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Jane Addams and the Contemporary Swedish Social Entrepreneurial Scene: Reflections on the Gendered Making of Social Knowledge

Introduction

In December 1922, only one year after universal suffrage had been introduced in Sweden, and with the experiences of the First World War still fresh in most people's minds, Jane Addams visited Stockholm. As the poster printed for the occasion announced (see ill. 1), she did so in connection with the large international gathering, the so-called "Conference for a New Peace," that had been recently organized in The Hague by the newly launched Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), of which Jane Addams was the initiator and first, long-term president (Bussey & Tims, 1980, pp. 43-44). The Swedish branch of the WILPF (Kvinnornas Fredsförbund, later renamed Internationella Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och Frihet, IKFF), took the opportunity to invite Addams to Stockholm along with two of her colleagues, Catherine Marshall and Jeanne Mélin, in conjunction with the Dutch conference. This obviously comprised a very important event for the local organizers. There was a reception at the Grand Hotel on the day of Addams's arrival and a public lecture on the following day in the large hall of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music (Melin, 1999, pp. 171-172; Larson, 1985, p. 318). [Figure 1. Jane Addams in Stockholm]

I have not been able to establish either the number or names of those who attended the reception and lecture. However, the Swedish women's peace movement at that time constituted a well organized and very extensive network, with a relatively large and robust core of members, who often succeeded in mobilizing many hundreds and at times even tens of thousands of sympathizers (Andersson, 2001, pp. 103-110). It would thus not be overly speculative to suggest that three of those in attendance at the Addams events might well have been Emilia Broomé, Ellen Key, and Anna Bugge Wicksell insofar as all three played leading roles in the early formation of the domestic women's peace movement (Hammar, 2004, pp. 11-75). Emilia Broomé (1866-1925) had organized Sweden's first women's peace organization in 1898, Sveriges Kvinnliga Fredsförening (Swedish Women's Peace Association, SKF), and served as its chairperson until 1911. Ellen Key (1849-1926), who was then one of the most influential public intellectuals in Sweden, was one of Broomé's most important sources of intellectual inspiration. Both Broomé's and Key's social engagement was based on a conviction, similar to Addams' idea of "social motherhood," that women in
particular, by virtue of their specific feminine qualities, had an important role to play in the peace question (Broomé, 1899; Key, 1899). Anna Bugge Wicksell (1862-1928), like Broomé and Key, had also written about and brought public attention to the peace question (Wicksell, 1893). In addition, Wicksell was by the time of Addams' visit one of Sweden's most important figures in the international peace movement in her capacity as Sweden's first female diplomat (Hallström, 2006, pp. 35-39; Nordqvist, 1985, p. 97, and Petrini, 1934, 45-59).

But although we do not know with certainty whether Broomé, Key, and Wicksell in fact attended the the Addams reception and lecture, that is not the primary issue here. I instead wish to use these events to illustrate that Jane Addams had Swedish connections and, more importantly, to introduce the main argument of the present discussion, namely, that there are many good reasons to view Broomé, Key, and Wicksell as Swedish equivalents of Jane Addams as a social entrepreneur. In order to substantiate this argument, we need to clarify, first, what is meant by social entrepreneurship and, second, in what respects Jane Addams may be regarded as a social entrepreneur. The general argument is analytically developed in three stages: first, a conceptual discussion concerning social entrepreneurship; second, an examination of Jane Addams as a social entrepreneur; third, a presentation of elements of the contemporary Swedish social entrepreneurial setting. Concerning the latter, the biographies of Ellen Key, Anna Bugge Wicksell, and Emilia Broomé will be empirically highlighted and compared in respect both to each other and to Jane Addams as a social entrepreneur.

**Social entrepreneurship – conceptual problems and possibilities**

What precisely is social entrepreneurship? Rather than engage here in a detailed discussion, I will confine myself to certain remarks concerning what I regard as the analytical strengths and shortcomings of the concept.

