



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Boekbespreking van: Vereine — Basiselement der Demokratie

Lelieveldt, H.

Citation

Lelieveldt, H. (1997). Boekbespreking van: Vereine — Basiselement der Demokratie. *Acta Politica*, 32: 1997(1), 83-96. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450529>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450529>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

(chapters 8 and 10) and resources are squandered at the eve of the consolidation (chapters 12 and 13). The book concludes with a summary of its major results.

This book is recommendable for several reasons. First, the research design enables the researchers to establish both short-term and long-term effects, something which earlier studies did not achieve. Some studies were conducted shortly after the reorganization took place and are therefore inappropriate for strong inferences about long-term causal effects. Other studies focus on the long-term effects of changes in the size of municipalities by studying cross-sectional variations in processes and policies in small and large municipalities. These studies are, however, unable to gauge the short term effects of amalgamations (the costs of change).

Second, the case-study method employed in combination with a quasi-experimental design provides the researchers with excellent opportunities to test the theoretical expectations using a strict and simple procedure. Moreover, the research is conducted systematically and in a way that allows a critical review of the research procedures. The research team has made considerable efforts to conduct the case studies in a disciplined way: formulating expectations on the effects of the reorganization; presenting the empirical results in summary tables.

Despite these assets this book has some major flaws. First, the reader is not informed about the rationale for the selection of the dependent variables (the effects of amalgamations). Why are some effects included (for instance participation in parties) and others excluded (most other forms of political participation)? No attempts are made to motivate the choice of the effects, neither in terms of the objectives of the policy-makers, nor in terms of normative criteria derived from democratic theory (political equality, responsiveness, or the protection of liberty).

Second, the logic underlying the theoretical expectations is often 'sloppy'. The study claims to provide a general theory (p.32) from which propositions about the effects of amalgamations can be derived. But in fact most of the propositions are the result of (often plausible) ad-hoc reasoning. In a volume co-authored by seven researchers this inevitably results in some inconsistencies. For instance, in chapter 2 the research team claims that the citizens in larger municipalities are less likely to participate in politics than the citizens in smaller units (p.25) and in chapter 10 the authors hypothesize that formal arrangements in larger municipalities make it more difficult for citizens to influence local decisions (p.196). In chapter 8, however, we are told that in relatively large municipalities relations are more formal and impersonal and thresholds for making a complaint against local government decisions are therefore lower.

Third, not all of the authors consistently employ the strict test procedure (see the results with regard to the reliability of the performance of larger municipalities in cases of illness and vacant situations [p.155] and with regard to the management of refuse collection [p.192 and table 10.1]).

Fourth, the internal validity of the research design is flawed by the selection of the control group. The research team frankly admits that the two units in the control

group managed to escape the amalgamation by the skin of their teeth. The assignment to the control group is therefore definitely non-random. This makes the interpretation of similarities between the experimental and the control group problematic, because the two municipalities that were able to escape from the amalgamation at the last moment, are likely to have gone through most of the processes experienced by the units in the experimental group.

Finally, as the authors hurry to admit, the small number of cases is a major limitation on the generalization of the results (external validity) of this study. The lack of a solid theoretical foundation of this study exacerbates this problem, since this impedes theoretical generalizations.

Notwithstanding these flaws, this book is a useful addition to the literature on the effects of amalgamations. Some of the findings in this book confirm the results of earlier quantitative studies. The cumulation of knowledge from studies employing different methods should make us even more critical of those who claim all kinds of positive effects for this type of reorganization. Even more so, because this book clearly shows that such a reorganization involves major transition costs.

S.A.H. Denters

Annette Zimmer, *Vereine – Basiselement der Demokratie (Voluntary Associations – Basic element of democracy)*. Leske + Budrich: Opladen 1996. DM 29.80

Judged by its title, this book deserves the attention of anyone interested in the role of voluntary associations in democratic societies. We currently witness a renewed interest in civil society and the role of voluntary associations – something that has been spurred in particular by the work of Putnam and the debate it ignited within and outside academia.

Voluntary associations deserve the interest of political scientists for at least two reasons. The first reason is that one may want to find out to what extent such associations – by virtue of providing opportunities for social participation – function as schools of democracy and how they contribute to what is known as social capital. The second reason is that one may be interested in the extent to which these organizations function as intermediaries between citizens and the state, and how these organizations try to influence political decision-making.

