

A. VAN DEN BRANDE, *Design of a Macro-Sociological Model of the Belgian Political System 1954-68*. R.U.G., 1974, 2 vol., promotor : M. Versichelen-Terryn.

The intention of the author is to find a coherent complex of concepts and hypotheses capable of rendering and explaining sociologically the most important structures and events in the political field during the period considered.

His point of departure is the paradox of the co-existence of a rather high degree of stability with serious conflict tensions and outbreaks.

The work is composed of three parts : first a theoretical part, then a part giving a description of the structures and hypotheses, and finally a third part in which the plausibility of these hypotheses is checked on three levels.

*In the first part* the points of departure, the reference-frame and the concepts used are carefully defined.

This is followed by an outline of the frame of thought of the political sociology, and finally the theory to be used, is built up.

The author has developed the power-typology of Geiger further into a combined typology which allows to give a rather shaded image of power-systems with their structural and functional implications. The typology consists of a combination of the form of power-exercise (integral or intercurive) with the nature of the power-basis (functional or structural).

In order to conceptualize the concrete bases on which oppositions and conflicts may arise in consequence of relative power, he has further developed and adapted the scheme of Lipset and Rokkan. With regard to the mutual relation of the conflicts, the ideas advanced by Dahl on the individual opinions, have been extended to structures on different levels, which again leads to some new insights here.

Finally, Galtung's theory about the relation between status-congruence and status-incongruence, and their criss-cross, is coupled to it; this theory appears to run quite parallel to the above-mentioned power-typology.

Thus a coherent complex of theories is formed, a complex which allows a typology of socio-political systems, and which contains a range of possible answers to the question as to the explanation of the paradox : stability/conflict.

*In the second part* the Belgian structures are described, especially on the meso-plane of groupes and organizations, in order to come to the hypotheses which may apply to the Belgian system.

Here the attention is focused mainly on the oppositions in the great conflict-dimensions (notably the social-economic, ideological and ethnical-cultural oppositions) and their interaction. The hypotheses derived from this are : the hypothesis of a balance of conflicts and of a priority of the structural-intercursive power over the structural-integral power, of a market-model over a hierarchical organization-model.

Starting from these hypotheses the political institutionalization is then examined, in which special attention is paid to the political parties and, with regard to their mutual relations and relations with the groups, more specified hypotheses are advanced.

*In the third part* the plausibility of the proposed model is investigated on three levels.

First on the *strictly political level*. Here a number of political developments of this period are used to demonstrate the action of a market-structure (i.e. of exchange-mechanismus), as well as the effects of the conflict-balance on this level.

Special attention is paid to the delimitation of the domain where the consensus of the elite plays the most important part, from the domain in which the criss-cross is the main stabilizing element.

With regard to the role of *groups* the author himself has inquired into the structural and functional meaning of the associations in the political system.

A number of specific hypotheses, derived from the principal hypothesis, are premised and quantitatively tested. They are largely corroborated, be it with a few important shades.

Finally the plausibility of the model is checked *on the individual level*. Here again specific hypotheses are deduced which are then compared with existing research.

Here also there seem to be sufficient indications to accept the model as plausible. Moreover, an important parallelism is noted in the dynamics on the three levels examined.

The *general conclusion*, consequently, is that the model can, subject to a few shades, map out and explain the dominant features of the Belgian political system 1954-68.

According to the author, some newer developments are showing up at the end of the period, which are partly caused by the dynamics described in the model.