

# The Growth of the Profession: Norway

STEIN KUHNLE  
STEIN ROKKAN  
University of Bergen

Norway cannot boast a long tradition of disciplined scholarship and teaching in the field of politics. Political science (*statsvitenskap*) was introduced as a subject at the University of Oslo in 1947: the decisive initiative was taken by the great teacher of constitutional law, Professor Frede Castberg. The initial courses were taught by scholars trained in law and in history. It took some time before it was possible to establish a distinctive teaching position for the new subject; the first *docent*, Thomas Wyller, was appointed in 1957.<sup>1</sup> The first regular chair was not established until the summer of 1965, and was held for a few years by Knut Dahl Jacobsen before he moved on to take the Chair of Public Administration at the University of Bergen.

The decisive thrust toward the development of a systematic discipline of politics had not come from the University, however. In contrast to the other Scandinavian countries the bulk of the Norwegian work on politics had been done in independent academic research institutions without explicit teaching functions. Four of these still play a significant role in Norwegian political science:

- the *Christian Michelsen Institute* in Bergen, established in 1929, active in political research since 1938.
- the *Institute for Social Research* in Oslo, established in 1950, active in political research practically from the start and operating a distinct Division of Political Studies since 1955.
- the *Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs*, established in 1960, mainly active as a documentation and information centre, but also engaged in long-term research in the field of international relations.
- the *International Peace Research Institute*, established in 1959 as a Division within the Institute for Social Research but given independent status from January 1, 1966; active in a wide range of fields within the sociology of economic, cultural, ethnic and national conflicts and responsible for a number of empirical studies of immediate interest to students of politics.

A fifth research institute, the *Polhøgda Foundation*, also established during the fifties, became an important centre for research on the politics of the Arctic and the ocean by the late sixties.

## 1. Stages of Expansion 1960-75

Political Science was a very small discipline in 1960. There was one department: in Oslo. And this Department could boast only two regular teaching positions and three recruitment posts (five-year fellowships or three-year assistantships) at the time. But this was the beginning of an extraordinary decade of academic expansion in Norway as can be seen in *Figure 1*. There was an increase in the number of positions from year to year until 1973 when the Ministry decided that the University had reached a ceiling and stopped all allocations for further positions.<sup>2</sup>

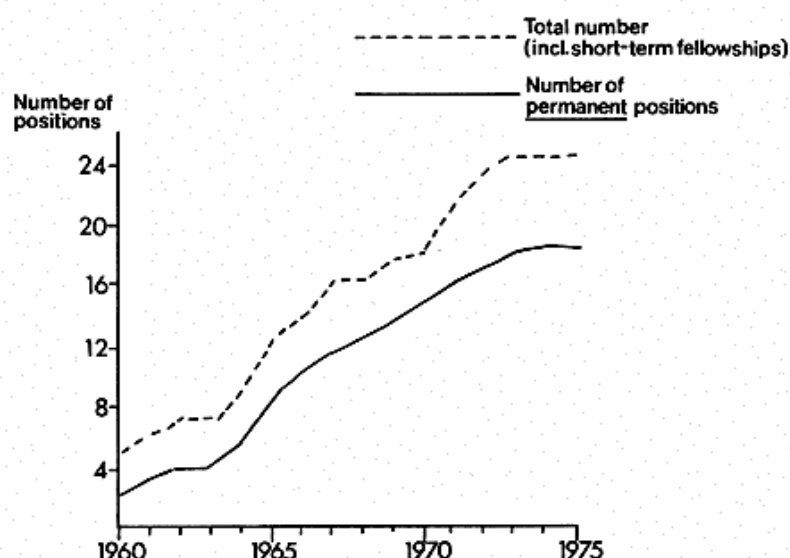


Figure 1: Number of teaching positions at the Institute of Political Science, Oslo, 1960-1975.

A 'quantum jump' in the expansion of the discipline occurred during the years 1966-70. The University of *Bergen* finally got into its stride and established a broad programme of teaching and research in the social sciences. Stein Rokkan transferred some of his activities from the Michelsen Institute to the University and was appointed Professor of Sociology with special responsibility for a new subject, *comparative politics*. An Institute of Sociology was established in Bergen in 1967 and rapidly developed into a genuinely multi-subject social science department; by the end of 1975 it had appointed two full professors in *public administration and organization theory*,<sup>3</sup> two in *sociology*, one in *economics* and one in *social administration and social policy*. There were also tenured *docent* positions in comparative politics and in economics. While the Institute in Oslo teaches political science as an integrated discipline, the Bergen Institute has divided it into two separate subjects: *comparative politics* and *public administration and organization*

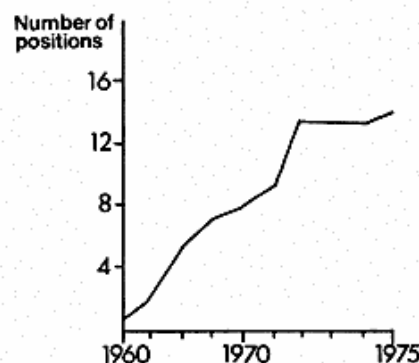


Figure 2: Number of permanent teaching positions in political science subjects at the Institute of Sociology, Bergen, 1966–1975.

