Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century: Remarks on the Swedish Case

Abstract:

One feature of the eighteenth-century learned life were the hundreds of societies aimed at reforming the economic basis of their own countries, regions or cities. Albeit these economic societies showcased diversity in both their names and the focal points of their activities, they ought to be treated together due to their model of combining economic reform, patriotic rhetoric, and the form of voluntary association. More importantly, the societies themselves subscribed to this international model in their staging of themselves, and influenced each other through a constant cross-fertilization of ideas, practices and publications. Sweden's first society premiered in the 1760s as the Patriotic Society in Stockholm. It was followed by two regional societies in the 1790s, and by the 1820s some twenty-five societies had been founded on Swedish soil. The societies appropriated the model of an economic society to fit in a tradition of scientific-economic discourse in the realm.

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One of the prominent phenomena of enlightened practice in the eighteenth century were societies that were aimed at improving the economic basis of their respective countries, counties or towns. The societies themselves were active publishers of economic, especially agricultural, knowledge, but their significance in the intellectual life of the eighteenth century is also visible in a number of other sources, such as Montesquieu's De l'esprit des lois. So far, the economic societies have not been treated in an

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\[1\] [Charles Louis de Secondat de La Brède et de] Montesquieu, De l'esprit des lois, Geneva 1758, livre XIV, chap. IX. For an online version of the text (edition of 1758), see http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/montesquieu/de_esprit_des_lois/de_esprit_des_lois_tdm.html <2th of March 2012>. This paper has benefitted greatly from collaboration with Koen Stapelbroek, with whom I have edited: The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century: Patriotic Reform in Europe and North America,
overall perspective as a movement of interconnected, yet independent, organisations. Nor have the economic societies been properly placed in their international context. My attempt here is on the one hand to provide an overview of this movement, and on the other hand to present eighteenth-century Swedish economic societies in a way that properly acknowledges their intellectual entanglement with sister societies elsewhere in Europe.

The tradition of economic societies in the eighteenth century

The naming conventions of societies aimed at advancing the economic conditions of their respective countries vary throughout Europe and the colonies of European states. Differences appear also in the societies' activities, prominence in political and social life as well as economic visions, but there are still good arguments for construing them as a broad European tradition with repercussions all over the world.

First, one reason for treating economic societies in an European perspective lies in the fact that their functions were at the time looked upon from not only a local point of view, but also with respect to economic challenges on an European level. The economic conditions of European states were increasingly compared and the wellbeing of the population in a realm was related to how a particular state fared in this competition. The societies themselves referred to challenges in economic competition between states, and were designed to help their own countries to cope better with these challenges.

In England, for instance, Robert Dossie published memoirs which were in practice the publication outlet of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (founded in 1754), and in which he noted how the business of improvement was something "[...] which almost every other civilized state has adopted, even with the immediate assistance of government. We hope, therefore, the publication of these Memoirs will have the aid of the ingenious and the encouragement of the public-spirited [...] to maintain the superiority, which at present distinguished us in science, and oeconomical arts, as well as arms, from all our neighbours and rivals." Similarly, half a century later, the Patriotic Society in Stockholm emphasised Sweden's role as a forerunner in setting up institutions.
to spur the economy, such as the Academy of Sciences and the chairs in economy at the universities in Uppsala and Lund (founded 1741 and 1750 respectively). These examples had been influential in other countries, so much so, that "they have in similar institutions and published works, not only reached us, but even surpassed us". The society recognised the need to advance Sweden's position in the economic competition between states and it was to keep up with the race that the Patriotic Society launched its new journal in 1776.

Second, these societies engaged in similar activities, such as producing knowledge on agriculture and other livelihoods, soliciting and publishing prize essays, conducting experiments, setting up educational facilities, organising relief for the poor, encouraging vaccinations, and handing out premiums for new inventions or industriousness. Geographical variations are of course significant in viewing activities of the societies, but a common pattern is clear. Some societies championed particular activities. For instance, the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce was even called "The Premium Society" in its early years. The Economic Society in Berne (Oekonomische Gesellschaft, founded 1759) provides an example of a society that was perhaps most internationally oriented, as it established a network of honorary members in which it included several of the period's prominent scientific and economic thinkers.