In respect to the shortcomings, not least of all is the fact that social entrepreneurship is a new and very fashionable concept. Other examples of such policy-laden concepts current today in both everyday usage and scholarly debate include "innovation", "knowledge society", and "triple helix", all of which call for critical reflection. If we restrict ourselves to debates within the scholarly community, the trendiness of the concept can be easily illustrated by Figure 2, which shows the emergence and extraordinarily rapid growth of the term in the last five years. [Figure 2. Popularity of the term social entrepreneurship]

Three points can be made if we take a somewhat closer look at the ten leading articles concerning social entrepreneurship (see Figure 3). [Figure 3. The ten leading articles on social entrepreneurship] The first is that research, as represented by the journals in which
the articles are published, is still heavily dominated by business and management studies. This indicates what may be referred to as the historical origins of the research field. Not only has research on social entrepreneurship grown out of more traditional research concerning entrepreneurship, this dependency is present in the current research debate as well. In this respect, one of the principal boundary issues is whether social entrepreneurship should be regarded as an element of the research area of entrepreneurship as such or as a mature and relatively autonomous area that is driven by its own internal mechanisms (see, e.g., Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Mair & Martí, 2006).

Second, the titles in question illustrate that one of the central issues still under debate concerns the meaning of the concept itself, that is, what social entrepreneurship is and how it should be defined (see, e.g., Dees, 1998; Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Martin & Osberg, 2007). There is, nevertheless, a fairly strong consensus concerning a number of the basic components of social entrepreneurship, such as identifying problems, recognizing opportunities, mobilizing resources, contributing to social change, and so forth.

Third, there is a strong tendency towards more general social science perspectives, including insights from organizational studies, institutionalist perspectives, and research on social movements. This reveals a profoundly contextual and process-oriented approach that regards social entrepreneurship "as a process resulting from the continuous interaction between social entrepreneurs and the context in which they and their activities are embedded" (Mair & Martí, 2006, p. 40; cf. Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004, pp. 262-263).

I would argue that it is precisely this tendency towards a more general and inclusive social science perspective that renders the concept of social entrepreneurship both interesting and potentially useful from an historical and sociological point of view. By focusing on the contextual embeddedness of social entrepreneurs in broader historical processes, social entrepreneurship research provides a set of analytical tools potentially useful not only for business researchers in an examination of the success or failure of contemporary enterprises, but also for enriching our historical understanding of civic-based initiatives as collectively coordinated, institutionally embedded, and pragmatically oriented endeavors. This also includes such social reformers as Jane Addams.

**Jane Addams as a social entrepreneur**

Was Jane Addams then a social entrepreneur? It is clear that she indeed was in a general sense. Indeed, she is likely the historical example most often used in popular representations to illustrate the common argument that although the term social entrepreneurship may be new,
social entrepreneurship as an historical phenomenon is not. Addams thus often figures as an historical point of reference among the many organizations that identify themselves as social enterprises today. One website rhetorically asks "What do Jane Addams, Maria Montessori and Muhammad Yunnus have in common?", and answers that "They are all exemplary social entrepreneurs." Other websites describe Addams as "a pioneering example of social entrepreneurship," "a social innovator of her day," and a role model for today's young women who are social entrepreneurial leaders.¹

But in what specific sense may Jane Addams be regarded as a social entrepreneur – in her role as an international peace maker and Nobel Prize Winner, as a social reformer and social researcher, or as a business woman with exceptional organizational qualities and leadership skills?

It is not my intent to question whether or not it is appropriate to describe Jane Addams as an outstanding social entrepreneur. I rather wish to draw attention to the tendency in most popular representations today to focus on her extraordinary, almost "saint-like" individual and personal qualities and skills, whereby she is regarded as an icon disconnected from the historical context in which she lived and acted. In line with the research on social entrepreneurship referred to above, it is instead more appropriate to examine her endeavors as a social entrepreneur in relation to the contemporary contexts and social movements in which she was an active participant.

Situating Addams' broad range of activities within an historical context does not make her efforts less impressive, although they then appear less unique. In this respect I wish to briefly mention five points which I find significant for understanding her in historical terms as a social entrepreneur.

First, Addams belonged to a very specific generation of well-educated, socially engaged middle-class women who experienced great improvements in their lives but also continued to face obstacles for women in respect to legal rights, higher education, cultural expectations, and political opportunities.

