

The Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden

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Aim of the Study

The Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden was appointed by the Government in June 1985. The directives offer a major challenge to Swedish social science. Three general questions form the main research topic:

1. What are the most important power resources in Swedish society today, and how are they distributed? What resources do individual citizens possess to influence social change? What influence do different groups and categories of individuals have over their own lives?
2. What is the distribution of power resources and influence within four central areas of society: the business sector, interest organizations, the public sector and opinion-making channels? The study shall examine how power is wielded in these areas today and what opportunities individuals have to influence and participate in these sectors.
3. In what direction is the distribution of power and influence in Swedish society changing? Are the ways in which different groups interact and exercise their power changing in such a way that the general opportunities for citizen scrutiny and control increase?

The overarching aim of the investigation is, according to the directives, to 'broaden and deepen our knowledge of the conditions of Swedish democracy and assess whether the general development of society is bringing it closer to the Swedish ideal of democracy'. The distribution of resources that influence the ability of citizens to assert their rights in different contexts, whether individually or collectively, is a central area of investigation for the study. Special attention is to be given to the position of women.

Why the Study was Initiated

The idea of a study of power and democracy did not originate with the Swedish government. It was clearly inspired by the Norwegian study of

power and democracy, initiated in 1972. The publications from the Norwegian study did not receive immediate attention from the Swedish social science community, nor did it, at first, play a role in the Swedish public debate. Once the final report was delivered in 1982, however, the study became widely known. Perhaps it was less the specific empirical results that drew attention but rather a set of new concepts and catchwords that somehow captured the prevalent mood of the early 1980s. Expressions such as 'iron triangles', 'the media-biased society', and 'the segmented state', became part of the public debate and public vocabulary.

Around 1984/1985 there were several voices arguing the need for a study of power and democracy in Sweden as well. The exact reasons why the study was initiated is a research topic in its own right. The explanation is probably not just a general interest in social science research but also a vague feeling that old concepts and interpretations were no longer adequate. The primary expectation was that the study would improve and modernize the self-understanding of a rapidly changing society.

Organization of the Study

In legal terms, the Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden is a government commission of inquiry. The government decided on its directives, appointed its four members, and financed the undertaking via the national budget for commissions of inquiry.

Yet, the study differs from ordinary commissions in a number of important ways. It is not to present any policy proposals. Its directives specify an assignment of pure research and it is headed by scholars who possess independence with respect to academic as well as administrative decisions. The grant is administered by Uppsala University according to the same procedures that apply to other research projects.

It is, therefore, fair to say that power over the study of power rests with the study of power itself. The design of the research program has been decided by the study's four members, who represent political science, history, economics, and organization theory.

The work of the commission is followed up by an advisory group that consists of non-Swedish scholars. The advisory group meets once a year.

Theoretical and Conceptual Problems

As has frequently and correctly been pointed out, power is among the most controversial concepts in the social sciences. It would be naive to hope that the truth about the 'real nature' of power lies concealed in the theoretical

debate. The long discussion of the concept of power cannot, however, be ignored. It is a rich source of experience, often of a negative, critical kind. Power can be studied systematically, but every method of observation has its own inherent limitations. Even though power appears in many forms the concept of power still has a core. Power implies the ability to influence.

The analysis of power is associated with many risks. Two possible fallacies deserve special mention here. One is the notion that *power is the cause of everything*, that behind every observed event in society lies a 'powerful person' who pushes a button or pulls a string. The ultimate consequence of this approach is a theory of conspiracy that overlooks the fact that social phenomena can occur as the unintended result of many individual actions.

Another possible error is the assumption that *power always has an impact*. An attempt to exercise influence, even on the part of someone who possesses large resources, is far from always successful. The outcome of an attempt to influence is often different from what was intended. Just as important as studying power is studying the lack of power.

It is particularly important for the Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden to analyze the significance of *institutions* in power relationships. In its simplest form, the exercise of power means that one actor imposes his will in a direct encounter with another actor, be it through coercion, persuasion, reward or some other means. In modern societies based on division of labor and specialization, however, the exercise of power ordinarily takes place indirectly and via institutionalized sets of rules.

