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Boekbespreking van: Government Failures and Institutions in Public Policy Evaluation

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For Spain, Gunther, Montero and Wert describe how, under the Franco regime, press laws were introduced to achieve a controlled liberalization, and how, in the chaotic times after Franco's demise, the press played an important role in the movement towards democratization. Russia and Hungary, countries that have come from a totalitarian regime, have undergone a totally different development towards democracy, and towards liberalization. The liberalization of these countries can be characterized as a top-down liberalization, as was seen in the Gorbachev era, whereas in countries like Spain the trend towards democracy came from the intellectuals, and from the common people. For the latter, the role of tourism, particularly the contacts it promoted with other Europeans, played a role that cannot be overestimated.

Although the stories of media and politics in countries with a longer tradition of democracy, like the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Germany have often been told, the authors have selected some interesting cases. This is particularly the case for the media situation in Italy. Until the 1980s, Italian media were structured along political lines. This was true not only for the newspapers, but also for the broadcasting system. It was strictly partisan. The Christian Democrats 'controlled' RAI 1, the socialists RAI 2, and the communists RAI 3. The 1990s, however, witnessed a change from consensual democracy (albeit with an unstable equilibrium) to majoritarian democracy. The view of the media system is particularly interesting because the leader of the largest party, Silvio Berlusconi of *Forza Italia*, also owns some very popular broadcasting firms. After becoming prime minister in 1994, Berlusconi replaced top-ranking personnel of the three RAI stations with individuals allied with himself and his party.

These are some of the most striking examples of the macroscopic perspective in *Democracy and the Media*. Although the chapter on Germany is adequate in its description of the German media situation from World War II until now, the story could have been more compelling. Its author, Kaase, focuses on the development of the media system in West Germany. The German Democratic Republic figures only in the last three pages, in the description of the unification of Germany since 1989. Even there, the perspective is clearly one from the west. If more room had been given to the media in the GDR, this chapter could have served as a link between the two groups of countries. The book as a whole could have gained more depth if the GDR-perspective had been explicitly included.

In the introduction it is stated that besides a macroscopic look at media and politics, a microscopic viewpoint would be taken. The latter is, in all chapters, less outstanding. Maybe this is partly due to the fact that most of the authors are political scientists, and not communication scholars. In every chapter an effort is made to describe the effects of the media on individuals. In some chapters this is done by assessing the influence of the media system as a whole, its content, and how it is organized on the democratic process as a whole. In other chapters, individual voting behaviour is the variable that is to be explained by media use. This influence is, however, especially difficult to ascertain. Every communication scholar knows that it is precarious business to

investigate the consequences of media use for individual behaviour. The results of sound research often indicate that such an effect is ambivalent, if not absent. Too many external factors are involved in this process, to ascertain the influence of media on politics at the individual level. To assess the influence of media on the attitudes or behaviour of individuals, investigations have to be carried out at a disaggregated level, but that would go beyond the scope of the overview Gunther and Mughan present.

Although the microscopic level does not constitute the core of the country descriptions, it does surface in some of the contributions. The concluding chapter deals with it explicitly. Here, the authors make an inventory of those aspects that have played a role in this process in various countries. The concluding chapter is thus justly entitled 'The political impact of the media: a reassessment'. Whereas in the ten country case studies the evidence for the influence of media on politics is scattered, it is all summarized, and put into perspective, in this last chapter. The final conclusion then seems a little obvious: mass media does not live up to its potential to improve the quality of democracy. However, the authors go beyond this by pointing out that this 'failure of the media' does not simply depend on the media's capitalist commercial mode of organization, but also on the impact of specific political decisions, which can harm as well as foster democracy.

The introductory chapter and the concluding chapter are very readable and sometimes even thought provoking. They serve as an interpretative framework for the descriptions of the ten most different media systems and societies. Even if the reader chooses not to read the descriptions, these two chapters will give a good overview of the relations that can and do exist between media and democracy. *Democracy and the Media* is a useful addition to the long list of books on media and politics, especially for its first and its last chapter. It can also be a useful teaching tool in courses of political science or communication. The book's ten case studies provide an accessible source for student assignments and presentations.

Carlo Hagemann

Ard Schilder, *Government Failures and Institutions in Public Policy Evaluation*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000, ISBN 90-232-3637-8, 229 p., Dfl. 55.00.

The past decades have provided political science scholars as well as public sector professionals with a range of alternative views and theories to describe, explain and evaluate governmental actions. Nowadays, scholars struggle with a public choice paradigm and an approach called Institutional Economics. By consequence, the public sector had to adapt to the principles of new public management. These may be more modern theories than welfare economics, Keynesian macro-economic planning and interference, and Taylorian scientific management. Yet, sceptics may well ask: So What? What are the real implications if new theories and paradigms tell us that

government is not omnipotent, sometimes incompetent, and often fails to achieve its objectives? Does it imply that we have to judge public policies in a different way, using different criteria to those we are used to? This is the interesting question Schilder tries to answer in his dissertation and now published book on governmental failures and institutions in public policy evaluation. The research question is appealing, because it asks what three streams of knowledge imply for designing an evaluation framework for public policy. He applies his proposal to Dutch technology policy and especially the implementation and evaluation aspects thereof.