Second, Addams' commitment to social issues began in a way very typical for the times and for the generation of women who shared her engagement with the so-called social question. The latter consisted of the contemporary, wide-ranging, and intensively debated social problems that were conceptualized as the dark side of the new modern industrial society in both the United States and Europe, and not least of all in England. When she visited London in 1883, she experienced what she vividly described in her autobiography as an "inerradible impression of the wretchedness of East London" (Addams, 1920, pp. 66ff).

Third, Addams did not merely identify and conceptualize social problems, but also recognized opportunities and found practical ways for dealing with them. When she visited Toynbee Hall in 1888 and thereby came in contact with the new settlement movement that was rapidly expanding in Europe, she found an organizational model that she regarded as an "experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city" (Showalter, 2009, p. 92). Thanks to the resulting efforts of Addams and Hull House, the settlement house movement later became established in the United States.

Fourth, Addams proceeded to mobilize resources in her activities as a social entrepreneur, in respect to which her network of contacts were of the utmost importance. She pooled her own resources with Ellen Gates Starr, while Helen Culver provided major financial support. A broad range of social issues were taken up within this network of socially engaged women, including the social issue, women's rights, immigration, the urban housing problem, the outbreak of the First World War, and the peace question.

Fifth, a significant component of Addams' endeavors was the importance of knowledge making, which, I would argue, has often been underestimated in current research concerning social entrepreneurship. The idea of research-based reforms was central to the American settlement movement as well as the more general social reform movement. Addams herself emphasized that "each new undertaking should be preceded by carefully ascertained facts" (Addams, 1920, p. 129). Indeed, most of her activities and various projects were firmly based upon broad and often groundbreaking knowledge, including the social reform initiatives of the Hull House project, with its pioneering social research at a time when academic social science was still in its formative phase (Deegan, 1986). This was also the case with her engagement with the international peace movement and efforts to inculcate the spirit of peace in society. The social research that Addams promoted typically had a distinctly practical orientation, which perhaps reflects her relation to pragmatism. In addition, inspired by
Tolstoyan ideals, she emphasized the importance of transforming ideas into practical work and strove to live in accordance with what she learned (Addams, 1920, pp. 259-291).

We will now proceed to the third point in our discussion and inquire whether Jane Addams, as a social entrepreneur, had any counterparts on the contemporary Swedish scene.

The Swedish social entrepreneurial scene

Although Addams had no such counterparts in one very restricted sense insofar as each individual has a unique set of personal, cultural, and social experiences that cannot be replicated, there were in fact a rather large number of women in Sweden that remind us of Jane Addams as a social entrepreneur. This becomes clear when we consider the historically specific generation of women who were born in roughly the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

The last three decades of gender history research have demonstrated in a series of empirical studies that many of the figures active in the first wave of the women's movement were not one-sidedly focused on women's emancipation and, after the turn of the century, the suffrage question, but were more broadly engaged in the larger contemporary social reform movements. Furthermore, they often acted within that context as advocates of the generally embraced idea that social reforms ought to be based upon social research (Wisselgren, 2012). In addition, these women often worked together with like-minded men in their efforts to promote social reforms (Yeo, 1996, p. 288; Berg, Florin, & Wisselgren 2011).

A closer look at some of the many organizations which made up the social reform movement in Sweden – such as the Women's Association for Suffrage (Landsföreningen för kvinnors politiska rösträtt, LKPR), the Central Organization for Social Work (Centralförbundet för socialt arbete, CSA), the Swedish Women's Peace Association (SKF), and the foundations that actively promoted the rise of early academic social science, including the Lorén Foundation and The Lars Hierta Memorial Foundation – reveals a striking pattern. It was often the case that the very same network of socially engaged, reform-minded individuals actively participated in all these associations, albeit in slightly different constellations. For this reason, one can analyze this network in terms of a single social reform movement (Lundquist, 1997; Rönnbäck, 2004; Hedin, 2002; Bokholm, 2000; Wisselgren, 2000; Odelberg, 1981).

