this is that the organizations we have studied regarded themselves as belonging to two different political movements. Socialist women regarded themselves not as part of the women's movement but as members of the labour movement. To use the concept of 'women's movement' for both organizations means using the result of later historical research that has shown that socialist women activists, who organized as women, were interested in matters of equality. One important difference between the two types of women's organizations is their autonomous organizing or their integration into a party organization.<sup>33</sup> These different ways of organizing are the product of different political strategies developed in some ways by

socialist leader Clara Zetkin. Many socialist women, especially during the early period of socialist women's organizing, were convinced that gender equality could only be reached through the end of capitalism; this meant that the struggle for gender equality was part of a larger political struggle.

The two wings can be understood in terms of class and gender during the historical period studied here, especially when referring to class as process and identity infused with other processual identities,<sup>34</sup> differently from Marx and Weber's concepts of class as a relationship between the process of production and a corresponding social identity.<sup>35</sup> Both the actual resources an individual woman has access to and her identification with the liberal feminist or the socialist movement create differences in attitudes towards the use of money and other resources.

Most of the socialist women came from the lower social strata, although we know not all of them did, while most of the women in the early liberal women's movement came from the middle and upper classes. These differences in the material situation of everyday life should put limits to how much money and time could individually be spent on political activity. However, social strata are also discursive constructions, differing in time and space.<sup>36</sup> This means that the monetary resources available for the early socialist and liberal women's movement could vary with who they mobilized and was dependent on, amongst other things, the nation's wealth. Thus, the relation between class and resources is not clear cut and not given once and forever, but needs instead to be investigated.

Since both resource mobilization theory and political process theory risk being 'grab bags of ad hoc residual categories',<sup>37</sup> it is important to define what it includes and differentiate the concepts we use and how they are linked to social movement theory. We take our departure from the resource mobilization theory but are as interested in indigenous resources as in influential allies' contributions. In order to analyse the strategic use of resources, we also need to problematize the value of different kinds of resources over time and in relation to class and gender.<sup>38</sup>

For the American women's suffrage movements, Holly J. McCammon et al. claim that success in fundraising helped them to achieve their goals, while Lee Ann Banazak rather emphasized the importance of how funds were used.<sup>39</sup> Hence, both the source of resources and what was given priority when spending them ought to be considered.

What kind of resources are we then talking about? Monetary resources are important, and are seen by some as the most important.<sup>40</sup> What makes money important in politics is its convertibility – the fact that it can easily be transformed into other valuable political resources.<sup>41</sup> Money could buy paid staff or hire experts, and thereby give opportunities to provide the organization with opportunities to do its own investigations as well as write

reports, pamphlets and petitions.<sup>42</sup> Money could also buy possibilities to communicate externally with potential or existing members or internally with periodical mass mailings, and such like. Money could even give opportunities to buy the ear of those in powerful positions.<sup>43</sup> Also coalitions with other organizations seem to be dependent on monetary resources, where Kevin W. Hula argues: 'financial resources are one of the key elements required of core members in a coalition'.<sup>44</sup> However, the access to funds is restricted by circumstances, such as social wealth and background as well as class identity of the mobilized people in the organization. Moreover, income distribution and business cycles in society affect an organization's ability to raise funds. Sydney Tarrow has, in his study on transnational activism, shown that social movements vary in their 'meaning work'. The reason for this, according to Tarrow, is that the activists work within their own countries power structures and political culture. Resources, opportunities and relative power positions can differ between the countries and are decisive in how the meaning work is framed.<sup>45</sup>

We can expect that the rank and file among liberal middle-class feminists would have access to larger amounts of money than the rank and file of socialist women's organizations. However, money could be divided into a wide set of different categories of currencies, where the uses are highly dependent on social relations, gender, class and ethnicity.<sup>46</sup>

In relation to the women's movement, the access to money was circumscribed, due to women's weaker property rights and less access to education and the labour market than men. Moreover, money's social value is also dependent on the source of income. For example the kind of money – pin money, a gift, or salary – involved may put limits on how money could be used, at least according to the dominant societal norms.<sup>47</sup> In this way the very concept of money could be affected by gender, class and ethnicity of the user.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in women's organizations income and income sources, as well as how to spend or invest money, could have been influenced and circumscribed by the historical context.