This study – a somewhat modified version of the Habilitationsschrift the author wrote at the University of Kassel – aims to give a comprehensive overview of voluntary associations or Vereine. Zimmer chooses to study associations from the perspective of Third Sector research, because she deems the approaches of political science, sociology, or economics too restrictive for this multi-faceted phenomenon. However ecumenical

the term third sector may sound, one should bear in mind that this perspective also has its limitations – something Zimmer herself acknowledges. Third-sector researchers study the position of the non-profit sector vis-à-vis market and state. They try to explain the respective roles of these sectors as providers of services. For them voluntary associations are interesting because they are non-commercial, non-governmental organizations that can produce services which are otherwise produced by organizations belonging to the two other sectors. The fact that voluntary associations may also have an impact on political culture or on collective decision-making is only of secondary interest to a third-sector researcher. As a result of this perspective, Zimmer not only discusses the role of Vereine. From time to time she extends her study to other kinds of non-profit organizations, and to theories that seek to explain their existence.

The book starts with a general overview of the subject by discussing the legal status and the history of associations. In 'Vereine' decision-making is based on the one-man-one-vote principle rather than on the basis of shares somebody owns. Furthermore, profits do not accrue to individual members and can only be used to further the goals of the association at large. Therefore 'Vereine' qualify as one of the most democratic forms of organization legally permitted. In fact, its form comes closest to that of the democratic state itself, lending support to the idea that voluntary associations might indeed function as the basic elements of democracy.

Subsequently Zimmer presents a historical overview of associations. Drawing upon Coleman's work she analyses the role organizations have played since the end of the Middle Ages: they functioned as corporate and collective actors that facilitated the modernization process. There is a clear overview of the relation between different socio-economic periods and the establishment of different kinds of associations. Thus the pre-industrial period witnessed the birth of associations mainly by and for the bourgeoisie (reading societies); and the industrial period spurred the development of organizations that sought to combat the negative effects of the industrial revolution (such as mutual aid societies). The post-industrial era saw the development of both conventional associations and more alternative forms, often labelled movements or initiatives.

This part also contains a short intellectual history of the study of associations. Zimmer considers De Tocqueville and Weber to be the intellectual fathers of associational research. While Tocqueville's remarks about the role of associations have become the standard reference in any work on civil society, it may be less known that Weber also devoted considerable attention to this phenomenon. At the first meeting of German sociologists (1910) he pleaded for a 'sociology of associations'.

Weber's views deserve attention because they provide an interesting counterpoint to Tocqueville's positive evaluation of associations. Weber was among the first to recognize two themes made famous by Michels later on in his study of the German Social Democratic Party. Weber discussed the problems of professionalization and oligarchization of voluntary associations – thereby challenging their supposed democratic character. He was also very critical of the extent to which these organizations

could mobilize their members politically. Instead he pointed to the role of associations as pacifying forces. He envisioned a constellation in which members of voluntary associations would be less politically active: 'Wo man singt, da lass dich ruhig nieder.'

Zimmer's reading of the literature on the relation between the level of engagement in voluntary associations and the democratic character of society makes her sceptical of the Tocquevillian perspective. She claims that, by now, one may doubt the existence of a positive correlation between various indices of civiness and the quality of democracy. However, her review of these studies is too limited to justify this conclusion (there are, for example, no references to the work of Olsen or Putnam). A more comprehensive reading of empirical studies would certainly lead her to conclude more in favour of De Tocqueville's views.

The second part of the book is empirical in nature and consists of a description of the associational landscape of the German city of Kassel. Her empirical study is based on a survey among officially registered voluntary associations ('eingetragene Vereine') as well as on interviews with leading members of these associations. Although in this part she only looks at a subset of non-profit organizations, her outlook remains distinctly third sector. She focuses on the role associations play as providers of services. Apart from describing basic facts about founding years, membership figures, and the way in which associations are financed, Zimmer also presents a typology of associations, differentiating between three types of internal organization.

Interesting in this part of the book is her study of the relation between associations and local government. She presents a detailed overview of the ways in which associations receive public support. Of the different governmental levels, it is local government that plays the dominant role in supporting associations. The bulk of the financial support that local government provides results from legal obligations. It is given to a relatively small group of organizations that are active in the field of social welfare.

What remains is a relatively small amount of money (0.3 % of the annual budget) that is allocated freely by the city. It benefits those voluntary associations that have been successful in their annual application for financial support. In Zimmer's view administrative departments play a pivotal role in determining which organizations receive subsidies and which do not. She clearly pinpoints them as the gatekeepers in the application process. The city council is portrayed as a body that merely rubber-stamps the proposals made by these departments. Zimmer also claims that there is a lot of arbitrariness with respect to these decisions.

From the perspective of democratic accountability her findings are very interesting. Precisely those subsidies over which local government has discretion turn out to be in the hands of unknown bureaucrats. Unfortunately she does not discuss this problem in detail. Her findings are only supported by heard-it-through-the-grapevine evidence: 'Ohne dies im Einzelfall exakt beweisen zu können, sind dennoch aus dem Vereinsalltag genügend Beispiele dafür bekannt, dass es für manche Vereine relative einfach ist, einen Antrag "durchzubringen", während andere mit konstanter Regelmässigkeit scheitern.'

