

Comments and Reviews

Ulf Lindström & Lauri Karvonen (eds):

Nordkalotten i Politiken. Lund: CVK Gleerup, 1983.

'Nordkalotten' denotes the peripheral areas of the Scandinavian countries, comprising the regions above the Polar Circle: Nordland, Troms, Finnmark in Norway, Norrbotten in Sweden and Lappland in Finland. Nordkalotten is sparsely populated, constituting 28% of the land of the Scandinavian countries but only harbouring 5% of the population. Nordkalotten as a periphery is the theme of the book, which is the result of cooperation between Nordic political scientists within the framework of the Nordic Political Science Association, with contributors mostly from the universities of Bergen, Åbo and Umeå.

The topics of the book refer in one way or another to how Nordkalotten fits into each national political system, where the main emphasis is, of course, on the basic dissimilarities. One of the contributors, Lauri Karvonen, takes up an equally interesting alternative perspective — the role of Nordkalotten in international politics. Karvonen finds that Nordic cooperation across Nordkalotten is well developed; and Karvonen argues that the successful projects are characterized by a combination of local mobilization and central involvement by civil servants having a knowledge about the local environment. Moreover, Karvonen also finds that the kind of bi-communal cooperation that has been practised in the Torne-Valley brings positive outcomes. However, one conclusion from Karvonen's analysis is that the regional problems in Nordkalotten cannot be handled without the support from the centre.

The centre-periphery approach that dominates the book implies a focus upon the pattern of development in the area. In 'Nordkalotten in a Bird's-eye view' Jon Wagtskjold discusses the problem of underdevelopment in this area. Looking at typical indicators concerning the development of the population structure and the economy, a certain parallellism between Nordkalotten and the Nordic countries as a whole may be established. Moreover, the social structure differences between Nordkalotten and the other areas in Scandinavia were less pronounced in 1980 than in 1950. Wagtskjold supports his conclusions by a large number of data derived from the Nordic Database for Regional Time Series Analysis (NDRT). Though Wagtskjold suggests that Nordkalotten does not fit all its standard images, we must be aware of the variations. It is

Comments and Reviews

Ulf Lindström & Lauri Karvonen (eds):

Nordkalotten i Politiken. Lund: CVK Gleerup, 1983.

'Nordkalotten' denotes the peripheral areas of the Scandinavian countries, comprising the regions above the Polar Circle: Nordland, Troms, Finnmark in Norway, Norrbotten in Sweden and Lappland in Finland. Nordkalotten is sparsely populated, constituting 28% of the land of the Scandinavian countries but only harbouring 5% of the population. Nordkalotten as a periphery is the theme of the book, which is the result of cooperation between Nordic political scientists within the framework of the Nordic Political Science Association, with contributors mostly from the universities of Bergen, Åbo and Umeå.

The topics of the book refer in one way or another to how Nordkalotten fits into each national political system, where the main emphasis is, of course, on the basic dissimilarities. One of the contributors, Lauri Karvonen, takes up an equally interesting alternative perspective — the role of Nordkalotten in international politics. Karvonen finds that Nordic cooperation across Nordkalotten is well developed; and Karvonen argues that the successful projects are characterized by a combination of local mobilization and central involvement by civil servants having a knowledge about the local environment. Moreover, Karvonen also finds that the kind of bi-communal cooperation that has been practised in the Torne-Valley brings positive outcomes. However, one conclusion from Karvonen's analysis is that the regional problems in Nordkalotten cannot be handled without the support from the centre.

The centre-periphery approach that dominates the book implies a focus upon the pattern of development in the area. In 'Nordkalotten in a Bird's-eye view' Jon Wagtskjold discusses the problem of underdevelopment in this area. Looking at typical indicators concerning the development of the population structure and the economy, a certain parallellism between Nordkalotten and the Nordic countries as a whole may be established. Moreover, the social structure differences between Nordkalotten and the other areas in Scandinavia were less pronounced in 1980 than in 1950. Wagtskjold supports his conclusions by a large number of data derived from the Nordic Database for Regional Time Series Analysis (NDRT). Though Wagtskjold suggests that Nordkalotten does not fit all its standard images, we must be aware of the variations. It is

clear from the Wagtskjold analysis that Northern Norway fared much better than Norrbotten and Lappland; no doubt Norrbotten developed more than Lappland. It should perhaps be noted that the positive development trend in Nordkalotten applies only up until the mid-sixties. Since the late sixties we can observe signs of a crisis in the development in this area, resulting in more unemployment and migration. This predicament formed the background for the establishment of a strong commitment to regional policy-making, which appears to have been most successful in Norway, but more problematic in Sweden and Finland.

It should be pointed out that the evaluation of the regional policies in this area does not constitute a principal theme in the book. In his description of the development in the population of Lappland — ‘Decentralized Concentration’ — Guy-Erik Isaksson refers to the objectives of the regional policy. Though these goals were not arrived at by unanimous agreement, one generally accepted end was to create central places outside the main cities. However, the outcomes hardly match the goal, as only one major city, Rovaniemi, has expanded whereas the other parts of the region display a retardation. Maybe there is also an indication that the regional policy has not only failed but has actually strengthened the development. The conclusion seems obvious: politics does not matter, a conclusion that receives support in a quite different study included in the book by Leif Johansson and Stephan Schmidt asking ‘Are the local governments in Norrbotten different?’ Their statistical analysis covers local government programmes that enter into a regional policy perspective: activities towards unemployment as well as means to promote the local enterprise structure. The main finding is that when we consider environmental factors, then the fact that the local governments in Norrbotten have a socialist political dominance does not mean any differences in relation to local governments in a similar environment but having a non-socialist political structure. Obviously, we may conclude that political factors have few implications for local government spending in an underdeveloped and sparsely populated area.

