



“Women Against the EEC!”: Limits of Transnational Feminist Solidarity

Hannah Kaarina Yoken

To cite this article: Hannah Kaarina Yoken (2022) “Women Against the EEC!”: Limits of Transnational Feminist Solidarity, *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 30:1, 35-47, DOI: [10.1080/08038740.2021.1973096](https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2021.1973096)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2021.1973096>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 14 Oct 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 963



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE

 OPEN ACCESS

 Check for updates

“Women Against the EEC!”: Limits of Transnational Feminist Solidarity

Hannah Kaarina Yoken

Centre for Gender History, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland

ABSTRACT

During the first half of the 1970s, Swedish and Danish new women’s movements campaigned against their respective countries joining the European Economic Community (EEC). In doing so, socialist feminist activists in Denmark and Sweden were confronted by questions regarding how to navigate international solidarity between women and where to draw its limits. This article explores these limits by examining Danish and Swedish feminist campaigns against EEC membership from a transnational perspective. I do this by firstly providing a comparative overview of the two Scandinavian countries’ anti-EEC discourses, arguing that they were transnationally interlinked via border-crossing feminist protest culture. Secondly, I explore the political and ideological underpinnings guiding these feminist anti-EEC campaigns, contending that the nationalist and protectionist socialist discourses that emerged from Swedish and Danish new women’s movements’ anti-EEC campaigns were in part discordant with contemporaneous transnational feminist calls for a “global sisterhood”. This article is based on extensive archival research in Sweden and Denmark, with a focus on examining the anti-EEC print culture produced by socialist feminists in the early 1970s.

ARTICLE HISTORY


Received 19 August 2021
Accepted 23 August 2021

KEYWORDS

Socialist feminism; new women’s movement; European Economic Community (EEC); Sweden; Denmark

Introduction

In 1974 the book *Kvinnor i alla länder* [Women in All Countries] was published in Sweden. Written by thirteen women, most of whom belonged to the Swedish socialist feminist organization Grupp 8 [Group 8], *Kvinnor i alla länder* was an encyclopaedic account of feminist activism and women’s everyday experiences across Europe. The book was categorized into country case studies from “old” European Economic Community, or EEC, countries (West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and France), “new” EEC states (UK and Denmark), and non-EEC nations (Sweden and Norway). On its back cover, the book’s authorial team proclaimed that the publication was “dedicated to our sisters in Sweden and other countries, and the international women’s movement” (Armbruster et al., 1974, back cover). Despite this emphasis on international feminist solidarity, *Kvinnor i alla länder* was also speckled with stark value judgements critiquing the ways in which nationally framed factors, such as religion and cultural traditions, affected how women were able to conduct themselves in their everyday lives. In the book’s introduction, its authors compared “the relative freedom of Germanic women” to “the Roman patriarchy” and “the complete oppression of women by Judaism”. The introduction also pinpointed European integration, and more specifically the EEC’s principles allowing the free movement of workers within its member states, as one of the root causes for increased prostitution and the “ruthless exploitation of women as goods and sex objects” in Europe (Armbruster et al., 1974, pp. 6–7).

CONTACT Hannah Kaarina Yoken  hannah.yoken@glasgow.ac.uk

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Two years prior to the publication of *Kvinnor i alla länder*, in 1972 the Danish socialist feminist movement known as Rødstrømpebevægelsen [The Redstocking Movement] published an article in their circular *Rødstrømpebladet* [The Redstocking Newspaper] analysing women's social, economic and political circumstances within the EEC. The article featured the lyrics and melody to a satirical protest song, written by one of the movement's members, titled "Kvinden i EEC" [Women in the EEC]. The song described the different ways in which women living in EEC member states were oppressed under capitalist patriarchy. The first verse described how French women who birthed children were awarded a castle for their hard work, whereas unmarried women received no such rewards. In the second verse, German women were described as gladly engaging in domestic duties like childcare and cooking, and having limited access to work outside the home. The penultimate verse depicted Italian women as highly religious, lacking access to contraception, and having little agency when subjected to the sexual demands of men. The song ended on a sober rather than satirical note, warning Danish women that they were "up for sale" and that they could show solidarity to and tangibly help their sisters across Europe only if they themselves remained free from the subjugating pressures of the EEC ('Kvinde og EEC', 1972, p. 2).

This article explores the limits of international feminist solidarity during the first half of the 1970s by examining Danish and Swedish new women's movement campaigns against EEC membership from a transnational perspective.¹ As the above examples illustrate, in both Denmark and Sweden new women's movement groups opposed their respective countries joining the EEC, the regional customs union and common market established under the Treaty of Rome in 1957. In this article I answer the two following research questions: firstly, what protest tactics did Swedish and Danish feminist activists employ in opposing the EEC and secondly, what were the political and ideological underpinnings guiding these feminist anti-EEC campaigns. To answer these questions, I posit that the tactics utilized by Danish and Swedish feminist activists opposing the EEC were analogous due to the transnational distribution of feminist protest culture between these two Scandinavian countries. I furthermore contend that the nationalist and protectionist socialist discourses associated with Swedish and Danish new women's movements' anti-EEC campaigns were in part discordant with contemporaneous transnational feminist calls for a "global sisterhood".

This article is based on novel archival research, initially conducted as part of my doctoral research on transnational new women's movement activism in the Nordic region. The written sources that form the core of my analysis were produced by grassroots feminist activists belonging to or associated with the independent socialist women's organization Grupp 8 and the party-politically non-aligned socialist women's organization Svenska Kvinnors Vänsterförbund, or SKV, in Sweden, and the party-politically autonomous socialist feminist movement Rødstrømpebevægelsen and its splinter group Kvindefronten (Women's Front) in Denmark. More specifically, the primary evidence on which I have based my arguments consists of new women's movement circulars such as magazines, newsletters and pamphlets created between the years 1972 and 1975.

