

satisfactorily settled and that there is a need for clarification and limitation. It is important that this need is pointed out at such an early stage of the SSD concept.

Welsch also shows the close interdependence of energy, economy and ecology. Yet, he does not forget about the great importance of *acceptance* of legal norms. Both the general public opinion in countries applying SSD and the early information, consultation and involvement of third (world) states are prerequisites to any success of a concept with great international and environmental implications.

*Ulf Marzik*

*Edward Dommen and Philippe Hein*  
**States, Microstates and Islands**  
Croom Helm, London 1985, 216 pp.

## I

This is a fascinating little book. The puzzle begins with the title. Why the switch from »States« and »Microstates«, to »Islands«? Because islands can be states or microstates, depending on their size, or because the islands the editors have in mind are too small even to become microstates? Their »Dedication« deepens the mystery. It refers to all the small islands around the world which »have served civilization after civilization well, and are still seeking their future«. Does this mean that this volume is concerned with the future of *islands* and not the *people* living on them? And do we assume that the goal is »statehood«, or rather *viable* statehood – the viability being provided by the kind of economic development past civilisations have been unable to achieve?

The case for this startling interpretation is strengthened by the »Foreword«, written by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) which gives »small state viability« and *economic* development pride of place. But it also speaks of *social* development and, in the same breath, of sustained »identity« (without indicating whether this means cultural uniqueness, political independence or territorial integrity). On the other hand, it leaves no doubt that this book is not intended *for* the people living in small island states. Instead it is addressed to the »intellectual community« (whatever that is) and to »intergovernmental fora« for which it is supposed to throw fresh light »upon the concrete options open to these [small island] States«. Nonetheless, no claim is made that the book performs this task. Rather the essays it contains are presented as »a step toward the search for new answers to . . . long-standing problems«.

Unfortunately this modest assessment is by and large correct. Ironically this may be mainly due to the dominating role played by UNCTAD in the gestation of the volume

(its Secretariat being directly or indirectly 'responsible' for five of its eight chapters). As a result, the position is not merely viewed from an international rather than a grassroots perspective, but the book also adopts a curiously ritualistic style. In addition to the predictable »disclaimer« ritual we also have »definition«, »typology«, »statistical«, »literature survey« and »pragmatism« rituals which all combine to turn the search for »fresh light« and »new answers« into an uphill battle and produce a volume which is the very opposite of a book by the people, for the people and about the people.

## II

The first group of papers, comprising more than half of the volume, consists of two introductory essays by the editors and two revised UNCTAD documents.

1. In the first essay *Edward Dommen* asks: »What is a microstate?« – and answers, not altogether surprisingly, that it is impossible to define »state« satisfactorily and that any definition of »microstate« must be arbitrary. More importantly, he sets the scene by declaring the place of microstates in *the international community* to be the focus of the volume (p. 1) and by creating the impression that »mallness« itself is the problem, so that the existence of microstates becomes an inevitable but nevertheless painful international burden which needs to be equitably distributed.

2. *Philippe Hein*, in the second essay, reviews primarily the economic literature on microstates and concludes »that, although there is a growing interest in the subject, further work in the area is needed and could lead to fruitful results with wider application« (p. 16). He suggests that this may require »an entirely different approach to social, environmental, political and economic management« because most theories of development implicitly assume »the institutional context of large industrialised countries« (p. 22). But although calling for »the forging of new concepts« (p. 23), his own proposal is more pragmatic:

any study (or teaching) of microstates' economics would be justified in starting with a focus on international trade and the external sector and treating the domestic economy as a mere dependent appendage (*ibid.*).

3. Those who look for a solid geographical base, a glittering statistical superstructure and a hefty dose of reassuring, political conservatism will find it in *François Doumenge's* chapter on »The Viability of Small Intertropical Islands«.

Doumenge commences with a discussion of the natural and cultural bases of viability, optimistically defined as »the productive capacity required to enable the wishes and aspirations of the population to be satisfied« (p. 96). Turning to political viability, he contrasts the forces of »fragmentation and differentiation« with those of »amalgamation« before introducing the delightful concept of »political imbrication« to denote the range of arrangements by which intertropical islands can remain politically dependent on their metropolitan masters, a process which continues to be »viable« (!) and indeed desirable:

as long as it does not run counter to the factors of island individualism which constitute a real obstacle to the unifying efforts of the metropolitan powers (p. 103). It is, of course, sheer altruism on the part of the metropolitan powers to engage in »political imbrication« since it can not only

ensure economic viability . . . it can even bring about a general improvement in the standard of living by allowing private capital inflows and public investment which would otherwise be impossible (p. 104).

