Norwegian Political Science at 60

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On the February 28, 1947, by way of royal decree, the University of Oslo (UiO) was allowed to grant a degree in political science; Norway's first department of political science was established at the same university in 1957. Today, 60 years later, political science departments can be found on each of Norway's largest university campuses; their graduates are active and evident locally, nationally, and internationally—with jobs in both the public and private sectors. While it is difficult to provide an accurate survey of the breadth and depth of contemporary Norwegian political science, this short article aims to supply a brief historical and institutional map for American political scientists interested in working in Norway or with Norwegian political scientists.

The Institutional History of Norwegian Political Science

As an academic discipline in a university context, Norwegian political science resulted from the efforts of three intellectual sponsors: an expert in national and international law (Frede Castberg), an intellectual historian (A. H. Winsnes), and a more general historian (Sverre Steen).[1] Their explicit intent in establishing a new field of study was to help educate future journalists and diplomats (Thue 1997, 187). In the early years, when the political climate was still dominated by the end of the Second World War, the discipline attracted a generation of active and optimistic students who were enamored with changing the world. In this context the study of political science was seen as a means of educating a more enlightened and engaged citizenry (Nilson 1989, 83).

It is not surprising, then, that most of the early student theses were written in the field of intellectual history and/or political theory: Thomas Chr. Wyller's thesis was written on Thomas Paine, Jens A. Christophersen wrote on the development of the concept of democracy, Paul Thyness' thesis explored Edmund Burke's political philosophy, and Eivind Storheim's work concerned Hobbes and the problem of peace (Thue 1997, 193).

This early trend is important, if only because these students became the next generation of teachers at the UiO. Wyller triumphed over Stein Rokkan for the first associate professorship (*dosent*) in political science, and later served as the department's first chair from 1957 to 1965. Christophersen became a university lecturer in political science in 1958, and an associate professor from 1970 (Thue 1997, 193).

While this early focus on political theory was important for determining the faculty make-up of Oslo's new department of political science, it is not at all characteristic of the broader development of Norwegian political science. Indeed, it would be both difficult and dishonest to describe the contemporary discipline as being characterized by a strong legal, philosophical, or historical bent. To the contrary, Norwegian political science tends to take pride in its membership in the social science community.

Four Main Branches of Norwegian Political Science

While the main trunk of Norwegian political science grew from the study of history and jurisprudence, it quickly split off into four main branches—statistical survey studies, comparative politics, international relations, and public administration—all of which continue to enjoy considerable influence and institutional support. Three of these branches can be directly traced to an institution that was not formally associated with the UiO. The fourth branch traces its roots back to the UiO, but has enjoyed support and success in other campus settings as well, especially in Bergen.

One of the most important impetuses for this Norwegian social science tradition can be traced to the Institute for Social Research (ISF). The ISF was established in 1950 by a group of individuals who had earlier gathered around Arne Næss (often credited as Norway's foremost philosopher in the twentieth century), and the generous support of the Rinde family. In the decades that followed, this institution was enormously influential; it became a sort of American bridgehead in European social science research (Thue 2000, 33; 2006). By exploiting a number of generous American scholarship and exchange programs (e.g., the Fulbright Program, and the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations), Næss was able to send some of his most promising students to the United States and to invite a number of American scholars to teach and advise a nascent generation of Norwegian social scientists.

The fruits of these exchanges are many and varied. The first of Næss's students to go to the United States was a lawyer and sociologist, Vilhelm Aubert, who began to study under Robert Merton at Columbia University. There Aubert came into contact with Paul F. Lazarsfeld, who would visit Norway in subsequent years and help establish a research tradition that continues to exert a strong influence.

Lazarsfeld, as the dynamic leader of the Bureau of Applied Social Research, played a remarkable role in building up contemporary social science in Norway. His visits, and those of his colleagues, helped Norwegian social scientists connect to an important international network of social science researchers. Most important for Norway's nascent political science environment was a long string of exchanges between students and staff at the ISF and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

It is this sort of international networking that can help to explain the prominence of Norway's most influential political scientist: Stein Rokkan. Another admirer of Næss, Rokkan was sent to the U.S. to study first at the University of Chicago and then at Columbia University. In the doing, his approach to the

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study of politics drifted away from the more historical, descriptive and normative perspectives that were finding a home at the UiO.

In the late 1950s, Rokkan teamed up with Henry Valen (1947–2007) and established a Norwegian election studies program that continues to exert much influence. The research tradition that resulted constitutes the first major branch of Norwegian political science. After establishing the voter-research program with Rokkan in 1957, Valen continued to direct the program until 1985, producing a long series of influential books and analyses on voter behavior in Norway, the last of which was published in 2007 (Valen and Narud 2007). The result is an impressive collection of electoral research data and a stable full of researchers trained in advanced statistical techniques. This legacy—of a methodologically-sophisticated, survey-based tradition of political sociology—can still be found at ISF (today associated with the work of Bernt Aardal), but it has also established an institutional beachhead at the Department of Sociology and Political Science at NTNU (in Trondheim), the political science section of which was founded by Ola Listhaug.