The third and final part of the book is devoted to a discussion of theories that seek to explain the existence of the non-profit sector, and theories that try to explain why people join voluntary associations. It is a good overview of existing theories as well as a critical reflection on the accomplishments of different rational choice explanations. As far as the reasons for the existence of the non-profit sector are concerned she discusses the contributions of Hansmann, Weisbrod and James, and of Salamon, Seibel and Evers. The discussion of the reasons why people join organizations consists of a treatment of Olson's Logic of Collective Action, Salisbury's Exchange Theory and the Resource Mobilisation Approach.

After reading the book one could ask whether Zimmer has indeed shown that associations are the basic elements of democracy – as the title of the book suggests. Strictly speaking she has not, and I think this may be due to the fact that she employs the third-sector perspective. In order to prove her case it would probably have been better to look at associations through the eyes of a political scientist, however limited such a perspective might seem from her point of view. Claims about the beneficial effects of associational membership on political participation could then have been substantiated by means of an empirical analysis of individual-level surveys or by a more comprehensive overview of the literature than the one presented in the book. This perspective would also enable a more thorough analysis of the relations between associations and local government. It is important that she devotes attention to the output side of the political process by looking at the financial links between government and associations. But this naturally begs the question of what is happening on the input side. It would be nice to know in which different ways these organizations are politically active and to what extent their involvement in providing public services constrains or expands their options for political participation.

Zimmer has written a book that is not only very interesting and informative, but also well documented (her bibliography contains more than 600 entries). It is a valuable reference work for all scholars interested in the role and functions of voluntary associations.

Herman Lelieveldt

Frank Hendriks, *Beleid, cultuur en instituties: Het verhaal van twee steden* (Policy, culture and institutions: A tale of two cities). DSWO Press: Leiden 1996

For some time, the so-called cultural theory, which was primarily developed by Douglas, Wildavsky, Thompson and Ellis, has been gaining importance in political science and its branch, policy science. It is important because, among other things, it offers the possibility to categorize political actors and explain their views on a policy

according to four 'cultural ideal types'. According to its advocates, a cultural approach can serve as a supplement to the classical rational actor approach. In a rational model, for example, a policy is presented as the product of a conscious weighing of needs, wishes, and means through which these needs and wishes can be fulfilled. With a cultural model policy is explained on the basis of dispositions, which may have arisen consciously initially, but which are now, as limiting conditions of behaviour, or the reflection of behaviour for a certain actor, no longer directly recognizable as such. Rational weighing takes place under, or is even decided by these culturally-determined limiting conditions.

Despite the large amount of attention that the cultural theory has received, only a relatively small number of empirical studies use this interesting theory as their starting-point. The thesis by Frank Hendriks, which attempts to interpret the post-war policy on car traffic in Birmingham and Munich using the cultural theory, deserves esteem if only because of its empirical orientation.

Hendriks connects the cultural theory with the neo-institutional approach in the political sciences. Central elements in his study are policy cultures and administrative institutions. Policy cultures comprise the values, norms, and rules that policy actors and policy communities believe in and follow with regard to contentious policy matters. Administrative institutions refer to the 'social conducting mechanisms' that are characteristic for the administrative system in which policy actors and policy communities are imbedded. Hendriks (p. 6) develops the following dual problem statement:

- What relation is there between the institutional composition of the administration and the ways in which cities such as Birmingham and München deal with diverging attitudes concerning the position of the car in public areas?
- What is the meaning of the institutional factor in the administration and how can this factor be described from the point of view of public administration?

The cultural theory, in short, means the following. On the basis of the dimensions 'group' and 'grid', five patterns of social relations are distinguished. 'Group' concerns the incorporation of an individual in a group. This means that the greater the incorporation, the more individual choices are determined by the choices and the norm and value patterns of the group. 'Grid' refers to the binding nature and the extensiveness of rules or directions that structure the individual choice processes. A combination of these dimensions, which originated from Durkheim, leads to four basic categories of social patterns that are linked to notions about man and his place in the world. These categories are: powerless fatalism (low group/high grid); hierarchical collectivism (high group/high grid); competitive individualism (low group/low grid); and egalitarian sectarianism (high group/low grid). There is a fifth category (low group/low grid) in which persons are placed that refrain from any form of social life (the hermit's position).

A central assumption in the theory is that the beliefs, actions and norms of an

individual coincide with 'the organization of the social relations'. These limit the rationality of the individual and his choice processes. There is thus a cultural distortion that leads to a certain form of 'bounded rationality'.

