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Boekbespreking van: Democracy and Corruption in Europe

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Peter John, *Analysing Public Policy*. Pinter, London 1998, ISBN 1855675870, £ 14.99

This book aims to create an encompassing theory of public policy. Peter John argues that the main research in contemporary public policy studies focuses (should focus) on policy variation and policy change. Policy variation research aims to explain differences in policy-making between sectors and across countries. Research on policy change is directed towards explaining policy stability and policy change. The argument this book advocates, is that current political science theories or approaches are not able to explain policy variation and policy change satisfactorily, and that an integrated, evolutionary theory is therefore necessary. After a short introduction to the policy-oriented approach of political science and a critical review of the stages model, the author presents in five successive chapters an overview, some applications and a critical acclaim of the five prevailing theoretical approaches to the study of public policy: institutional approaches, group and network approaches, socio-economic approaches, rational choice theory, and ideas-based approaches. After concluding that none of the former theories fully explains variation and change in public policy, he uses the two remaining chapters to introduce a synthesis in the form of an evolutionary model of public policy variation and change.

By illustrating the deficiencies of simple stagist models like the sequential model of the policy process, Peter John discusses some of the problems with the conventional study of public policy. This leads to the conclusion that stagist models confuse more than they illuminate because in reality policy-making cannot be neatly chopped into pieces of agenda-setting, policy design and policy evaluation. Therefore, stagist models can at best serve as heuristic or learning devices but are not suitable for extracting testable hypotheses.

Each of the five central political science theories and approaches has its strengths and weaknesses. I will give two short examples of Peter John's treatment of the five basic theoretical approaches. First the institutional approach. One of the institutional approaches this book discusses is new institutionalism. According to John, new institutionalists accept that there are a variety of influences on policy and they consider "that institutions affect power of groups, shape the way ideas circulate to influence policy, and influence the coordination of public decisions." (p.57) According to new institutionalists institutions comprise norms and conventions. The broad view of new institutionalism enables a comparison of policy-making across countries. But "by incorporating values and norms as part of institutions, they include too many aspects of political life under one category." (p.64) Second the ideas-based approach. These perspectives have in common that ideas are key factors explaining policy change and variation. This chapter discusses the work of Haas, Sabatier, Fischer and Stone. Not surprisingly the criticism is that one element (ideas) dominates the explanation of policy change and policy variation.

As a result it is impossible to know whether what is being claimed is correct or not. In post-positivist and/or interpretivist public policy everything is transformed into discourse. If the empirical world is to be investigated, it cannot be seen as a seamless connection of ideas. (p.166)

In short, John argues that each approach offers at best a partial explanation for policy change and/or policy variation, while comprehensive explanations are needed. Therefore, a synthesis has to be developed. In doing so John first discusses the work of Sabatier (Policy Advocacy Coalition Framework), Kingdon (Policy Streams Approach), and Baumgartner and Jones (Punctuated Equilibrium Model). These three models have in common that they place ideas at the centre of the analysis and combine them with elements of rational choice, network, institutional, and socio-economic approaches. The drawback is that they do not fully manage to encompass all the activity associated with public decision-making. John suggests that an evolutionary approach is able to fill that gap.

An evolutionary theory of public policy views public policy-making primarily as continuous processes of competition between and cooperation concerning ideas and interests. It is argued that by incorporating elements of Kingdon's Policy Streams Approach and Baumgartner and Jones's Punctuated Equilibrium Model it is possible to explain the 'success' of a policy in evolutionary terms. In an evolutionary approach, institutions, groups, economies and ideas constitute the ground on which policies are born, grow old and become extinct.

John's book offers a critical and very well written, though somewhat roughly sketched, overview of contemporary public policy theory. Public policy analysts and political scientists should, therefore, have it in their bookcases. Less convincing is the way John tries to find a solution to the central problem that existing approaches only provide a partial explanation. In the first place his evolutionary theory is not (yet) very specific. Second, in its present form the proposed evolutionary theory seems to suffer from the same drawbacks as some of the other approaches this study covers. As a result John does not convince me to use his approach in preference to ad hoc combinations of partial approaches.

Rob van de Peppel

Donatella Della Porta and Yves Mény (eds.), *Democracy and Corruption in Europe*. Pinter, London/Washington 1997, ISBN 1-85567-367-3

During the 1990s political and administrative corruption has become an important issue for many states in different parts of the world. Many developing countries as well as established democracies were confronted with series of scandals that showed that no regime is immune to the corruption virus. The volume *Democracy and Corruption in*

Europe brings together scholars who analyse various forms of corruption in West European countries, Russia and Japan. They try to relate political corruption to characteristics of the political and administrative system. What causes corruption? What are its consequences?