In 1958 Rokkan left to Bergen for the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), which had already been established in 1930. Together with the economist Just Faaland (who had arrived at CMI in 1952) Rokkan helped to revitalize the social science wing of the CMI by linking it to a number of international research programs and by mobilizing additional financial resources. In 1966 he became a professor of comparative politics at the University of Bergen's department of sociology (established the following year in 1967)—and it is here that we find one of the most important institutional legacies of Rokkan's work. In 1980, the year after Rokkan's death, the University of Bergen (UiB) established the department of comparative politics, an institute whose work remains heavily influenced by Rokkan. In particular, Rokkan's academic legacy can be traced to his interest in combining an older macro-sociological tradition with recent developments in social science data collection and methods. The comparative, social-historical research that results constitutes the second main branch of contemporary Norwegian political science.

As with the first two branches of Norwegian political science, the third branch was also grafted with the help of Arne Næss. One arm of this branch, which is devoted to international relations, drew more consciously from the tradition and influence of legal studies at the UiO, and the activities of the Norwegian Nobel Institute (established in 1904), whose associates award the annual Nobel Peace Prize. This influence can be seen in a strong initial focus on international law. Indeed, the very first thesis in political science was written on the subject by Eirik Steinnes (Thue 1997, 193), but the study of international politics at the UiO moved quickly in a more historical direction, as evidenced in Knut Midgaard's (1959) "History of Ideas" thesis on peace research. This tendency built up steam in the early 1960s when Nils Ørvik was hired as the field's second associate professor at the UiO (in 1963).

The second arm of this branch of research grew out of the institutional sector and maintained a special focus on peace and conflict studies. This arm is more data-driven and methodologically sophisticated. Here the influence of Arne Næss and the ISF is found in the person of Johan Galtung, who was hired as a professor of peace and conflict research at the UiO in 1969 (and held that position until 1977, when he moved abroad). Already in 1959, Galtung had established the ISF's Section for Conflict and Peace Research, which later (in 1966) gained its independence as the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). At about the same time, the Fridtjof Nansen Institute was established (in 1958) and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) was formed in 1960.[2] This institution-based tradition of international politics is still strong and influential, as exemplified by the work of Nils Petter Gleditsch, and the continued research output at each of these three research institutes (Nansen, NUPI, PRIO).

The fourth and final branch of Norwegian political science does not trace its legacy back to Stein Rokkan or the ISF. But it does share with Rokkan a strong historical-sociological component to its work. This branch owes its heritage to Knut Dahl Jacobsen, who was awarded the first full professorship in political science at the UiO in 1965. Four years later, however, Dahl moved away from Oslo and set up the field of public administration and organizational studies at the University of Bergen (UiB) in 1969. In 1980, when the UiB created a department of comparative politics it also created a twin: the department of administration and organization theory. Today this research tradition enjoys a strong institutional anchoring in Oslo, Bergen, and Tromsø, but is perhaps most commonly associated with the systemic-anarchic perspective of organizational decision-making associated with Johan P. Olsen (who began as a professor in Bergen but is now at UiO).

These four branches of Norwegian political science—Valen-inspired electoral research, Rokkan-inspired comparative politics, Galtung-inspired peace research, and a more sociological approach to organization studies that we today associate with Johan P. Olsen—continue to dominate the discipline today.

Figure 1: Stein Rokkan

Stein Rokkan (1921–1979) had a remarkable influence on Norwegian political science, and European social science in general. He was, among other things: president of the International Political Science Association (1970–73); vice-president for the International Sociological Association (1966–70); chairman of the European Consortium for Political Research (1970–76), which he helped found; president of the International Social Science Council associated with UNESCO (1973–77); chairman of the Nordic Association for Political Science (1975–76), an organization he initiated; and leader of the Norwegian Social Science Data services (1975–79), at its establishment and during its first years in existence.

His influence is also recognized in a number of posthumous awards, including the Stein Rokkan Lectures (held at the European Consortium for Political Research's annual Joint Sessions of Workshops); the Stein Rokkan Memorial Fund (at the International Political Science Association), which provides stipends for research travelling; two Stein Rokkan Prizes for brilliant research contributions by young researchers (one sponsored by the International Social Science Council, another by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service); and an annual Stein Rokkan lecture in tribute to his memory, arranged since 1981 by the department of comparative politics (in Bergen).

