

**Dietmar Braun and Fabrizio Gilardi (eds.)**

*Delegation in Contemporary Democracies.*

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We have seen a growing number of works that apply political science theories to both national and European levels of governance. *Delegation in Contemporary Democracies* edited by Dietmar Braun and Fabrizio Gilardi is one such publication. It was published as part of the Routledge/ECPR Studies in Political Science series in association with the European Consortium for Political Research in 2006.

The authors address the issue of delegation that has had a growing importance on modern societies that require rising levels of specialisation. Many authors raise the question 'Why delegate?' The basic answer is the lack of sufficient resources and abilities of the actors. The contributors to this volume try to identify these resources and abilities. Another equally important question to be answered is 'how much discretion/control should be given/kept?' The authors based their chapters on rational choice, institutional analy-

sis and principal-agent models. All authors clearly explain the application of the theory and models to their particular area under investigation. The book first focuses on the standard chain of delegation, meaning the delegation to the bureaucracy, to the electorate, to the legislature and to the executive in parliamentary systems. It then turns to the new forms of delegation such as independent agencies, special interest organisations and the European Union.

The first five chapters focus on the standard chain. Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang Müller and Torbjörn Bergman present the chains of delegation in a standard representative democracy. They show the problems of democratic agency and their various forms stating that delegation is necessary but also potentially precarious. The risk of some agency loss, however, cannot be avoided and is subject to trade-offs. The most valuable part of the chapter is the presenta-

tion of how different systems face different agency losses.

The following chapter by Patrick Dumont and Frederic Varone looks at the principal-agent relationship from the perspective of the size of the countries in question. The case of Luxembourg serves an illustration. While applying the theory of small democracies, they discuss the effect of smallness, proximity and short cuts. They conclude with establishing the need for more research on smallness and declaring the future objective of presenting a normative question on the optimal size of democracies.

Chapter four by David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran raises the question of constraints on delegation. Their theory is based, for the most part, on the model of the United States. They tried to show how their theory of efficient delegation applies in the context of parliamentary democracies. They admit that the conclusions have to be tested against large sets of data to confirm their validity but they are convinced that it is applicable in all cases.

The last chapter in this section by Victor Lapuente Giné presents a general theory that elucidates the various levels of bureaucratization across countries with both autocratic and democratic regimes. The comparative institutional concept of this approach is the most positive aspect of the chapter. The author comes to the conclusion that 'the more you protect people from government (through the separation of powers), the more you enable the government to act, because the government makes a credible commitment with respect to public em-

ployees and the costly bureaucratisation in not needed' (Gine 2006: 119).

The next section commences with the Fabrizio Gilardi's discussion of recent developments in delegation theory and its application to independent regulatory agencies. After this more introductory chapter, the reader is presented with the other applications of independent actors in other policy areas. Dietmar Braun uses Lowi's typology and argues that the structure of the policy area has an effect on the structure and dynamics of delegation. Chapter eight presents Gül Sosay's discussion of the 'other side' of independent regulatory agencies asking how legitimate they are in the domestic system. She claims that the argument of efficiency is not enough to substantiate their existence, as it is not a democratic argument.

In chapter nine Peter Munk Christiansen and Asbjørn Sonne Nørgaard concentrate on the relationship between government and interest groups. Their approach is in many ways new and refreshing. They show that minority government can use them as means of maintaining power and the minority government can use it to their advantage,

The following chapter takes into question the role of the European Union. Fabio Franchino first summarises the previous work on delegation and the European Union. He presents two alternative explanations why member states delegate their power to the EU and tests which one has more explaining power potential. He looks at the Council, Commission and the Parliament, which does not allow examining them in detail but the reader is presented with a broad

approach that examines the issue from various angles.

In the final chapter, the editors show that the theory selected for the book still does not represent a coherent theory and that at the moment relevant variables are the immediate objective.

The chapters present models, graphs and tables that help the reader grasp the complexities of delegation, its advantages and potential dangers in modern societies. The advances in level of analysis and theoretical work require a more experienced reader but the language and structure are articulate and succinct.

The volume provides a very broad and comparative perspective. The presented vol-

ume requires some level of knowledge of the discussed issues and familiarity with the rational choice institutional theory. As such, it should find its main target audience among scholars, advanced students and professionals that will find it useful in various ways.

## References

- Giné, Victor, L. (2006) 'A delegation theory for explaining the bureaucratization of public administrations', in Dietmar Braun and Fabrizio Gilardi (eds) *Delegation in Contemporary Democracies*, pp. 99–122. Oxon and New York: Routledge 2006.