The editors, Della Porta and Mény, define corruption as "a clandestine exchange between two 'markets', the 'political and/or administrative market' and the economic and social market." Corruption violates public, legal and ethical norms, and sacrifices the common good to private – personal, corporatist, partisan, etc. – interests. Corruption thus undermines the rule of law, and denies the principles of equality and transparency in that it favours certain actors who have secret and privileged access to public resources.

The volume contains reports and reflections on corruption in various countries, and concludes with a comparative analysis, in which the editors primarily try to establish the causes of political corruption in the countries studied.

The empirical chapters about the seven countries present a lot of useful information for anyone interested in corruption theory and anti-corruption policies. Mény sketches recent developments in France, paying extra attention to the involvement of the Socialist Party. Della Porta reports about her extensive empirical research on corruption in Italy where two vicious circles characterized the political and administrative system: 'clientelism – corruption – clientelism' and 'poor administration – corruption – poor administration'. According to Heywood, there are similarities between the Italian and Spanish situations: "In common with other Mediterranean societies, patronage and clientelism are deep-rooted in Spain." Other factors are important as well, the author stresses, and among them are the financial needs of political parties as well as the attempts to make the administrative system more transparent.

Germany (chapter by Siebel) and the United Kingdom (Adonis) represent North Europe. The most remarkable conclusion for Germany is that the massive political and economic liberalization process undertaken in former East Germany did not cause, as it did in other former socialist countries, an increase in corruption. On the contrary, politicians from West Germany were involved more often in corruption scandals in the 1990s.

The most interesting part of the book for political science and public administration is the concluding chapter by the editors. Della Porta and Mény present a systematic comparison of the characteristics and evolution of the corruption phenomenon in various democracies in order to "get away from ethnocentrism and construct generalizable explanations." They focus on the characteristics of the politicians and the political parties involved and on features of the political and administrative systems.

Corrupted 'politicians' can be distinguished from career politicians in the traditional Weberian sense. A first thing to note is that political careers nowadays appear to be a channel for rapid social mobility; this attracts 'gain politicians', who use politics as a

means for personal enrichment. Second, there is at the same time an interweaving of public positions and financial and entrepreneurial activities. Pantouflage, the movement of people between the public and private sectors, leads to more corruption and fraud. Third, there is a proliferation of figures who do not belong to either the state or the market and who, therefore, 'violate' the rules governing both. 'Business politicians' are more prominent "individuals who combine 'an intermediary role' in business affairs, licit or illicit, and generally, involvement in their own right in financial activity, with political intermediation in the traditional sense."

The strength or weakness of *political parties* is also considered to be relevant for the prominence of political corruption. However, corruption appears to be linked to the motivation of the voters and party members, rather than to their number. When the power of parties is increased by penetrating public bodies, and when parties dominate public administration, fiefdoms are produced which parties and their members can exploit for practices of corruption and clientelism.

Corruption appears to be linked to characteristics of the whole party system. Sometimes the rise to power of new parties coincides with an increase in corruption; in other cases, however, if one party remains in power for a long time this also is supposed to cause corruption. More important seems to be the lack of real opposition by consociativismo: the tendency to involve all the major political forces, whether government or opposition, in government decisions. Widespread consociativismo encourages secret pacts of connivance over illicit income for political actors.

Additionally, politicians' and political parties' need for money is an important aspect when trying to understand political corruption. It is related to the political culture of a country, which is not so easy to change, but it can also be influenced by regulating electoral campaign financing.

A last factor discussed by Della Porta and Mény concerns *public administration* and public corruption. The culture of the public bureaucrats is important (integrity, impartiality, efficiency), but other aspects seem to be relevant as well, though the precise relationship with corruption is not always very clear. The growth of state power and intervention can produce more corruption just as privatization and deregulation can. The same is true for administrative decentralization and centralization, the introduction of control structures (purely formal procedures are useless or even counter-productive) and the consequences of the existence of informal power networks like Masonic lodges.

To conclude, *Democracy and Corruption in Europe* is a welcome contribution to our knowledge about the extent and causes of political corruption in seven countries. The book also shows that more scholars in political science and public administration are becoming interested in corruption and corruption research. The editors present a useful and stimulating first attempt to formulate theory based on the comparison of the countries. Yet, it is also clear that a lot of work still needs to be done. The formulated assumptions should be confronted with other empirical research on public corruption and – most importantly – the knowledge and insights into corruption

should be incorporated and integrated in other fields in political science and public administration, for example in theories about political behaviour, power and parties.