This approach assigns a central role to the study of citizen encounters with social institutions. One set of theories is particularly interesting here. Various attempts have been made to isolate a number of theoretically distinct *techniques of social coordination*. These may be regarded as attempts to systematize the power structures that consist of abstract regulative principles. The literature contains many proposals for classification. Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom, for example, distinguish between four different 'sociopolitical processes': hierarchy, polyarchy, bargaining, and the price system. Each of these principles of social organization has its special properties. They often appear in combinations. Various side effects, distortions and perversions can then be studied. The theoretical discussion concerning principles of social coordination is a useful tool which offers a number of fundamental categories for understanding the 'descriptive grammar' of society.

The two central concepts in the commission's task are 'democracy' and 'power'. The connecting link between them is the concept of *autonomy*. Democracy means that the norms regulating a group of individuals express the autonomous decisions of that group. The opposite is heteronomy, i.e. a situation where the norms of collective regulation have been established by an agent outside the group itself. The concept of autonomy can also be

applied at the individual level. Personal autonomy means making one's own decisions without being subjected to another's will.

Thus, both collective and personal autonomy become questions of power. An analysis of power implies a study of actual influence or ability to influence. Techniques of social coordination can be analyzed on two levels. One concerns power *within* the prevailing social institutions, i.e. how citizen opportunities and life chances are dependent on institutionalized regulative principles. The other level concerns power *over* social institutions. The ideal of democracy need not be synonymous with extending the domain of majority rule to cover all aspects of public life. Citizens may decide democratically that they will abstain from applying the majority principle in certain fields and will instead allow other rules of social action (such as the market or the rule of experts) to prevail.

Many forms of social organization are based on *indirect* power. In such cases, power and competence have been *delegated*, i.e. transferred from one actor to another. Principal-agent theory and theories of representation are of particular relevance. Empirical analyses should aim at clarifying what individual power relationships *actually* look like: what feedback and monitoring mechanisms are present and what real opportunities the principal has to correct the agent.

A central theoretical distinction in this context is that between *power*, *responsibility* and *legitimacy*. Power is actual influence or ability to influence. Responsibility means taking the blame if something goes wrong. A person regarded as the rightful exerciser of power enjoys legitimacy. In some cases power, responsibility and legitimacy may coincide. It is particularly interesting to study those cases where they do not coincide. This triad of concepts can, for instance, be used to analyze processes of decentralization: are there cases in which responsibility is decentralized while power remains centralized? What is the role of assumptions about rightful exercise of power in ensuring that those who have actually exercised power accept responsibility for their actions?

Institutional Change in the Welfare State

The central question posed in the directives to the study concerns how democracy actually works in Sweden today. The task is to analyze how Sweden is really governed. One might say that the aim of the study is to contribute to the formulation of the *real* (in contrast to the formal) constitution of society.

What makes the task of the study especially interesting is that its investigation concerns a rather special historical situation. The welfare state that was developed in the decades following World War II was characterized

by a number of particular features. In greatly simplified terms, the social system which culminated around 1970 could be depicted in the following way.

Large-scale production. Production was concentrated in fewer and larger units. Major companies and the state contributed jointly to structural rationalization. The key concepts were growth and rationalization to improve efficiency.

An expanding public sector. An increasing proportion of rising production results were used to finance broader public-sector undertakings. Large-scale social insurance and transfer payment systems were developed. Municipalities were amalgamated and reorganized so that they would be large enough to administer schools, child care, old-age care and other social services.

Corporatism. The major interest organizations assumed partial responsibility for large portions of public policy. The organizations came to participate both formally and informally in the preparation as well as the implementation of decisions. These corporative arrangements reflect a political culture oriented toward agreements and compromises.

Representative democracy. Major social reforms were usually preceded by extensive research. The social interests affected by reform proposals were allowed to participate in decision making but only in forms sanctioned by the government. The elite-culture was consensus-oriented. Layman control was replaced by professional politicians and full-time officials.

These features of the Swedish welfare state have certain properties in common. They all presuppose *centralism*, *universalism* and *homogeneity*. Political goals such as 'equality', 'solidarity' and 'social justice' justified far-reaching, all-encompassing, standardized solutions.

These three properties of the welfare state are now put into question. This is the historical situation in which the Study of Power and Democracy begins its work. How much of the old welfare-state model still survives? In what areas have the greatest changes taken place? What new form of government is in the process of emerging?

Many of the present social changes can be interpreted as contrary to the principles which were dominant until quite recently. Universalism is challenged. The institutions designed to maintain equality and uniformity are weakening. Some aspects of the ongoing changes will be briefly pointed to.

