enskilda individer som haft chansen att utveckla sociala band och som förmår samarbeta, samt av vilka idéer, tolkningar och resurser dessa bär på.

I litteraturgenomgången skisseras hur den sociala nätverks-modellen för institutionell förändring som utvecklas i boken—the logic of interpersonal trust—skulle kunna ha bäring på olika typer av forskningsproblem. Ett annat syfte med litteraturgenomgången är att visa på hur olika teoritraditioner stödjer varandra i vad de — ofta mer eller mindre i förbifarten—har att säga om sociala nätverk. (Att forskare parallellt gör liknande fynd måste rimligtvis anses styrka ett teoretiskt resonemang!) Boken vaskar alltså fram vad äldre studier noterat om sociala nätverk, men inte dragit ut de teoretiska konsekvenserna av. Utifrån detta och utifrån en fallstudie utvecklas så en social nätverksmodell för institutionell förändring.

                                    Astrid Hedin

BENT FLYVBJERG: *Making Social Science Matter. Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again.* Cambridge University Press 2001.

Debates on Truth and Method, and the Power of Example

Is social science letting itself be colonized by the natural sciences? So Bent Flyvbjerg claims. Political science and other social sciences are straining to imitate the natural sciences, seeking universally valid knowledge and predictive theory. This is why, according to Flyvbjerg, "social inquiry fails". Instead, he argues, social science should turn away from scientism and go into dialogue with society, "making social science matter".

Whether or not one agrees with Flyvbjerg's description of contemporary social science (curiously, Flyvbjerg regards the strive to scientism as constituting the current mainstream of the discipline — but is it?), his book certainly does address very important and timely questions for the discipline.

Context Counts

If the social sciences were to aspire to emulate the natural sciences — which Flyvbjerg claims they are currently trying to do — then their achievements would seem dismal. Why is social science not able to come up with the same type of reliable, context-independent explanatory and predictive theories that the natural sciences have produced? Because, Flyvbjerg explains, context counts (Chapters 3 and 4). Since human beings act on the basis of their own situational self-interpretations, social theory can only be as stable as these interpretations. Likewise, the social scientists' research interests and concepts must be understood in relation to a specific (research) context. Secondly, since the objects of social science research are subjects in themselves, they may answer back. If we publish the results of our research, policymaking and society may change in response.

While these first two arguments are classic post-modern and hermeneutic insights, Flyvbjerg's third argument is perhaps more seldom made. He makes a case for genuine expertise as opposed to abstract analytical rationality (Chapter 2). In any form of human learning, experience — not merely memorization of abstract rules — is what makes the genuine expert. Like in chess or soccer, there is a qualitative gap between the competent rule-follower and the true expert, who relies on experience and intuition. By the same token, Flyvbjerg argues, social inquiry needs to rely not on analytical rationality and abstract rules, but on concrete cases, practical knowledge and practical ethics.

Experience

This is where Flyvbjerg launches his recommendations for how social inquiry ought to be conducted, namely as "practical wisdom" or *phronesis* (Chapter 5). The Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* is best understood in relation to Aristotele's two complimentary intellectual virtues: *episteme* and *techne*. While *epistheme* is based on analytical rationality and searches for universal, context-independent knowledge, *phronesis* is not necessarily concerned with the production of theory, but with practical common sense. Most centrally, *phronesis* is based on ex-

perience. However, compared to *techne*, which is the simple search for practical know-how – a craft–*phronesis* also involves values and ethics.

The goal of *phronesis* is to enter into a dialogue with society to help it reflect on its values. As Flyvbjerg puts it, "the practical rationality of *phronesis* is based on a socially conditioned, intersubjective 'between-reason'". An important task for social science is to assist society in balancing instrumental rationality with value-rationality. This is where the natural sciences are weakest, and the social sciences strongest. To "succeed again", Flyvbjerg argues, social science must stop neglecting this prime competitive advantage and give up the strive for a type of knowledge that it cannot achieve.

Against "Theory"

But which type of knowledge, more exactly, is it that social science "cannot achieve" (p. 2)? In his argument against "theory", Flyvbjerg doesn't quite set up a straw-man, but he does choose an opponent which is probably not the most viable in the discipline. In Chapters 3 and 4, ideal "theory" is taken to be predictive – which in its stricter sense is most probably a minority view among social scientists. Social science theory may be "predictive" in terms of producing hypotheses, but very rarely succeeds in predicting actual events. Still, just as in the natural sciences, Flyvbjerg takes "theory" to be something explicit, universal, abstract, discrete, systematic and complete. As Flyvbjerg emphasizes, there are few signs that social science should be on its way to producing this type of theory.