Note: the scale is the same as in Fig. 1 but data are available for permanent positions only (the lower curve in Fig. 1).

*theory*. The growth in the number of permanent positions in the two political science subjects at the Bergen Institute is apparent from Figure 2.<sup>4</sup> It will be seen that the expansion was particularly rapid until 1972 when stagnation occurred just as we saw for Oslo.

Further developments have since taken place at the Universities of *Trondheim* and *Tromsø*, both established in 1968. These institutions both offer teaching in social science subjects: political science has not been set up as a separate, independent discipline, but integrated into a broader range of social sciences.

A number of *regional colleges* were established in 1969 and 1970. By 1975, four of these offered education in political science, whether under the name of public administration or of 'social politics': *Agder Distriktshøgskole*, Kristiansand; *Rogaland Distriktshøgskole*, Stavanger; *Hedmark/Oppland Distriktshøgskole*, Lillehammer and *Nordland Distriktshøgskole*, Bodø.

## 2. The Organization of Study Schedules and the Production of Graduates

During the early years political science could only be studied for a graduate degree called *Magister Artium* which required some 6–7 years of concentrated study after university entrance. The University of Bergen introduced a multi-discipline social science degree called the *Cand. Polit.* in 1966. The undergraduate part of this degree called for a combination of three different subjects over 4–5 years, and the graduate degree required a further 3–4 semesters of concentrated work in one of the subjects. Graduate degrees of this new type were offered in comparative politics from 1967 and in public administration from 1969 onwards. The *Cand. Polit.* degree was subsequently introduced in Oslo as well, but then as an alternative to the *Mag. Art.* and with a much stronger concentration on political science subjects.

With the multi-level *Cand. Polit.* scheme students are offered opportunities to

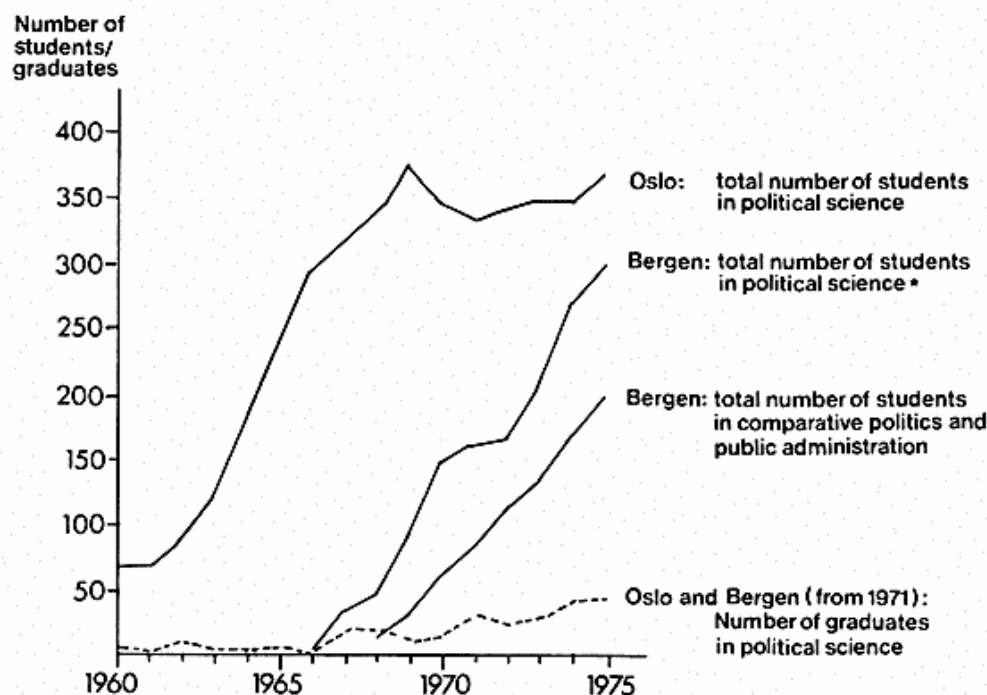


Figure 3: Total student loads in political science and number of graduates in political science 1960–1975. (Statistics for autumn term).