Third, these societies deployed similar vocabulary, using concepts such as "common good", "public-spiritedness", "fatherland" and "patriotism", and tied these concepts to economic reform especially in their programmatic texts. Thus in Scotland The Honourable Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland founded in 1723 gave an account of its birth by directly associating a concern with the state of the economy and production to the love of country:


“Then several Noblemen and Gentlemen, afflicted with the Consideration of the low Condition of Agriculture and Manufactures, and excited by Love to their Country, did institute the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland; and the Number of Members increased so much, that it amounted to upwards of 300 of the Flower of the Nation.”

In a more statist version the love of country was present also in Britanny in the first publication of the Société d’agriculture, du commerce et des arts:

“L’Ouvrage qu’on présente au Public, n’est ni un Traité, ni même un Essai sur L’Agriculture, les Arts & le Commerce. Il ne doit être envisagé que comme les préliminaires d’un Recueil que l’amour de la Patrie, la protection des États du Gouvernement, rendront considérable, & dont l’utilité se fera sentir de plus en plus, à mesure que les matériaux se rassembleront dans le dépôt de la Société. Le Corps d’Observations est moins une suite d’instructions, qu’une suite d’invitations qui porteront ceux qui peuvent aider leur Patrie à ne pas lui refuser leur secours.”

Other societies, such as the ones in Hamburg, Stockholm and Milan, simply included the word ”patriotic” in their names. Again, if we follow the range of similar societies, variations in the patriotism of different societies are easily discerned, but all societies did express an economic patriotism that aspired to support the common cause. Along with the variations, we can definitely also see a pattern.

Fourth, the societies were societies. Many of them were inspired by scientific academies and certainly benefitted from an intellectual exchange between academies as well as from contacts with state organisations and universities. Many of the societies strived from their inception to be awarded royal status and many of them succeeded in this. As societies, they were not programatically anti-state organisations, rather they complemented the activities of states and to a large extent shared objectives with the state. The organisational form of a society does however come across as significant in the historical self-understanding of these societies. The society was a way of taking a

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public stand on common matters without using the traditional channels of estate-based society. The society potentially crossed estate-borders and client relations by offering a channel for private men to come together and form opinions. This is evident for instance in the above-cited passage from the Honourable Society in Scotland referring to Noblemen and Gentlemen. In Sweden, the statutes of the Patriotic Society recapitulate the establishment of the society precisely by emphasising how "a considerable amount of Swedish Men concerned with the [public] good have, excited by such a noble spirit, come together". The "Men" in question held significant positions in society, but in this context, rank and position were put aside, whereas passion for public affairs was emphasised. This was also made visible by addressing members as citizens, rather than by title.

Different emphasis within the definition may exclude a set of societies, although their historical self-understanding was that they were a part of a tradition of similar societies. Thus, as a fifth criterion, and this is the most important one, the societies compared themselves to each other. With the goal of becoming local vehicles to emulate more advanced countries economically, the societies also sought inspiration from other sister societies. In these comparisons, they displayed what could in modern terms be described as a transnational imagination, a vision of belonging to a common movement of similar societies in Europe. For instance, in its first publication the Economic Society in Berne provided a list of societies that functioned as models for it, mentioning the Dublin Society as well as societies in London, Florence, and Brittany. In a similar way, almost half a century later, the Finnish Economic Society (Finska Hushållnings Sällskapet, founded 1797), provided a similar list of model societies.

Actual contacts between societies did of course take place, but were not that common. The societies were locally focussed, as their mission was reform in their respective geographical areas. Often the establishment of a society was preceded by a key figure getting acquainted with some foreign society. This was the case with Christian Martfelt, the founder of the Royal Danish Agricultural Society (Det Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningselskab, founded 1768); Jacob Sievers, the probable

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9 "Åtskillige vältänkande Svenske Män, uppellede af en så ådel hâg, hafta derføre fôrenat sig." Högborg, Kungliga patriotiska sällskapets historia (see note 3), p. 242, which includes a reprint of the statutes from 1772.