On the other hand, in Chapter 6, he argues that case studies and good narratives can indeed be used both to test hypotheses and to make generalizations and contribute to cumulative knowledge. What is this, if not theory-building? Ideally, Flyvbjerg might have practiced some helpful *phronesis* by reflecting more on what the term "theory" might mean within the social sciences. Notably, the focus on *phronesis* as the favored alternative to scientism bypasses common social science concepts such as empirical generalizations; social tendencies as opposed to social laws; ideal types; and the usage of formal mod-

eling as a heuristic tool, rather than as predictive theory.

The type of knowledge that social science can and should aim to achieve, Flyvbjerg argues, is *phronesis*. The second half of his book is dedicated to explaining and updating this classic concept to include issues of power (Chapters 8 to 10). In this scenario, the purpose of social science is less to develop theory, but to contribute to society's practical rationality.

Genealogy as Phronesis

The most well-known development of Aristotle's classic concept of *phronesis* stems from the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. (Gadamer passed away in March 2002, at the age of 102.) Gadamer's book on *Truth and Method*, first published in 1960, became known to a wider audience in the late 1970s, through his debates with Jürgen Habermas.

In his venture to update the concept of a *phronetic* social science, Flyvbjerg does not review the famous Gadamer-Habermas debate, but instead steers straight from Aristotle to Foucault. In Chapters 8 and 9, Flyvbjerg provides an excellent introduction to Foucault's analysis of how discursive power is everywhere, determining rationality. Along the way, Flyvbjerg dismisses Habermas' model of discursive democracy as idealistic, sociologically naive, insensitive to context, and oriented toward universal theory (*epistheme*) rather than practical wisdom (*phronesis*) (pp. 96-97, 102, 106-108).

Flyvbjerg suggests Foucault's method of genealogy as an instructive example of how *phronetic* social science might be conducted. Just as a *phronetic* methodology should, genealogy is oriented toward political praxis: By retracing how a specific situation came about, and showing that it was not determined by historical necessity, a genealogical analysis opens up the possibility that practices and institutions can be altered.

Phronesis in Aalborg

But altered how? In Flyvbjerg's conception, the end step of *phronetic* social science is for the

scientist "to become partisan, to face conflict, and to exercise power" (p. 155). As a second example of a *phronetic* research methodology, Flyvbjerg offers his own 1998 case study of urban planning in the Danish city of Aalborg (*Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice.* University of Chicago Press). In Chapter 11 of *Making Social Science Matter*, Flyvbjerg reviews his older study:

In Aalborg, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce was managing to influence inner city planning, privileging automobile traffic over other means of transportation—which conflicted directly with the environmental objectives ratified by the democratically elected City Council. Flyvbjerg then intervened with his book, forcing the "semi-institutionalized, semi-secret" political process to open up for public insight and wider participation (p. 160). As a result, the city of Aalborg reformed its structure of planning and received the European Union's "European Planning Prize" (p. 161).

"Common Sense"?

What catches the eye in this description is Flyvbjerg's claim that he did not need any abstract analytical rationality—no "ideals of strong democracy or strong ecology" — to determine that the state of affairs in Aalborg's city planning was "neither desirable nor justifiable" (pp. 154-155). Indeed, he insists, "[m]ost, if not all, informed persons who subscribe to the ground rules of democracy (-) would also have to agree with my analysis".

But would they? Is there a given interpretation of what are the "ground rules of democracy" and how they should be implemented? Here, the problematic character of how *phronesis* relies on "practical rationality and common sense" (p. 104) becomes evident. As Flyvbjerg notes, Habermas has distanced himself from *phronesis*, which he found to be conservative. Notions such as "common sense" risk denying the potential of critical reflection and the power of the better argument. This was one of the points of contention in the Habermas-Gadamer debate, which Flyvbjerg chooses not to refer to.

Power and Rationality

Flyvbjerg makes a brave call for social science to invite itself to the public debate, setting its own agenda, making social science matter. His line of argument is clear and transparent. Still, it seems that Flyvbjerg's critique of Habermas at times bites its own tail. While Foucault claims that "power is everywhere", Habermas distinguishes between power and rationality in communication (p. 94). But in his success in improving the democratic process in Aalborg, does Flyvbjerg not rely on the power of the better argument?