Though some contributions belong to policy analysis, most articles analyse the political sociology of Nordkalotten. What characterizes Nordkalotten is the strong position of the organized labour movement, including in particular the Communist branch. Looking at the overall post-war period it is clear that the various Communist parties have had their stronghold in Nordkalotten. Three papers deal with the phenomenon of left-wing radicalism employing aggregate data for each country: Norway in Selle & Svåsand ‘The Ecology of Radicalism in Northern Norway 1945-1977’, Sweden in Berglund & Hallin ‘Political Tradition: A Study in Unexplained Variation’, and Finland in Laulajainen ‘Left-Wing Radicalism in Finnish Lappland’. Though these papers differ in terms of methodology, some of their conclusions may be compared as they all bear on the interesting problem of which factors influence the variation

in the strength of the Communist parties in this area. Variables measuring the strength of party organization may be confronted with ordinary socio-economic variables. The extent of party organization is indicated in various ways: the occurrences of party lists at local elections (NKP), the development in the membership of the SAP before the 1917 party split, differences in the membership development of the SAP between 1898-1917 and 1918-1928, whereas in the Finnish case the indicators refer to organizational development for the DFFF between 1948-1951. It may be pointed out that measuring party organization properties is not always unproblematic and it would have been constructive to discuss some of the measurement problems associated with these indicators.

Let us look at the three analyses separately. Per Selle and Lars Svåsand, following Selle (1983), base their findings on a correlation matrix that is employed for a path-analysis of the support for the NKP at the elections of 1945 and 1949. Evidently, political tradition and political organization are the factors that have the largest direct effect on the strength of the NKP; however, in terms of causal modelling the impact of these factors is considerably reduced as a result of the effect of environmental variables. Sten Berglund and Bo Hallin employ a different design in their study, which covers the counties of Norrbotten and Västerbotten outside Nordkalotten as well as the Social Democratic Party; in a stepwise regression a model consisting of socio-economic structure, party organization and religiosity is estimated on data pertaining to eight parliamentary elections: 1948-1970. Generally speaking, the party organization variable matters; compared to the first regression step, socio-economic structure explains between 20% and 45% of the variation, the second step adding some 10% in explanatory power. It may thus be noted that the socio-economic environment matters more, at least in the Swedish case. In the study on Lappland the answer is instead that politics predominates over socio-economic conditions. In a detailed and interesting analysis of the development of the Communist movement since 1920, Laulajainen shows that two variables — in a set of eighteen variables — together explain 79% of the variation in the support for the DFFF in the roughly twenty communes of Lappland; his presentation of the technique in the analysis is, however, somewhat vague and inexplicit.

Thus, we find that one and the same question — politics or socio-economic environment — receives a different answer in the various national parts of Nordkalotten, though the set of data is rather similar: Norway = socio-economic structure and politics, Sweden = socio-economic structure and Finland = politics. Confronted by such an answer we must ask if the findings may be a consequence of the choice of method of analysis: maybe the path structure is more appropriate than the step-wise regression technique for the kind of analysis that is relevant here?

Let us look at the contribution that discusses the historical conditions out of which grew the political traditions that characterize the Swedish part of Nordkalotten, Norrbotten. Ulf Lindström looks for an answer to the contrary-to-fact problem of why no regional counter-movements developed, in his article 'The political integration and mobilization of Norrbotten'. The plausible hypothesis is, of course, that Norrbotten placed at the utmost periphery should display an inclination towards regional separatism. Lindström argues convincingly that the hypothesis fails because the social and cultural differences between various groups *within* Norrbotten were larger than the differences *between* Norrbotten and the rest of Sweden; the assumption is thus that such a situation is conducive to national integration. Moreover, the politically dissatisfied groups were never mobilized. Lindström backs his argument with an interesting essay over the integration process in Sweden, starting from the theory that integration is a movement of the centre towards the periphery, whereas mobilization works the other way around. An attempt is made to operationalize the concepts of centre and periphery covering the period of 1870 to 1930, adding some twenty-six variables and resulting in a nice centre-periphery map. However, all is not well — for which Lindström is not to blame — as the concept of centre and periphery is difficult to handle. The explanation may be found in the construction of the index. It is probably a too daring hypothesis that among such a large number of variables in such a number of cases (twenty-five counties) one single dimension would be identifiable; this might be the explanation of the contradictions Lindström faces when he relates mobilization to his centre-periphery index (see 84). Looking more closely at the data generously supplemented, it seems possible to discover more than one dimension, one of which could be classified as a centre-periphery dimension. It may finally be added that Kirsti Suolinna draws an interesting picture of the religious geography of Nordkalotten in her 'Laestadianismen and the Religious Revival Movement in Nordkalotten'.

To sum up: *Nordkalotten i Politiken* is a welcome contribution to the literature on this part of Scandinavia. Several of the contributions are illustrated with good maps, tables and diagrams, which sometimes makes reanalysis of data possible. The contributions may also be used for discussing some methodological issues such as problems in regression analysis, model specification, residual analysis and construction of indices.

REFERENCE

Selle, P. 1983. *Norges Kommunistiske parti 1945-1950*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.

Svante Ersson, University of Umeå