Hendriks regards the group and grid dimensions as characteristics of institutions, but he also says that these dimensions only concern one aspect of institutions, namely the formative aspect. Facilitative and restrictive aspects can, however, also be recognized in institutions. By this, the author means that administrative institutions also contain rules, connections, barriers, and interdependencies that have an influence on the articulation and aggregation of policy cultures. More intelligibly formulated, Hendriks seems to want to say that administrative institutions promote or in fact hinder certain policy cultures (in terms of the types of the cultural theory). However, it remains unclear in his theoretical exposition what the relation is between institutions and the fatalistic, the hierarchical, the individualistic, and the egalitarian policy culture. The culture of the hermit is not taken into consideration by Hendriks. The other group and grid dimensions are of course also restrictive to the action alternatives of individuals, but in a way also facilitating because 'group and grid' give individuals action possibilities too. The 'hierarchy' has, for example, more alternatives at his disposal than the 'fatalist', because he can employ the power and the security of the group as a resource, while the fatalist does not dispose of these possibilities.

After the discussion of his conceptual model, which is more a reflection of the cultural theory and the neo-institutionalism than an integrated framework of analysis, Hendriks studies the policy with regard to car traffic in Munich and Birmingham. To do this, he has translated the more general typology of policy cultures towards a policy aimed at car traffic. In a fatalistic culture, problems that are related to car mobility are vaguely formulated. For example, it remains unclear what the causes of traffic jams are. In line with this, there are few ideas about possible solutions. The fatalist lives in a world in which everything is decided by others or by factors that are hard to understand. The hierarchical culture, on the other hand, is steeped with ideas about surveillance and control. Car traffic is then also looked at in these terms. A hierarchy will attempt to regulate car traffic in a technical-functionalistic way without too much ideological involvement. In the individualistic culture, the car is seen as a very positive object. This means of transportation does justice to the individual freedom of choice; it is fast; it increases accessibility; and it offers privacy. Problems regarding car traffic are seen by the individualist as restrictions to the car. The egalitarian culture contains values such as liveability, durability and justice. Seen from these values, modern car mobility is problematic. The egalitarian strives to limit car traffic and stimulate more environmentally friendly means of transportation.

The empirical evaluations of the theoretical notions lead Hendriks to the following conclusions, among others:

- The design of the administrative institutions in Birmingham stimulated an individual, hierarchically-tinted policy culture with certain fatalistic aspects. A result of this was that a policy was conducted, which was unilaterally directed at

removing restrictions to car traffic, and that other solutions, such as the expansion of public transportation, were ignored.

- In Munich, the institutional context allowed a more balanced policy culture with more egalitarian elements. This led to the realization of a policy which paid attention to the flow of car traffic, the environment, as well as to the liveability of the city.
- Institutions, such as participation at a local and sub-local level for example, exercise influence in mutual cohesion. This cohesion expresses itself in a so-called administrative system of institutions.
- The administrative system is reflected in eight different characteristics: as a medium, as a meaning system, as a pool of 'conventional wisdom', as an attention structure, as an action corridor, as an opportunity structure, as a limiting structure, and as a power structure.
- The institutional designs in Birmingham and Munich are related to the institutions on the national level. The English Westminster-model (power-centralizing and power-concentrating) versus the German federate model (power-diffusing and power-sharing). The first model is suitable for an adequate and quick policy implementation, but is not aimed at a critical reflection of the policy (learning) and the creation of consensus. The second model is capable of creating consensus and learning from the policy implementation, but does bring about lengthy, laborious policy processes.

Hendriks has written a well-readable and interesting study, which is however disappointing for several reasons. Mention has been made before of the lack of an adequate analysis framework. Furthermore, the institutional design of the administration (the independent variable) and the policy culture (the dependent variable) are not clearly separated from each other. Hendriks deems policy culture closely related to the structural aspect (p. 51) and in practice interwoven with administrative institutions. In order to prevent contamination, he endeavours to make a conceptual distinction between both notions. That he did not succeed is shown by the fact that in his description, a policy culture consists of rules (p. 92), while administrative institutions are seen as social conducting mechanisms (p. 92) and thus also include rules.

Another important problem is that the theoretical concepts have been operationalized to a limited degree. It is therefore not surprising that the extent of the section, in which 'the transition from theory to practice' is discussed, is no more than one and a half pages. A result of this omission is that in various areas of the empirical analysis, it is claimed that the culture types recur. There is no clear and verifiable argumentation in which, for example, the group and grid dimensions are distinguished on an empirical level. Because of this, it is also not possible to examine critically the relations between the group and grid dimensions and the notions about man and his place in the world (myths of nature) which, in my opinion, constitute the heart of the

cultural theory. The importance of Hendriks' thesis does not so much lie therefore in an empirical test of a number of theoretical concepts or in an exploration of the relation between institutions and culture, but rather in the fact that it draws attention to a number of interesting themes in the political and policy sciences.