Hence, while the internal political organisation of island communities is immaterial (forming, at best, part of the cultural base of economic viability),

[t]he type of [external] political structure [= political imbrication] adopted is one of the decisive factors in establishing the complex equilibriums which enable small islands, not only to continue to exist [!], despite the handicap of geographical isolation, but even to develop while retaining their original [!] character (p. 104).

This is the basis for Doumenge's grand »typical viability« scheme. By tabulating negative and positive factors it becomes possible to rank intertropical islands on a scale ranging from »precarious« to »achieved dynamic« viability. But »island specificity« always needs to be taken into account, and that »can only be determined through a very refined analysis of the whole complex of natural and human factors«. The ultimate goal is:

[t]he preparation of a scientific atlas which makes it possible to situate in space and to quantify all the major physical human economic and social phenomena . . . [as] an irreplaceable instrument in estimating the criteria of viability and defining an active policy in consequence (p. 114).

4. The »Examination of the Particular Needs and Problems of Island Developing Countries« by the UNCTAD Secretariat is considerably less ambitious than Doumenge's scheme. But it provides some light relief after the former's antediluvian arrogance; for example:

Islands are by definition surrounded by water. Transport links between islands and their neighbours must therefore be by sea or by air, unless they are near enough to be linked to the mainland by a bridge (in that case, however, they could hardly be regarded as remote, and would therefore not meet the criteria laid down in Conference resolution III (V)) (p. 126).

### III

So much for the background. Where is the »fresh light«?

1. In »Paradise lost?« *Dolman* provides first of all a streamlined survey of the problems and constraints faced by »small island developing countries«. In his view things are getting worse rather than better (a process which started with the colonisation rather than the decolonisation of these islands!), and increased exports (including tourism and the exploitation of marine resources) are unlikely to provide a solution. He therefore advocates increasing *self-reliance* as the only viable alternative.

This is not to suggest a return to things past, but rather the need for a critical reappraisal of values, problems and opportunities. Such a reappraisal may result in the rejection of much conventional wisdom and make it possible for some small island countries to identify new development paths that larger developing countries may one day be forced to travel. Is it too much to suggest that small islands, for all the problems and constraints that confront them, could become the laboratory in which alternative development strategies, shaped by the notion of self-reliance, first see the light of day (pp. 62–3)?

Unfortunately this is the last paragraph of Dolman's contribution so that his argument acquires a distinctly rhetorical ring. Yet it deserves closer consideration since it at least opens the way to a research agenda which no longer treats small island countries as a liability but as capable of providing positive models for larger developing countries – and perhaps even for the developed parts of the world.

Dolman presents us with a neat paradox: small island countries have, for purely economic reasons, no choice but to pursue 'alternative' development strategies – irrespective of whether or not they regard these strategies as politically, socially or culturally desirable; however, once this is accepted, the problems to be faced by these countries in designing and implementing such strategies are no longer primarily economic but political, social and cultural. In other words, we need to ask, for example, which forms of social and political organisation – and which cultural values – are likely to encourage self-reliance, instead of continuing to argue (rightly or wrongly) that 'traditional' forms of land tenure are obstacles on the path to export-oriented economic growth which have to be removed.

The effects of this changed perspective on our assessment of the present and the past are equally profound. How far, for instance does the justification of treating the domestic economies of small island states as mere dependent appendages of international trade rest, in fact, on economic rather than on political or ideological grounds?

2. This is not quite the question which the editors take up in their joint contribution on 'Foreign Trade in Goods and Services: the Dominant Activity of Small Island Economies'. Instead Dommen and Hein begin their attempt to construct a pragmatic counterposition to that taken by Dolman by admitting

that the options open to most small islands are somewhat limited, in so far as their future prospects are dependent to a large extent on decisions taken outside them (p. 155).

Yet, this is no reason to despair, for

there are certainly a number of areas where local decision-making is crucial, and there is no doubt that purposeful trade policies in particular may have a determining influence on the pattern of development of these countries (ibid.).