11 Åbo tidningar, 3 January 1798.
appropriator of the model of an economic society to Russia in the Free Economic Society (Vol‘noe ekonomičeskoe obščestvo, founded 1765); and Johan Gadolin, who initiated the Finnish Economic Society. All of them had travelled in England, and reported on their experiences there.\(^\text{12}\)

**Proliferation and significance of economic societies as a model**

Roughly speaking, economic societies spread throughout Europe and beyond in three waves. First, in the 1720s and 1730s in the British Isles (and Ireland), the Honourable Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland (founded 1723) and the Dublin Society of Improvement of Husbandry, Agriculture and other Useful Arts (founded 1731, Royal from 1749 onwards) were the first two organisations to embody the idea of a society that sought to improve the economic conditions of their respective countries. Both were, in a sense, prompted by the relation of Scotland and Ireland respectively to the British Empire. Forming societies to encourage economic improvement was a way to cope with the dependence on England. Through the union with England in 1707, Scottish landed interests lost their channel for representation, and could not ignore the underdevelopment of the Scottish economy as compared to England. Ireland was not in union with England, but was under English parliamentary control and politically dependent on England.\(^\text{13}\)

Inspired by the Scottish and especially Irish societies, the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce was founded in London in 1754. In the following decades the Society in London established itself as one of the key societies in Europe. The Dublin Society had already proven itself worthy of international recognition, whereas the Scottish society, although it was established first and had inspired the founders of the Dublin society, was soon dissolved and was rarely referred to by other European societies established in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In a second wave, around the time of the Seven Years' War, a number of societies emerged throughout Europe. This occurred in a time of strained commercial relations between European states,\(^\text{14}\)


even those not involved in the war. Societies sprang up in Brittany (1757), Berne (1759), Leipzig (1764), Zürich (1764), Hamburg (1765), St Petersburg (1765), Vergara/Bergara (Basque country) (1765), Stockholm (1766) and Copenhagen (1768), just to give a few of the most prominent examples. Many of the first societies emerged in peripheral areas in European states, but were soon emulated elsewhere in their respective countries. The Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts (Société d'agriculture, du commerce et des arts), for instance, inspired the establishment of a network of some twenty societies and twenty-nine branches of these societies in the coming years. Similarly, the society in the Basque country stimulated a network of some seventy Economic Societies of Friends of the Country (Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del Pais) in Spain.

A third wave can be vaguely discerned around the French Revolution when a number of provincial cities and European colonies created economic societies. Only a few of them gained international reputation, but many gained strong positions locally. The spread of these societies had to do with the need to cover all areas in a polity. Especially regarding the production and dissemination of agricultural knowledge, the societies needed a presence on the local level, and thus needed local organisations as well.

A short account of the proliferation of these societies does not however capture the fact that the historical understanding of what sort of tradition the economic societies constituted was different in different parts of the world. Likewise, the vision of the economic societies as a border-crossing tradition also evolved apace with the unfolding of the societies. In the Irish case the Scottish model society was extremely important, but the Scottish model was unknown to most of the societies in Continental Europe. Likewise, the society in London became a crucial model for many of the societies established in the second half of the 1760s, but had not yet gained an international reputation when the societies in Brittany and Berne were established. Interestingly enough, it seems as if the Irish model and the success of the Dublin Society was not "exported" to Brittany and elsewhere until it had already gained some acknowledgement in London.

It is an impossible task to determine the number of "economic societies" that emerged during the long

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14 This is a key theme in Istvan Hont, Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective, Cambridge, MA 2005.
15 Shovlin, The Society of Brittany (see note 7); Emile Justin, Les sociétés royales d'agriculture au XVIIIe siècle (1757–1793), Saint-Lô 1935.
eighteenth century. The issue has thus far been mainly addressed on a national level\textsuperscript{17}, but there are some preliminary overviews of societies. Ulrich Im Hof for instance lists 116 societies for "the promotion of economic improvement and the common good in Europe and the Overseas"\textsuperscript{18}. In her study on Danish societies, Juliane Engelhardt has come up with the slightly larger figure of 233 "patriotic societies"\textsuperscript{19}. Neither one of them claim to have determined comprehensive figures.