Towards a transnational "second wave" feminist history

There have been few attempts to map the ways in which anti-EEC discourses and activism fit into the broader ideological frameworks according to which Swedish and Danish new women's movements operated in the early 1970s (Bertone, 1998; Dahlerup, 1998; Elgán, 2015; Sandaker Glomm, 2011). This is also true for the historiography accounting for feminist activism in the rest of Europe, with questions surrounding feminist responses to the EEC receiving little to no attention. Similarly, there is limited existing research into Scandinavian or Nordic feminist campaigns regarding other key Cold War -era intergovernmental organizations such as NATO. Overall, research into grassroots feminist activists' entanglements with Cold War -era intergovernmental organizations has tended to focus on the United Nations, with the UN Decade for Women—including the World Conferences held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985—being of

particular interest to gender historians (Bonfiglioli, 2016; Ghodsee, 2019; Kjærsgaard, 2018; Olcott, 2017). A study of Swedish and Danish new women's movements' anti-EEC campaigning adds to this subgenre of transnational feminist historiography.

As a methodological approach, transnational history offers the historian an avenue into interpreting historical phenomena that cross cultural, linguistic, national and geopolitical borders (Iriye, 2004; Midgley, Twells, & Carlier, 2016). This article straddles two transnational developments that took place during the first half of the 1970s: firstly, the transnationally intertwined development of feminist thought and praxis in Denmark and Sweden and secondly, the inherently transnational questions raised by the expansion of European economic and political integration. Regarding the transnational development of Swedish and Danish feminist activism during the 1970s, there is a limited historiography detailing the histories of new women's movement groups and organizations in the Nordic region more broadly, and a plethora of this literature has been confined to developments within a specific country or city (Dahlerup, 1986; Elgán, 2017; Isaksson, 2007). There are even fewer studies focused on grassroots feminist activism and organizing from a transnational perspective (Andersson, 2012; Bergman, 1999; Dahlerup & Gulli, 1985). By going beyond any single country's concrete or intellectual borders, this article—and transnational history overall—transcends nation-state centred historical writing and “methodological nationalism” (Curthoys & Lake, 2005; McGerr, 1991; Saunier, 2008). In other words, this article challenges and accentuates the predominantly national framing of so-called “second wave” feminism, to which the Swedish and Danish new women's movements also belonged. Instead of habitually applied and often nationally or locally demarcated frames of reference, such as membership demographics and challenges to local or national legislation, in this article I identify transnational connections tangibly interlinking Swedish and Danish anti-EEC protest tactics and highlight feminist responses to transnational legislative questions posed by the prospects of Sweden and Denmark joining the EEC.

The evidence discussed in this article originates from Swedish and Danish groups that subscribed to what can be termed “left feminism” (de Haan, 2010), where women's oppression was viewed in conjunction with a broader understanding of social and structural inequality. Though local and national particularities meant that the groups of which the movements comprised were neither homogenous nor uniform, in both Sweden and Denmark the movements' overall outlooks combined socialist and feminist thought, often functioning under the slogan “no feminism without socialism, no socialism without feminism”. During the early 1970s forming transnational links with women across the world was also of paramount importance to Danish and Swedish socialist feminists, which often led to activists in both countries grappling with what it meant to be a woman and a feminist in an increasingly interconnected world. From performing comradeship with “Third World” revolutionary women on the pages of women's movement magazines to partaking in women's liberation conferences across Europe and further afield, grassroots activists belonging to the new women's movements in Denmark and Sweden were repeatedly confronted by questions regarding exactly how to navigate international solidarity between women and whether the notion of a “global sisterhood” had its limits (Yoken, 2020).

Reflecting on the history of “second wave” feminism, Mann and Huffman have noted how during the 1970s essentialist phrases like “as a woman”, “sisterhood” and a generalized “we”, which were meant as unifying expressions, became what Elizabeth Spelman referred to in 1988 as the fractionalizing “Trojan horse of feminist ethnocentrism” (Archer Mann & Huffman, 2005, p. 59; Spelman, 1988, p. x). In the words of Black feminist author Audre Lorde (2000), the pretence of one homogenous experience—in the United States and elsewhere—was captured in the notion of “sisterhood”, while in fact white women focused on their subjugation as women and disregarded the differences of race, sexual preference, class and age. In hindsight, the book *Sisterhood Is Global*, edited by Robin Morgan, and to which Danish and Swedish feminist thinkers and activists also contributed, has come to represent the universalizing tendencies of “second wave” feminism (Adams & Thomas, 2010). In the book Morgan (1985) argued that there was a “common condition (. . .) experienced by all human beings who are born female” (p. 4). As Amrita Basu (1995) wrote in

the mid-1990s, Morgan's understanding of global sisterhood was flawed in its limited grasp of the degree to which women's experiences differed and women's movements were locally situated. Much of this retrospective criticism, including critiques voiced about feminism's history and present day in the Nordic region, have utilized the concept of intersectionality to elucidate what was missing from feminist analyses stemming from "the second wave" of the 1970s.²

Traces of these universalizing tendencies were also present in Danish and Swedish socialist feminist thought of the era. For example, an article published in the Swedish Grupp 8's periodical *Kvinnobulletinen* [Women's Bulletin] in 1973 argued that much of the patriarchal oppression faced by women in the developing world, referred to as "the tropic", could be equated to the grievances of women in Sweden, with female circumcision being compared to the myth of the vaginal orgasm and "the veil"—referring to the hijab, niqab and burka—being equated with Western women feeling the need to wear makeup, wigs and uncomfortable shoes (Stövling, 1973, pp. 24–27). The universalizing tendencies and blind spots regarding intersectionality they fostered have also elicited debate in recent Scandinavian feminist scholarship. In a 2020 article, the Danish-Swedish gender studies scholar and former Danish new women's movement member Nina Lykke critically examined the "epistemologies of ignorance" regarding race, racism and white privilege in local Scandinavian contexts, which she interprets as having been part of Nordic socialist feminist thought and praxis during the 1970s. She articulates a paradox, where Nordic socialist feminist activists were highly attentive to questions surrounding class and protested (neo)imperialist and (neo)colonialist racism in, for example, Vietnam, Palestine and South Africa, while being simultaneously entrenched in left-wing eurocentrism. Lykke identifies a universalizing "white European working class lenses", which shaped the region's socialist feminists' world views (Lykke, 2020, p. 198). However, as I will argue in this article, a focus on socialist feminist anti-EEC activism reveals another paradox: the universalizing lens applied by Swedish and Danish new women's movements to questions surrounding the EEC was not *broadly* European but rather *distinctly* tied to national and regional identity, with socialist feminists in the two Scandinavian countries sharing a frame of reference that distinguished Swedish and Danish women from their counterparts in Southern and Central Europe.

