

Chapter 21 : Structural functionalism

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.
Alphonse Karr (1808-1890)

If a modern political monarchy research existed, it would probably be conducted within the sociological branch of Structural Functionalism, a sociological equivalent of 19th-century organic state science (see chapters 5 & 14). Structural functionalism began with Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) & Max Weber (1864-1920) and has since further developed in a number of directions. What is common to the directions is that different parts of society are supposed to influence each other. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), for example, used biological reasoning that the social body is dependent on its individual organs which are also dependent on each other. Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) had a corresponding system theory that the parts of society adapt to each other. According to Parsons, the survival of the parts require...

- adapting to local conditions
- achieving the objectives set
- integration of society as a whole
- upholding social values

Those who have wanted to interpret social change as piecemeal replacement of the sick parts of society by healthy equivalents have had many objections to a theory that denies the possibility of reform, but claims that the "natural state" of society is status quo - being in a state of equilibrium. If the equilibrium is disturbed, society does not remain in its new position but returns to its old state. If something is to be changed it requires a revolution or more. There is a Marxist/democratic branch of research on system-preserving subordination that will explain how it works (see below). Lasting changes require external pressure, new norms & new generations of residents. Change is not impossible, but it takes time. As for the transition from monarchy to democracy, this has been going on for 300 years & seems not yet finished.

I describe some aspects of the theory with relevance to the monarchy & what data I could find relevant to the subject:

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A. LEGITIMACY

The legitimacy of the monarchy is the most discussed issue. The debate distinguish between a legitimate ruler and a legitimate exercise of power. The regent legitimises himself not only by the order of succession, but also by his personal qualities. When so much depends on a single person, his upbringing becomes a public matter (see chapter 25).

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A legitimate regent

There is a paper by political scientist Peter Sundström that applies social scientist David Beetham's political legitimacy criteria to the Swedish royal house.¹ Beetham's arguments are

¹ Sundström 2013.

based on sociologist Max Weber. According to Weber, political legitimacy can be based on law, tradition & charisma; usually in combination. Beetham's criteria are more bureaucratic: claims must be formally legal, perceived as legitimate (consistent with public sense of justice, sanctioned by some authority) & additionally supported by some large group.²

Beetham's legitimacy criteria are difficult to apply to Swedish conditions. The compromise between Swedish monarchy & parliamentary democracy seems to be largely imposed by circumstances. The revolutions of the 19th century brought us more democracy. The dictatorships of the 20th century put the lid on development. In the 21st century, the Torekov-compromise has acquired the same status as the 1809 constitution. My interpretation of Sundström's interpretation is that the Swedish form of government in its present form is legitimized by a veritable carpet bombing of monarchic criteria (see section 32D). Republican suspicion is a mutual influence. That the monarchy, by virtue of its legitimacy, somehow affects democracy. As far as can be determined, there seems to be three reasons for the suspicion:

- Monarchy by definition excludes republic.
- By supporting the monarchy, democracy legitimises outdated norms.
- There is a continuity in Swedish politics implying that democracy copies monarchy.

Examples of the above are spread throughout the book. The current status quo is discussed in chapter 32.

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The legitimate exercise of power

The European history of monarchy is usually described as a development from feudal rule → autocracy → constitutional monarchy → symbolic monarchy. There has been a long and confused debate about what powers an autocratic monarch actually had. The answer is that the powers varied. Henshall (1992) tries to clarify the matter. The difficulty was poor documentation, unclear technical terms & a recent confusion of historiography with propaganda. First Montesquieu made a distinction between executive, legislative and judicial powers. Previously, all three were called legislation. Henshall's conclusion is that autocratic monarchs were not as autocratic as posterity would have them. Although in theory they "owned" their kingdom they, for example, refrained from confiscating private property. Those who tried would be branded as "tyrants" & risked being dethroned. He summarizes: 'The absolute monarchies of the early modern period bore little resemblance to nineteenth-century autocracy: they were more consultative, more constitutional and more patriarchal.'³ I.e. he wants to separate the bureaucratic colossi of the 19th century (=the Vienna-Congress empires; The Big Four) from the 18th century kingdoms & *l'ancien régime*.