In addressing the number, it is necessary to acknowledge the different labels that were used for the societies. The different names and the different self-understandings of the societies make it impossible to come up with a universally applicable definition of an "economic society". In scholarly literature, different shorthands are deployed for the societies depending on the scholarly tradition in question. In the British context "improvement societies" is often used as shorthand, whereas French societies and Societies in the United States of America are labelled as "agricultural societies". For Germany and Spain "patriotic societies" is used whereas in Switzerland, Sweden and Russia "economic societies" are more common. Especially in the case of Germany, Spain and Sweden, "patriotic" and "economic" are both terms used in the historical naming of societies. Apart from traditions of national historiography, there are no good reasons for choosing one over the other. For an international survey "economic societies" may be used as a short hand simply to avoid "improvement, agricultural, economic and patriotic societies" as a collective name, but the shorthand itself may mean neglecting the actual historical names of the societies. Only in France and Spain one can see a nearly consistent naming policy of all societies in the country.


\textsuperscript{18} Ulrich Im Hof, Das gesellige Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, München 1982, pp. 260–263.

One reason to deploy the label "economic societies" as opposed to "patriotic societies" is to avoid confusion among readers that are not familiar with eighteenth-century political and economic thought. For a broader audience "economic societies" may be an easier way to present the mission and visions of the societies, and doing this without evoking associations to nationalism. "Economic societies" may better evoke the economic character of the societies' patriotism, thus underlining the discontinuity with nineteenth-century nation building without, however, losing sight of the continuity in the patriotic vocabulary in other respects. 

By surveying studies on societies that perceived themselves as belonging to a tradition of economic societies, a figure of at least 562 societies is reached. Although this figure is much higher than the ones provided earlier, it is clear that even this figure remains an underestimation. Short-lived societies are often omitted, as are societies that do not fit the point of view or the period covered in the literature. It is not crucial to reach a final figure of societies, rather it is more important to note that the spread of these societies was remarkable, and that most big European cities as well as quite a few

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smaller ones hosted a society of this kind in the second half of the eighteenth century. Economic societies sprang up also in North America, in Spanish colonies in South America as well as Dutch colonies in South East Asia. The predominantly local take of scholars on these societies has perhaps not grasped the proliferation of economic societies in the same way that a bird's-eye view targeting a broader geographical area can.

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Another way to illustrate the significance of the economic societies is to look at contrasting contexts. Societies for encouraging local economic conditions first sprang up in the British Isles and Ireland. According to Peter Clark, the British Isles hosted up to 25,000 different clubs and societies in various fields in society throughout the eighteenth century. Against this background, it is not surprising that also economic and agricultural improvement took the form of a society in Britain<sup>22</sup>.

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The Free Economic Society in St Petersburg was established as the second ever society in the Russian Empire in 1765<sup>23</sup>. The tradition of conceptualising public life in Russia differed from that in Britain. The number of societies should not be seen as some sort of representation of development, but merely an illustration of the difference in the organisation of society. However, the breakthrough of the model of an economic society shows how compelling the model was. Naturally, the model of an economic society was adapted to Russian circumstances and the reign of Catherine II, in the same way it was also adapted in other contexts. Thus, an international overview of economic societies is necessarily an overview of transfers, adaptations and the asymmetric relations between the different societies<sup>24</sup>. As the spread of societies demonstrates, the model of an economic society was simply not something that could be ignored. The eagerness of making economic societies royal or in other ways tied to the state can be interpreted as a need to claim these organisations. As organisations for economic reform were established all over Europe, it made sense for local agents to claim this initiative, in order to prevent other organisations or other people from doing so. In the Swedish case, for instance, a number of initiatives were taken in this direction, but only a few were successful in establishing a more solid formation.


<sup>24</sup> The theoretical discussion on intellectual and institutional transfers is constantly growing. For further references, see Jani Marjanen, Undermining methodological nationalism: Histoire croisée of concepts as transnational history, in: Mathias Albert, Gesa Bluhm, Jan Helmig, Andreas Leutzsch, Jochen Walter (eds.), Transnational Political Spaces: Agents – Structures – Encounters, Frankfurt a. M./New York 2009 (Historische Politikforschung, 18), pp. 239–263.
Economic societies and the state – the case of Sweden

Eighteenth-century economic societies developed in constant interaction between scientific and other learned societies, academies, other forms of sociability such as Freemasons and secret societies as well as governments and administrative organisations of the state. Here the focus is on state relations in the Swedish case.