Much of the research deconstructing the history of the Cold War - era "sisterhood is global" narrative has rightly focused on tracing, and at times triangulating, power relations between women situated in Western Europe and North America, socialist countries and the Global South. In this article, the analytical focus stays within Europe, but incorporates lessons learned from this global feminist scholarship. The themes raised in this article speak to an important yet overlooked aspect of women's history, notably the differences observed and hierarchies created by feminist activists *within* Western-aligned capitalist Europe. As the opening examples of this article demonstrate, at times socialist feminist campaigns opposing Sweden and Denmark joining the EEC attempted to promote the notion of a "global sisterhood", relying on the discourse establishing essentialist equivalencies between all women regardless of geopolitical location. Simultaneously however, the material produced in opposition to EEC-membership by Swedish and Danish socialist feminists was marked by ethnocentric cultural value judgements and hierarchy-fostering political assertions, which presented Scandinavian women as more privileged and progressive than women in Central and Southern Europe. As this article will demonstrate, by focusing on Swedish and Danish new women's movements' campaigns of the early 1970s against the EEC, a thorny, complex and at times self-contradictory story regarding intra-European feminist solidarity unfolds.

Transnationally reverberant socialist feminist protest culture

In 1957 six Western European nations (France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) met in the Italian capital Rome and signed a treatise which established what became known as the EEC. The EEC was founded as an agricultural and industrial customs union, the aim of which was to create a European economic area, liberalize trade and retain the potential of becoming a political union (Gilbert, 2012). In the early 1970s a wave of wide-scale socio-political

debate regarding European integration took place in both Denmark and Sweden. In Denmark, feminist campaigns opposing European integration had a clear focal point: they targeted the October 1972 referendum on Danish EEC membership, in which the Danish people ended up voting in favour of membership by over sixty percent and with a ninety percent voter turnout (Petersen & Elklit, 1973). In Sweden, national discussions regarding EEC membership wavered throughout the 1960s and 1970s, often garnering stark criticism from the Swedish Left, with campaigns waxing and waning accordingly (Makko, 2012). During the first half of the 1960s, Sweden prospectively joining the EEC was interpreted as going against the country's non-aligned status, due to the United States endorsing the EEC and several of its member states belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. In the latter part of the decade, public and political opinion shifted and in 1967 Sweden applied for full EEC membership. Under Prime Minister Olof Palme's leadership, discussions between Sweden and the EEC continued into the early 1970s with a renewed emphasis on Sweden needing to retain a non-aligned foreign policy. However, in the spring of 1971 Palme declared that EEC membership was irreconcilable with Sweden's politically neutral status. Instead, Sweden formed a free trade agreement with the EEC, which came into effect in 1973. The agreement fell short of formal membership and therefore retained Sweden's neutral Cold War -era political status (Ekengren, 2011; Hancock, 1972; Karlsson, 2020).

At the same time, in the early 1970s, both Denmark and Sweden saw the emergence of the new women's movement. Meaningfully shaped at the local and national levels by transnational transfers of feminist ideas into, between and out of Scandinavia, Danish and Swedish socialist feminist thought and praxis were connected to one another, and to the global second feminist wave, thanks to the border-crossing circulation of ideas and practices via the international travels of people and texts (Yoken, 2020). The most well-known and historicized campaigns the Swedish and Danish new women's movements initiated include demands for better working conditions for women, affordable and accessible childcare, and abortion rights, thus striving for policy change and legal reform on the national level. Much of the Swedish evidence discussed in this article was produced by women belonging to Grupp 8 and SKV, which defined themselves as independent socialist women's organization focused on rejecting both bourgeois society and patriarchal culture (Isaksson, 2007). Like Grupp 8 and SKV, the Danish Rødstrømpebevægelsen and Kvindefronten believed a socialist society was a necessity in order to eliminate the oppression and exploitation of women (Dahlerup, 1998). These links between the New Left and socialist feminist activism were particularly pronounced in the early 1970s, during the advent of the new women's movement. For example, Danish sociologist Drude Dahlerup (1998) has argued that the Rødstrømpebevægelsen's anti-EEC activism was one of three key campaigns to take place during the movement's so-called "first phase" in the early 1970s, alongside campaigns for abortion rights and equal pay.

Within the Swedish and Danish new women's movements of the early 1970s, questions specific to women's rights therefore intersected with other topics debated contemporaneously within the broader left-wing socio-political arena. The primary reason provided by Swedish and Danish new women's movement groups against EEC membership was based on a socialist reading of economic outcomes, notably how European integration would worsen the labour rights of the proletariat—both women and men. In other words, socialist feminist activists were worried that the freedom of movement of people, goods and capital within the EEC would lead to worsened outcomes for the Scandinavian working classes in terms of their economic realities and political rights. In conveying these economic reservations, Swedish and Danish women's movements circulated stories that served as warnings of what would happen if Sweden or Denmark were to join the EEC, notably how the free movement of capital and labour could lead to devastating redundancies. For example, Rødstrømpebevægelsen members depicted how women working in a Belgian weapons factory had gone on strike demanding equal pay, only to have production be moved to West Germany ('Kvinde og EEC', 1972, p. 3). Grupp 8 similarly detailed how the multinational footwear company Bata had expanded its production to Sweden, capturing the country's shoe market and buying up the Swedish company Oscaria, only for Swedish production to be shut down and moved to countries with cheaper labour ('Kvinnor/Kamrater! EEC',

1971). Therefore, while national particularities dictated the overall outcomes of anti-EEC campaigning of the early 1970s, with Denmark joining the regional organization in 1972 and Sweden abstaining from formal membership, the discourses circulated by socialist feminists in Sweden and Denmark largely resembled each other and emphasized how class inequalities intersected with women's rights. The reason for these similarities was in part that the Swedish and Danish new women's movements originated from the same transnational wave of socialist feminist activism. This mirroring was also due to tangible transnational transfers of feminist protest culture between the two Scandinavian countries.