\* Students in *samfunnskunnskap* included.

take one-year courses (*grunnfag*), three-semester courses (*mellomfag*) and full three-year study schedules (*hovedfag*). A number of students take the shorter courses in political science and combine these with other social science subjects or with history. The total student load, particularly at the lower levels, increased rapidly during the 1960s (see Figure 3). The steep growth at the University of Oslo came to an end in 1969, with the level stabilizing over the last few years, partly as a result of limitations in the total intake of students. There were no such signs of stagnation in Bergen through 1975, but a levelling off is likely later in the seventies. The upper curve for Bergen includes figures for an introductory one-year course combining political science, sociology and economics, called *samfunnskunnskap*. This is strictly an undergraduate course, and students who want to move on to the graduate *Cand. Polit.* have to concentrate on one or the other of the basic disciplines.

The yearly production of upper-level graduates (*Mag. Art.* or *Cand. Polit.*) is still small in proportion to the total student load (see the bottom curve in Figure

Table I. Number of Graduates in Political Science 1950–1975, by Sex

Time period	Men	Women
1950–59	58	4
1960–64	22	0
1965–69	54	3
1970–75	168	9
Total	302	16

3).<sup>5</sup> Table I gives a better picture of the trend: the slow growth until about 1965, the acceleration after the introduction of the *Cand. Polit.* degree.

Very few Norwegian students have gone abroad to study political science. According to information kept by the Norwegian Political Science Association *five* Norwegians have acquired either an M.A. or a Ph.D. in political science in the United States and only *one* Norwegian has graduated in Sweden!

### 3. The Production of Graduate Theses

Table II gives a breakdown of the graduate theses by theme: these figures cover both *Mag. Art.* and *Cand. Polit.* degrees. It will be seen that most theses have been produced on political *institutions* of various kinds: government, parliament, legislation, administrative decision-making. The category is very broad and a more detailed check reveals a trend towards greater emphasis on *local* decision-making studies. The classification scheme is by no means perfect – some theses could easily be classified under several headings – but on the whole the scheme reflects the changes which have occurred in the distribution of theses by thematic focus. Although the total number of theses produced in the first five-year period is low, we note the early concentration on political parties and organizations. Within this broad category we can again observe a definite change in the concentration of interests: a declining interest in parties, greater interest in the study of organizations. Quite a few studies have recently been written on the development of specific organizations and their role in the political system. Table II also indicates that interest in the political systems of foreign countries has been on the increase, while interest in pure theory or in the history of political ideas has never been widespread in Norway and has even declined further over the last few years.

Table II. Theses by Field 1960–1975

Thesis topics	1960–1964		1965–1969		1970–1975		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Theory, political ideas	1	4.5	3	5.3	3	1.7	7	2.7
Mass media, public opinion, political socialization	2	9.1	5	8.8	7	4.0	14	5.5
Electoral research: surveys and ecological analysis	2	9.1	2	3.5	6	3.4	10	3.9
Parties, organizations	9	40.9	8	14.0	38	21.4	55	21.5
Elites: recruitments, behaviour	3	13.6	6	10.5	7	4.0	16	6.2
Political institutions: government, parliament, legislation, administrative decision-making, local dec.-mak. studies	2	9.1	18	31.6	81	45.8	101	39.5
Political systems of foreign nations, developmental research, developing countries	0	0	2	3.5	9	5.1	11	4.3
International politics, foreign politics of nations (incl. Norway)	3	13.6	13	22.8	26	14.7	42	16.4
Total	22	99.9	57	100.0	177	100.1	256	100.0

#### 4. The Careers of Political Science Graduates

Unfortunately detailed data on the career patterns of candidates in political science are not available. The information we have been able to collect is limited to the occupational position of all candidates in June, 1976. To give some indication of possible trends of change in the employment profiles we have set up, in Table III, one column for all candidates who graduated during the entire period 1960–1975, and one column for the subset of candidates who received degrees during the last 6-year period, 1970–1975.

The figures reflect a remarkably stable pattern. Although apparently a greater proportion of the candidates of the generation of the sixties than of the seventies found employment within the universities, or within other teaching and/or research institutions at the same level, the difference is only marginal. The table indicates that proportionally more candidates are now finding employment in the government administration *outside* the central bureaucracy, and in administration at lower levels – e.g. province (*fylke*) or commune. Although the table only offers modest evidence of such a change in the employment profile, it is certainly an interesting change and we may expect the trend to be reinforced in the years to come.

