

Relateret hertil er den største begrænsning ved bogens undersøgelser fraværet af samlede dynamiske analyser, der knytter udviklingen i de tre dagsordener – partiernes, mediernes og vælgerne – sammen på systematisk vis. Der er i bogen enkelte tilløb til en dynamisk sammenkædning af to dagsordener af gangen (se fx p. 308 og 350–351), men der mangler en klar opsamling på spørgsmålet om, hvordan udviklingerne i de tre dagsordener spillede sammen i løbet af valgkampen. Igen ville en grundig belysning af spørgsmålet fordrer indsamling af nye data (fx for vælgerne reaktioner i valgkampens løb), men en mere eksplícit sammenstilling af eksisterende data eksempelvis om mediernes indhold og udviklingen i vælgerne støtte til partierne under valgkampen ville kunne understøtte konklusionerne. Som forfatterne dog også nævner (p. 298), kræver det formentlig undersøgelser med en betydeligt længere tidshorisont end en valgkamp, hvis spørgsmålet om samspillet mellem de tre dagsordener skal kunne afklares. Inspiration til det videre arbejde i denne retning kan fx findes i Lise Tøgebys bog *Man har et standpunkt...* (Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2004), der sammenkæder paneldata og medieindhold over en årrække i mere konsekvente dynamiske analyser af den danske opinionsudvikling.

Samlet set rokker de rejste spørgsmål ikke ved bogens resultater. Det står således fast, at *I valgkampens hete* er en god og læseværdig bog både for fagfolk, men også for alment interesserede og – med konklusionerne in mente – måske særligt for beslutningstagere med interesse for demokratiets velbefindende.

JONATHON W. MOSES

Knut Heidar, ed. (2004):
Nordic Politics. Comparative Perspectives
Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 311 pages
ISBN: 82-15-00628-0 (h.)

Grandma was right: you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. The cover on this book heralds: «*Nordic Politics. Comparative Perspectives* questions the much vaunted thesis of Nordic homogeneity by launching a comparative re-examination of the institutional structures, political forces and public policies that characterize Sweden, Denmark and Norway separately and collectively as emblematically 'Nordic'».

Luckily for the reader, this is not exactly true. This is not a narrow response to simplistic claims about the homogeneity of Nordic policies. Claims such as these are not definitive – they depend critically on the perspective of the reader and the objective of the authors involved. As a result, foreigners tend to think that the Nordic region looks like a homogeneous glob (relative to other homogeneous globs, like the Anglo-America glob, the Sub-Saharan African glob, the Southern European glob, the Latin American glob, etc.). Nordic residents, however, pride themselves in the differences that separate and distinguish their different national policies. There is little mystery here worthy of further investigation.

The editor of this collection is clearly and refreshingly aware of this. In the book's conclusion (p. 266), Knut Heidar points out how arguments about similarities and differences are analytical constructions: «All human phenomena look different the closer the observer gets to them. The low resolution of the panoramic shot gives a general view, making the major contours appear 'similar' or even 'identical'. Only the close up can reveal the differentiating details».

Neither is the title as misleading as the cover would have us believe. While there is some variation in the cases included, most chapters include Finland in their study, and the editor (at least) recognizes that the Nordic rubric extends beyond Norway, Sweden and Denmark, to include Finland, Iceland, Åland, the Faeroes and Greenland. Indeed, in a footnote to the introductory chapter (#4) Heidar explicitly recognizes that, for many purposes, the introduction of Finland makes the analysis more interesting!

Hear! Hear! This sort of thinking should be encouraged with the hope of it spreading. Imagine how interesting this book might have been had the authors been encouraged to include more of the other Nordic «outliers». After all, there is much to be gleaned by comparisons that included the politics of Greenland, the Faeroe Islands, Åland and Iceland. These territories and countries are almost always shunned in larger Nordic studies, and yet they offer fascinating glimpses into the possibilities of difference: not only among the Nordics, but in European politics more generally. Iceland is a fascinating, perhaps unique, example of a country whose political elite largely oppose EU-membership, while the general public is broadly supportive; Greenland is the only region in Europe that has pulled out of the European Union. Given the dismal popularity of the EU among Nordic residents, one might expect some interest in cases like these.

