

Comments and Reviews

Risto Alapuro et al., eds.: *Small States in Comparative Perspective. Essays for Erik Allardt*

Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1985, 306 pp.

Erik Allardt has been a leading figure in Nordic sociology for the last generation. His ability to inspire colleagues and students is well described in Himmelstrand's introduction. Just as Allardt's own work, the book covers many themes and issues. The editors make no attempt to synthesize the contributions. Neither will I. The book consists of three main parts: 'Comparing States in Europe', 'Inter-Nordic Comparisons' and 'Finland in a Comparative Perspective'.

The first part of the book spans from general comparative models to studies of technological dependency in small West European countries. The last article in this section contrasts the relation between women and the state in the Nordic countries with that in Poland. Part three of the book concentrates on Finland. It covers topics as different as the intellectual development of sociology and political science, demographic peculiarities, the political system, and social change. Unfortunately there is no room to do justice to these contributions here. In this context it seems most appropriate to focus on the inter-Nordic comparisons.

The four inter-Nordic comparisons in the second part focus on central issues in political science and political sociology: Alapuro takes another look at a classical issue: What determined the type and speed of political mobilization in the Nordic countries around the turn of the century? His point of departure is Theda Skocpol's argument that national mobilization processes should be considered in connection with inter-state relations. He argues that external relations should be more consciously integrated in such analyses. Personally I would like a clearer distinction between extraordinary events and systemic influences.

Does a high level of public expenditures solve the problems of the modern welfare state, or is it itself a source of serious problems? Kosonen discusses this problem in the light of two perspectives. The first is a general theory of capitalist development focusing on system contradictions and class influence. The second perspective identifies national economic policy 'models'. He finds that there are important differences between sectors and countries. The increase in public expenditures during the 1970's is seen as a reflection of intrinsic tensions in the policy models, rather than the source of these contradictions.

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The Nordic tradition of neo-corporatism has focused on integrated participation in government decision-making and implementation. Anckar and Helander discuss variations between the Nordic countries in this respect. The evaluation of such arrangements is mixed: On the one hand, rather than replacing other forms of participation, neo-corporatist arrangements supplement them. On the other hand, corporatist structures must inevitably mean curtailment of parliamentary power. Two related paradoxes are pointed out: First, the trend toward elite consensus tends to undermine specific political responsibilities. Second, worries about lack of representativity are paralleled by a strong feeling that an orderly society has to rely on organizations playing key roles in public policy-making.

It is generally considered that social mobility varies across nations and that such variation is related to rates of change in the occupational structure. Erikson and Pöntinen show that the rate of actual mobility is higher in Sweden than in Finland, despite the greater structural change in the latter country. Sweden has also been shown to have higher rate of social mobility than both England and France. The present study confirms the deviant position of Sweden. It is speculated that this is due to the special character of the active labour market policy, expansion of education and other welfare measures with a levelling effect on the careers of children coming from different social origins.

All in all, this is a readable book. It covers many of the areas where Allardt has played a key role on the Nordic, as well as the international, scene. The introduction refers to Allardt's views on 'systematic completeness and piecemeal variety', but less to the systematic completeness. There is something for every taste, but the composition of the book does not result in a gourmet meal.

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