Limited access to resources, or restrictions of use by social values of money, can be compensated for. Money does not, however, buy everything. Other resources can also be mobilized without a large budget: members, solidarity, strategic allies, and so on. The members' social and cultural capital could open doors to important networks, such as allies in government, political parties, and media or other influential organizations, that otherwise would have demanded many financial resources or would have been impossible to open. A strong organization, administration, and in particular a skilful and dedicated staff, are also instrumental.<sup>49</sup> An example of the use of already established older organizations positive to the stake of newer movements is how newer women's organizations have



been able to take advantage of older, more established ones – by using their networks of communication, their premises and their constitutions.<sup>50</sup>

Different kinds of resources could affect the possibility of achieving the goals of the organizations in different ways and in different situations. On the one hand, monetary resources set the standard for what could be done. On the other hand, members and allies as such could be crucial for the success of social movements in both democratic and undemocratic systems.<sup>51</sup>

However, mobilization is a precondition for both income and supporters. Irrespective of nationality and the political subjects mobilized by organizations or social movements, there are the same problems: to legitimize both the goals and strategies of the organization. To attain these mobilizing structures, organizations must be able to stand up for their political demands. New members have to be recruited and solidarity among existing members must be kept up. Interests have to be framed in such a way that the public pays attention to the organization's claims. Support from other organizations and groups has to be obtained. In order to get support, information has to be distributed to members and potential members. Having more sympathizers provides more chances to make one's voice heard. However, having a growing number of members increases the administrative costs. An organization is more expensive to run than a loose network, but it gives the movement better ability to survive and act for longer periods.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, monetary and human resources are interwoven. To be able to handle different kinds of resources, we take our departure from Jo Freeman's scheme of resources used for her study on American women's organizations.<sup>53</sup> Table 1 illustrates how she separates tangible and intangible resources into more detailed categories. Examples for tangible resources are money, an office and a journal. Intangible resources could mainly be regarded as human resources. Members themselves can here be seen as contributing human resources, which can be split into 'unspecialized' and 'specialized' resources.

'Unspecialized' resources include, for example, members' time, their convictions, and their solidarity. Their names and bodies can be useful in demonstrations or as human shields in non-violent protests, although they might have other personal resources that can be used to legitimize action and organization.<sup>54</sup> Organizations or movements can use members' unpaid labour, including their time.<sup>55</sup>

Even temporalities restrict access to free time. While workers can buy and sell time, it is not possible for housewives to commodify their time and separate between free time and work. This means that there are differences between groups in their individual relation to time, their use of time and the degree of control over time in relation to paid employment and domestic work.<sup>56</sup>



**Table I.1.** *Resources possible to mobilize for the first wave of women's movements. Created by the authors.*

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Tangible resources</i>     | Money<br>Space<br>Press organ  |
| <i>Intangible resources</i>   | People   |
| Unspecialized human resources | Time<br>Commitment   |
| Specialized human resources   | Expertise<br>Access to decision makers; allies in government, political parties, and media or other influential organizations<br>Status in polity<br>Status in group |

*Source:* This is a modified model of what Jo Freeman has presented in: Freeman, Jo (1999), *A Model for Analyzing the Strategic Options of Social Movement Organizations*. In *Waves of Protest*, J. Freeman and V. Johnson (eds); Lanham, MD and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 225.

'Specialized' resources include, for example, expert knowledge and access to important decision makers – allies in government, political parties, media, or other influential organizations.<sup>57</sup> The importance of different allies may vary, depending on the context. Research on social movements has emphasized the importance of allies, such as political parties, for new organizations. Sidney Tarrow emphasizes the role of influential allies as an extraordinary resource, for example, in non-democratic or repressive systems where organizations or social movements only have few internal resources. We know that even after women formally had received the right to vote, they were under-represented and sometimes not present at all in parliaments, which made them still dependent on men in parliament.

Relations with the press have been important for a long time, even if access to media might be more decisive today.<sup>58</sup> Here also the state could facilitate or obstruct opportunities by legislation and economic support. We can also expect that access to or restrictions in the access to higher education make a difference in men's and women's human resources, such as expert knowledge, which is of course also affected by their class.

Most groups raise money from many sources – not just one source. Income sources could be monetary bequests or donations, membership fees, staff-generated revenue such as the sale of pamphlets or organizing meetings giving revenue, fundraising, investments giving good return, or state subsidies.<sup>59</sup> Yet all resources are not always available, and even if they are they cannot always be used for all types of organizing in all

historical situations. Vivianne A. Zelizer has discussed the social value of money, depending on the source of income and the use of it.<sup>60</sup> Orsi Husz has, for example, shown how a debate on taxes in Sweden during the 1950s made a point that middle-class families had less money left after having paid taxes than what was necessary for their living, including a big house, a maid, etc., than ordinary workers who did not have to pay for a luxury lifestyle.<sup>61</sup> Here the demands on a certain standard of living, due to a certain class background, were the reason why less money was suddenly more money. This is especially interesting when we are looking at women's organizations, and women of different classes, since the ideological division of the private sphere as female and the public sphere as male have made economical agents male gendered.<sup>62</sup> We have to take into account not only what resources the women's organization had access to but also what was regarded as 'legitimate' or 'respectable' dependent on gender, class and the historical context.