If we should succumb to the notion that the political impact of social science rests only on its traditional authority, rather than on the power of the better argument—does this not risk becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy? While Habermas' work is often read — or some would claim: misread — to be very idealistic, it is seldom appreciated how these types of considerations tie into his particular mode of theorizing.

The Power of Example

Of the main arguments in the book, Flyvbjerg's *plaidoyer* for more good case study research is perhaps the most convincing and inspiring. Specifically, his Chapter 6 on "The Power of Example" can be highly recommended as an enriching complement to standard methodology readings by authors such as Yin, Eckstein, Sartori, Lijphart, and King, Keohane and Verba.

Flyvbjerg is concerned that the social sciences are presently dominated by large sample studies, at the expense of good exemplars. His emphasis is on the power of example and the centrality of experience for the development of scientific expertise. His two most central pieces of advise to researchers are Foucault's dictum to "never lose sight of a reference to a concrete example". And that "the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied".

At Last – the Behavioral Revolution?

Indirectly, Flyvbjerg's thoughtful book addresses ongoing methodological debates such as

for example those initiated by the "Perestroika" movement within the American Political Science Association. (His book is reviewed in this context in PS No. 1, 2001). The rather polemic Perestroika movement – as it calls itself – has turned against the claimed "hegemony" of formal modeling and quantitative methods, in favor of methodological pluralism and "an ecumenical science of politics". (Demands that have been answered with a plea for academic pluralism and more intellectual humility – on the part of the Perestroika movement, see PS No. 2, 2002).

During recent years, it seems that quantitative methods are being adopted by more social scientists and employed on a much broader range of research problems. The use of statistical method is less and less the prerogative of the experienced electoral analyst. Since the behavioral revolution in the 1960s, national and international isomorphic pressures have brought governments and organizations to issue statistics on ever more features of society. With the evolution of the internet, quantitative data sets are now becoming more easily available to a growing number of researchers.

These trends can be interpreted in more optimistic and more pessimistic veins. In a more optimistic view, social science can now become truly cumulative at last. In the more pessimistic interpretation, the improved availability of quantitative data-sets combine with the academic pressure to "publish or perish" – at its strongest in American academia – to glue researchers to their university desks, working with large statistical samples rather than with the complex, messy, time-consuming case studies that in Flyvbjerg's view are an important source of social science expertise.

Flyvbjerg's book does not give an overview or guide to these debates, but offers a thoughtful and innovative contribution. While at times, Flyvbjerg may seem to advocate a radical turn away from "theory" (however defined), at other times, he seems mostly concerned with the plurality and balance of the discipline.

Astrid Hedin

ELENA HELLBERG-HIRN: *Soil and Soul: The Symbolic World of Russianness.* Aldershot: Ashgate 1998.

En angenäm känsla av välbehag sprider sig inom mig efter läsandet av Elena Hellberg-Hirns alster 'Soil and Soul' med underrubriken 'The Symbolic World of Russianness'. Föreliggande anmälan är ett försök att förklara denna känsla utifrån de intryck som boken förmedlar till läsaren under resans gång. Boken handlar om hur vi kan förstå och tolka uppfattningar om 'det ryska' som en uppsättning symboler, vilka återspeglar det politiska och sociokulturella klimatet i Ryssland under olika tidsepoker. Mer specifikt beskrivs hur den ryska nationella identiteten förstärks av den mytologiska kopplingen mellan territorium (soil) och själ (soul).

> The main aim of this book is to provide an orientation in the symbolic world of Russian self-identification, and thus to outline a comprenhensible background to the current political discourse about the road to the future Russia (Hellberg-Hirn 1998: 2).

Författarinnan läser, beskriver, analyserar och tolkar symboliska uttryck i den ryska historien för att bättre förstå de politiska skeenden som kännetecknar Rysslands ganska så stormiga utveckling från Kiev till idag. Läsaren erbjuds en rikt empiriskt pyntad exposé över hur symboler kan bli politik; om hur symboler och myter blir till essentialiserade uppfattningar om vad som konstituerar den ryska nationella identiteten. Hellberg-Hirn är medveten om att de föreställningar om 'det ryska' som framträder i symbolfloran i någon mening är förenklade stereotypiseringar, men samtidigt argumenterar hon för att de har betydelse för den förda politiken. Hennes utgångspunkt skapar en distans, en ödmjukhet i relation till de tolkningar som görs i analysen – på så sätt kan man säga att hon anammar den postkoloniala samhällsfilosofen Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivaks strategiska råd:

> But it is not possible, within discourse, to escape essentializing somewhere [...] So then strategically you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a