

Comments and Reviews

Voitto Helander & Dag Anckar: *Consultation and Political Culture. Essays on the Case of Finland. Commentationes Scientiarum Socialium 19: Tammissaari-Ekenäs, 1983. 198 p.*

During the last two decades, political institutions and political cultures of the Western democracies have undergone profound changes. New styles of policy making and interest intermediation have developed. Interest organizations have begun increasingly to collaborate with each other and with the government. In many countries, the relations between organizations and the government have become more and more centralized. The policy style in this neo-corporatist arena is consensual and encompassing. Decisions have been made with a unanimity rule and there is a tendency to make large policy packages.

In this process a new kind of elite culture has developed. Formerly political cultures were divided according to class borders and ideological borders; there were leaders and followers in each subculture. In the neo-corporatist interest intermediation, leaders of different political parties and interest organizations get used to collaborating with each other, their ways of thinking, world views and ideologies converge, and elites become tied to the "system rationality" of the society. The traditional "vertical" sub-cultures of the society disintegrate. The ties between elites and subjects get looser, and a new division between two cultures, elite culture and mass culture, grows up. As a result of this "horizontal" cultural sub-division, political decision-making has become less responsive to new articulated interests. Political parties and interest organizations to some extent lose their effectiveness in the articulation and aggregation of interests. In this situation new social movements have entered the political arena.

Voitto Helander and *Dag Anckar* have written a book dealing with the above-mentioned trends in Finnish societal development. In fact *Consultation and Political Culture* is a collection of essays prepared for different international conferences. In this book these essays appear in a revised form.

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The essay concentrates on the remarkable changes in the relations between interest organizations and the state, changes from a pluralist style of interest intermediation to a neocorporatist style of consultation, collaboration and decision-making. The most remarkable changes took place in the late 1960s and in the 1970s.

The next five chapters analyse structures and processes of neo-corporatism in Finland from different points of view. In one essay Helander describes and analyses interest representation in the Finnish committee system. In the process of corporatization, the role of interest organizations and especially the role of central confederations of the labour market has become more important. In another essay, Helander describes and analyses the system of incomes policy in Finland, its introduction in 1968, its stability in the 1970s, the institutional collaboration between the partners of the labour market, and the development of political and organizational support for the incomes policy system.

Helander and Anckar have together written two essays on the role of preparatory participation, consultative participation, bargaining and decision-making in the Finnish system of neo-corporatism. These essays, as well as the above mentioned ones, show that in the 1960s and 1970s there has been an increasing integration between government and interest organizations. In this process power structures have been centralized.

The authors shed light on the causes of corporatization, too. According to their analysis, the growth of the public sector has increased the inclination of organizations to participate in policy-making. Improvements in the organizational resource base increased the inclination of organizations to participate, as well as added to the need of the political system to incorporate organizations in policy-making. The rise of neo-corporatism also introduced a new ideology of global planning and comprehensive political decision-making.

In the last two essays of the book, the authors analyse changes in interest articulation. According to Helander, neo-corporatism has to a large extent unified elite culture in society. As a result of socio-economic development, there has also been a process of unification in the mass cultures of the society. But elite cultures and mass cultures have not developed in the same direction. As a result a new kind of cleavage between elite and the masses has developed.

This new cleavage gives rise to new social movements. In the last essay in the book Dag Anckar analyses the role of new social movements in interest articulation. He elaborates two possibilities. One possibility is that we analyse new social movements as promoters of interest articulation and interest aggregation, and as promoters of democracy. The other possibility is that new social movements fill mass media with information and political decision-

making agendas with problems that will bias the preferences of the citizens. According to Anckar, new social movements should be regarded as promoters of democracy rather than as threats to democratic politics.

Consultation and Political Culture is a good presentation of the contemporary neo-corporatism in Finland. The structure of the book is clear and there is a living connection between empirical data and theoretical discussion. The book is valuable as a national case study when we compare neo-corporatist development in Finland with neo-corporatist development in many other Western European countries. There seem to be many similarities both in institutions of decision-making, policy styles, as well as in elite and mass opinions, but we are also given material to analyse the specific nature of Finnish neo-corporatism.

Scientific books are not usually perfect. *Consultation and Political Culture* is no exception. The book is a collection of essays rather than a unified monograph. As a result of this essayistic structure there is some unnecessary repetition of facts and ideas in different essays. There are some inexact statements both in some tables and in the text. And there are problems in some theoretical frameworks used in the book. For instance, Dag Anckar, following *John D. May*, defines democracy by the so-called responsiveness rule. According to this rule, democracy is the "necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the wishes with respect to those acts, of the persons who are affected". The heuristic value of this rule may be high, but the operationalization of the rule is very problematic. We have the impossibility theorem of *Kenneth Arrow*, a theorem according to which it is usually impossible to deduce a transitive and perfect collective preference function from the preference functions of the members of that collectivity. When the preferences of the citizens are given, we usually have many "as good" decisions.

These problems do not lessen the value of the book as a description and analysis of interest aggregation and interest intermediation in Finland. *Consultation and Political Culture* is a good analysis of some essential trends of neo-corporatism and interest aggregation in Finland.

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