Oscar van Heffen

D.-J. Kraan, *Budgetary Decisions: A Public Choice Approach*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1996

Budgetary Decisions is a revision of Kraan's dissertation *Budgetary Decisions: A Micro-Economic Approach to Allocation and Distribution in the Public Sector* (1990). The book offers an introduction to the positive theory of public choice. Kraan wrote his book while working in the Directorate General of the Budget at the Ministry of Finance. The book is highly recommended by Gerrit Zalm, Minister of Finance, and Gordon Tullock, the well-known Public Choice theorist. According to Kraan budgetary decisions are the output of the political system. He combines Easton's input-output theory of the political system with the individual rationality assumption of the public choice approach. In this respect his book is an innovative alternative for Van den Doel's *Democratie en welvaartstheorie*.

In the first chapter Kraan presents several perspectives on budgetary decision-making. The distinction between public choice theory and other theories is described with the help of three key concepts: rationality, competence, and strategic interaction. The rationality of decision-makers is defined as the capability to order individual preferences for potential consequences of choice alternatives in a consistent way. The competence of the decision-maker is the set of choice alternatives that is available to him. His competence is defined by legal rules and constitutional constraints. The notion of strategic interaction refers to the idea that individual decision-makers have a noticeable effect on the process. Game theory is used to analyze interactive decision-making.

In the second chapter Kraan describes the structure of the budgetary process. This structure is a schedule of the basic competence rules of the budgetary process in the parliamentary and presidential system. The third chapter illustrates the public choice theory of public goods and private goods. To analyze the optimum of the demand for public goods, Van den Doel's two-dimensional graph is replaced by a three-dimensional indifference surface. The mathematical appendix examines the n -dimensional Preference Function (PF) and shows that the PF has the characteristic of single-peakedness. Chapter four presents the cost and benefit analysis of supply in the public sector. In this chapter Kraan also displays several models that illustrate the strategic games that the bureaucrats and politicians play with each other. In chapter

five Kraan uses game theory and Duncan Black's theory of committees to characterize political decision-making. The single-peaked preference functions (PF) of politicians define the core of an N -person budgetary game. Chapter six elaborates the role of the bureaucrat in decision-making. The expectation of the outcomes of the political process and the interaction with other bureaucrats is part of his strategic behaviour. In Kraan's model the bureaucrats can choose between a monopoly strategy, a monopoly strategy with price discrimination, and a competitive strategy. The monopoly strategy in the budgetary game for public goods does not always lead to a stable result (i.e., the monopoly strategy does not guarantee the core as the solution of the game). The two other strategies can generate a stable outcome of the budgetary game. But according to Kraan, the monopoly strategy with price discrimination is not very attractive for bureaucrats, because it would benefit only a minority of politicians and therefore it would therefore undermine the functioning of coalitions of politicians. This means that bureaucrats have a strong incentive to choose the competitive strategy and offer their services at cost price. Chapter seven analyzes the institutional feasibility of those situations where the budgetary game does not result in a stable solution. Tullock's log-rolling equilibrium is not very robust if coalitions are allowed to finance increases of outputs with decreases of other outputs. If a coalition accepts the rule of non-intervention a stable solution will occur. The agenda rule of non-intervention is an institutional option to reach an equilibrium on the level of the budgetary committee. The downside of this rule of non-intervention is, however, that it can reduce the level of social welfare of society at large. The last chapter, chapter eight, looks at ways to reform the budgetary decision-making, such as better information about the financial management of government, and several types of privatization. Kraan concludes his book with a positive judgement of public choice theory as a tool to analyze the problems of budgetary decision-making and to develop solutions of these problems. His work in the Directorate General of the Budget at the Ministry of Finance enables him to see that the fruitful ideas of public choice theory have not entered the official documents. But Kraan hopes that his book will make a contribution in budgetary decision-making.

Kraan's purpose was to write a systematic introduction to the budgetary process, a subject of public choice theory. He succeeds in presenting such an introduction: the book presents the theory of public choice very adequately and gives the reader a good idea what the relevant discussion is in this field of public choice theory. I doubt that 'the only desirable prerequisite is an elementary knowledge of microeconomic theory' because some analyses go beyond the elementary level. In short, this is a good public choice book written for public choice theorists by a public choice theorist. A political scientist on the other hand, will not always be satisfied with this book. He would criticize Kraan for not giving us a first-hand, insider's view of how budgetary decision-making really works in the Ministry of Finance. The models, graphs, and ideal points of actors in a three or more dimensional utility space will not convince political scientists that public choice is a useful approach for an empirical study of