The Rødstrømpebevægelsen took concrete grassroots action in the lead up to the 1972 referendum. In the months prior, the movement's Aarhus chapter took it upon itself to translate and circulate the Sullerot Report, a confidential study authorized by the Commission of the European Communities and colloquially named after its author, the French sociologist Evelyn Sullerot. Commissioned in 1968 and published initially in 1970, the Sullerot Report provided a critical overview of the economic circumstances and employment practices of women in EEC member states, with Sullerot noting in the report's introduction:

It is obvious that countries of the European Community have done nothing to draw up a common policy on the situation of women. This is at a time when the USSR is taking stock of its policy on women and the United States is taking stock and pursuing an active policy with regard to review in the field. (Commission of the European Communities, 1970, p. 10)

The report, which the Aarhus activists had translated into Danish from a German language copy accessed via contacts in Brussels, was distributed nationally and caused an uproar within Danish politics and the country's mainstream media (Dahlerup, 1998). The Danish translation of the Sullerot report was quickly circulated across Scandinavia amongst socialist feminists as an act of regional border-crossing solidarity, reaching Swedish SKV activists who published a lengthy summary of the report in their magazine *Vi Mänskor* [Us Humans] (Armbruster, 1972, pp. 5–7, 10). In both Sweden and Denmark, socialist feminists relied on disseminating similar discourses, arguing that Sullerot's analysis focused on elevating women's socio-economic status to that enjoyed by men, rather than Sullerot fully challenging the structural inequalities that led to the subjugation of women under capitalist patriarchy. The transnational circulation of the Sullerot report, as well as the strong socialist grounding of Nordic feminist ideology in the 1970s, thus explains why the discourses of the Swedish and Danish socialist feminist anti-EEC campaigns mirrored each other.

The Rødstrømpebevægelsen's campaign opposing EEC membership was distinctly anti-establishment in character, with women's groups organizing their own demonstrations and rallying together with other leftist social movement groups under the umbrella organization Folkebevægelsen mod EF [The People's Movement against the EEC] (Dahlerup, 1998; 'EEC-gruppen', 1972; 'Referaat fra koo.mødet den 4.sept.', 1974). Partaking in anti-EEC demonstrations was the cause of internal tensions for Danish socialist feminists, with questions arising regarding the extent to which the topic fit within women's movement activism *in toto*. In the fall of 1971 activists belonging the Rødstrømpebevægelsen in Aarhus initiated a new working group focused on protesting Danish EEC membership. The following spring the working group, which consisted by this point of over thirty women, was criticized by the movement's local chapter at large, who disapproved of the EEC-group having worked with other anti-EEC campaigners without the general consensus of the Aarhus Rødstrømpebevægelsen. This organizational criticism was nevertheless followed by a clarification, stating that the stance of the working group opposing Denmark joining the EEC was not a problem in and of itself:

It's rather clear that we have to be opponents [of the EEC] due to our more or less socialist underpinnings – or due to the economic and social legislations of the common market, which oppress women. ('Angående Rødstrømpernes EEC-arbejde', 1972)

As was the case in Denmark, in Sweden socialist feminist activists joined broader leftist coalitions opposing the EEC. For example, members of Grupp 8 took part in Nej till EEC [No to the EEC], a group that facilitated communication between revolutionary and party political leftist individuals opposing European economic integration ('Kvinnor/Kamrater! EEC', 1971). These examples demonstrate that in neither Sweden nor Denmark was the new women's movement a social movement monolith. Instead, feminist activists in both countries were intertwined with other contemporaneous social movements and constantly attempting to incorporate women as a significant category of socialist analysis.

In Sweden anti-EEC campaigns led by socialist feminists were distinctly gendered, with activists from Grupp 8 and SKV forming the Stockholm-based advocacy group Kvinnor mot EEC [Women Against EEC] in 1973. The group showed deep concerns regarding how a free trade agreement with the EEC would reduce Swedish women's standard of living ('Kvinnor mot EEC'; 'Vad kan vi sätta emot?', 1973). Despite economic arguments being at the forefront of Kvinnor mot EEC's political agenda, the group advocated for the creation of an active women's protest culture: in addition to more traditional means of protest, like organizing public demonstrations, leafleting and seeking representation in the mainstream media, the group encouraged women to channel their energy into artistic endeavours, ranging from fine arts to handicrafts. Women's creative protest culture—including events dedicated to singing ("sångkvallad"), film screenings and group study—was described by Kvinnor mot EEC as "the best weapon" women could wield against the EEC ('Vad kan vi sätta emot?', 1973).

Based on an analysis of articles published in Grupp 8's periodical *Kvinnobulletinen* in 1971, Elisabeth Elgán (2015) has posited that anti-EEC discourses tended to be presented in gender-neutral socialist terms rather than as issues specifically affecting women. A study of material published by Kvinnor mot EEC from 1973 to 1974 reveals a more explicitly feminist discourse emerging by the mid-1970s, in which anti-EEC protest was tied to what was known as kvinnokultur, or women's culture. Reverberant of, but not directly analogous with, the English-language term "cultural feminism", kvinnokultur as a theoretical concept was introduced in a 1973 essay written by women's movement activist Louise Waldén and published in SKV's magazine *Vi Männskor*. Waldén defined kvinnokultur as a "culture created by women" aimed at challenging patriarchal societal norms. Inspired by the Marxist writing of Frantz Fanon and Sheila Rowbotham, during the 1970s kvinnokultur transformed from a theoretical perspective to a palpable grassroots-level project, marked by women's artistic output and creative approaches to protest politics (Isaksson, 2007). Compared to Sweden, Danish "kvindekultur" was a less theoretical and more practice-oriented project. It was marked by its egalitarian and collective practices, and its emphasis on all women being equally capable of cultural production regardless of them being professionals or amateurs (Dahlerup, 1998).

