

The City of the Nineties: Post-Modern Settlement?

by J.P.L. Burgers

Being the delivery room of modernity, the city is a strategic subject in the debate of modernity vs. post-modernity. If there really is such a transformation, it should show in a restructuring of urban spaces and activities. There are three basic characteristics of the modern, bourgeois city which had its heyday in the 18th and 19th century: commodification of space, the purposive display of culture and civility in urban activities and design, and surveillance and control of the urban lower classes. It is argued that there are two important changes in the contemporary city in respect to the bourgeois city. Firstly, high culture has lost much of its aura and is used in a much more instrumental way (for instance: cultural facilities as assets in 'city-marketing'). Secondly, the principle of controlling the urban masses, the lower classes and deviant categories, has changed from re-education, rehabilitation, disciplination to expulsion, containment and 'target-hardening'. The article ends with an attempt to explain these changes on an macro-sociological level.

Religious clientelism in a Yugoslav peasant community

by Mart Bax

Compared with political patronage or clientelism, social scientists have paid relatively little attention to religious clientelism. They usually seem to have equated it with the formal model of the Roman Catholic Church and its wide range of benevolent patron saints, who intermediate between God and favour-seeking, dependent humans. Thus it is viewed as little more than a model for political action and organization.

Data obtained from a Yugoslav peasant community seems to indicate that religious clientelism can also be approached as a field of inquiry in its own right. Based on daily messages from the Virgin Mary, a complex constellation of human religious interdependencies has emerged in central Hercegovina. It includes patrons, brokers and other intermediaries as well as large numbers of clients. The article describes the genesis and evolution of this human clientage system. Its dynamics, its inherent tensions, forces and mechanisms differ considerably from those usually in effect in the field of political patronage. More comparative research will be needed to bear out the range of this conclusion.

Formulation of research problems; with special reference to interpretive research

by P.G. Swanborn

A research problem is defined as a concise, as complete and timely as possible, formula-

tion of the question the researcher has to answer. Completeness concerns the explication of domain, variables and relations. Interpretive research usually starts with the explication of a domain and/or some sensitizing concepts; research results can be viewed as the replacement of sensitizing concepts by a network of observable phenomena and – however sketchily – relations between them. Transformed into ordinary ‘variable language’ such results can, in their turn, constitute the problem formulation for quantitative research. The usual dilemma of whether or not to formulate in advance the research problem is solved by relating the explicitness of the formulation to research phases. In this article several other aspects of problem formulation are tackled: the functions of a concise problem formulation; the difference between research goals and research problems; descriptive ‘what is’-questions versus explanatory ‘why’-questions. Many examples are taken from recent Dutch interpretive research.

Medewerkers aan dit nummer

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