Source: SAMPOL (2007)

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The State of the Discipline Today

A rough, cocktail-napkin tally of the accumulated number of political science graduates in Norway might exceed 2,000. Finding them and counting them, however, would be a very difficult matter. The number of registered political-science researchers at the turn of the millennium was estimated at 349: 225 of these worked in the educational sector, 124 in the think-tank/research sector (NFR 2002, 15–6). These researchers tend to work in a variety of fields at a relatively high level of international competitiveness.

This, at least, was the lesson learnt in a recent evaluation conducted by the Research Council of Norway: "Compared to its counterparts in the other Nordic countries, Norwegian political science can hold its own in a number of areas, including voter research, institutionalism, research on the EU and international regimes" (NFR 2002, 11). While the evaluation noted that the quality of scholarship can vary significantly across institutions, and that there is a shortage of work that is theoretically innovative, the general picture drawn in the evaluation was fairly attractive.

I concur. While others might document this strength with reference to the strong sociological and comparative research traditions associated with the work and followers of Stein Rokkan and Johan P. Olsen, my own preferences lie elsewhere. I would say that the strength of modern political science in Norway lies in the strong methodological training associated with the first and third branches described above (electoral research and conflict studies). Norwegian political scientists in these areas are doing cutting-edge research at the highest international levels. As an example of this I might point to the Centre for the Study of Civil War—located at PRIO and run by NTNU's Scott Gates—which is the only Norwegian Centre of Excellence established in the social sciences.

This capacity for Norwegian political science to compete internationally is also evident in Hix's recent (2004) ranking of international political science programs.[3] Here we find Norwegian political science ranked about ninth or tenth place in the world—behind the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Israel, and Switzerland (and maybe also Ireland). Not bad for a discipline that draws from a population of just 4.5 million people! This impressive score is also evident in the ranking of Norway's three largest universities (in terms of political science stature), as evidenced in Table 1.

As this ranking does not adequately control for size (Underdal 2007, 250), larger departments tend to rank comparatively better. For this reason it may be useful to know that the University of Bergen actually employs the largest number of professional political scientists (professors, associate professors, and assistant professors)—followed by Oslo, Tromsø, and Trondheim—as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: International Ranking of Norwegian Political Science, by Institution

	Nordic	Europe	World
Oslo	1	14	52
NTNU	4	53	145
Bergen	9	83	195

Source: Underdal (2007, 250), based on Hix (2004)

Table 2: Number of Academic Staff at Four Largest Universities

University	No. of Full-Time Academic Staff
Bergen (UiB)	37.5
• *Department of comparative politics*	*20.0*
• *Department of administration and organization theory*	*17.5*
Oslo (UiO)	33,1
Tromsø (UiT)	18.0
Trondheim (NTNU)	15.0
Total	141.1

Note: Tally was made from information provided on each department's homepage on November 11, 2007. The tally includes only professors, associate professors (*førsteamanuensis*), and assistant professors (*universitetslektor*). Part-time positions were aggregated (e.g., professor/ *førsteamanuensis* II = 50%).

While these evaluations indicate the quality of Norwegian political science, they provide little help in mapping its spread. The concluding section will examine three different ways to document the spread of contemporary Norwegian political science: in terms of its employers, in terms of its student production, and in terms of its national organization.

The Spread of Norwegian Political Science

Political scientists in Norway, as elsewhere, tend to be employed in the education, research, and private sectors. Providing a solid overview of potential employers is nearly impossible, but Table 3 offers a list of some of the most important actors in the university and research sectors, along with their Internet addresses. Many of these institutions will be familiar from the historical description above.

Another way to gauge the pulse and direction of contemporary Norwegian political science is to look at the number and area of dissertations/theses produced in Norway each year. In order to provide this overview, I have aggregated the annual department reports as submitted to the *Norwegian Political Science Journal* (*Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift*, or *NST*) for the past three years (2005–07). On the basis of their thesis titles,[4] I have then organized this production under five main rubrics: political theory, political be-

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Table 3: Main Institutions Conducting Norwegian Political Science