In the first three chapters, Schilder presents an overview of what the new paradigms have to offer. In his chapter on public choice he thoroughly describes the theories of, respectively, Downs, Niskanen, Dunleavy, Tullock, Mancur Olson, McNutt and Madison. Schilder's theoretical overview is more than satisfactory, although a little too benevolent. It lacks a critical perspective on the ideas of maximizing behaviour, rent seeking, the bureaucratic behaviour supposed, and political opportunism. In his chapter on institutional economic perspectives on public policy, Schilder discusses the theories of Williamson, Coase and North. Among other things, he goes into the theories of transaction costs, the impact of institutions as rules of the game, the micro-analytical perspective, principal agent theory, new institutional political economy, and the idea of governance as a last resort.

The author runs into problems because of his description of the features of so many theories in only one chapter. Perhaps his aim was to give a complete picture of neo-institutional approaches. However, that does not explain the omission of historical institutionalism (e.g., Steinmo and Thelen) as well as game theoretic approaches (e.g., Scharpf). Perhaps the author made a pre-selection on the basis of some criterion. If so, the exact criterion remains implicit. Possibly, the theories were chosen because they all claim to explain the internal organization of government. However, if that is the case, regime theory and the (at least in name) neo-institutional approach of March and Olsen are lacking. It seems much more likely that Schilder has restricted the theories to be discussed, according to the criterion that one value, namely efficiency, has to be optimized, maximized or minimized. This results in, firstly, a strange mixture of variety and unity: variety in what to explain and unity in how it is explained and in the basic assumption of economic rationality underlying these theories. Secondly, it produces the a priori preference of market structures over governmental structures. These theories consider public policies flawed first and foremost because they are public in nature and do not arise out of a competitive setting that would enhance efficiency. In the fourth chapter this line of reasoning continues in the discussion of the new public management approach. Essential elements of this approach are clear objectives, competition, a performance-related reward system and review systems.

Nevertheless, given the author's thorough description of the numerous theories and paradigms, these critical comments would not have been made, were it not that the author's conclusions are problematic. Schilder tries to find out what the modern theories imply for evaluation research and the criteria used therein. He tries to develop

an evaluation framework on the basis of these theories. He subsequently applies these criteria to an evaluation of past evaluations in the field of Dutch technology policy. One wonders whether it is relevant to evaluate past evaluations on the basis of criteria proposed in modern theories. It cannot but result in a critical conclusion regarding those policy evaluations. In my opinion, this critical attitude comes too late in the book. I would have preferred the author to be as critical about modern theories as he is about the evaluation of Dutch technology policy. The reason for this comment is that the author uses those theories not to explain empirically but to judge normatively. This results in a framework that stresses the importance of adapting public policies to institutional mechanisms. This implies a focus on clear, unitary and broad priorities and goals, a performance-related reward system, competition in implementation and a balanced review system. On the other hand, complexity and remediability are crucial factors of this framework (p. 116). The framework is problematic because, when applied to public policies, it cannot but find flaws, as the meta-evaluation of technology policy exactly demonstrates. My knowledge of technology policy is too limited to judge Schilder's meta-analysis, but from the perspective of evaluation and theory one might well wonder whether a conclusion less critical than the one derived by Schilder, might have been possible.

The problem is that Schilder ignores the political dimension underlying the framework. In my opinion the criteria do not do justice to public policies or to what they have to achieve. To make decisions on the basis of a simple cost-benefit analysis is indeed the way to do things in the free market. The public sector, however, also has to look, among other things, at the distribution of costs and benefits over different groups in society, the side-effects of its policies, the degree to which different interests are at stake, the degree to which all stakeholders can influence the policy process, and the degree to which it is law-based. To ignore these effects is to deny the merits of the public aspects of public policies. To look only at technical, organizational or procedural criteria, because those are the ones derived from modern theories, and to ignore criteria like equity and righteousness, does not do justice to the unique character of public policies.

In sum, this book shows that the author knows what he is talking about as far as the contents and the implications of modern theories are concerned. The description and comparison thereof is not the point of my criticism. My main objection concerns the usage of these theories in an evaluative, i.e. normative, way, without proper reflection on their implications. To make the core of these theories also the core of an evaluation framework for public policies ignores the fundamental differences between public and private policies. Confining an evaluation of public policies to criteria that are especially appropriate for evaluations in free market situations almost automatically leads to the conclusion that the public sector has done it wrong, just because they were public in nature. In my view, this is not a problem for the public sector, but rather for the framework used to evaluate it.