this kind of political decision-making. The actors in Kraan's book are simply too good to each other; they all are involved in a cooperative game. In reality actors are usually involved in a non-cooperative (zero-sum) game. This view of political scientists is relevant, because, according to Gordon Tullock, in his Foreword to this book, 'Public Choice should be a tool for improved management of the government'. Management seldom aims to reach the common good: most of the time management is about outsmarting the other, and if nothing else works: shake the tree and see who falls to the ground. In other words, compared to the political struggle over the budget, a catch-as-catch-can fight looks more like a very civilized tea party. Kraan shares the ideas of Buchanan and Tullock that public choice theory is a positive economic theory. However, since the real actors in actual decision-making do not resemble the assumptions underlying the public choice models, this approach is normative. It establishes normative criteria for priorities, rules of the game and methods of aggregating individual preferences. This study of budgetary decision-making gives a perspective on how the bureaucrats, citizens, and politicians should act to achieve a stable solution. This knowledge gives us a Platonic perspective on reality, which is useful in its own right, but I have doubts as to whether it will ever be a useful tool for the actual management of government.

Huib Pellikaan

A. Hoogerwerf, *Geweld in Nederland (Violence in The Netherlands)*. Van Gorcum, Assen 1996

Violence is a relatively neglected subject in political science. Political scientists live in an intellectual world where violence lacks the status of an independent category. In the mainstream of Western political thought, violence is viewed as an unfortunate but sometimes necessary means to secure political ends. Hoogerwerf's book on *Violence in The Netherlands* is situated in this mainstream. Although the author clearly recognizes the difference between instrumental violence, expressive violence and ritual violence (p.23), his theoretical approach is limited to the first type of violence in that it assumes violence to be the 'ultimum remedium' in human relations (p.28). It is assumed that not only the author himself, but every human being wants to avoid violence. Without this assumption the theory of Thomas Hobbes would have no basis. Why should men want to prevent the war of all against all unless violence was conceived as an excessively heavy expense in the human accounting system? Hobbesian man has a profound aversion towards violence and would much rather live in a permanent state of subjection than in a permanent state of war. Hence violence belongs to the pathology of politics, to borrow a book title of Carl Friedrich. In the short summary of considerations on violence in political thought (chapter 10)

this liberal view predominates. Of course, Hoogerwerf mentions Rudolf Steinmetz' *Philosophie des Kriegeres*, in which war is considered from a social-Darwinist perspective as a common good; he also mentions Georges Sorel's *Reflexions on Violence*; he even cites Joseph Goebbels' statement on total war. But all this remains very marginal and is not discussed seriously. In fact, a whole tradition in Western thought from Joseph de Maistre and Marquis de Sade, to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Benito Mussolini is neglected.

Bearing in mind this restriction, Hoogerwerf's treatment of violence in The Netherlands is competent, erudite and inclusive. There is not an article that has been written on the subject that is not summarized in this book; not a single empirical data set is bypassed in Hoogerwerf's survey of literature. The reader gets a helicopter's view of what has been discussed and investigated in The Netherlands.

The book contains a general theory of violence by assuming that violence springs from extreme circumstances. When cultural differences between groups are great, when the distribution of wealth is unequal and when social disintegration increases, violence becomes more likely (p.31). The author discusses culture and violence; inequality and violence; social cohesion and violence (chapters 4 to 7). Subsequently the impact of political regimes on the outbreak of violence (chapter 8) and the consequences of violence for the victims, the perpetrators, and society as a whole (chapter 9) are discussed. In these chapters an impressive amount of empirical evidence is evaluated, in the course of which, however, it becomes clear that, even within the paradigm of the Enlightenment thought, the number of different and sometimes contradictory theoretical explanations is immense. For example, the increase of extreme right-wing violence is related to the (electoral) support of extreme right-wing parties (p.84). Yet the increase of extreme left-wing violence is explained by the very lack of support and the resulting isolation of the movement (p.88). At one point it is assumed that violence is related to the imbalance between increasing social equality and the increasing economic inequality (p.61); at another point it is maintained that violence tends to pop up when the power balance is felt to move in an unfavourable direction (p.35). I am not arguing here that the different theoretical models are necessarily incompatible. It does show, however, that the research on violence is still in its infancy and that even within the framework of liberalism it is far from easy to build a coherent 'overall theory'. It is here that I feel a little uneasy with the composition of the book. Even though the author clearly indicates that several quite different theoretical frameworks co-exist, the presentation of these different theories, and of the empirical data that have been collected on the basis of it, is such that the reader is easily led to the conclusion that a coherent body of scientific knowledge does exist and that only a few puzzles have yet to be solved. In other words, the book reads like a research proposal that lures the reader to believe that only time and money is needed to discover the sources of violence in contemporary society. This impression is reinforced by the last chapter which contains a series of suggestions for a government policy against violence. In the last chapter the liberal bias of the author is most clear. Being a liberal

