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Boekbespreking van: Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction

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more socially responsible role. Therefore, his social agenda remains limited to some suggestions about schooling, reducing work pressure, creating new associational forms, etc. It is doubtful whether these suggestions, if implemented, would be able to reverse the declining trend in American civic life. Although Putnam himself explicitly denies this, some parts of this book seem inspired by fond memories of the close-knit communities of the 1950s. New forms of social and civic engagement are rather easily dismissed as having little effect, although for the moment we do not have any real research results about the social consequences of these new interaction methods. Putnam cannot produce real convincing evidence that the traditional face-to-face associations, which were prevalent in the 1950s, really strengthen social ties more effectively than contemporary, more network-like associational forms.

Despite these shortcomings, there is little doubt that this book will be widely quoted and that it will become something of a standard reference. There is no other book that offers such conclusive evidence about the decline of traditional social ties, at least in American society. This fact having been firmly established, the book can only be considered as a starting point for a whole new discussion about the question whether social cohesion can be maintained by the new, more fluid interaction styles which are rapidly replacing the traditional associations and institutions in Western societies.

Marc Hooghe

Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge 2000. Hardback ISBN 0-415-18727-3; paperback ISBN 0-415-18728-1. £ 15. 99.

Real challenges face the scholar who seeks to write a textbook on methodology that is simultaneously of use and of interest to students on comparative politics courses. Students are typically drawn to comparative politics because of the interesting substantive questions raised in the field, not because of issues of methods. Indeed, for most students, methodological matters seem abstract and perhaps even dull in comparison with exciting empirical questions.

Todd Landman's new book succeeds admirably at avoiding a dry discussion of methodology, while at the same time offering much advice that will be helpful to advanced undergraduate students. The success of the book arises from its focus on actual examples from comparative studies of nation-states. The range of empirical studies covered is, in fact, quite remarkable, and includes a good many of the leading works in the field. These studies are vividly illustrated using many helpful figures, tables and text boxes.

The book is structured into three parts, which offer a convenient basis for organizing this discussion. In part one, Landman develops separate chapters on why we compare nations, how we compare nations, and the problems of comparing nations. Using

many empirical examples to illustrate his points, he argues that we compare nations to facilitate description and classification, and to allow for hypothesis testing and perhaps prediction. The discussion is useful, though it does downplay the role of comparison in the discovery and generation of new hypotheses. In addition, the treatment of key methodological concepts such as cases, units of analysis, variables, and levels of analysis is too brief to be of much use to beginning students.

Landman's analysis of how to compare nations focuses on the distinction between large-*N*, small-*N*, and case study research designs. He usefully reviews the received understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition, drawing heavily on pioneering insights of Arend Lijphart and the more recent work of David Collier. I was somewhat less satisfied with Landman's analysis of the problems of comparison, a discussion that focuses on the small-*N* problem, conceptual validity, and selection bias. For instance, Landman fails to adequately illustrate the degrees of freedom problem that confronts much comparative work, and he mistakenly assumes that selection bias will lead scholars to overestimate the importance of certain causal factors (underestimating causal effects is actually the typical effect of selection bias). As a result, Landman characterizes certain studies, such as Skocpol's work on revolutions, as suffering from selection bias when this is not really the case.

Part II is the heart of book, offering separate chapters on five major research areas in comparative politics: economic development and democracy; political violence and social revolution; social movements; transitions to democracy; and institutional design and democratic performance. Each of these chapters is organized into sections on large-*N* studies, small-*N* studies, and single case studies. Landman's coverage of the literature for these topics is extremely impressive, so much so that he ends up offering a literature review that will be of interest to seasoned professors as well as beginning students. I was especially impressed by Landman's treatment of more recent studies from the mid- and late 1990s.

A central goal of the chapters in Part II is to introduce students to the diverse kinds of explanations that have been developed in the field. In this respect, Landman is also quite successful. For example, in the chapter on economic development and democracy, students are presented with an overview of four decades of quantitative research exploring the linkage between development and democracy, culminating with the recent work of Przeworski and collaborators. Attention then turns to small-*N* studies, ranging from the early work of de Schweinitz and Moore to the more recent study by Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens. A final section addresses case study research on development and democratization, such as Putnam's study of civic engagement in Italy. In this chapter and others, Landman uses many arrow diagrams and columns filled with listings of independent and dependent variables to summarize the various relationships proposed by the authors.