In line with kvinno/kvindekultur, and populist agitprop approaches to political campaigning of the time more broadly, the anti-EEC print culture produced by Swedish and Danish socialist feminists placed an emphasis on visual imagery, notably satirical cartoons and provocative caricatures. The illustrations of women's experiences and rights in existing EEC member states were designed to act as shocking warnings, emphasizing the capitalist misogyny women in Central and Southern Europe were regularly subjected to and that Scandinavian women would be faced with if Sweden and Denmark were to join the EEC. For example, the imagery printed in the Swedish *Vi Männskor* included a typecast depiction of a dark haired, crucifix pendant wearing and homely Catholic Southern European "mother", surrounded by her four children (Armbruster, 1972; Lidén, 1972). In Denmark too, *Rødstrømpebladet* depicted a German man in hunting uniform walking not only his dog on a lead but also a pearl-wearing bourgeois woman. Similarly, an Italian man was portrayed as sitting on the back of a naked woman, treating her like a bench, while he read about the rights of women from a newspaper ('Kvinde og EEC', 1972). An analysis of the visual culture

produced by Swedish and Danish activists therefore adds to the notion that these anti-EEC campaigns were the sites of cultural value judgements, where subtle yet perceptible hierarchies were fashioned between Scandinavia and the less developed central and southern regions of Europe.

These examples demonstrate that the flow of Swedish and Danish socialist feminist protest culture in the early 1970s was transnational, with information circulating between activists located in different national settings—the transnational lineage identified above moving from Belgium to Denmark and on to Sweden. However, the discourses that were produced by Swedish and Danish feminist activists as the result of these transnational flows of information were starkly aware of economic, political, cultural and historical differences between women. The EEC furthermore provided Danish and Swedish new women’s movements a tangible framework through which to compare and contrast women’s standings in different European nation states, which led to the circulation of subtle yet noteworthy discourses hierarchically differentiating between women’s realities in Scandinavia in comparison to Central and Southern Europe.

Socialist feminist anti-EEC campaigns: a site of juxtaposing discourses

During the first half of the 1970s, Swedish and Danish socialist feminists’ anti-EEC campaigns circulated discourses that were not analogous with other contemporaneous women’s movement campaigns (Elgán, 2015). An illuminating example of these concurrent yet juxtaposing discourses can be found in socialist feminist discussions surrounding migration. Throughout the 1970s, Swedish and Danish new women’s movements framed their relationship to immigrant women using a discourse that emphasized an abstract solidarity and shared struggle: immigrant women—primarily the wives of guest workers—living in the two Scandinavian countries were understood as being subjected to both capitalist and patriarchal forms of oppression, in addition to being discriminated against as foreigners. This ethos was reflected in the slogans used by feminist activists in both Denmark and Sweden. For example, the Danish group Kvindefronten campaigned on behalf of immigrants and foreign workers under the catchphrase:

Foreign workers and Danish women stand together in the fight against being thrown out of the labour market and against being denied the right to unemployment benefit. (*Fremmedarbejderkvinder*, 1979, pp. 12–13)

In Sweden, Grupp 8 used a similar refrain, calling for a united front between workers, no matter what their country of origin: “Foreigners and Swedish workers have the same foes and must fight the same fight!” (Witt-Brattström, 1975, pp. 24–26, 28). However, within the auspices of new women’s movement campaigns opposing the EEC, migration became depicted as a site of enmity rather than solidarity. Freedom of movement was singled out as particularly damaging to Swedish women, with *Kvinnor mot EEC* emphasizing how Swedish women “refuse to be ‘guest workers’ in Europe—or ‘white widows’ in Sweden”, with the latter figure of speech referring to Swedish women being left behind if men were forced to move country in search of employment (*Kvinnor mot EEC!*, 1973, p. 19).

These discordant discourses were in part shaped by left-wing anti-EEC sentiments within Swedish and Danish society outwith the confines of the new women’s movement (Ekengren, 2011; Svensson, 2021). This is supported by Elgán’s 2015 argument that in the early 1970s Grupp 8’s anti-EEC discourse largely steered clear of gendered analyses. I interpret this as suggesting that much of the initial socialist feminist discourse surrounding the EEC was adapted by the Swedish new women’s movement from broader socialist campaigning. The same conclusion can be extended to Denmark, where the *Rødstrømperne* campaigned closely with the leftist organization *Folkebevægelsen mod EF*. However, of significant importance was also an overarching understanding among Swedish and Danish socialist feminists that the socioeconomic position of women in the region was relatively strong vis-à-vis women in Central and Southern Europe. Having studied

Grupp 8's anti-EEC discourses, Elgán (2015) has aptly termed this approach as “welfare chauvinism”, or the notion that the Scandinavian welfare state was the only legitimate and well-functioning framework in Europe. Indeed, Kvinnor mot EEC adopted the protectionist and nationalist slogan “self-sufficient women in a self-sufficient Sweden” (“Kvinnor mot EG”). In Denmark too the notion of “welfare chauvinism” guided socialist feminists’ anti-EEC campaigning, with the Rødstrømperne producing hierarchical discourses meant to alert Danish women to their legislative privileges at the national level in comparison to women’s rights in existing EEC states:

West Germany even passed a law in 1967, according to which married women must have their spouse’s written permission in order to work. And the personal authority that Danish women acquired in 1899, Luxembourgish women do not have to this day. (‘Kvinde og EEC’, 1972)

Safeguarding women’s existing rights within Sweden and Denmark was only part of the argument being put forward, with activists in both countries sharing an understanding that EEC membership would take the nexus of political decision-making further from the populace and therefore hinder the Scandinavian new women’s movements’ abilities to meaningfully shape their national government’s legislative actions (‘Kvinnor mot EEC!’, 1973). This populist scepticism of supranationalism was also echoed in Swedish and Danish socialist feminists’ arguments that there was a lack of communication between the EEC, its existing member states and their citizens. An article published in *Kvinnobulletinen* rejected expert-led sentiments that the political and economic mechanisms of the EEC were too complicated for the average Swede to fully comprehend, instead emphasizing that everyday Swedish citizens were fully capable of making informed judgements regarding the EEC’s complexities (‘Kvinnor/Kamrater! EEC’, 1971). An article published in the Danish magazine *Kvinder* [Women], written after Denmark had joined the EEC, similarly described the country’s mainstream media as providing everyday Danes with insufficient information regarding the European organization’s inner working: “When we know nothing, we cannot ask any question” (Michael, 1975, p. 9).