Leo Huberts

Max Visser, *Five Theories of Voting Action: Strategy and Structure of Psychological Explanation*. Twente University Press, Enschede 1998, ISBN 9036511429, Dfl. 43.50

Max Visser's dissertation mainly consists of five overviews of a psychological approach to voting that has been or can be a source of inspiration for theories of voting. Additionally, the theoretical implications of these perspectives for (future) voting research are discussed. This is a theoretical rather than an empirical study: no data analyses are presented, a theoretical overview is given.

In the introductory chapter Visser distinguishes three aspects which differ in the various approaches to electoral research: (1) the underlying theories of human behaviour (based on sociology, psychology or economics), (2) the basic unit of analysis (individual voter versus collective electorate), and (3) the time perspective (single moment versus time period). Visser's study focuses on psychology-based theories, oriented to the individual voter, using both time perspectives. More precisely, "the *research purpose* of the dissertation is to describe, analyze and uncover convergences between different existing psychological theories of voting behavior at the individual level, both with regard to their structure and to the various strategies of explanation these theories imply." (pp.8-9) Four research questions are formulated:

1. Which intervening variables do psychology-oriented schools employ in voting action research?
2. What are the (historical) antecedents of these intervening variables in psychological theory?
3. What strategies of explanation do psychology-oriented schools employ in voting research?
4. To what extent and in which ways may theoretical convergences between the intervening variables be discerned?

With respect to strategies of explanation a nomothetic, causal model and an idiographic, teleological or functional model are distinguished, which correspond with both time perspectives and concentrate respectively on *inter*-individual and *intra*-individual differences.

The second chapter, "The empirical analysis of voting action", starts with brief discussions about the Würzburg and Vienna schools. Visser discusses some of Paul Lazarsfeld's conceptual and methodological ideas before devoting three pages to the classic voting studies of the Columbia school. In the final paragraph only one sentence

is devoted to each of the first three research questions. The absence of any elaboration on the intervening variables (and their definitions) is particularly disappointing.

"The field theory of voting action", the next chapter, has a similar structure to the second. First, the Gestalt school is discussed briefly. Next, some of Kurt Lewin's conceptual ideas are discussed, before three pages are devoted to the approach of the Michigan school. Having briefly noted some problems of the party identification concept, it is concluded – contrary to claims made by scholars of the Michigan school – that the Columbia and Michigan schools are quite similar, both in theoretical and in methodological terms.

"The cognitive theory of voting action" starts with some elaboration on theories of balance and dissonance, and on the New Look movement. After a short sketch of the rise of the computer metaphor and the information processing approach within psychology, its applications to voting behaviour are discussed, focusing especially on the schema concept. Visser concludes that the cognitive approach "has not yet developed into an all-encompassing theory of voting action" (p.59) and that, moreover, it cannot provide satisfying answers when applied alone. Probably, similar remarks could and should have been made in the two preceding chapters.

"The psychodynamic theory of voting action" begins with a brief discussion of Sigmund Freud's views and their impact on thinking about personality. The most central concept in this chapter is that of authoritarian personality, which is associated with voting research predominantly through its correlation with fascist and extreme right political preferences. Visser concludes that the main contribution of this approach with respect to the intervening psychological variables is the addition of the need concept.

"The humanistic theory of voting action" first elaborates upon the Vienna school, Gestalt psychology, and Abraham Maslow's ideas about a hierarchy of needs. Next, Ronald Inglehart's conception of materialist and postmaterialist values is discussed. Its relevance for voting research lies in the fact that postmaterialist voters favour leftist, environmental parties. According to Visser, Inglehart added the concepts of need and value to the existing stock of intervening variables in voting research. As with the psychodynamic theory of voting research, the originally adopted functional approach that characterized the psychological antecedents faded in favour of a causal approach. This has also been adopted in the other three psychological approaches and is characteristic of the mass surveys that are typically employed for voting research.

The final chapter, "Converging theories of voting action", presents an overview of the intervening variables that correspond with each of the five 'schools'. The Columbia school is associated with perception, opinion, attitude, and identification, and the other four added the concepts of cognitive structure, evaluation, schema, cue, need and value. Next, Visser sketches his view on the voting action, which he later refers to as "a general model of voting action" (p.102). Voting is the result of a number of interacting factors, which should be studied as a whole rather than in isolation. These 'mutually interdependent coexisting facts' together constitute a field, in which