

Finally, a good book should raise more questions than it answers. This could be said about this volume. Firstly, the process of nomination and its consequences (to parties and parliaments) must be more systematically studied before we can make any more definite statements about which variables in the process of selection cause effects, to what extent, and with what consequences. Secondly, if our main interest is in studying what consequences the process of selection have on parties and their members, our information remains incomplete unless we include elections at the local level. In Scandinavia not only municipal but also community council elections should be included. By widening the theoretical population from parliamentary elections to elections at the local level, the process of selection and its consequences becomes considerably different. However, my intention is not to rewrite an already skilfully written volume. Rather, I want to make a plea for more systematic Scandinavian studies on the topic that has been my interest for a couple of years.

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T. Miller: *Consulting Citizens in Sweden. Planning Participation in Context*. Swedish Council for Building Research. Document D10: 1988. (172 pp.)

In Sweden as in many other countries 'citizen participation' became an issue on the political agenda in the 1970s. A number of action groups cropped up bypassing the political parties and the traditional interest groups, with the miners' wild-cat strike in 1969/70 and the elms battle in Stockholm 1971 as the most spectacular examples. The state authorities in Sweden reacted slowly by way of cautious experiments in participatory planning, mainly in the shape of information exchange. These activities were generally undertaken as extraordinary projects sponsored by special grants. Many experiments were described and analysed by evaluators often closely related to the projects as planners or consultants.

With a background as a planner, activist and evaluator, Thomas Miller in his doctoral thesis *Consulting Citizens in Sweden. Planning Participation in Context* draws upon a number of case studies as well as on the general theoretical discourse in order to 'construct a contextual framework for understanding citizen participation in planning'. Taking the triple role experience of the author into account and the number of case studies he has published himself and in co-operation with others the general aim of the thesis is surprisingly modest. It is a pity he did not take the opportunity to evaluate the participatory activities in Sweden during the 1970s in more depth. The evaluation – relegated to the last chapter and comprising just a quarter of the book – is very superficial, giving the reader no chance to see if the conclusions are empirically justified. I shall return to this point.

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The conclusion drawn from the theoretical discourse presented in the first chapter is that 'the inherent constraints of the institutionalized citizen participation process make it ineffective as a means of achieving political influence compared with other strategies in which autonomy of action is maintained'. Though the conclusion may well reflect much of the vast literature on citizen participation, it is too sweeping. De Sario and Langton (1987), for example, in a recently published overview give quite another picture:

Although we have experienced a number of successes, controversy still surrounds many fundamental questions of citizen involvement. Are government-mandated organizations less effective than self-initiated organizations . . . ?

For researchers as well as planners and activists it would be interesting to see under what circumstances institutionalized citizen participation could be effective in terms of influence (for the citizens) and/or legitimation (for the authorities). Once more quoting De Sario and Langton (1987):

Systematic comparative evaluation and experimentation is needed to specify the determinants of successful programs.

In the first chapter the author places the concept in a theoretical context, reviewing the well-known debate between adherents of participatory democracy (e.g. Pateman) and pluralists (e.g. Dahl). From the political science literature he also extracts the functions generally assigned to political participation – the instrumental and the developmental functions in relationship to the citizens and the legitimating and conflict-reducing functions in relationship to the authorities. Finally he presents and operationalizes the concept.

The poles of the debate on participation are correctly reviewed but it might be added that the elitist version of pluralism (Schumpeter) is not the only possible one. Neo-pluralism (Lindblom; Dahl in his later books) has a far more sympathetic view of participation than does classical pluralism (Held 1987). This development of democratic theory has its correspondence in planning practice. Today the question is no longer *if* citizen participation should take place but *what forms* it should take. Thus, citizen participation has definitely entered the 'mainstream of society' (Hester 1987).

Miller defines citizen participation as 'actions of non-elite laymen which are sanctioned by the authorities, and which aim at influencing the policy outcomes of local politics'. The problem with this definition is that it does not clarify the dual nature of citizen participation generally acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Langton 1978; surprisingly this work is not included among the author's references). Basing the distinction upon the source of initiative, Langton discerns two forms of citizen participation: citizen involvement (initiated from above) and citizen action (initiated from below). The point of this distinction is not to introduce a dichotomy

for simple classification of participatory activities. However, it alerts the observer to examine any participatory situation from the bottom as well as from the top. The author may have been wise to concentrate on activities initiated by the authorities (citizen involvement in Langton's terms) – the object of inquiry always has to be delimited – but that does not justify the *a priori* exclusion of citizen-initiated activities from the analysis. Empirically most participatory situations include activities initiated by authorities as well as by citizens. Thus Miller's definition runs the risk of examining the participatory activities one-sidedly from the authorities' perspective. Certainly the author seems to be aware of the dual nature of citizen participation, but he has not managed to integrate this insight very well with the analytical framework.