The credo of enlightenment can be summed up as a greater role for the state. Not so popular. The peasants tried throughout the 19th century to stay out of politics. There were lots of subsistence farmers who praised the peasant Paavo's ideal of quietly working their plot without government interference. The hope seems to have been that as long as they kept quiet, they would be left alone. That did not happen. A large number of reforms were launched. At the end of the century, politics and bureaucracy were felt to have run amok, and the king as a

² Weber 1922; Beetham 1991.

³ Henshall 1992: s. 211.

last authority to complain to. Both Oscar II and Gustaf V held public audiences, where anyone could do so. Gustaf V even took to criticizing his own government. After Gustaf V's death in 1950, it has not been possible to identify any "royal policy" apart from other policies. The Republican suspicion, however, is that such exists & is to seek in the representation.

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The regent as a tool

After 1718, it becomes increasingly difficult to find examples of personal exercise of power. The examples mentioned - Gustaf III, Gustaf IV, Karl XIV Johan - are all in some sense warlords. The peaceful monarchs are inconspicuous. They are usually described as "tools" for one or other power elite - the nobility, the bourgeoisie and then the social democracy. The question in this book is "tools for what?". The answer seems to be a tool for legitimizing the policies pursued. Society had become too complicated to be governed by a single person, but it took long for this to be accepted by the population. In the meantime, it was necessary, as Oscar II, to act as the public face of the government, even in decisions that he could not influence. This seems to have been a general European trend although Walter Bagehot describes it as something specific to Queen Victoria's England (see chapter 7). In Sweden, this policy reached its end with the Torekov-compromise of 1971. Parliamentary democracy was sufficiently established to enforce its own decisions. Until then, there was a certain division of labour between regent and political elite so that the rulers concentrated on foreign and cultural policy, while domestic policy was more "democratic".

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B. FUNCTIONALITY

The existence or demise of the monarchy is thought to depend on whether it adds anything. The structural-functionalist interpretation is that this "something" are norms that dampen society's conflict level. Depending on political orientation, this is considered good or bad. The research on the subject (or rather the speculations) are about adaptation, stability & state utility:

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Adaptation

The continued existence of the monarchy must, in the structurally functional approach, mean that it has adapted to modern society. This is said to have taken place by accepting parliamentary democracy as a "societal ideology" according to political scientist Herbert Tingsten (see also chapter 14):

"The belief in [parliamentary] democracy is not a political opinion in the same sense as, for example, conservatism, liberalism and socialism. It implies an idea of the form of the government, of the technique of political decisions, not of the content of the state's decisions or the structure of society. It can therefore be regarded as a kind of societal ideology, in the sense that it is common to different political views. You are a democrat, but but also a conservative, a liberal or a socialist."⁴

⁴ Tingsten 1945: s. 57.

Which in our case means that you can be a monarchist & a democrat (even a republican!) at the same time. There is no ideological contradiction, because parliamentary democracy is not an ideology but a system of conflict management & resource allocation. As long as you accept the rules, you are a democrat. And anyone can be a republican of the heart. Even monarchists. There is no formal agreement that the royal house has renounced its power ambitions, but the Social Democrats interpreted Gustaf VI's negative attitude towards the Tutaryd initiative, as confirmation of this being the case (see chapter 15). This is however considered by the republicans to have been a reversal under the gallows & a diversion. In the future, the royal family could once again covet an active role. Best to abolish the institution while you could.

The current position of the royal house is unclear. Hereditary monarchies and lifelong service belongs to the 19th century, but here still lives on "embedded" in a democratic structure. The royal house has also gained acceptance for the fact that the monarchy is a societal ideology in the sense that it is the country's oldest still existing institution. The fact that the King is head of state is not a necessity, but in that capacity he still has certain powers. However, it has been suggested that the Marshal of the Realm should be appointed by the government and play the same role as when Carl Gustaf after the Brunei debacle was proposed to have a political commissar.