Fragmentation of class basis. The social base on which the welfare state was founded half a century ago is captured by the triangle of labor, business and agriculture. While the cleavages between these social groups still determine political life to a large extent, the traditional classes comprise an ever-decreasing proportion of the population. Today only one third of the active population works in the primary or secondary sectors. The old

classes are gradually losing their social meaning. The class structure is becoming more fragmented.

Heterogenization of organizations. Corporatist arrangements are based on the existence of encompassing and homogeneous interest organizations. However, the dominance of a few, powerful organizations is presently weakening. The authority of peak organizations is challenged by member organizations, cartels and new organizations. Members question the decisions taken by their own organizations. Organized Sweden is becoming more heterogeneous.

Voter instability. Although the Swedish party system seems stable on the macro level, micro changes indicate an increasing instability. A growing number of party switchers, an increasing proportion of split votes, a decrease in class voting, and a weakening of party identification are all evidence of a party system becoming less and less predictable.

Fragmentation of mass media. After several decades of an extremely centralized and homogeneous opinion-making structure, the emergence of electronic media means that the number of independent channels of communication increase.

Decline of authority. The culture of unity and consensus is weakening. As representatives of established society, authorities have been challenged by the red, blue and green political waves of the last two decades.

Emerging multi-cultural society. The conventional picture of Sweden as a culturally homogeneous society needs to be revised. Immigrants and their descendants are gradually changing the Swedishness and old values and norms of Sweden.

Gender system questioned. The representation of women in public life is gradually increasing. The patriarchal elements of the old welfare-state model are questioned.

Decentralization. The central state administration is becoming less important. Competence is transferred to local governments. Municipalities are within themselves broken up into small units.

Regionalization. Counties and municipalities act more and more as autonomous units. Local and regional initiatives indicate that national homogeneity is weakened.

Pluralism. One aspect of the ongoing developments is that the number of independent decision-making centers is increasing. Sweden is going pluralist.

Research Projects Initiated by the Study

The major part of the research work presently carried out under the auspices of the Study of Power and Democracy is conducted as independent

research projects. It was a strategic decision by the study to organize itself as a large research program. The responsibility for specific aspects of the general task laid out in the directives has been given to individual researchers or research groups in different disciplines and at various university departments around the country.

The specific choice of research projects reflects a particular evaluation of contemporary social science in Sweden. The predominant mode of research in Sweden is heavily biased toward a pragmatic, empirical approach. Few areas of social life in Sweden have escaped the questionnaires and statistical tools of meticulous researchers. Innumerable research reports witness about the pains of social scientists and the patience of respondents. This type of research has often been sponsored and utilized by sectoral bodies of the public sector. The symbiosis between social science and the state is in itself an interesting phenomenon, which has had consequences not only for social science but also for the state.

Despite the fact that the Study of Power and Democracy is organized as a government commission of inquiry, the stress is less on pragmatic proposals and more on a general contribution to the basic understanding of mechanisms of power and democracy in modern society. The study constitutes a forum for discussion of what contemporary social science could contribute to the understanding of the change that the modern welfare state is presently undergoing.

These are the research projects that are now in progress.¹

Power over companies is an investigation of power and influence over Swedish companies. The ownership structure is analyzed from two perspectives, one concerning macroeconomic efficiency, the other democratic standards. The study is designed to compare the situation of today with the development of the post-war period. The last turbulent decade has meant that many companies have changed ownership. The question is whether this development has affected the overall ownership structure. Some twenty years ago the debate on the power over companies revolved around the concept of 'the fifteen families'. Although private individual ownership is still important, the rise of institutions as controlling agents has had an important impact on the ownership structure.

Power over markets as a separate research project indicates that it is not sufficient to study economic power by analyzing companies in isolation. Important decisions are also taken in a complex interaction between companies, politicians, bureaucrats and special-interest organizations. Markets are regulated by rules and constraints which are often formulated in complex bargaining processes. This project is a study of the 'negotiated economy'.

Power and internationalization focuses on the economic and political aspects of international integration. Sweden's economic relations with other countries have increased sharply in the post-war period. What has this

meant for Sweden's political and economic discretion? To what extent has Swedish sovereignty been limited by various forms of international activities and commitments?

Technology and power. The purpose of this project is to analyze how contemporary technological development is related to the power structure and democratic procedures in Sweden. One of the important aspects raised in this project pertains to the consequences of changing production technology. In many respects, information technology appears to be undermining the negotiating position of organized industrial workers in relation to employers. The factory system, the physical concentration of production plants, tends to be weakened by a production system that can operate by means of information technology networks.