The belief, that women’s overall position within Scandinavian society was relatively strong compared to the rest of Europe, in part explains why Swedish and Danish feminists framed the anti-EEC debates as a case of self-sufficient protectionism. The Swedish and Danish women’s movements were especially critical towards the harmonization of social policies within the EEC, which were interpreted as detrimental due to lowering Danish and Swedish welfare state standards. In Sweden, Kvinnor mot EEC argued that harmonization would impair opportunities for parental leave, child support, childcare and unemployment benefits, while the Copenhagen Rødstrømperne similarly posited that harmonization would inevitably benefit women living in countries with large gender pay gaps, and chip away at the degree of wage and pension parity already achieved in Scandinavia (‘Kvinde og EEC’, 1972; ‘Vad kan vi sätta emot?’, 1973). The Aarhus Rødstrømperne even explicitly noted that striving to lead by example was unrealistic under the EEC’s bureaucratic and male-dominated organizational structures (‘Angående Rødstrømpernes EEC-arbejde’, 1972). In the words of the Copenhagen Rødstrømperne:

We have enough problems in Denmark related to social policy, family law, and problems surrounding women’s equality. (...) We do not have the time, the power, or the desire to have all this destroyed or at best delayed in a common market, where the conditions of the common man in general are deteriorating, and where a woman is disadvantaged even more than she is in today’s Denmark. (‘Kvinde og EEC’, 1972, p. 5)

The discourse that the Swedish and Danish welfare states bolstered rather than hindered women’s political and economic rights was in stark contrast with the majority of claims made by the two countries’ new women’s movements during the first half of the 1970s. In both Sweden and Denmark, socialist feminist activists steadily campaigned for legal and social reform throughout the 1970s, demanding new and improved policies regarding women’s employment, access to childcare and rights to bodily autonomy (Dahlerup, 1998; Elgán, 2015). Archival evidence from Denmark suggests that this juxtaposition within socialist feminist discourse was recognized at the

time and discussed within the ranks of the Rødstrømpebevægelsen: in 1972 the movement's Aarhus faction discussed how "a narrow nationalist" reading of the Danish capitalist "fatherland" as worth defending from the EEC's subjugation needed to be rejected and what had to be emphasized instead was "the anti-imperialist nature of the anti-EEC struggle" ('Angående Rødstrømpernes EEC-arbejde', 1972). In Sweden too, a reader letter protesting the Vietnam War published in *Kvinnobulletinen* in 1972 portrayed Sweden's potential EEC membership as "one of the many pages of Swedish imperialism" ('Brev om Vietnam—Stöd FNL', 1972, p. 43). Therefore, in both Sweden and Denmark, the new women's movements' perspectives regarding their respective countries' EEC membership were coloured by a myriad of competing discourses, oscillating between nationalist protectionism and self-sufficiency and anti-imperialist socialist struggle. The new women's movements' campaigns against EEC membership in the early 1970s therefore provide a complex case study within Cold War -era feminist historiography, where the Swedish and Danish welfare states were contemporaneously depicted as both targets of critical socialist feminist scrutiny and valuable national institutions worthy of feminist safeguarding.

During the lead up to the Danish EEC referendum in 1972, campaigners who supported European integration framed the Danish new women's movement as not showing sufficient solidarity towards its sisters in EEC countries and the Danish socialist feminists were accused of not practising the international sisterhood and solidarity that they preached. This criticism, that campaigning against EEC membership was a betrayal of a transnational sisterhood, clearly struck a chord with the movement. Still in 1975, three years after the Danish referendum, Rødstrømperne members in Aarhus lamented the negative public attention the movement had received due to their staunchly anti-EEC stance:

They attempted to use our own concept of 'sister solidarity'. That if we said no, it was because we were showing non-solidarity towards women in the European countries that we saw as having it worse than us. (Michael, 1975, pp. 9–10)

The immediate response to this negative publicity, published in an internal newsletter in 1972, emphasized how supporting capitalist political structures rather than striving for socialist alternatives would be a betrayal of "international sister solidarity across all borders" ('Angående Rødstrømpernes EEC-arbejde', 1972). This exchange of critiques and responses underlines a main source of these paradoxical discourses: the ideological impetuses that informed Swedish and Danish new women's movements were influenced by both feminist *and* socialist thought. The hybridization of these two distinct vectors of influence during the first half of the 1970s resulted in both internal and external divergences and juxtaposing interpretations regarding the limits of international solidarity and "global sisterhood".

