

The focus of the book is on the emergence of the modern mass society under intense struggles about how to shape the future. The period between 1830 and 1920 was the time between two major revolutions. Its distinctive mark was the belief in progress and the opposition to this belief. The society could and should be improved through political and economic achievements. However, the road towards democracy was not straight and easy. The contradictions and the interest conflicts were often strong, because there were many competitors about setting the agenda for the future. The outcomes of the conflicts were never given beforehand. One frontline was between monarchical and people's sovereignty. Many conflicts in what from the 1830s onwards began to be called the social issue looked for their solutions. The same is true for the struggle between employers and employees, organised capital and organised labour. Other stumbling-blocks were the education issue, the place of the Lutheran state church in society, and the emerging feminism. All these conflicts were negotiated in a country that ever more came to be marked by mass media and new consumption opportunities. The book also describes how Sweden became a small power surrounded by big powers. The oppositions and conflicts between Russia, Britain, and, from the 1870s, Germany, made it crucial for the Swedish political elite to define and find a realistic power position in the Baltic region. The foreign politics were consequently contested. An important point of this conflict dealt with the Union Sweden-Norway (1814-1905). Sweden is seen in a global and European perspective from the viewpoints of politics, economy and culture.