Despite its breath, however, Landman's discussion of existing studies is not without limitations. For one thing, the summaries of the different works are often inadequate representations of the authors' arguments. In many cases, the problem is simply one

of oversimplifying an author's argument for the purpose of offering a brief summary that will be useful to students; in other cases, however, real distortions are introduced into the author's original arguments. For example, I was not satisfied with the summaries of more than a dozen studies of democratization, in which highly nuanced arguments are reduced to only a couple of explanatory variables (see Landman's Table 7.2). Likewise, the summaries of small-*N* studies by scholars such as Moore, Skocpol, and Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens often ignore the role of sequencing and timing. These scholars are interested not only in specifying the values of certain macro variables but also in theorizing the way in which the temporal ordering of variables can have a major effect on outcomes. Landman's summary of static variables does not do justice to these considerations of temporal processes.

Furthermore, because this book focuses on substantive arguments, it necessarily devotes comparatively less attention to analysing the actual research techniques used in large-*N*, small-*N*, and case study research. While students will learn about the different conclusions offered in these research traditions, they will not develop a real feel for what it is like to work with statistical data for large numbers of cases or with detailed historical information for a small number of cases. As a result, some students may have trouble fully appreciating the various checks and balances between the traditions discussed by Landman.

Part III of the book considers the major methodological challenges facing comparative politics in the years to come. I found this part of the book to be the least satisfying from a pedagogical perspective. In the effort to summarize all of the arguments in the book in a single short chapter, Landman ends up covering too much ground for most students. Likewise, the discussion of the past and future of comparative politics is too brief. For example, in a mere two pages Landman describes the evolution of the substantive foci and research methods of comparative politics over the entire last century. Such sweeping generalizations are probably too superficial to engage most students. More intriguing themes are raised at the very end of the book with the discussion of new transnational political influences, human rights, and globalization.

In summary, Landman has written an important if not perfect textbook on methods for comparative political analysis. A major advantage of this book over other similar offerings is its impressive use of detailed and up-to-date examples from real studies of comparative politics. I would highly recommend the book for advanced undergraduate students, even though it sometimes attempts to cover too much material in too little space for this audience. However, I would caution against using the book with graduate students. The problem is not any of the inevitable limitations that arise in Landman's sweeping discussion, but rather that summary versions of methodological ideas and substantive works are less helpful for these students. Professors who teach graduate seminars on comparative politics will be better off assigning selected items from the many excellent works considered in Landman's textbook.

James Mahoney

Gerrit Voerman (ed.) *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen 1998* [*The 1998 Yearbook of the Centre for the Documentation of Dutch Political Parties*]. Groningen: Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen 1999. ISBN 90-75612-01-x, f 25,-.

In the 25 years of its existence the *Centre for the Documentation of Dutch Political Parties* has proven its value for the study of Dutch politics. One of its features is the publication of a yearbook. Basically, it has two components: historical information on special topics of party history and an annual overview of the main political events, particularly of parties. Furthermore, the yearbook traditionally pairs a few idiosyncratic historical studies with a number of analytical essays on the position of Dutch political parties in the political process within the Netherlands. The 1998 yearbook is no exception in this respect. Despite its emphasis on historical analysis and on the intricacies of the politics of only one political system, the 1998 yearbook offers a few contributions that are of interest to the general comparative political scientist.

The volume contains three history-oriented papers. One deals with affiliated youth organizations. Another discusses the relationship between the Dutch Communist Party and its counterpart in the GDR, the SED, between 1946-1989. The last essay is an intriguing paper on the liberal party and its relationship with the press in the 1950s and 1960s. All three are valuable for those who are interested in these kinds of *petites histoires*, but they are less relevant to political science in general than the 'analytical' papers.

The latter all deal with the main political event of 1998 in Dutch politics: the national parliamentary elections. *Van Praag* and *Penseel* pose the question to what extent have marketing methods professionalized electoral campaigning. *Lucardie* gives an overview of the parties that competed for office, but were not eligible to enter parliament (i.e., they did not even gain 0.67% of the national vote!). *Mamadouh* and *Van der Wusten* provide us with a geographical analysis of the stability of and changes in voting behaviour at the local level in the Netherlands. Lastly, *Andeweg* discusses the pros and cons of the Dutch process of forming a coalition government.

All these essays are relevant for the study of Dutch politics. At the same time, they have a rather parochial flavour about them. They tend to emphasize the peculiarities if not idiosyncrasies of Dutch politics rather than the more general trends that can be observed. This leads to remarks about coalition theories that cannot explain the actual composition of the present government (*Andeweg*, p. 193). Another example is the use of the volatility measure by *Mamadouh* and *Van der Wusten*, who claim that it has not been used before on a disaggregated level (except in the United Kingdom, p. 165). Apart from the fact that this is not true (see, for instance, *Mair & Bartolini, Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability. The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885-1985*, 1990, as well as *Lane & Ersson, Politics and Society in Western Europe*, 1998), it only shows that these analyses – however sensible they are – lack a broader context. This is also true for the contributions by *Lucardie* and by *Van Praag* and *Penseel*, who