

# Erik Allardt

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ERIK ALLARDT WAS a pioneer of modern sociology in Finland and one of the most outstanding social scientists in the Nordic countries. He studied the tensions and contradictions of social structure, political radicalism, social welfare, and ethnic minorities. His contributions as a scholar, teacher and mediator of international influences, and as a participant in science policy and other debates on social issues were of exceptional significance.

In 1952 Allardt defended his doctoral thesis on the influence of norm systems on divorces, and the academic year 1953–54 he spent in the United States, thanks to a postdoctoral fellowship. It was there that he made the acquaintance of many leading figures in the modern political sociology of the time. Fruits of this stay appeared in his study of the influence of conflicting norms on voting behaviour (1956) and the textbook of sociology that he wrote in collaboration with Yrjö Littunen (1958). This book was to become a seminal work on the subject in Finland and the other Nordic countries for decades to come. Allardt gained international recognition in the early 1960s with his work on communism in Finland.

Allardt's main contribution to political sociology was inspired by Émile Durkheim's

theory of norms and the division of labour, published in Finnish notably in his monograph *Yhteiskunnan rakenne ja sosiaalinen paine* ("The structure of society and social pressure", 1964). In it he approached society and its institutions and organizations from the perspective of the division of labour and pressure towards conformity. This work opened up a new perspective on transformations in Finnish society and their consequences. The book left a powerful mark on sociological research and debate in Finland, especially in the 1960s.

Allardt was one of the seven scholars appointed as a Research Professor at the Academy of Finland, when these posts were introduced in 1970. This enabled him and his team to carry out a large-scale interview survey on welfare in four Nordic countries. Allardt's main contribution to the project was the monograph *Att ha, att älska, att vara. Om välfärd i Norden* ("Having, loving, being. On welfare in the Nordic countries", 1975), which also came out in Finnish and Japanese translations. Allardt's point was to extend the view of people's welfare from the material level of living to include their quality of life and their own perceptions of their well-being. His multi-

dimensional approach to welfare was composed of needs related to material and impersonal resources (*having*), needs related to love, companionship and solidarity (*loving*), and needs denoting self-actualization and the obverse of alienation (being). This division has left its mark on welfare studies both in Finland and internationally. Allardt completed his ten-year period as Research Professor with a work on ethnic minorities in Europe (1979).

Allardt was a charismatic and inspiring university teacher. Dozens of doctoral theses were prepared under his supervision, and he was also frequently used as a pre-examiner of theses and as an opponent in their public defences.

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters invited Erik Allardt to become a member in 1971. Among the positions that he held in university administration, particular mention should be made of his service as chairman of the Central Scientific Committee of the Academy of Finland in 1986–1991) and as chancellor of Åbo Akademi University in 1992–1994. His liberal interventions in public debates on scientific and social issues were widely respected. In them he often tried to reconcile opposite views. The esteem in which Allardt was held is well shown in the award of the honorary title of Academician granted to him by the President of Finland in 1995.

*Obituary by Matti Alestalo, Risto Alapuro and Hannu Uusitalo*

*Photo: Academy of Finland*