

SUMMARY

Individual and Contextual Variables in Social Research. By Erik Allardt.

The article contains a plea for the use of contextual variables in multivariate analysis of data in social research. It is assumed that most fruitful propositions in social science refer to relationships between more than two variables. The crucial form of elaborational analysis is therefore what Lazarsfeld, Hyman and other researchers have termed specification. In specification, an assessment of the joint effects of individual and contextual variables often renders the theoretically most fruitful propositions.

Contextual variables appear to be particularly important:

(1) In studies focusing on general attitudinal or value dimensions such as authoritarianism, prejudice, activity, passivity, autonomy, dogmatism etc. Without the simultaneous use of contextual variables as independent variables, explanations in terms of these general attitudinal dimensions run the risk of becoming mere tautologies.

(2) As links between empirical studies and sociological theories. Most sociological theories contain theoretical concepts which on an operational level require contextual variables.

(3) In explaining hitherto contradictory results.

The use of contextual variables does not mean blind adherence to sociological determinism. On the contrary, the systematic use of contextual variables is often combined with a view according to which the social context only sets and defines boundaries for the individual. Within these boundaries the individual often makes rational decisions.

The Control of State Corporations in Norway and Sweden. By Ingvar S. Melin.

In Sweden and Norway the organization of state enterprises has been the subject of a lively political debate as well as of many years of investigation by the government.

In Norway, there have been four separate investigations between 1948 and 1960 concerning the control of state enterprises. The majority of the experts consulted favored a more extensive use of the corporate entity where the state is the major shareholder. A very central question, which has been the subject of great interest and has elicited considerable difference of opinion, is the position of a civil servant of state employee on the board of a state company. It has been suggested that the owner — the state — should be represented on the board by a civil servant whose task it is to inform the cabinet minister in charge of state enterprises. This has actually been the case in most companies. In both Sweden and Norway the cabinet minister carries parliamentary responsibility for the operations of the state enterprises. On the other hand critics claim that the civil servant who has to deal with matters of financial importance concerning a state enterprise, both in the capacity of a civil servant and as a member of the board of the enterprise, disqualifies himself from handling the same matters in both positions: This question still remains unsettled but it seems as if control and above all communication between the supervising ministry and the state enterprises would not be feasible without governmental representation on the boards of the enterprises.

In Sweden, the government appointed a royal commission to make a systematic study of state enterprises. Under the chairmanship of the late Prof. Elis Hastad it carried out its investigations during 1953—1960. In the Swedish Parliament claims have been made that parliamentary control is insufficient as the state auditors are not permitted to check the accounts of the state corporations. The royal commission, however, states that the auditing of these specifically business-type enterprises is too difficult a task for the state auditors whose primary aim is to check the state administration. However, the commission recommends that Members of Parliament with business experience should be elected to positions of company auditor in state corporations.