myself, I fully sympathize with his policy suggestions: fight intolerance, combat inequality, increase democracy. From a professional point of view I could not agree more: we should have more money for research on the root causes of violence. And yet, I remain somewhat sceptical when I read that the government should combat sub- and countercultures of violence. How can a government fight cultures of violence if violence itself is defined as external to political philosophy, as a form of social and political pathology that should be 'cured' by a benevolent doctor? Is it not from this kind of political paternalism that many perpetrators of violence want to emancipate themselves? There is no other way of confronting (political) violence but to take it seriously and to study violence in all its instrumental, expressive and ritual forms. To do so we need a new political anthropology.

Meindert Fennema

Tineke A. Abma, *Responsief evalueren: Discoursen, controversen, en allianties in het postmoderne* (*Responsive evaluation: Discourses, controversies and alliances in post-modernism*). Eburon: Delft 1996.

Schopenhauer writes the following about a number of his colleague philosophers:

'The public learned from Kant that the obscure is not always meaningless. Almost immediately, the meaningless hid behind the obscure discourse. Fichte was the first to begin with this, Schelling was at least his equal. The greatest brutality in bringing up utter nonsense, in the relating of meaningless, foolish accumulations of words, was manifested with Hegel.'

Analogue to these possibly exaggerated remarks by Schopenhauer, one can use words with a similar meaning for the work of many post-modern 'thinkers'. This does not apply to lucid philosophers such as Rorty, whose work is of eminent importance to twentieth-century philosophy and science, but it does apply to the writings of a number of his self-proclaimed disciples in the science of public administration and policy science. Unfortunately, Tineke Abma's thesis, in which the so-called responsive evaluation is prominent, falls into the last category.

Out of dissatisfaction with the more 'traditional' forms of policy evaluation, Abma asks herself the following main question: 'How can policy evaluation be enriched with notions from post-modern thinking and what implications does this have for practices in the social service sector?'

What is striking in this phrasing of the question is the term 'enriched'. Although this vague notion is not explained, it can be understood from the text that enrichment is conceived as the creation of an open conversation '... in which they who experience

the pain and the burdens of their exclusion get up to speak about their experiences' (see sub-question 3, p.24). With this, Abma resists the idea of the evaluator as an expert, who assesses a certain policy on the basis of certain criteria. Such an instrumental assessment would be the actual practice in most conventional policy evaluations. Because of this, some parties with interests (among others, patients in the social service sector) are shut out, as are their experiences, which are relevant to the actual practice of the policy. This exclusion is mostly deemed to be the result of the starting points of the system-analytic and the critical-theoretic policy evaluation, which can be traced back to the modernistic Enlightenment project, namely:

- man is a rational, coherent, and autonomous subject with a stable identity;
- science is the supplier of objective, reliable, and universally applicable knowledge;
- language is a transparent and neutral medium that presents reality, and that makes a sharp distinction between fact and fiction possible;
- scientific knowledge is an instrument for rationalizing systems and the emancipation of people.

Put mildly, Abma creates a caricature of conventional policy evaluation. The starting points that are accredited to the system-analytic and the critical-theoretical evaluation are a good example of this. Twenty to twenty-five years ago, at the time of the infamous 'Commissie voor de Ontwikkeling voor de Beleidsanalyse' (Committee for the Development of Policy Evaluation), it may have been the case that a number of these starting points indeed underlay evaluations in the Netherlands. Nowadays, however, these principles are thought about in a more subtle way.

The idea that man is a rational, coherent, and autonomous subject that possesses a stable identity has become more and more splintered since Freud's works. Perhaps Abma associates this starting point with the rational actor models in the social sciences, although her writing is not very clear on this point. If this is the case, then it is a serious misunderstanding on her part. Rational actor models are not to be considered as normative starting points or as essentialistic reflections of reality, but as a means to approach and better understand the world outside us.

The thought that (present) conventional policy evaluation presupposes that language is transparent and neutral and (completely) represents reality also seems like a creation on her part. Scientists have not readily taken such a stand since Wittgenstein and Carnap. It is hence not surprising that Abma does not tell the whole story, but by and large sticks a label on certain forms of policy evaluation. Furthermore, it can be noted that the relation between fact and fiction is problematic; but fact and fiction do indeed differ. The idea that fact and fiction cannot be distinguished and that 'the world' is only a social construction, which also seems to be Abma's assumption, once led a physicist to note that it is strange that such social-constructivists always travel by plane to scientific congresses. After all, if the world outside us is fiction and permits everything, they might as well arrive on a flying carpet. It is much cheaper that way.