The Republican position is that the hereditary monarchy is contrary to the system of government, since all other offices are appointed for a limited time & through elections. Andreas Norlén (conservative; chairman of the constitutional committee; member of the royalist association; speaker of the Parliament), however, objects that such an approach is inconsistent with the objectives of the constitution. If the head of state has been separated from the political system to fill a ceremonial & unifying role, political conflicts regarding the office should not be encouraged. Such would be counterproductive.⁵

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The unclear status of the royal houses - both management function, autonomous institution & the government's "spokesperson" - is a constant subject of conflict. The republican debate tends to regard the royal house as a government agency subject to the Parliament. That is not the case. A number of motions to review the royal courts doings have been tabled, though it is unclear how carefully it would be done. Part of the royal court is already subject to a review according to a previous agreement. The National Audit Office (RRV) distinguishes three levels:

Financial review is that RRV assesses whether the numbers and the summary are reliable and relevant. The audit is carried out in accordance with good auditing practice (ISSAI).

Annual audit is a financial audit + verification of compliance with the operational directives. Weaknesses in financial control are commented on.

Performance audit is a review of economy, resource utilization, achievement of objectives and societal benefits. Proposals for improvement are made.

⁵ Andréas Norlén. KU-ordföranden: "Varför laga det som inte är trasigt". <svt.se/opinion> (2017-06-14).

The motions have led to informal discussions between the government and the royal house corresponding to an economic review of the court's appanage, but no revision of the activities. That would be tantamount to impeachment.

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Stability

The official explanation for England avoiding the revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 was that the monarch had a calming influence through his mere existence. There is an oft-quoted passage by the Conservative Prime Minister Lord Salisbury (1830-1903):

Those holding the power – the prime ministers who leads the government when their party achieves a parliamentary majority – come and go with the vagaries of election, while the Queen endures as head of state. She lacks the power to govern, but she has a sort of negative power. Because she is there, no prime minister can be number one. “She makes a dictatorship more difficult, she makes military coups more difficult, rule by decree more difficult,” said Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, the 7th Marquess of Salisbury, a Conservative politician and former leader of the House of Lords. “It is more difficult because she occupies space, and due process must be followed”.⁶

The argument is middling old. Similar arguments have been put forward by Talleyrand, Richard Wagner, Heinrich von Treitschke, Max Weber and others.⁷ The meaning is somewhat unclear. I have interpreted the Bill of Rights of 1688 as a compromise acceptable to the majority, and that the English republicans therefore never got a hearing for their demands. In this spirit, under the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign, there was a reform movement “Democratic Royalism” to completely passivate the royal house.⁸ There is an oft-quoted counterfactual reasoning by Winston Churchill: “If the Allies at the peace table at Versailles had allowed a Hohenzollern, a Wittelsbach and a Habsburg to return to their thrones, there would have been no Hitler. A democratic basis of society might have been preserved by a crowned Weimar in contact with the victorious Allies.”⁹ Variants of the argument have been later put forward by the journalist about Walter Lippman & sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset:

Lippman: “[Democracy] has stripped the government of that impressive authority which is derived from tradition, immemorial usage, consecration, veneration, prescription, prestige, heredity, hierarchy. ... It is significant, I think, certainly it is at least suggestive, that while nearly all the Western governments have been in deep trouble since the First World War, the constitutional monarchies of Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and the United Kingdom have shown greater capacity to endure, to preserve order with freedom, than the republics of France, Germany, Spain and Italy. In some measure that may be because in a republic the governing power, being wholly secularized, loses much of its prestige; it is stripped, if one prefers, of all the illusions of intrinsic majesty.”¹⁰

⁶ Bedell Smith 2012.

⁷ Anter 2014: s. 65.

⁸ Kuhn 1996.

⁹ Payne 1995: s. 489. [Citat: Winston Churchill, 1946-04-26.]

¹⁰ Lippman 1955: ss. 54-57.

Lipsets: “If the status of major conservative groups and symbols is not threatened during this transitional period [from aristocratic monarchies to democratic republics], even though they lose much of their power, democracy seems to be much more secure. And thus we have the absurd fact that ten out of the twelve stable European and English-speaking democracies are monarchies. Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand are kingdoms, or dominions of a monarch, while the only republics which meet the conditions of stable democratic procedures are the United States and Switzerland, plus Uruguay in Latin America.