Michiel S. de Vries

Henri Goverde, Philip G. Cerny, Mark Haugaard and Howard Lentner (eds.), *Power in Contemporary Politics. Theories, Practices, Globalizations*. London: Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: SAGE, 2000, 272 p., ISBN 0-761-96677-3, USD 27.95

What has political science to offer to our knowledge of social phenomena, compared with other sciences such as sociology, law, economics, psychology and anthropology? In my view, the contribution of political science is directly related to its special relationship with the aspect of power and influence. In decision-making theory, for example, this is very apparent: an economist points at the costs and benefits of the decision and decision-making. A psychologist protests when the personalities involved are ignored (e.g., in management styles). A lawyer explains the outcome by analysing the procedures and rules. An anthropologist uses the existing values, norms and perceptions (culture) as the core of an explanatory framework, whereas a sociologist often focuses on the environment of the actors involved in the game. The political scientist, however, is the one who defines decision-making in terms of power, influence, and resources and (inter) dependencies. In other words, what we can offer science is directly related to power and influence. At the same time there is a remarkable reluctance in the field to address this central issue. For example, the research committee on political power of the International Political Science Association is very small considering the centrality of its object. This research group, chaired by Henri Goverde of Nijmegen University, has put together *Power in Contemporary Politics*. The book, which encompasses the committee members' latest work aims to offer a state-of-the-art overview of the theory and practice of the most central concept in political science, power. It therefore deserves some attention.

The volume is divided into three parts, each of which professes to tackle controversial contemporary issues about power. The first part considers the current state of theorizing about the nature of power. Part 2 discusses the attempts by some empirical scientists to reformulate the problem. The third part asks whether the international and transnational context, and globalization in particular, has to lead to a re-conceptualization of power.

The general introduction to *Power in Contemporary Politics*, which is 33 pages long, stresses the importance of focusing on power and powerlessness to understand society (as a prejudice as well as a hypothesis). It also poses the fundamental question: what is power? Debates on political power have been virtually continuous and had many different perspectives. Some of the issues discussed are: power as a contested concept, the relationship between and debate about structure and agency in power analysis, the debate on globalization, and the relationship between power and democratic decision-making. The main claim of the book is that the renaissance of (neo-) liberalism constitutes the dominant theme cutting across all power debates today.

Since Lukes wrote *Power: A Radical View* (1974), there have been many new theories, especially concerning the relationship between knowledge and power. This

is reflected in the attention that is paid to authors like Foucault and Bourdieu in Part 1. Here, Goehler analyses conceptualizations of power, starting with Hannah Arendt and Max Weber, who represent the consensual and the conflictual faces of power, respectively. Arendt defines power as the human capacity to act in common with others, whereas Weber conceives power as the achievement of one's own will in a social relationship. Goehler combines both views into a 'single comprehensive view of power' and distinguishes two forms of power in social relationships: transitive power, which is 'power over' (and refers to others; a zero-sum game), and interactive power, which is 'power to' (and refers to itself; not a zero-sum game). Both forms have to be taken into consideration and are fundamental to the study and practice of politics. Haugaard looks at another issue: the issue of ideology and legitimacy. He analyses two processes of sustaining relations of domination through perceptions of social actors. New forms of (expert) domination are emerging (replacing legal/bureaucratic domination) in what he sees as a process of transition from modernity to post-modernity. Clegg writes about the power/knowledge relation as central to the relations of power and the related aspect of consciousness. His main claim is that neither resistance nor legitimacy are endemic, nor can they be taken for granted: they occur through the discursive expressions of existing conditions of existence that are socially framed.

Part II looks at power in practice: how has the balance of power shifted among state institutions, civil society and markets? Goverde and Van Tatenhove point out that power is an underexposed phenomenon in the network approach. They argue that the application of a multilayered concept, with power as a capacity (first layer), power as a relational phenomenon (second layer) and power as a structural phenomenon (third layer) would improve the situation. Following this chapter, which is more theoretical than empirical, two researchers present some results of power research. Rommetvedt is interested in private and public power at the national level and how private interests operate in order to influence public authorities. Data are presented on lobbying and its impact on government and parliament. Arts has carried out research on the influence of NGO's on international environmental issues and sketches a method that can be used to measure the influence of actors.

The third part of the book contains four papers about globalization and international relations. The papers present different interpretations of globalization, although a common theme is the reflection on the renaissance of political and economic liberal ideology, particularly in its American manifestation. A good thing might be that the papers stimulate reflection on globalization; disappointing, however, is that this part of the book does not address crucial questions about power in an international context (for instance, how can we discover or measure changing power relations in international relations; how can the present division of power be characterized; and what is globalization in terms of changing power relations?).

The relationship of this third part of the book with the rest is limited, as is its contribution to what are, in my opinion, the central questions in the theory and methodology of power research. The fact that the last part was so limited in its relevance