What shape is this pattern of development to take? Foreign trade obviously is to play the central role, but, in a reversal of the Dolman paradox, this economic goal must be justified by an act of political self-determination of the island communities themselves. Thus the authors call on the eloquence of 'the Government of Western Samoa':

Theoretically, an island country has two options. It can remain a small, closed society at a subsistence level which would probably provide adequate quantity (not necessarily quality) of food but none of the consumer goods, medicines and other modern conveniences that come with economic development. Alternatively, it can have access to these things by becoming integrated with the world economy through the promotion of the type of development which allows for greater and more beneficial exchange. In fact, the first is not really an option. There are few, if any, small societies which having had access to certain amenities have rejected them and gone back peacefully to the traditional ways of their ancestors. Having become a part of the international economy, it is then a question of preserving what is best in traditional values and developing the economy so that it becomes more reliant on trade and less on aid« (quoted pp. 155–6).

In this imperfect world we all live in there is no alternative to export-led strategies aimed at achieving economic growth. »Alternative« development strategies are, irrespective of their economic soundness, politically irrelevant because the people are not going to accept them, having become hooked on imported goods and services which they can obviously only afford to buy with export earnings! In a nutshell, the dependence of their domestic economies on international trade reflects the wishes of the people which we must naturally respect however harmful this may be to our own economic interests. Besides there is an important conceptual distinction to be made, namely between utopian »self-sufficiency« and pragmatic »self-reliance«, recommended by down-to-earth development experts. Despite the inevitability of selective export specialisation as a policy »there are some prospects for increasing self-reliance in a number of small islands« (p. 176).

But again we must be cautiously realistic. The prospects »for import substitution in manufactures or sophisticated consumer goods« are »normally very limited« and »island developing countries would do well to avoid falling into the trap of over-protected local production like some other developing countries« (ibid.) because »in a very small market [...] . . . it may in the end amount to economic suicide« (quoted p. 177). Moreover, any increase in self-reliance requires »the will of the islanders themselves, and their determination to be more independent in their patterns of thinking, behaviour and consumption« – and the rewards promised by the authors for this Herculean effort are so ridiculously small that it is hard to believe that their posture is genuine:

promoting a diet including more coconut and local fish, or the use of sailing boats or sail-assisted motor boats, may be an appropriate strategy for some small island communities (ibid.).

In any case, beyond the increased use of coconuts, local fish and sails, the universe of small island states is governed by the immutable laws of international trade:

Their state of openness and dependency on trade is a fact of life they have to live with. Their policy option is therefore . . . to choose which area or areas of export specialization to promote and to be prepared to shift their specialization to adjust to changing overseas demand (ibid.).

This calls for great political skills on the part of their leaders, the authors remind us, to avoid the Scylla of too liberalised economic policies and the Charybdis of excessive self-reliance (p. 180). However, we can rest assured as »islanders tend to be good sailors« (p. 181).

3. Those island communities which are not happy to rely on the innate political sailing skills of their leaders and which are not prepared to wait until Doumenge's grand atlas permits them to calculate the optimal imbrication strategy scientifically – or which foolishly believe that it is the main duty of their leaders to look after things at home, instead of cruising around mythical obstacles abroad – will be particularly interested in what *David Murray* has to say about the actual »Public Administration in the Micro-states of the Pacific.«

Murray begins by pointing out that the question as to how

to cope with smallness when developing structures and processes of administration for microstates has [not only] not been a significant issue in the study of public or development administration . . . [but] that the perception of problems and the solutions to them rested in the eyes of public and development administration specialists on doctrines derived from large States . . . [As most of these doctrines were difficult to operate, a good deal of improvisation was needed.] Such improvisations were not, however, regarded as a basis for developing doctrines of effective administration which could be treated as an appropriate substitute for the wisdom received from elsewhere. Improvisation was treated as a, no doubt necessary, response in the circumstances, while the ideal remained to bring structures and processes into conformity with established international doctrine (p. 185).

The purpose of Murray's paper is to question the appropriateness of this response. He looks at three areas where actual practice departed for good reasons from models of »good« administration and where the departures could therefore be treated as experiments in developing more appropriate forms of administration – and he leaves no doubt that they are just illustrations of a much more general process. We will take up Murray's story where it links with the economic base of administrative organisation. Here Murray draws our attention to the crucial fact that

external aid was available on a scale that allowed a burgeoning administration, and then created a dependence on such aid with the result that the focus of administrative attention became to satisfy the aid givers and maintain their financial support (p. 200).