As the concept of civil society (bürgerliche Gesellschaft, borgerligt samfund) gained increased currency in the eighteenth century and was slowly redefined as a sphere outside the state and the economic markets, most famously expressed in Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) and G. W. F. Hegel's Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (1821), economic societies spread along with other forms of sociability throughout Europe. Economic societies are rather difficult to place in a sphere strictly outside the state. The societies' aims did provide an alternative avenue for pursuing economic reform, but their aims were almost always in concordance with state objectives. In the Swedish case, most eighteenth-century initiatives to form organisations to improve economic conditions were tied to the Crown in one way or the other.

Intellectual engagements in economic reform in Sweden had their institutional starting point in the establishment of the Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1739 (almost immediately made Royal). In an early phase, the Academy's initiator Mårten Triewald even called it an Economical Scientific Society (Oeconomisk vetenskapssocietet), and indeed its first publications, as well as its ceremonial speeches, had a remarkable emphasis on economic issues.

The Academy's agenda of economic improvement was not enough, especially for those who felt that agriculture was a neglected livelihood in Sweden. A number of initiatives to form organisations to promote economic activity and agriculture were put forward during the eighteenth century. In 1738,

\[26\] For a discussion of economic societies vis-à-vis scientific organisations and freemasonry, see Stapelbroek, Marjanen, Political Economy (see note 22). See also van Dülmen, The Society of the Enlightenement (see note 8), pp. 52–81; Im Hof, Das gesellige Jahrhundert (see note 18), pp. 134–172.


Anders Gabriel Duhre proposed an Economical society (*Oeconomisk societet*); in 1746 Jacob Faggot pleaded for an Agricultural guild; in 1752 the Estates discussed a "comprehensive plan for economic societies"; and in 1756 Johann Eberhard Ludvig Ehrenreich argued for an agricultural society that could function as a means for import substitution. None of these initiatives materialised. Nor were they seen as anything else than administrative bodies. They did not include an idea of citizens promoting the common good through voluntary association. Nor did they acknowledge examples of societies for the encouragement of local economy founded in Scotland or Ireland28.

The British societies seem to be first acknowledged in Swedish public debate in the 1750s and 1760s29. An invitation to establish a society in which private persons come together and hand out premiums to promote innovation and industriousness stems from the pen of C. F. Scheffer and is dated to the mid-1760s. Scheffer had been an envoy in Paris, and it seems that the British examples migrated to Sweden via France and the French agricultural societies30.

It was however not Scheffer’s proposition that led to the foundation of the first society of this kind in Sweden, but a spin-off from a secret order, Pro Patria, that was founded in Stockholm in 1766. Pro Patria hosted a branch called the Swedish Patriotic Society (*Swenska Patriotiska Sällskapet*, also founded in 1766), which during the coming years developed more and more into an independent society that resembled its sister societies in Europe. The development of the Patriotic Society portrays in an interesting way in which the model of an economic society was adapted in the Swedish context.

A controversy loomed in the background of the establishment of the Patriotic Society. In the 1760s the Academy of Sciences had launched a prize-essay question on emigration from Sweden. (Incidentally, a similar question with a similarly controversial outcome was posed roughly at the same time in Berne by the Economic Society.) Some of the authors used their prize essays as opportunities to criticise existing legislation31. The commotion that came out of this undermined the academy, and opened

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29 The first reference to the Dublin Society, I have come across is in a dissertation from the early 1750s: Daniel Lithander (and Pehr Kalm), Oförgripeliga tanckar om nödvändigheten af skogars bette wård och ans i Finland, Åbo 1753. For initiatives to form agricultural improvement organisations, see Nils Edling, För moderniseringens modernisation. Två studier av Kungl. Skogs- och Lantbruksakademiens tillkomst och tidiga historia, Stockholm 2003, pp. 24–31.