But, like the book cover's sales pitch, this would have resulted in a different book. What *is* collected in this anthology is itself worthy of note. Sandwiched between a preface and conclusion by the editor, this book includes

fourteen well-written and argued chapters; chapters that cover much of the traditional terrain occupied by Norwegian political science. With an eye toward inclusion, but at the risk of distracting the reader, there are chapter contributions by Knut Heidar (on state and nation building, as well as parties and political systems), Tom Christensen (on modern state reforms), Oddbjørn Knutsen (on voters and social cleavages), Per Selle and Tommy Tranvik (on civic society in transition), Trond Nordby (on patterns of corporatist intermediation), Hanne Marthe Narud (on political representation and parliamentary nominations), Bjørn Erik Rasch (on parliamentary government), Nina Raaum (on the presence of women in parliamentary politics), Lawrence Rose (on local government and politics), Harald Baldersheim (on Nordic regions in a European perspective), Anton Steen (on the viability of the welfare state), Tore Nyhamar (on security policies), and Janne Haaland Matlary (on Nordics and the EU).

Each and every chapter provides a nice descriptive introduction to many of the main approaches used by Norwegian political scientists to study the questions at hand. These approaches are then used to help the reader evaluate the uniqueness of Nordic policies in disparate areas. Indeed, the quality of the individual chapter contributions is so consistently high that I hesitate to pull out any one chapter for special attention.

Written in English for a public that is mostly unfamiliar with Nordic politics, this volume provides a nice introduction to the political landscape of individual Nordic countries. By employing mainstream analytical approaches to political science we are encouraged to see Nordic policies in a larger comparative context, while we examine and come to grips with the distinctiveness of national policies in the Nordic region. Although the foreign reader might expect to find this type of variance in some policy areas (for example, in the study of EU-membership or security policies), it may come as a pleasant surprise in others (e.g., women in politics, the pace and scope of organizational reform, etc.). In short, the volume's analytical framework provides for the sort of close-up focus that encourages students to see variation where the foreign student is accustomed to seeing sameness. This is a welcome correction to the tendency (understandable as it is) for foreign observers to clump Nordic policies into simple homogeneous types.

These observations help to describe the motivations and strength of the anthology, but they also reveal one of its weaknesses. *Nordic Politics* lacks a strong organizational design or principle. Most of the chapters began life as lectures in «Nordic Politics» given at Oslo University's Department of Political Science in the spring of 2004, and the anthology reads as such: a hodgepodge of interesting, but diverse and sometimes unrelated, approaches.

Even if the editor did not intend to cover every topic (p. 8), a more explicit and tighter organizational structure could have contributed to a more cohesive anthology.

While the book is meant as a comparative introduction to Nordic politics, this is clearly Norden from a Norwegian perspective. A strong Norwegian accent is evident in the affiliation of the authors (each of them is employed in institutions that are located in either Bergen or Oslo), the emphasis on Norwegian approaches to political science, and the abundance of Norwegian examples. For example, it is difficult to imagine a British or American (or, for that matter, Swedish) anthology of Nordic policies that would begin (chapter 2) with a contribution on New Public Management (not usually an audience grabber), and/or one that is filled with so many references to Stein Rokkan (don't be fooled by the index: Rokkan figures prominently in many of the studies that make up this anthology.)

Although the chapter themes represent a broad swath of traditional issues, they seem to be chosen with an eye at showcasing the Nordic polity and its variances. A more aggressive (and honest) anthology might have encouraged studies that illustrate some of the problems that Nordic states share (and to which they respond differently): e.g., the large regional cleavages that resulted from EU membership applications, the problem with racism and refugee assimilation, the difficulty women have with breaking through the private and university sectors' thick glass ceilings, etc. By including a wider sampling of Nordic policy areas, it would be easier to avoid the sort of normative cheerleading that (almost inevitably) characterizes a study of this type.

While foreigners may question the utility of emphasizing the Norwegian perspective (given that Norway is the smallest of the four major states under consideration and the only country outside of the EU), many will welcome an approach to Nordic studies that is not dominated by Swedo-centrism. I can only assume that readers of *Norsk statsvitenskapelig tidsskrift* will embrace this bias. Any problem with this anthology, I suspect, lies with the publisher: is there really a market large enough to support an English introduction to political scientific approaches to the study of Nordic politics? Let the readers of this journal hope that the publisher finds this market to be both large and prosperous!