Murray admits that

[b]ureaucratization and the creation of overweight, overpowerful and partly uncontrolled government services was a problem not peculiar to island states in the Pacific, but it was understandable that the circumstances of these states made the problem seem a particularly pressing one. The prospect of societies being appendages of the governmental administration was an immediate danger, and with the established model of administration this meant having society organised as an adjunct to a

hierarchically structured administration in which there was an emphasis on chains of command and lines of control and on career service (ibid.).

This is the context, in which Murray views the »improvised« administrative reforms.

Devices and practices mentioned in this paper can be seen as ways of establishing a different pattern of relationships between the government administration and the society. Part-time jobs, fluidity in the structure of jobs, having individuals working in several different structures, part-time and contract appointments, attention to consensus administration – these and other practices created different relationships in society. They could be seen as ways of breaking down the barriers imposed by the ideal of an independent public service and achieving a different integration of public service and society (ibid.).

Despite all this, Murray is not prepared to accept (like Dolman) that the »improvised« departures from conventional administrative wisdom could serve as a model for larger developing (as well as developed?) countries; that we are, in other words, not simply dealing with »the problem of smallness« but with different forms of social and political organisation which all have problems as well as promises. Instead of asking why it should not also be desirable to achieve an integration of public service and society in the United Kingdom or to devise a system of government which would make the United States financially less dependent on the continued growth of its economy, Murray prefers to stick to the harmless and somewhat artificial problem of geographical smallness which only involves a few peripheral others. This seemingly reduces our task to solving *their* problems and turns the »rethinking« exercise into a delicious »wash me but do not wet me« experience.

4. Perhaps the contribution of *David Pitt*, which deals with »Anthropological and Social Theories and Microstates«, will give us a better idea of the kind of rethinking required.

Pitt adopts a curiously erratic, but in retrospect surprisingly purposive, approach. Instead of engaging in the expected discussion of theories relating to the origin and the changing role of the state, the character and limits of bureaucracy, the sociology of organisations and so on, he is concerned with transcending the depressing notion of »smallness« as a category of thought, using four »schools« as his stepping stones.

Pitt dismisses the »empiricists« because they deal with small and nasty groups as actually existing units and uses the »rationalist« in order to get away from the criterion of formal statehood altogether, so that he can include »sub-nations«, that is any kind of quasi-group with a sense of identity striving for greater independence, in his purview. The demolition of all definitional boundaries achieved, Pitt seeks refuge among the »networkers«, who are concerned with amorphous networks of social *relations* (in contrast to the discrete social *units* of the »empiricists«). However, since these networks can (and should) transcend even the physical boundaries of large nation states, forming »liberated communities« (the degree of liberation apparently increasing in proportion to

their size), Pitt needs to find his way back to the bogeyman of »smallness« – and the »Small is Beautiful« battlecry of the »Schumacherians«, offers a convenient bridge. Who wants »smallness«? Certainly not the people living in microstates, as Pitt well knows from his own life in the near-microstate New Zealand which he experienced as a self-inflicted »concentration camp of the mind«. But then grand theories can be just as oppressive as small societies – for example those of the »Schumacherians«:

Like most theories Small is Beautiful is the product of intellectuals and their role may often be to create self-fulfilling prophecies irrespective of local wishes. *Max-Neef* has suggested that outside activists should withdraw as soon as possible. This is only a part palliative and there is evidence to suggest that smallness may be regarded by some as desirable and by others as much less so. One concrete indicator of this is the apparently ever-increasing tide of migration from what are often somewhat self-reliant if poor communities into »big smokes«, the slums of the great cities which are coming to dominate the demographic landscape worldwide (p. 34).

And so Pitt drifts on, providing illuminating but disjointed insight (and searching for a liberating theory of small steps?) towards an almost surrealistic climax (p. 38) which presents international agencies as an antidote for small societies, big government and states of all sizes, perhaps because he regards them as a prototype for a global network of liberalised communities which are neither poor nor self-sufficient but will live happily ever after as humanistic and pluralistic parasites of whichever host is enlightened enough to feed them.

On the other hand, Pitt's maverick contribution makes greater strides towards a search for new answers to the long standing problems – not only of small island states – than any other in this volume.

Still, small island communities are well advised to rely increasingly on improving their own sailing skills, otherwise the processes of their political (and economic) imbrication will continue, with or without the help of Doumenge's scientific atlas.

*Peter Sack*