One typical feature of technological development during the last century has been the emergence of large physical systems for the distribution of people, goods, energy, water, waste and information. These distribution networks form the basis of a modern social and economic geography and are characterized by increasingly global networks. While these distribution systems strongly improve people's access to central goods and services and increase the available volume of transactions, they tie social interaction to the physical system in a fundamental way. Control over and strategic placement in these systems form the bases for important modern power complexes. The systems for distribution of energy and electronically conveyed information are particularly important. The danger of self-reinforcing resonances in the globalized information systems are also growing.

Power and work-related injuries is a study of one particular aspect of the ability of the individual citizen to claim their rights in a complex decision system. What happens when a worker is injured at work? How does the health care system work? How does one get the special compensation guaranteed by law? What chance do individual workers have of making their voices heard against corporate bodies, high-status experts, public agencies, and within their own organizations? Work-related injuries are drawn into a complex and unwieldy power system that includes the Government, parliament, public agencies, consulting experts, employer organizations, trade unions, companies and sometimes even the mass media. The focus of this investigation is on the type of resources that are important in the process of furthering one's rights. The question is whether changes in the institutional situation over the last three decades have weakened the importance of collective resources, i.e. organized bargaining position, while individual resources are becoming more crucial.

Public administration is the title of a study on recent changes in the Swedish public sector. One question deals with the different interpretations of the public sector over time. In modern times, three main doctrines of public administration have prevailed: *legal rule*, *popular rule* and *market*

rule. The court of law is the model for the doctrine of legal rule. Legal security serves as the basic criterion of the bureaucracy. Independence from the environment is stressed. The second set of principles, popular rule, emphasizes political responsiveness and representativity. The involvement of special-interest groups is encouraged. The idea is to democratize the bureaucracy. According to the third model, the market, there is no fundamental difference between a public body and a private company. Both are organizations which can be run in very much the same way. Organizations are to be efficient, i.e. they are to produce a certain output at the lowest possible cost. Flexibility rather than rigid application of fixed rules is stressed. Reorganizations and rationalizations serve as important tools to increase efficiency.

Of course, any public administration is characterized by a mix of these different doctrines and the importance of each varies from one area to another. There is also considerable variation over time. The present trend in Sweden, as in most other West European countries, is heavily influenced by the market model. The old bureaucrat is to change his identity and become a modern manager and entrepreneur. Catchwords such as service orientation, efficiency, decentralization, modernization and flexibility prevail in the vocabulary of today's bureaucracy. The essential question is how this change affects the actual working of the public administration and how it influences the relationship between individual citizens and the public sector.

Organized interests and the public good studies the role of organized interests in Swedish politics. Comparisons are made over time and across different policy areas. The historical comparison is based on five approximate points in time: the period after the breakthrough of democracy (about 1920), economic crisis policy and the beginning of the long period of Social Democratic rule (about 1935), the end of World War II regulation policies and the beginning of the welfare state expansion (about 1950), the peak of economic growth (about 1965) and finally the economic problems and administrative policy changes of the 1980s. The policy areas studied are: taxation, education, work environment, alcohol and drugs, industry and labor market, agriculture, constitutional law, and environmental protection. Three stages of the policy-making process are taken up: problem formulation and agenda building, parliamentary decision-making, and implementation.

Power and organization is a project on how modern organizations work. The dissemination of norms concerning the structure and behavior of organizations is an important aspect of opinion-making in society and has a major impact on the distribution of power and responsibility. Notions as to what constitutes a reasonable organization are important. To maintain legitimacy, organizations are compelled to adapt such notions, which easily

become both norms for how organizations ought to behave and descriptions of how they actually behave. Here one can speak of both the power of rationalization and the rationalization of power.

Modern management ideas are imported to Sweden from the United States. New forms, such as matrix structures, charismatic leadership, and management by corporate culture, are proposed. Findings from Swedish local government differ, however, from the dogmas of organizational theory. Governance is diffuse and unclear. Power is not regarded as a feature that is planned by certain people and located at the top (or bottom) of a hierarchy. Instead it is viewed as a natural, uncontrolled and almost biological phenomenon. It is dangerous to ignore old traditions and merely ride new waves and apply new ideas without first trying to understand how governing processes work in reality and what the distribution of power looks like in organizations. Federations of independent bodies have old roots in Sweden. The project analyzes questions about control and power in the inverted hierarchies of federations.