31 Marjanen, Between (see note 12); Lindroth, Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia (see note 24).
The establishment of Patriotic Society within the secret order of Pro Patria made sense in the context of Stockholm in the 1760s, in which a number of similar secret organisations and Masonic groups flourished. Pro Patria had a broader focus, including an interest in music, *belles lettres* and, perhaps above all, ceremonies and medals, but this institutional setting also provided funds and membership to the Patriotic Society that focused solely on economic and agricultural matters – matters deemed as immediately useful. Soon the Patriotic Society became more prominent than its mother organisation, and as it started publishing its own transactions, it could stand on its own two feet. It started functioning as did many of the European economic and learned societies, aiming at producing and distributing knowledge concerning commerce, manufacturing, the arts and agriculture. In 1772, the Patriotic Society was made royal, earned its own statutes, and became fully independent.\(^3^2\)

As the Patriotic Society was a new organisation, that also had a number of prominent international models to vouch for its usefulness, it was important to give it a stronger institutional basis. The society’s key figures had set their eyes on royal support almost from the very beginning, and the controversy with the Academy, may have been a factor in actually gaining that royal status. For sure, becoming a Royal Patriotic Society inevitably meant financial and institutional security for the society, but the event was also a part of the staging of Gustavus III as a benevolent and enlightened monarch.\(^3^3\) The association of the crown and the society in 1772 was far from unprecedented. Most of the similar societies in Europe that had gained prominent status were directly associated to the monarch or the estates.\(^3^4\) The societies played a double role: on the one hand, they were free from the state or the crown, like the *Free* Economic Society in St Petersburg; and on the other hand, their aims were always in concordance with the powers that be. In a sense, they were complementary to the authorities in sharing their aims, but having more freedom to pursue them and having better means to do that in producing and disseminating knowledge.
The Patriotic Society focussed primarily on economic issues, its journal, *Hushållnings Journalen* (published from 1776), translates as Economic Journal. The association of economy and patriotism seems to be self-evident in the eighteenth-century context. However, the regionally focussed societies in the Swedish realm discussed below were all called economic (either *ekonomisk* or *hushållnings*)\(^{35}\).

The following economic societies were founded on Gotland (*Gotlands ekonomiska sällskap*) and Finland (*Finska Hushållnings Sällskapet*) in 1791 and 1797 respectively. Both parts of the realm were seen as economically outside the norm or underdeveloped, and both societies aimed at developing local economic conditions so that the regions could better keep up with the pace of the Stockholm region. Reasons to the differences were both geographical, with the Baltic Sea as both a dividing and uniting element between the regions, as well as a political in the sense that the Crown had a different relation to all parts of its realm. Finland's proximity to Russia had been an issue throughout the century and Finland was often seen as either a granary for the Stockholm region or buffer zone between Stockholm and Russia. Especially, the latter apprehension combined with experiences of Russian occupation of Finland twice in the eighteenth century had implications for how inhabitants in Finland saw their position\(^{36}\).

In terms of keeping up with the economic and political centre, a clear parallel to Scotland and Ireland is noticeable. A similar development with "second societies" being founded in underdeveloped regions of a realm can also be found for instance in Norway, which hosted the first societies after the Royal Danish Agricultural Society\(^{37}\). The Society on Gotland remained rather inactive for the first twenty years of its existence, whereas the Finnish Economic Society succeeded in becoming an important forum for improvement in Turku (Sw. Åbo), and also gained royal support for its cause. It relied on the intellectual atmosphere of utility that was noticeably present at the university in Turku (*Akademin i Åbo*), as well as on the professors, clergymen and civil servants that resided in Turku\(^{38}\). The Finnish Society also developed a collaboration with the Patriotic Society. Members of the Royal Patriotic

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\(^{35}\) *Hushållning* is a vernacular form of the word economy, that was widely used in the eighteenth century.

\(^{36}\) On Gotland, Finland and other parts of the Swedish empire, see Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden*, Stockholm 2000, particularly pp. 67–73, 267–327. The question of Finland's position within Sweden and its implication for identities in the region is one of the most revisited ones in Finnish historiography. For a short discussion and further references, see Marjanen, Between (see note 12).


Society that lived in the Finnish parts of the realm became members of the Royal Finnish Economic Society, and a geographical division of labour concerning prizes and prize essays was set. In practice, this meant acknowledging that the Finnish parts of the realm were not sufficiently addressed by the Patriotic Society or the king, and helped create a sense of Finland as a polity. Albeit the Finnish society was founded partly out of discontent, it was not an oppositional initiative. It was rather an instrument of loyalist politics in which the improvement of economic conditions and the staging of a beneficial monarch were conflated.