Conclusion

In the 1984 compendium *Sisterhood is Global* Irish feminist activist Nell McCafferty contemplated how European integration had benefitted women in Ireland:

Membership in the European Economic Community has allowed some small winds of change to blow our way and shed light into the ghetto. The sight of sisters beyond these shores is a continual comfort - (McCafferty, 1985, p. 455)

McCafferty's sentiment is notably more affirmative than the perspectives encoded into the print culture and circulars produced by Swedish and Danish new women's movements during the first half of the 1970s. As I have argued, the discourses regarding EEC membership disseminated by new women's movements in these two Scandinavian national contexts mirrored one another due to a shared commitment to feminism *and* socialism, with both ideologies shaping the ways in which the movements approached European integration. This mirroring was also the result of transnationally circulated protest culture. Despite these border-crossing flows of information, national particularities led to very different outcomes, with Denmark joining the EEC in 1972 and Sweden

retaining its distance to the regional organization. I have accordingly contended that socialist feminist anti-EEC protest in both countries was tied to national and regional identities, which at times resulted in complex and even contradictory assertions and interpretations regarding intra-European women's solidarity. Most importantly, by using a transnational approach to study Danish and Swedish socialist feminist history, this article begins to unravel patterns of nationally situated hierarchical thinking present among "second wave" activists within Western aligned capitalist Europe. As a case study, my analyses surrounding anti-EEC socialist feminist campaigns also broaden the existing historiography surrounding gender and transnational organizations in the Cold War -era.

Finally, it is important to remember that questions regarding European integration had longevity beyond the early 1970s—and thus the temporal focus of this article—and by no means did questions regarding the EEC fully disappear from Swedish and Danish new women's movements' agendas in the 1980s nor the 1990s. In 1982 Kvindefronten printed a short article on women's rights in Greenland, which emphasized the imperialist implications when Denmark had joined the EEC in 1972: in essence, according to feminist activists, the Danish bourgeoisie had sold Denmark to the ECC, with its colony Greenland having little say in the matter ('Grønland', 1983; 'Grønland ud af EF', 1982). In Sweden European integration became a prevalent topic once again in the early 1990s: in the lead up to the country's 1994 referendum on European Union membership both *Kvinnobulletinen* and *Vi Mänskor* published multiple articles urging women to once again vote "no". Even in today's political climate the relationship between feminism and European integration is still prevalent: in May 2014 the Swedish political party Feministiskt Initiativ (Feminist Initiative, *F!*) gained a seat in the European Parliament, making it the first openly feminist party to do so (Wendt, 2016). It is therefore crucial for historians to (re-)focus on Cold War -era debates surrounding European integration from a feminist perspective, without shying away from the complex and even juxtaposing histories this might foster.

Notes

1. I have chosen to term the feminist groups discussed in this article as belonging to the Swedish and Danish new women's movements. Much like the term "new feminism", which has been applied to postwar feminist activism in European countries like France and Italy, the new women's movement is commonly used within Nordic scholarship to demarcate the grassroots-level feminist organizing that took place from the late 1960s into the 1990s. I write about the Nordic new women's movements—in the plural—to emphasize how the region's feminist activism comprised of a plethora of homogenous and at times even oppositional groups and organizations.
2. Intersectionality refers to "the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation—economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in *historically specific contexts*" and cannot be differentiated into separate and self-contained categories. Brahm and Phoenix (2004). Emphasis my own.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council in doctoral training partnership with the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities; and Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Notes on contributor

Hannah Kaarina Yoken doctoral thesis (University of Glasgow, 2020) investigated the transnational development of feminist activism in Finland, Sweden and Denmark from the 1960s into the 1990s. Her PhD research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in doctoral training partnership with the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (2016–2019) and by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (2020). In the autumn of 2018 she was a visiting doctoral researcher at Stockholm University, in partnership with the Swedish Labour Movement's Archives and Library. Yoken has expertise in multilingual oral history methodology and extensive experience conducting transnational archival research. Her work has been featured in numerous publications, in both English and Finnish. She has worked as a Learning, Teaching & Scholarship Tutor and Lecturer in History at the University of Glasgow and as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. She is working on turning her doctoral research into a monograph with the help of funding from the Ella & Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation.

References

- Adams, M., & Thomas, G. (2010). Transnational feminist activism and globalizing women's movements. In R. A. Denmark (Ed.), *The international studies encyclopaedia* (pp. 7170–7188). London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Andersson, I. (2012). I Köpenhamn var den feministiska världen större och mer spännande: Dansk feminism som inspiration och utmaning för feminister på andra sidan sundet under 1970-talet. *Gränslös. Tidskrift För Studier Av Öresundsregionens Historia, Kultur Och Samhällsliv*, 1(1), 31–41.
- Angående Rødstrømpernes EEC-arbejde. (1972, April). *Rødstrømperne I Århus: Foreningsblader Rødstrømpen*, 10.
- Archer Mann, S., & Huffman, D. J. (2005). The decentering of second wave feminism and the rise of the third wave. *Science & Society*, 69(1), 56–91.
- Armbruster, U. (1972). Kvinnan i EEC. *Vi Mänskor*, 4(5–7), 10.
- Armbruster, U., Bjerck, B., Bonnevie Hjort, M. B., Clayhills, H., Felicetti, S., Granell, I., . . . Waldén, L. (1974). *Kvinnor i alla länder*. Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag.
- Basu, A. (1995). *The challenges of local feminism: Women's movements in global perspectives*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bergman, S. (1999). Women in new social movements. In C. Berqvist, A. Borchort, A. Christensen, V. Ramstedt-Silén, N. C. Raaum, & A. Styrkásdóttir (Eds.), *Equal democracies?: Gender and politics in the Nordic countries* (pp. 97–117). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Bertone, C. (1998). Constructing a women's perspective on the European Union: The Danish debate. *Nora: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 6(2), 108–121.
- Bonfiglioli, C. (2016). The first UN world conference on women (1975) as a cold war encounter: recovering anti-imperialist non-aligned and socialist genealogies. *Filozofija I Društvo*, 27(3), 521–541.
- Brah, A., & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I A woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(3), 75–86.
- Brev om Vietnam – Stöd FNL. (1972). *Kvinnobulletinen*, 2–3, 43.
- Commission of the European Communities. (1970). *The employment of women and the problems it raises in the member states of the European community*. Abridged version of Mrs E. Sullerot's report.
- Curthoys, A., & Lake, M. (2005). Introduction. In A. Curthoys & M. Lake (Eds.), *Connected worlds: History in transnational perspective* (pp. 5–20). Canberra: The Australian National University Press.
- Dahlerup, D., & Gulli, B. (1985). Women's organizations in the Nordic countries: Lack of force or counterforce? The new women's liberation movement in the Nordic countries. In E. Haavio-Mannila & T. Skard (Eds.), *Unfinished democracy: Women in Nordic politics* (pp. 22–34). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Dahlerup, D. (1986). Is the new women's movement dead? Decline or change of the Danish movement. In D. Dahlerup (Ed.), *The new women's movement: Feminism and political power in Europe and the USA* (pp. 217–243). London: Sage Publication.
- Dahlerup, D. (1998). *Rødstrømperne – Den danske Rødstrømpebevægelses udvikling, nytænkning og gennemslag 1970–1985 bind I & II*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- de Haan, F. (2010). Continuing cold war paradigms in Western historiography of transnational women's organisations: The case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). *Women's History Review*, 19(4), 547–573.
- EEC-gruppen. (1972, April). *Rødstrømperne I Århus: Foreningsblader Rødstrømpen*, 10.
- Ekegren, A. (2011). How ideas influence decision-making: Olof Palme and Swedish foreign policy, 1965–1975. *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36(2), 117–134.
- Elgán, E. (2015). *Att Ge Sig Själv Makt: Grupp 8 och 1970-talets feminism*. Gothenburg: Makadam Förlag.
- Elgán, E. (2017). The myth and the archives: Some reflections on Swedish feminism in the 1970s. In K. Schulz (Ed.), *The women's liberation movement: Impacts and outcomes* (pp. 285–297). New York and Oxford: Berghahn.
- Fremmedarbejderkvinder – danske kvinder stå stamen. (1979). *Kvindefronten*, 6, 12–13.