Another part of this project is a study of strategies in complex decision-making processes. A pilot study has shown that all questions were not handled in the same process but rather in different parallel subprocesses. These processes were populated by different participants, took place in different arenas, and were characterized by different types of arguments. Parallel processes seem to have been an instrument for handling a multiplicity of (probably inconsistent) norms. Such differentiation of processes nevertheless increased the uncertainty felt by the participants involved. They found it hard to see the consequences of their own actions.

Women's power and economic resources. One far-reaching social transformation during the past few decades is the change in the status of women in public life and in the economy. One purpose of this project is to analyze how influence, living conditions and economic resources of women are related to the specific principles of social coordination chosen in post-war Sweden. The project particularly emphasizes the fact that the outcome for women is strongly dependent on the *interplay* and *coordination* between different regulative principles. The project will therefore examine in what ways and to what extent a social structure of the Swedish type (a mixed economy and a welfare state, with strong special-interest organizations) can alter the gender system in economic respects.

Social engineering and everyday life. The purpose of this project is to study the Swedish Social Democratic 'people's home' (*folkhemmet*) of the 1930s as a utopia and political ideology. The people's home is in this context regarded as a very concrete concept: the state assumes a benevolent role over Swedish households and the lives of their occupants. One problem is the relationship between professional power and democracy, the depoliticization of political decisions with the legitimacy of scientific expertise.

Another problem area concerns the expansion of politics into the private sphere. Central to this project is the utopia of social engineers: the dream of the rational planning of everyday life.

Women in the welfare state is a study of the inequality between men and women. This structural inequality is captured by the concept of gender system.

One specific study deals with gender system and law in the welfare state. Special attention is given to the legal technique that is typical of the welfare state, the enabling laws. The investigation deals with how the existing resources for personal care and services in social work and health care systems are distributed in individual cases. The setting of priorities occurs in relatively imprecise ways as a kind of bargaining within a welfare bureaucracy where, in most cases, both sides are women. Another part of this project studies the logic of the gender system at the organizational level. The study is conducted at a hospital and takes into account the entire hierarchy in two specialties, surgery and care of the chronically ill. The hierarchies include levels dominated by males as well as females. The question is what happens when men compete in female-dominated fields. What is the outcome of competition between the sexes in fields that are not yet established as the domain of either?

Public opinion is studied with special focus on its relation to power. Harold Lasswell once formulated 'the general law of power': 'When men want power, they act according to their expectation of how to maximize power. Hence symbols (words and images) affect power as they affect expectations of power'.² Every country has its special dominant ideology, its set of received ideas. This project will attempt to characterize the Swedish political culture and its inherent dilemmas. There is, for example, a particular tension between problem-solving and problem-avoidance. On the one hand, Swedish political culture emphasizes expertise, objectivity, coming together to reach agreement, working out problems, and finding practical solutions. On the other hand, there is also a culture which avoids conflicts, which says 'yes' when it means 'no', and which sidesteps – 'neither voice nor exit'. It is a culture intent on avoiding 'troublemakers'.

The mass media are not passive 'channels' which simply transmit messages. Modern media have their own logic. This kind of media logic is most prominent in television's emphasis on simplification, visual appeal, emotionality and need for short, quick news items that require simple solutions. According to this logic, events ought to be easily delimited, easy to depict, dramatic and negative. One central question is to what extent this media logic affects other domains of social life. The medialization of politics severely challenges the established political forces that work according to another logic, a logic of ideology, coherent world views and a basis on social classes and long-term interests.

The role of media in decision-making processes is increasing. Media management is an important power resource. One indicator of this development is the emergence of an informing class. The professionalization of sources implies that companies, special-interest organizations and public agencies have created their own information services and propaganda bureaus. Another indicator of the struggle over public opinion is the creation of media images. One empirical study showed that two thirds of the central boards and agencies of the state had changed or modified their graphic symbols during the 1980s. The old coat of arms, the three crowns traditionally representing the Kingdom of Sweden, is now being replaced by modern logotypes in which the acronym of the public agency is designed in the same way as any private company.³

The role of media for citizens is also analyzed. The question is what the medialization of politics means for citizen opinions of society, and how their perceptions of legitimacy and their view of social solidarity have been affected.

The forms of power is a project on the manifest as well as invisible and abstract expressions of power. A number of humanists and writers have been invited to contribute to an anthology. The forms of power can be seen in buildings, clothing, seals or language – and also in invisible, inward-directed strategies of obedience.