I will seek to exemplify this broader pattern through reference to the three women whom we have already identified as peace movement entrepreneurs, namely, Ellen Key, Anna Bugge Wicksell, and Emilia Broomé. At this venture we will not emphasize their engagement
in the peace movement, but rather focus on their involvement in the emerging academic social science of that time. This will enable us to show that they were similar to Jane Addams not only as peace activists and social reformers, but also in a broader sense as social entrepreneurs.

Ellen Key is likely the individual who reminds us more than anyone else of Jane Addams. Like Addams, Key was one of the most influential public intellectuals of her time, bringing together and inspiring a group of likeminded women. She promoted a gendered conception of social motherhood, whereby women were regarded as more suitable for certain societal tasks than men by virtue of their unique feminine qualities. This became an important argument for promoting women's contributions to public life (Ambjörnsson 1974, 1978, 2008). She was also engaged in the early formation of the social sciences, as was Addams. For example, Key was one of the most important Swedish advocates of the views of Herbert Spencer, and she also introduced Charles Letourneau to the Swedish reading public in a widely distributed text concerning the social evolution of moral issues (Key, 1891). Although Letourneau (1831-1902) is relatively unknown today, he was in fact the first professor of sociology in France. In addition, Key was a member of the surprisingly gender-equal board of directors of the Lorén Foundation, established in 1885, which played a seminal role in the establishment of Swedish social science in its capacity of a combined private research council and social research institute.2

Knut Wicksell, who became professor of economics and financial law at Lund University in 1901, was one of the first Swedish social scientists, and his early academic career depended heavily on financial support from the Lorén Foundation. Wicksell's wife, Anna Bugge Wicksell, was of at least a similar order of importance for his career, but it should be noted that they deliberately announced their partnership as a "union" in order to express their opposition to the patriarchal Swedish marriage laws. In a manner not surprising for the period, Bugge not only helped her husband by accepting the lion's share of family care and household work, she also assisted him as both private secretary and manager who strategically planned his career and made it possible for him in practical terms to concentrate on his research (Gårdlund, 1990, pp. 297, 337, 357; C. Jonung, 1986, p. 586; L. Jonung, 1990, p. 586). At the same time, however, she was engaged in the women's movement, the suffrage movement, the peace movement, and in the more general social reform movement, first in

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2 Other board members included two women, Anne Charlotte Leffler and Sonja Kovalevsky, and three men, Axel Key, Johan Leffler, and David Davidson. See Wisselgren (2000) for information concerning the Lorén Foundation.
Norway and Sweden, and later on the international level after Wicksell became professor. Anna Bugge and Knut Wicksell were thus intellectuals who shared a commitment to social reform issues in the broad sense as well as a couple who collaborated in the practical affairs in daily life (Wisselgren, 2012, pp. 196-199).

Emilia Broomé was committed to social reform issues and the peace movement, as were Addams, Key, and Bugge, but the chronological order for her was reversed in the sense that she first became involved with the peace movement, as was noted above in respect to her being the founder and driving force in SKF from 1899 to 1911. She then later worked with more general social issues as the director (byråföreståndarinna) of the Central Organization for Social Work (CSA). While the latter may be regarded as a Swedish counterpart of the English Charity Organization Society (COS), it also had important similarities with Hull House in that its aim was to promote social reforms through both practical education as well as social research (Hedin, 2002, pp. 113-162; Qvarsell, 2003, pp. 124-125). There are also other parallels with Hull House. For example, the CSA was also primarily staffed by women, especially at the beginning, and both institutions were located either outside or at the margins of the academic sphere rather than at its center, although they were connected with it through a number of shared networks. The CSA functioned in practice as a hub in the social reform movement and, as such, exerted an important influence on the formation of contemporary Swedish social welfare policy. It was in fact so successful that when two of the most important long-standing goals of the CSA were fulfilled – the establishment of the National Board of Social Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) (1913) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (Socialdepartementet) (1921) – its sphere of action significantly contracted (Fjällbäck Holmgren, 1928, p. 40; see also Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004, p. 261).