- Ghodsee, K. (2019). *Second world, second sex: Socialist women's activism and global solidarity during the Cold War*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Gilbert, M. (2012). *European integration: A concise history*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Grønland. (1983). *Kvindefronten*, 19, 4–6.
- Grønland ud af EF. (1982). *Kvindefronten*, 10, 6.
- Hancock, D. M. (1972). Sweden, Scandinavia and the EEC. *International Affairs*, 48(3), 424–437.
- Iriye, A. (2004). Transnational history' [review article]. *Contemporary European History*, 13(2), 211–222.
- Isaksson, E. (2007). *Kvinnokamp - Synen på underordning och motstånd i den nya kvinnorörelsen*. Stockholm: Atlas.
- Karlsson, B. (2020). Two cartel regimes. Swedish paper cartels and the EEC in the 1970s. *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 68(3), 254–269.
- Kjærsgaard, K. (2018). International arenas and domestic institution formation: The impact of the UN women's conferences in Denmark, 1975–1985. *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*, 36(3), 271–286.
- Kvinde og EEC. (1972). *Rødstrømpebladet*, 5, 2–7.
- Kvinnor mot EEC!. (1973). *Vi Mänkor*, 1, 19.
- Kvinnor mot EG, B77:2. Andra vågens kvinnorörelse, KvinnSam, Göteborgs universitetsbibliotek.
- Kvinnor/Kamrater! EEC (1971). *Kvinnobulletinen*, 2, 22–27.
- Lidén, A. (1972). Att leta efter kvinnobilder. *Vi Mänkor*, 2, 20–24.
- Lorde, A. (2000). Age, race, class, and sex: Women redefining women. In W. Komar & F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist theory: A reader* (pp. 288–293). Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing.
- Lykke, N. (2020). Transversal dialogues on intersectionality, socialist feminism and epistemologies of ignorance. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 28(3), 197–210.
- Makko, A. (2012). Sweden, Europe and the cold war: A reappraisal. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 14(2), 68–97.
- McCafferty, N. (1985). Ireland(s): Coping with the womb and the border. In R. Morgan (Ed.), *Sisterhood is global: The international women's movement anthology* (pp. 451–457). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- McGerr, M. (1991). The price of the "new transnational history". *American Historical Review*, 96(4), 1056–1067.
- Michael, P. (1975, February). EF og kvinderne. *Kvinder*, 1, 9–11.
- Midgley, C., Twells, A., & Carlier, J. (2016). Introduction. In C. Midgley, A. Twells, & J. Carlier (Eds.), *Women in transnational history: Connecting the local and the global* (pp. 1–10). London: Routledge.
- Morgan, R. (1985). *Sisterhood is global: The international women's movement anthology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Olcott, J. (2017). *International women's year: The greatest consciousness-raising event in history*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Petersen, N., & Elklit, J. (1973). Denmark enters the European communities. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 8(A8), 198–213.
- Referaat fra koo.mødet den 4.sept. 1974. *Det Interne Blad for København*, 7.
- Sandaker Glomm, A. (2011). Marx says no to the EEC - Nordic artists against the 1972 eec membership campaigns. In K. Vincent & J. F. Botero-Garcia (Eds.), *Voices: Postgraduate perspectives on interdisciplinarity* (pp. 126–158). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Saunier, P. (2008). Learning by doing: Notes about the making of the Palgrave dictionary of transnational history. *Journal of Modern European History*, 6(2), 159–180.
- Spelman, E. V. (1988). *Inessential woman*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Stövling, B. (1973). Kvinnoförtryck – En exotisk företeelse? *Kvinnobulletinen*, 3–4, 24–27.
- Svensson, P. (2021). The Irish and Danish 1972 referendums on EC accession. In J. Smith (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of european referendums* (pp. 429–448). Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Vad kan vi sätta emot? (1973). *Vi Mänkor*, 3, 15.
- Wendt, M. (2016). Undermining women's political agency: Media coverage of Feministisk Initiativ (Fi), Sweden's first feminist political party. *New Feminist Research/Nouvelles Recherches Féministes*, 34(3–4), 81–101.
- Witt-Brattström, E. (1975). Invandrarkvinnan mångdubbelt förtryckt. *Kvinnobulletinen*, 4, 24–26, 28.
- Yoken, H. K. (2020) *Nordic transnational feminist activism: The new women's movements in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, 1960s-1990s* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Glasgow.