The value and legitimacy of different resources will be influenced by the 'cultural context', or dominating attitudes within groups and societies. 'Social context' is the social milieu and networks in which the social movement is embedded. If an organization is sensitive to these attitudes, it will be able to frame a problem in a way that mobilizes individuals and hence also generates support, money, or participation in protest actions. In this context, it seems possible that for women's organizations attitudes towards what is regarded as appropriate according to gender and class are important for the way protests can be and actually are conducted. This means that the formulation and framing of goals could be dependent on the cultural context as well.

The 'political context' is also central. Access to political influence and powerful allies is important, as are conflicts between elites in society. The political context and the actions of opponents are decisive for collective action, for legitimizing activity, and for determining the prospects of winning or losing.<sup>63</sup> The outcome may be dependent on whether a less established organization is ideologically placed far from the political establishment or not.

## **Comparing the Swedish Case**

Sweden today is well known for its welfare state promoting gender politics and its state feminism. However, Swedish women's organizations still have less access to major financial resources than male-dominated or mixed organizations. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Swedish women's organizations also had lower state subsidies per member than other kinds of organizations.<sup>64</sup>

We have chosen to study one middle-class emancipatory women's organization, the Fredrika Bremer Association (FBA), and one socialist women's organization, the Social Democratic Women's Federation (SSKF) and its predecessors. Both have been important women's organizations in Sweden's political life and organized mainly white Lutheran women. The FBA was the first national women's organization, founded in 1884. For several decades it was the dominant women's organization and could be regarded as a liberal women's organization mainly for middle-class women. By 1925 the organization had matured and found its organizational structure, with development from a centralized organization dominated by a network in the capital city to the structure with local clubs formally represented on the board that still remains today. The SSKF was officially founded about forty years later, in 1920, but had since 1906 a predecessor which also is taken into account in this study, as it was an earlier form of organizing that probably for strategic reasons was not called an organization. The organizations are studied during their initial phase of organizing until they were more or less consolidated: the FBA from the 1880s to 1925 and the social democratic women's movement from 1906 to 1933. This comparison between two different organizations is also a comparison between slightly different historical periods. The question is if a comparison is meaningful under these circumstances – our answer is yes, of course.

This study is based on extensive comparative research. When we started our research we planned for a systematic comparison between similar organizations in Sweden, Great Britain, Germany and Canada, all connected with the same international movements the Swedish organizations were members of as well. Although many historians have regarded comparisons as the golden way to knowledge and have likened historical comparisons with laboratory experiments, the experience of many historians down in the basements of archives differs much from these glorifications of comparisons. The reason is very simple: many times archival material that at a first glance seems to be comparable is, when examined more closely, not comparable in all respects or not at all, which is an interesting first result.<sup>65</sup> Our intention was also to limit our comparisons to monetary resources for each case, as it seemed that money would be a perfect unit to compare and because it would be difficult to make the same extensive network studies as in the Swedish case.

The results of our comparative approach are as much a result of this research as the starting point for this book. Our comparative approach has forced us many times to rewrite the aims of our studies as insights from our comparisons showed that our starting points were very Sweden-centred.

One of the most important results of our research was that we found out how special Swedish organizations were in comparison with the

organizations in other parts of the Western world. First of all, FBA was one of the few member organizations of the International Council of Women (ICW), the umbrella organization of non-socialist women's organizations that was not initiated by the international organization. Differently from other member organizations, FBA was not an umbrella organization of Swedish women's organizations. In Germany, Canada and Great Britain, ICW had initiated a congregation of national women's organizations in one umbrella organization. Second, Swedish socialist women were one of the few socialist women's groups during the period of study that had a women's organization with its own budget and that was formally financially independent from the Swedish social democratic party. The finances of socialist women were in most of the cases embedded in the finances of the different social democratic parties, making it impossible to study access to money without diving into the archival material on a level of verifications which are seldom kept in archives. As a result of this we were not able to compare the exact access to financial means between the socialist women's organizations in these countries, with the exception of a few years in the case of the British Women's Labour League. Our ambition to combine cross-class and cross-national comparisons in a systematic way was therefore difficult to fulfil the way we originally planned it. One of the questions that remains from this comparative experience is why were Swedish organizations so different, although they belonged to the same international movements during a period of time when synchronicity was one of the characteristics of a wave of globalization at the turn of the century? We have chosen to use minor comparisons in our summarizing chapters, whenever comparisons were possible to make. These comparisons are first of all used to contextualize the Swedish cases, to highlight both what can be discerned as a general pattern and also what can be discerned as shaped by the specific Swedish context studied here. We have also been able to compare how a specific situation, the lack of available money, has been treated in the different organizations, as strategies to engage in politics with little or no money were necessary to develop for all of the organizations, whether they were part of a political party or an independent organization.

We have already emphasized political and economic rights as being important for women's political struggle. These laws were made by the nation-state – in this regard the different nation-states are an important framework to understand part of the mobilization process of the women's movement, but we also need to find out how much they mattered as mentioned earlier: political rights did not automatically lead to political power, but of course they could. Comparisons often keep to explanations that tend to overemphasize the nation-state as an explanatory factor.