Three other patterns appear from a more general comparison of the lives and careers of Ellen Key, Anna Bugge Wicksell, and Emilia Broomé. First, they were born in the 1860s and belonged to roughly the same generation, shared a number of important historically situated experiences, and participated in the social reform movement and the same networks. Second, the broader social reform movement in which they were active included not only women's issues, but also a number of other parallel issues, such as the peace question and the drive for social reforms upon the basis of social research. Third, they each contributed, albeit in different ways, to the early formation of Swedish academic social science. Key was a member of the Lorén Foundation and also introduced contemporary international sociology to Sweden; Wicksell promoted and facilitated her husband's scholarly career; and Broomé was the principal of one of the main research and social reform organizations of the time. But in
contrast to, for example, the male professors of the new academic social sciences, their contributions were partly indirect and relatively anonymous. Consequently, their mark on history has been less as scholarly writers than as social entrepreneurs. We may thus speak of them as practical intellectuals whose endeavors were directed towards collective goals within relatively anonomous organizations and social movements (Ambjörnsson & Sörlin, 1995).

What general conclusions may we draw if we now connect our earlier remarks concerning Jane Addams with these observations concerning the Swedish scene in the reform movement and in the social sciences?

Concluding discussion

Most of the points made concerning Ellen Key, Anna Bugge Wicksell, and Emilia Broomé are valid for Jane Addams as well. This serves to clarify certain general patterns which they share as social entrepreneurs with Jane Addams.

All four of these individuals, as historically and contextually situated social entrepreneurs, identified important social problems that had to be resolved. They were skilful in recognizing the opportunities that presented themselves for securing financial and organizational resources, which they then mobilized with the help of their broad networks of like-minded friends within the social reform movement. They were thereby able to contribute to gradual social change (see Banks, 1972, pp. 51-41).

The fact that Key, Wicksell, Broomé, and Addams belonged to the same generation and became socially active during the same period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant that they experienced not only important moments in democratization and women's emancipation, but also the great social transitions associated with the new modern industrial society that was emerging. It is thus no coincidence that they belonged to the same generation as the so-called founding fathers of the social sciences and, like them, reflected upon and were deeply concerned with the new social questions of their time. They, too, consequently played valuable roles in the formation of the modern social sciences.

It is also evident from a broader perspective which takes into consideration the historical role of the social reform movement that the peace movement and the rise of the social sciences should not be regarded as two processes distinct from each other. They were in fact two facets of the same issue that were united by engagement in the social issues of the time as well as by knowledge production. Although they employed different forms of knowledge production, we should not restrict our notion of social knowledge to scholarly knowledge alone (see Eyerman and Jamison 1991, pp. 53-59). In this respect, there is no
contradiction between the formation of abstract knowledge in the emergent social sciences and the more practically oriented knowledge produced within the social reform movement. It is also important to emphasize that men and women often worked together — at times like Anna Bugge and Knut Wicksell as a collaborative intellectual couple — in the collective social entrepreneurial knowledge practices of the social reform movement.

However, this broader perspective also reveals an important historical pattern concerning a gendered division of labor insofar as both the political and academic spheres remained relatively closed to women. Although universal suffrage had been introduced in Sweden by the time of Addams' visit in 1922, there were still only a handful of women in the Swedish Riksdag and even fewer in academic social research. What I have sought to demonstrate with this paper is that the international peace movement was centred around the same social issues as the new social sciences, that the peace movement and the social sciences were not two entirely separate arenas, and that Jane Addams helps us to reveal the gender patterns in the history of the creation of social knowledge better than many other individuals of her time.

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References


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TALA

JANE ADDAMS, U. S. A.,

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ENGLAND,

JEANNE MÉLIN, FRANKRIKE,

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Ill. 2. The "career" of the term social entrepreneurship. Number of publications with both “social” and “entrepreneurship” in the title of the article, based on an advanced search in Google Scholar on November 1, 2010. Double-checked with a search in ISI Web of Science on November 15, 2010, with similar results.
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**III. 3. Top ten articles on “social entrepreneurship”.** The list is generated by using the same search engine and criteria, on the same date as in ill. 2.