Universities and Colleges	Research Institutes
University of Bergen • Department of administration and organization theory o http://ugle.svf.uib.no/admorg/default.asp?kategori=35&versjon=true • Department of comparative politics o http://ugle.svf.uib.no/sampol/default.asp?versjon=true **University of Oslo** • Department of political science o www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/english/index.html **University of Tromsø** • Department of political science o http://uit.no/statsvitenskap/?Language=en&PHPSESSID=f7826264ae1d19bd7b4e4cf0a00e8df6 **Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Trondheim)** • Department of sociology and political science o www.ntnu.no/iss **University of Agder** • School of economics and social studies o www.uia.no/no/content/view/full/5451 **Bodø College** • Department of social sciences o www.english.asf.hibo.no/ **Lillehammer University College** • Department of political science o www.hil.no/hil/forskning/forskningsomraader/statsvitenskap **Norwegian University of Life Sciences** • Department of international environment and development studies (Noragric) o www.umb.no/8403 **Note:** This is only a sample of research institutes employing political scientists.	• Institute for Social Research (ISF) o www.samfunnsforskning.no/ • Fridtjof Nansen Institute o www.fni.no/ • Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) o http://english.nupi.no/ • International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) o www.prio.no/ • Chr. Michelsen Institute o www.cmi.no/ • Centre for the Study of Civil War o www.prio.no/cscw/ • Norwegian Nobel Institute o http://nobelpeaceprize.org/ • FAFO o www.fafo.no/indexenglish.htm • Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) o www.nibr.no/content/view/full/66 • Norwegian Institute for Research on Growing-Up, Welfare and Aging (NOVA) o www.nova.no/index.gan?id=15&subid=0 • Centre for European Studies (ARENA) o www.arena.uio.no/ • Centre for Rural Research o www.bygdeforskning.no/engelsk/index.htm • Stein Rokkan Centre (SEFOS) o www.rokkansenteret.uib.no/ • Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture (TIK) o www.tik.uio.no/english/ • ECON o www.econ.no • SINTEF o www.sintef.no/default____490.aspx • Statistics Norway (SSB) o www.ssb.no/en/ • Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo (CICERO) o www.cicero.uio.no/home/index_e.aspx

havior, public administration, comparative politics, and international relations. These data are presented in Table 4.

From this table we can still see how far political theory has fallen as a subject of research in Norwegian political science. (I suspect this trend is not limited to Norway.) By contrast, the other main branches of political science—comparative politics (which includes both the Rokkan and Vallen traditions), public administration, and international politics—continue to play an important role.

A third and final way to map the scope of contemporary Norwegian political science is to look at the role played by its national organization. Formally, Norwegian political scientists are organized in the Norwegian Political Science Association, an organization responsible for two important landmarks in Norwegian political science. Although the Association itself is currently inactive, its two institutional landmarks remain very visible.

The first of these is the Association's journal, *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* (*NST*).[5] Issued four times a year, this journal is currently enjoying its twenty-third year. Its editorship today circulates among the political science departments at each of the four largest universities (each department enjoys editorial responsibility for three years, before passing it onto the next). Traditionally, the articles published in the *NST* are written in Norwegian with short English abstracts. In recent years, however, under the editorship of Torbjørn Knutsen, the journal has published several of its articles (and book reviews) in English. This trend is indicative of the dominance of English in contemporary Norwegian political

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science.

The second institutional representation of the Norwegian Political Science Association is its annual conference. Like the editorship of the national journal, responsibility for organizing this conference circulates among the four largest departments. The conference tends to be held in the first week of January and includes papers from across the broad spectrum of contemporary political science. For example, the 2008 conference will be organized in Tromsø, which has organized a call for papers in the following areas: international relations, public policy, organization, political theory; comparative politics, and political behavior.[6] While the size of these conferences can vary, the 2007 conference in Trondheim attracted about 100 delegates.

Table 4: Graduate Student Production, 2005–07, by Number (and %)

	Doctoral Dissertations	Masters Theses
Theory	2 (1%)	5 (1%)
Political Behavior	0	35 (9%)
Public Administration	6 (32%)	117 (31%)
Comparative Politics	9 (47%)	140 (37%)
International Politics	2 (1%)	78 (21%)
Total	19	375

Source: NST (2005, 2006, 2007)

Conclusion

In short, Norwegian political science has travelled a great distance from its humble roots in law and history. The discipline today contributes actively to a wide array of political research subjects. As a result of a strong American influence in its formative years, and as a consequence of the international ambitions of its founding fathers, Norwegian political science is a methodologically-sophisticated and internationally-oriented discipline—one that is particularly well-suited for collaborating with researchers in the U.S. and around the globe.

Notes

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1. Although he was not an initial sponsor, the nature of political science at UiO was also influenced heavily by yet another historian, Jens Arup Seip.

2. For overview of Norwegian developments in IR studies, see Underdal (1986).

3.This mining of Hix's data for Norwegian results comes from Underdal (2007).

4. This operationalization strategy is anything but foolproof. There are two potential sources of difficulty. The first is department submissions. It strikes me as rather odd that the UiO did not register any finished dissertations in 2006 and 2007. Second, it is not always easy to depict a given topic as falling within one of these rubrics on the basis of the thesis title alone. For this reason, I have aggregated over three years, to increase the number of observations to 394.

5. See www.universitetsforlaget.no/tidsskrift/vaare/samfunnsvitenskap/fmmb_norsk_statsvitenskapelig_tidsskrift/.

6. See http://uit.no/statsvitenskap/930/46.

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