Citizen participation is operationalized into four categories: information exchange, delegated authority, electoral mechanisms and pressure group activities. The narrowness of definition is emphasized by the weight of analysis exclusively laid on information exchange sanctioned by the authorities. It is particularly strange to exclude pressure group activities from the analysis as they are normally sanctioned by the authorities and are furthermore as in the U.S. a fundamental element of the political culture in Sweden. The narrowness of definition and operationalization runs the risk of making the analysis circular: by choosing situations where all citizen-initiated activities are supposed to be excluded, one certainly makes it difficult to find situations where citizens have exerted anything but marginal influence. Taking the focus on information exchange for granted one still has to regret the lack of conceptual refinement. As was shown already by Arnstein (1969) in her famous article, a number of rungs could be identified on the 'ladder of participation'. At least the author should have tried to construct some sort of typology making it possible to discriminate between situations where information exchange gives more or less influence to the citizens.

The final chapter of the book approaches the evaluation issue and is based on different kinds of sources. Case studies done by the author and others are mixed with synthesizing overviews, theoretical studies and normative statements by the author. The cases are never presented systematically and it is impossible for the reader to relate the conclusions to the cases as such. No wonder then that the main conclusion is as sweeping as the one drawn from the theoretical discourse in chapter one. The superficiality of analysis is blamed on the 'heterogeneous character of the empirical material and the fact that it consists of diverse case studies', but I am sure it would have been possible to deduce something more than 'informed guesses and hypotheses' from the material. Paradoxically the author himself, despite the defective sources, points out some cases where even 'strong influence' was exerted by the participants. Which were the

situational factors making this success possible? And why this contradiction between the general conclusions and some strongly deviant cases?

According to the theoretical approach developed in chapter one the evaluation should be made in relationship to the dual perspective, efficiency thus being discussed according to the goals of the citizens as well as those of the authorities. Unfortunately no such clear distinction between the different evaluative criteria is upheld, e.g. the different methods of communication on pages 127–129 seem to be evaluated one-sidedly from the authorities' point of view. The author also tries to answer the question why citizen participation became a political issue in the 1970s. In order to do that he uses a combination of two explanations.

One explanation relates to the development of the welfare state in Sweden, where citizen participation is understood as an answer to a number of 'structural' conditions such as centralization in public, private and voluntary organizations and regional polarization. Many citizens reacted to this development by creating action groups using more or less authority-sanctioned methods to influence policy outcomes. The authorities in their turn tried to disarm this movement by institutionalizing participation. This picture is well known from other countries and the kind of explanation used by Miller may be seen as an application of the legitimation crisis thesis developed by Habermas and Offe. As has been shown by Held (1987), this explanation also has some points in common with the overload thesis put forward by liberal theorists such as Hayek and Nozick. Though hardly possible to test in strictly causal terms, explanations like these may be viewed as interpretive frameworks placing citizen participation in a broader context. However, the second explanation put forward by Miller is more controversial.

According to Miller citizen participation in Sweden during the 1960s and 70s 'drew heavily on the American experience' – a proposition which is used as the theme for chapter three on citizen participation in planning and social programs in the U.S. Unfortunately the instances verifying this thesis are extremely weak. Miller refers to a few articles in a Swedish journal of architecture published at the end of the 1960s and also to some general works on citizen participation, where experience from the U.S. is said to have inspired or influenced planning practice in other countries. But at the end of the 1960s participation became an important issue in a number of countries – the students' and workers' movement in France, the cultural revolution in China and the people's uprising in Czechoslovakia can be mentioned as examples. Neither in Miller's thesis nor in other sources have I found instances verifying that influence from the U.S. upon Swedish planning was as decisive as Miller proposes.

In chapter two a very broad picture of citizen participation in the U.S.

is painted, including both the 'Citizen-Involvement Movement' and the 'Citizen-Action Movement' as Langton (1978) prefers to call them. The breadth of this chapter is in contrast to the narrow definition and operationalization presented in chapter one and implemented in chapter four. The chapter is readable but adds very little to the vast secondary literature on which it is based. The corresponding judgement goes for the thesis as a whole. It is well written but offers more of cautious synthesis than analysis, more of breadth than depth, more combination of already known 'facts' than new conclusions. One has to regret that the author did not try to get anything more out of the case studies on citizen planning in Sweden.

The theoretical discourse in chapter one promises more than it holds. The book would have gained in strength if it had contained, instead of the two extensive chapters on the U.S. and the societal conditions for participation in Sweden, a systematic comparative evaluation according to distinct evaluative criteria. It would at least have been possible to compare a few 'typical cases' in more depth, especially as the author himself has done some of the case studies on which the thesis draws or rather should draw.

However, other comparable books are written in Swedish (Bohm 1985; Gidlund 1981; Wikforss 1984) and Miller's thesis could be useful to readers outside the country who want to have an introduction to authority-mandated citizen participation in Sweden. For Swedish readers the theoretical context given in chapter one – reflecting some central elements in the body of mainstream political science – may contribute to a deeper understanding of the planning practices. Miller's ambition to elevate the issue of citizen participation from a rather narrow technical discussion to a wider political and theoretical context well deserves further development in future research.

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