The Economic Society in Gotland did not gain royal status, nor did the other regional economic societies that were founded after the Finnish Economic Society. All of the following societies were geographically delineated to particular counties (län). Thus, the counties of Örebro (1803), Värmland (1803), Västernorrland (1805) and Skaraborg (1807) all received economic societies before the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars hit Sweden. Due to their county focus, they may not have been appropriate as royal societies, but they did have a strong attachment to the authorities, perhaps even more so than their predecessors did. Most often, the county governors (landshövding) would act as chairs of the society, and the aims of the societies were more profoundly tied to disseminating good practices, than acting as forums for intellectual exchange and knowledge production.

After the Russo-Swedish War, remaining Finnish parts of the Swedish realm were incorporated to the Russian Empire. They were in 1809 formed into a Finnish Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire, and few years later also previously occupied regions were included in the Grand Duchy. This had two major consequences for the economic societies. In the new Grand Duchy the Economic Society became Imperial and gained a surprisingly strong role in political and economic life. Although Swedish laws, religion and customs remained intact in Finland, the Grand Duchy did not have many governing structures, which made the Economic Society as a semi-administrative body a rather important forum for politicking and reform in the first two decades of the century. Bearing in mind that the estates Diet did not convene in the Grand Duchy, the society was in this particular period the core organisation in the country when addressing issues that concerned the whole nation.


40 For basic information on the county societies and the commemorative works on them, see Kårström, Regionala främjare (see note 19).

41 See Marjanen, Between (see note 12), and for interpretations on the role of the Economic Society and Finland as a polity, see Stenius, Frivilligt, jämlikt, samfält (see note 8), pp. 103–107; Matti Klinge, Napoleonin varjo. Euroopan ja Suomen murros 1795–1815, Helsinki 2009, pp. 317–322. For a comparative discussion on economic societies and consolidating a nation, see Stapelbroek and Marjanen, Political Economy (see note 21).
In post-1809 Sweden, a new organisation for agricultural reform was founded in 1811 (active from 1813 onwards), the Royal Agricultural Academy (*Kongl. Svenska Lantbruks Academien*, later *Kungl. skogs- och lantbruksakademien*). The new Academy incorporated all county economic societies, except for the Patriotic Society, as local branches. The counties that did not host local societies soon gained ones under the auspices of the new Academy. This way the whole country was geographically covered, but represented by a single academy for the advancement of agriculture. The Patriotic Society, of course, remained as an organisation for the whole country as well, but developed a much more marginal position. In a sense, the Swedish interest in economic and agricultural reform had developed on an institutional level from academy to society and back again.

**Concluding remarks**

With the Royal Agricultural Academy in Sweden, the civic interest in promoting the common good in all fields of the economy through a society that encompassed the whole realm came to an end. The Academy focused on agriculture and forestry only, and did so with a necessary presence in the whole country, without particular concern for the circulation of a patriotic spirit. In the Finnish case, this broad patriotism lingered on for a few decades longer, but soon the Economic Society too had to focus more on down-to-earth improvement of agriculture only. As elsewhere in Europe, economic development no longer merited a key position as a dominant discourse, but formed its own specialist discourse. Those who sought to develop a civic spirit had to engage in other sectors of society.

The development was similar elsewhere in Europe, but institutionally economic societies adapted in different ways. The Swedish Economic Societies became local agricultural organisations for dissemination of good practices. Others, like the society in Kurpfalz (*Kuhrpfälzische physikalisch-ökonomische Gesellschaft*, 1769), were merged into academic organisations. Some, like the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, today known as the Royal Society of Arts, or the Patriotic Society (*Patriotische Gesellschaft*) in Hamburg, had a solid institutional role in public debate, but were not confined to agricultural matters. Yet others had a more ceremonial role, in handing out medals and grants, like the Patriotic Society in Stockholm. The different paths of the mentioned organisations are indicative of the rather rapid rise and decline of the societies. Already by the turn of the nineteenth century, the economic societies' methods of collecting, producing and

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43 Augello, Guidi (eds.), *The Spread of Political Economy* (see note 21).
disseminating useful knowledge to promote local conditions were deemed insufficient for the more specialised division of labour in governing economy, society and politics in the nineteenth century.

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