The preservation of the monarchy has apparently retained for these nations the loyalty of the aristocratic, traditionalist, and clerical sectors of the population which resented increased democratization and equalitarianism. And by accepting the lower strata and not resisting to the point where revolution might be necessary, the conservative orders won or retained the loyalty of the new 'citizens'. In countries where monarchy was overthrown by revolution, and orderly succession was broken, forces aligned with the throne have sometimes continued to refuse legitimacy to republican successors down to the fifth generation or more.”¹¹

In Sweden, during the 19th century, the majority of the Swedish people seem to have accepted constitutional monarchy as an acceptable compromise between revolution and autocracy. The monarchists of the 20th and 21st centuries seem to have a continued pragmatic approach. They often quote Winston Churchill: ”Democracy is the worst of governments, apart from all the others.”

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In the context of the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011, a similar debate was held about the reasons for the Arab monarchies being politically more stable than the Arab republics.¹² The monarchies of Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, Jordan & Morocco remained stable. The Republics of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya replaced their lifetime presidents. Libya and Syria fought civil wars. (See also chapter 10.)

The discussions surrounding the political collapse of Afghanistan are probably more pertinent. The Afghan Communist Party had the whole Afghan royal family executed in 1978, and then a civil war broke out which is not yet over. The monarchy might have been replaced by a strong president (an enlightened despot), but this was never the case. And democracy did not work out. It is counterproductive to politicize a cohesive force. It only contributes to regional fragmentation.

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State utility

The status of the royal house is hard to define. It is difficult to parlay political impotence into anything substantial. In the structural-functionalist approach, however, the royal house contributes to stability by merely existing. The royal house seems to have made a virtue out of necessity. Lack of political power is redefined as ”being above politics” and thereby guaranteeing internal peace.

¹¹ Lipset 1960: ss. 77-83.

¹² Davidson 2012; Kühnhardt 2012; Menaldo 2012; Bank m fl. 2014.

The royal house also uses its position as apex of the social pyramid. Being rewarded or spending time with the royals is an honour & proof to careerists that they have arrived. The royal household's interaction with the social elites also strengthens their own position. It is an example of reciprocal legitimization. Mutual praise is double praise. Researchers in the field usually refer to structuralists & cultural theorists such as Foucault & Bourdieu.

Chapters 16-18 contain a number of concrete examples of how the state benefits from the monarchy. Carl Gustaf himself, however, is doubtful about the value of his efforts. He considers it his job to hold the fort. Stable institutions are always good, even if they do nothing.

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C. SUBJECT MENTALITY

The research on system-preserving subject-mentality is hard to summarize. The older German-influenced research is based on the guardian state. The guardians are the subjects. The rest do not count. The latter Anglo-Saxon research is based on society as a self-regulatory system:

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The authoritarian personality

After World War II, a subject mentality was often equated with a "fascist or extreme right-wing personality psychology". The opposite would be a liberal civic mentality. I quote:

Authoritarian [people] love authorities

The authoritarian personality is not egalitarian. They feel kinship with the strong and idealize those with power. Especially those who have power over themselves. Authoritarian people are highly judgemental and sort other people according to fixed principles. Some will do, others not.

Underneath the surface they are constantly interested in how they themselves are perceived. Their self-esteem is nourished by respect and courtesy from others, their self-confidence does not grow from within. It is the position and connection with other authorities that give them strength, not their own identity.¹³

There is an extensive literature on the subject. Theodor Adorno (1950): The Authoritarian personality, gave birth to the F or Fascist scale. A modernized version is the "Right Wing Authoritarian" (RWA scale) (1981) with three sub-scales: Authoritarian, conservative & traditional. A corresponding Left Wing scale is also available. The value of the F, LWA & RWA scale is thought to be determined by inheritance or upbringing. It is difficult to comment on the research, but if the mentality is established when young, it will be difficult to change. You have to wait for a new generation. Since the concept of political psychology is based on psychoanalytic theory, the criticism has been that it seems more natural to start from the defence of group interests or individual status when explaining authoritarian behaviour.

¹³ Om den auktoritära personligheten. <profilschager.com> (2021-01-01) [Svensk ledarutbildning.]

The Scandinavian version (Sandmose 1933) is the Law of Jante, 10 rules stating that you are worthless & better suck up to your superiors. A corresponding Russian version is the so called *Homo Sovieticus* (Zinovjev 1982). Later terms are "core russian mindset", "true russian", etc.¹⁴ It seems a mélange of small town conformity, political prudence & patriotism. Maybe with a sprinkling of brutality.

