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Ivar Bleiklie, Norwegian Research Centre in Organization and Management

Göran Djupsund og Lars Svåsand (red.): *Partiorganisasjoner: Studier i struktur og prosesser i finske, norske, og svenske partier*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 1990, 318 pp.

At the IVth Nordic Conference of The Nordic Political Science Association, a group on the study of the political party organizations was founded. This book is a result of the work of this group, but it is worth noting that the book is not the outcome of a research project guided by a common framework or a common theoretical approach. The articles are the outputs of the ongoing research projects of the individual contributors. This gives the book a somewhat disparate character and it is therefore not recommendable to read the book at one sitting. The intention of the book is simply to throw some light on different important aspects of the various activities of party organizations in three Nordic countries.

In an introductory chapter Göran Djupsund and Lars Svåsand give a short and concentrated, and therefore indeed useful, summary of the research on party organizations. They distinguish between three categories of studies: (1) structural analyses, which place the main emphasis on the power relationship between the different bodies of the party organization; (2) participatory analyses, with the main emphasis on an analysis of who actually speaks on behalf of the different bodies of the party organization; (3) functional analyses, which raise the question about what role the party organization plays as a part of a greater social movement, as a part of the political system as a whole, and the importance of the organization to the existence of the party as such. These distinctions, then, form the structure of the following presentation of the individual contributions.

In part one Göran Djupsund, Lars Svåsand and Jon Pierre describe the development of the party system and of the organizational structure in the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish political parties respectively. These articles present a great deal of real knowledge and useful information: the 'family tree' of the parties, party organigrammes, membership figures, number of local and regional branches, etc. It is a pity that the actual information is not more up-to-date. Thus the membership figures of the Swedish parties are only presented up to and including 1976. On the whole, these three chapters demonstrate the drawbacks of the long period of time taken to produce the book. Jon Pierre, for example, wrote his article in May 1987.

The second part of the book includes three case studies of the decision-making process at the congress/national conference of the Social Democratic Party in Finland, Norway and Sweden. Viveca Ramstedt-Silén presents a thorough and purely empirical analysis of the Finnish Social Democratic Party's congresses from 1966 to 1984. Knut Heidar has made a vivid analysis of the national conferences of the Norwegian 'Arbejderpartiet' from the middle of the 1960s to the 1985 confer-

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ence, which is given special attention. Finally, Jon Pierre concentrates his analysis of the Swedish Social Democratic Party to the 1972 congress only. The focus of these three articles is on the influence exercised by the delegates and the party leadership respectively on the final decisions reached by the congresses. The influence is measured by counting the number of proposals, who proposed the motions, the content of the proposed amendments and the final divisions.

In all three countries there has been a marked increase in the number of proposals. In Norway it is interesting to note that the number of proposals is much higher in periods when the party is in opposition than in periods when the party is in office. The influence of the party leadership has generally increased in all three countries, foremost as regards its success in securing that the final wording of the resolutions is drafted in such a way that it doesn't restrict the maneuverability of the party leadership in the subsequent negotiations with other parties. On the other hand, the findings also demonstrate that the congress/conference cannot be used willy-nilly by the party leadership. The congress/conference is much more than just a rubber stamp.

In the third part of the book Göran Djupsund presents his findings about the committee system of the Finnish parties and Hilde E. Johansen and Lars Svåsand describe the development in Norway. Sweden is not represented in this section. We are once more confronted with a series of purely empirical data concerning the number of committees, their size and composition, lifespan, way of functioning, and so on. I have been able to find neither the announced (pp. 171 and 184) comparison between the development in Finland and Norway, nor an analysis of the functions of the committees in the parties under scrutiny. The editors' attention must have been distracted by something more important.

The final part of the book deals with the central issue of the relationship between party organization and the mobilization of the voters. Since the article by Jan Sundberg on local party branches and the campaign activities of the party members is by and large a pilot study from his already published book *Lokala partiorganisationer i kommunala och nationella val* I will not comment on that article, but instead turn my attention to the most interesting article in the book, that is Per Selle and Lars Svåsand's: 'Partiorganisationer og velgeropslutning', (Party Organizations and Electoral Support).

It has often been said that one of the most important functions of a party organization is to mobilize and motivate the voters to cast their vote for the party. The greater the membership the higher the possibility of a large and stable party voting score. This assertion is analyzed by Selle and Svåsand. Their conclusion is that there seems to be a correlation on the national level between the organizational support and the electoral support, especially since 1970. On the regional level (fylke), however, the findings indicate that there exist great variations between the parties with respect to the number of members of a party and the party's electoral support. 'Højre' comes close to the expectation that electoral strength and organizational strength will go together, while 'Arbejderpartiet' deviates in this respect. This party has a stronger center-periphery difference as regards membership strength than it has as regards electoral strength. On the aggregated national level then, the regional differences disappear and therefore it looks as if a much more intimate relationship exists between electoral support and the size of the membership than is actually the case. The lower the level of aggregation the less obvious the correlation.

But is, after all, the *size* of a party's membership relevant. Isn't it the *level of activity* by the members rather than the number of members that counts? This

problem is also dealt with by Selle and Svåsand. Their conclusion is: 'If our impression of a connection between an increased membership and a lowered membership activity level is correct, this de-emphasizes the role of organizational size as such for the electoral turnout' (p. 257).

A further problem is whether the party has a stable membership or whether it experiences a heavy turnover of its members. A stable membership is expected to exhibit a higher degree of party identification than temporary members. The analysis of Selle and Svåsand demonstrates that the turnover of party members is very high and that there is a difference as regards party identification between party members and non-party members but that the difference is not at a level which permits the conclusion that there is a fundamental qualitative difference.

These conclusions are finally compared with parts of the international literature on party organizations, and Selle and Svåsand summarize: 'The role of the parties as national agents of mobilization can be seen then as more important than previous at the same time as the parties role as structures of integration and opinion-forming is decreasing. Perhaps the short term effect of the parties mobilizing efforts might be increasing at the same time as the long term effect and the continuity is decreasing' (p. 264).

As mentioned above, the book is a collection of elaborated working papers from ongoing or already finished research projects. A more careful editing job as well as an up-to-date collection of the data would have been desirable. This collection of articles, nevertheless, presents much useful empirical information but perhaps not quite as much knowledge. A specific reference to the international theoretical discussion on party organizations by the individual authors would have sustained a better understanding of the relevance of the selected topic and it would have given the conclusions a broader and more fruitful perspective. Anyway, the book is indeed welcome as a relevant contribution to the Scandinavian research on parties and party organizations.

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Leif Lewin: *Samhället och de organiserade intressena*. Stockholm: Norstedts, 1992, 135 pp.

This book is the first volume in a series on society and organized interests in Sweden, emerging from a research project launched in the mid-eighties at the University of Uppsala.¹ Smaller parts of the project have previously been published within the framework of the much larger project on power and democracy in Sweden completed in 1990, but not the present contribution.

The rise and decline of corporatism in Sweden is the theme of the present study, whereby Lewin distinguishes between three phases: the early years (1900–30), the heyday (1930–70) and the erosion of corporatism (from around 1970). The first phase was characterized by an outburst of relatively small and not fully recognized associations generally pursuing special-group interests. Their rise is explained, sophisticatedly but perhaps rather schematically, as a functional requirement complementary to the already existing type of preference aggregation. The real and complex interest intensities of voters could hardly be adequately represented in general elections alone, it is argued.