To ensure no misunderstanding, social-constructivists such as Rorty do not think

that there is no world outside us, but they do say that the essence or the truth of that world is within us. They are thus not of the opinion that the 'world' permits everything.

The two other alleged starting points of conventional policy evaluation have been greatly amended. Dryzek, for example, put the importance of policy science for policy implementation into perspective a number of years ago. He noted that there are no undisputed, tested theories with regard to policy interventions. Bovens and 't Hart have shown the relative meaning of policy evaluations and have given post-modernistically inspired adjustments of existing methods in various areas. Dryzek, as well as Bovens and 't Hart, none of whom are minor figures in policy science, do not think in terms of the idea that scientific knowledge is universally manageable and can serve as an instrument for rationalizing systems and emancipating people without any problems.

The more detailed picture that Abma paints of policy evaluations, of which she is not very fond, is very one-sided. The suggestion that researchers prefer to use an experimental design in a policy evaluation, demonstrates a great lack of knowledge of these types of studies. Almost all the handbooks that consider such a research design superior, report that an experimental design is generally impossible in the world of policy and therefore does not often appear in policy evaluations. This is why researchers have developed alternative designs. For example, the American Yin can be mentioned in his context.

Abma furthermore assumes that the conventional evaluator unquestioningly takes the official policy aims as the starting point of the evaluation. This may undoubtedly happen, especially in the world of policy consultancy agencies, but the more serious researcher will certainly take the warnings from an influential article by Herweijer to heart. For that matter, it is striking that, judging by her references, Abma does not know this article, which was published in 1981. Herweijer pointed out that, among others, the official and actual aims can differ and that aims can shift over time. In addition, Scriven a.o. has pointed out that evaluations can also take place without accounting for the interests and needs of the target group of a policy.

The questionable sketch that Abma gives of conventional policy evaluation does not of course imply that the responsive evaluation that she supports, does not have any value. Abma's version of responsive evaluation is not easy to reproduce, but can anyhow be conceived as an interactive process. In the words of one of the founders of this approach: it concerns a method in which the design gradually develops on the basis of issues that present themselves in the natural setting. In this way, responsive policy evaluation displays a connection with the grounded theory-approach of Glaser and Strauss.

Responsive evaluation claims to make use of 'adaptive and reprogrammable' observation instruments. The evaluator himself is seen to be the best observation instrument because a human being is flexible and responsive. Apart from the fact that this grossly overestimates the human capacity to process information, the gathering of impressions is also declared to be a reliable observation method. The reading of a

basic handbook of psychology would have made it clear that human observations are not always equally reliable. Furthermore, this view of human observation expresses a naive belief in the possibilities of studying 'reality' without preconceptions and theories. It is strange that, with regard to other scientific approaches, Abma formulates the criticism that these approaches do not realize that a researcher's values, interests, experiences and preconceptions can never be switched off (p.103), while earlier (p.94) she gives a checklist that is supposed to safeguard the researcher from subjective interpretations. Furthermore, it can be noted that the idea that the actual picture of that which was studied will spontaneously arise from the data, this being part of the gospel of the grounded theory approach, is fictitious.

Responsive evaluation is ruled by the idea that everyone, but particularly the weaker persons in society, must be heard and their realities must serve as the basis of a negotiation process with those involved in a certain policy. The evaluator acts as a sort of 'process manager'. This manifests itself, for example, in the second research question, namely: "How can an evaluator facilitate interactive processes by extending the sense?"

Responsive evaluation seems to be like a therapy that has to enable people in a policy context to make equal contributions, or an endeavour for emancipation that aims to let people without a say in matters be heard. This is not unimportant, but it has nothing to do with performing an evaluation. Of course one can stretch evaluation-research to such a point that it also contains therapies and an endeavour for emancipation. But in my opinion, this is not very wise, because if words can mean everything, they will be meaningless.

On the one hand, Abma's study is a discussion of literature about different approaches of policy evaluation, and on the other hand, it is propaganda for responsive evaluation. Abma answers her research question by means of stories about evaluation studies conducted by herself and others, which are difficult to interpret. It would have been natural for the author to compare conventional and responsive evaluations in detail, in order to decide which of the two contributes more to making sure everyone involved is heard; the processing of the different interests; and getting an interactive policy process going. Unfortunately there was no comparative, systematic design, so that, contrary to what Abma thinks, nothing can be said about the superiority of responsive policy evaluations.

No founded judgement can be given on the research methods the researcher actually employed. This is simply because she does not provide any clear information about them. Moreover, she does not find this important. She says the following about one of the evaluation studies that she discusses:

'Although the first name on the cover of the book suggests that the researcher is a human being of flesh and blood, a distance is created further on. As the reader, I get the impression that I am dealing with an expert. This is strengthened by the very extensive methodological justification.'