Dimensions of citizenship is a project based on a nation-wide survey. One central issue for the Study of Power and Democracy is the connection between principles of coordination and the ability of citizens to influence their situation. The notion of a number of separate principles of coordination provides a base for the development of a theory on the meaning of citizenship. In a society with several different principles of coordination, a citizen acts simultaneously in multiple roles or capacities. In the market, the citizen assumes the role of customer. In dealing with the legal system and the public sector, the citizen is a legal object, a subject, user and client. In institutions that are based on general elections, a citizen assumes the role of voter and elected official. Negotiated settlements require a citizen to take on the role of a member of an interest group and a party to the negotiations. One central issue is to what extent citizens are able to assert themselves in their various capacities. In a historical perspective, the question is how citizen competence has developed over time. The advantage of including a broad spectrum of citizenship roles in a comprehensive study is that it is possible to analyze associations between roles. The main question here is whether roles are cumulative or complementary. Explanations of individual variations in how strongly citizens are able to assert themselves in their various capacities can be discussed on two levels, the individual and the institutional. With respect to institutional explanations, group-based factors have historically been of crucial importance. Popular move-

ments with a broad membership base have worked as a leverage, giving voice to citizens with few or small socio-economic resources.

Power in the multicultural society is a study on how institutions and ideologies work in implementing the general goals of immigration policy. According to these goals, society is 'multicultural'. That is, it is an open 'pluralist' society where different cultures 'cooperate'. This cooperation both rests on and seeks to achieve democratic ideals and goals such as 'equality' and 'freedom of choice'. Immigrants should be entitled to their own cultural development and society should develop in the direction of cultural pluralism. Opportunities for organizing parallel or alternative 'ethnic publicity' in local contexts are crucial for the creation of a sense of identity, cultural self-assurance and personality development among immigrants. This has repercussions on participation and influence in broader social contexts such as working life, opinion-formation and public political life.

Swedish leaders is a project which utilizes the theories and methods of elite sociology in an effort to analyze the recruitment and the structure of Swedish top decision-makers. The study of recruitment of Swedish leaders entails a modern version of earlier historical investigations of social mobility. For example, what has been the impact of the educational system, what alternative career paths have Swedish voluntary associations opened up, what is the significance of family background, personal contacts, and schools? The analysis of elite structure studies patterns of interaction, contact networks and overlapping group membership with regard both to private and professional relationships.

Social change from a local community perspective is a study of the city of Katrineholm. This city was part of a classical sociological survey that was conducted in the late 1940s. The present project replicates the important parts of the older survey. The time span covered by the two studies is a historical era in which industrial society reached its peak. New needs have arisen and people have encountered new problems that result in demands for changes in old organizations as well as the desire for new forms of collective effort. One can expect shortcomings in this respect to cause dissatisfaction and discontent. There are relatively few studies, and no Swedish one, where social change has been measured in a stringent manner over a long period. Social change, particularly the tension between collective action and individualization, constitutes an important condition for the mobilization and erosion of power. Changes in conditions for collective action affect the mobilization of power resources.

The reports from these projects are published in a series of books. The researchers involved are solely responsible for the contents of these monographs. In this sense, the various parts of the Study of Power and Democracy

work as independent research projects. However, the projects will also form an important contribution to the overall conclusions of the power study. The final report will be published in 1990.

The Swedish Model and Beyond

Interpretations of social change are often methodological artifacts. Every statement about the present becoming more complex than the past should be critically examined. There is, nevertheless, strong evidence that the homogeneity of Swedish society is decreasing. This is not to say that the developments presented here are linear processes bound to continue. Neither are they necessarily unique for Sweden. In many respects, these are changes that characterize most post-industrial societies. However, when consideration is given to the particular characteristics of the Swedish welfare-state model, it can be persuasively argued that the type of change now occurring severely challenges the established institutions.

This is not to say that the collective project must be completely revised. The basic ideas may be retained but the specific institutions may have to be evaluated. The central problem is the classical question about the relationship between freedom and equality. Equality and pluralism are not necessarily incompatible – at least not as a matter of principle. The actual practice is another matter.

NOTES

1. The research projects are described in *Progress Report 1987*, published by the Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden. The following presentation draws on the contributions to this report.
2. 'The Language of Power', in Harold D. Lasswell, Nathan Leites et al., *Language and Politics*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1965, p. 19.
3. Olof Petersson and Jonas Fredén, *Statens symboler*, Maktutredningen, Uppsala 1987.