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False consciousness

In an exchange of letters in 1893, Friedrich Engels developed an oft-cited criticism of (German) intellectuals as "useful idiots" suffering from false consciousness, subjective class thinking & misled by a hegemonic discourse. As in the case of the Hegel lord-slave example, their function was to legitimize the existing society by pseudo-arguments, not to explain it. I quote Engels:

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives. Because it is a process of thought he derives both its form and its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors. He works with mere thought material which he accepts without examination as the product of thought, he does not investigate further for a more remote process independent of thought; indeed its origin seems obvious to him, because as all action is produced through the medium of thought it also appears to him to be ultimately based upon thought.¹⁵

Engels seems to have argued that "Germanization" - the difficult to understand concepts of German philosophers—made them incomprehensible. The German philosophy existed as a metaphysic unrelated to the existing society. A corresponding criticism has been levelled at the French who made discourse at the expense of facts a virtue.

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Apolitical man

If, when & how people's interest in society in general & politics in particular is awakened has been a research area since the 1960s youth revolt. The answer is that the interest is awakened by discussions in primary and secondary school, but hardly afterwards. In Sweden about 25 percent of the adults are apolitical. Hypothetically, these are monarchists in the sense that through their passivity they support the establishment. I quote:

"The *uninvolved*, unlike the active, are not particularly interested in politics and do not participate in any political activities. They are quite satisfied with how Swedish democracy works, but their confidence in the political institutions is not very great. The word 'politics' does not arouse very positive feelings in them. But they are not anti-political in their positions either. They trust their fellow human beings more than

¹⁴ Timofey Vorobyov. <quora.com> (2021-2022).

¹⁵ Engels 1893.

the active ones do. It is possible that trust in others will discourage them from engaging and tend to withdraw. They have little ambition as regarding politics. Nor are they very diligent news consumers. Their political knowledge is moderate, as is their confidence in their own ability to achieve something politically.”¹⁶

The exact figures of the political commitment are: Active (6 percent), positive (46 percent), neutral (26 percent), negative (21 percent). To say that democracy is a societal ideology is therefore only part truth. Only half are convinced.

The lukewarm support obviously has consequences: According to the Media Academy's measurements in 2020, the “confidence” was middling: in the royal house (50 percent), the Parliament (35 percent), the government (31 percent) and the parties (15 percent). This can be interpreted as the will of the people being that the political system should not be used for conflict resolution, but for administration of the consensus & there the monarchy is a good fit.

An older term for the apolitical man is the simple man. The opposite to the simple man is the authorities. I have not been able to find the origin of the term but it appears to be a variant of Paavo the farmer. Paavo works his field & prefers to be left alone. Possibly the term is Russian. The simple man belongs to a conservative sea of peasants, unaffected by the currents of the time and assumed to be closer to the good & the true than the effeminate, overeducated, corrupt, brutal or just completely different authority. The middle group of semi-educated autodidacts & braggart city dwellers is frowned upon. Knowledge is naught. The true simple man has wisdom. The superior virtue of the oppressed as George Orwell calls it.

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Democracy as Potemkin village

One can assume that parliamentary democracy also has its limits. In 2018, the Swedish Parliament published an anthology on the issue, in connection with the 100th anniversary of the Swedish suffrage reform. Ten of the country's political scientists were invited to comment on the current turmoil. The editors also commissioned an opinion study. The result was that the citizens were generally satisfied with their political system (86 percent), but they were keen to see their own issues of concern taken more seriously (59 percent). The contributions were indeed about the ability of the political system to deliver. When the political system does not want to or can not deliver, it is temporarily pushed aside.¹⁷ The monarchy is supposed to legitimize this.

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D. SUMMARY

The theory of structural functionalism assumes that the family, the school or some other institution impresses the values of society. If the school abdicates society is supposed to return to the natural Social Darwinistic state of Hobbes where life is everybody's struggle

¹⁶ Amnå m fl. 2016: s. 94.

¹⁷ Barrling & Holmberg 2018.

against everybody else and by any means, much like in suburban gangster circles. A peaceful society is rule-driven. The monarchy helps to legitimize the rules.

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