Table III. Occupational Profile of Norwegian Political Scientists Graduated During the Period 1960–1975\*

Type of employment	All candidates 1960–1975		Candidates 1970–1975	
	N	%	N	%
Starting representatives	1	0.4	0	
Research; universities, district colleges, etc.	107	44.4	71	42.0
Teaching at high school level, gymnasium	10	4.1	9	5.3
Journalists, reports in mass media	12	5.0	6	3.6
Central government administration	41	17.0	28	16.6
Other government administration (directorates, etc.)	38	15.8	30	17.8
Province ( <i>fylke</i> ) administration	3	1.2	3	1.8
Commune administration	17	7.1	14	8.3
Interest organizations	4	1.7	4	2.4
Private firms, business	3	1.2	1	0.6
Other activity	5	2.1	3	1.8
Total	241	100.2	169	100.2

\*As of July 1976

#### 5. The Use of Political Science Expertise on Governmental Commissions

Political science has clearly established itself as a distinctive academic discipline in Norway and has begun to produce a phalanx of younger experts for the various agencies of the public sector. However, this, must not be taken as evidence of full acceptance in the 'inner circles' of public power: the discipline has still far to go

towards recognition as a full-fledged profession on the level of law or economics. Law is still the central profession in the State machinery. Economists have made themselves indispensable in the preparation as well as in the implementation of key decisions affecting the major partners in the game of national politics. By contrast, political scientists are still far from making their mark in the policymaking processes. This can best be read out of the lists of participants on governmental commissions of inquiry. Norwegian political scientists have not been used in such bodies with anywhere near the frequency of their Swedish colleagues. A scanning of the 234 reports published in the series *Norges Offentlige Utredninger* during its first four years 1972–75 shows that political scientists were only rarely called upon for advice; in fact we find only 15 cases where a political scientist was a member of, or a consultant to, an official commission. And these were not all cases of direct professional consultation; for only in seven of the cases can it be clearly stated that the political scientist took part as an expert in his field. In the other cases it was his position in the administrative or the organizational structure that counted, not his specific expertise as a political scientist.

Here are some examples of participation in governmental commissions:

- Sverre Høyer was a member of the commissions preparing reports on the economy of the daily press (NOU 1973:22: *Dagspressens økonomi*) and on co-operation among daily newspapers (NOU 1974:57: *Samarbeid i dagspressen*);
- As many as four political scientists – Audun Ervik, Paul Flaa, Finn H. Hoven and Francesco Kjellberg – were appointed members of a commission which made a report on education for communal administration (NOU 1972:40: *Kommunallinjen ved Norges Kommunal- og Socialskole*).
- Henry Valen was consulted by the commission which drafted a report on candidate election at national and local elections (NOU 1973:38: *Personvalget ved Stortingsvalg og Kommunevalg*), and a student – later a graduate – at the Institute of Political Science in Oslo prepared an overview of Storting representatives by types of commune for the report on elections of province councils (NOU 1972:13: *Valg av fylkesting*).

Obviously, political science expertise is not relevant in all contexts, but a better representation/consultation score than 15 out of a total of 234 commissions might have been expected and justified. For example, it would have seemed reasonable to seek information and advice from political scientists in commissions which:

- evaluated the merging of 21 communes (NOU 1974:14: *Vurdering av 21 kommunesammenslutninger*);
- outlined the status of neighbourhood committees in the communes (NOU 1974:5: *Lokalutvalg i kommunene*);

- studied the organization of committees in the government administration (NOU 1974:43: *Nemnder i forvaltningen: organisasjon og saksbehandling*); and
- studied goals and guidelines for reforms in local administration (NOU 1974:53: *Mål og retningslinjer for reformer i lokalforvaltningen*).

These examples show that the young discipline of political science is not as yet regarded as a fully established profession by the authorities. But as the number of political science graduates in governmental agencies increase – a discernible trend which is spelled out in Table III – and as the increasing amount of research on a widening range of topics, as documented in our overview of ‘Trends of Research’, becomes more visible, we should expect a change in the scope of the use of political science expertise in governmental commissions. The professional organization – the Norwegian Political Science Association – has over the last three or four years stepped up its activity, and may be expected to play a much more vitale role as a broker between the political science community, the central administration and the public.

## 6. Professional Organization: The Norwegian Political Science Association

The Norwegian Political Science Association (*Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Forening*) was founded in the early 1950s. The Association is a member of the International Political Science Association and has always had one representative on its Council. In 1975, the Association joined with the national associations of the other Nordic countries to form the Nordic Political Science Association.

The main activity of the Norwegian Association has concentrated on the annual conferences. The number of participants at these conferences – which take place every fall – has varied between 30 and 40, but in 1976 an all-time record was set: 64 participants. These figures can hardly be evaluated without taking into consideration the small community of political scientists in Norway. Over the past few years, the Association has had about 100–120 dues-paying individual members.

The themes of the annual conferences are decided upon by the Board each year. Themes have been chosen on the unwritten principle that priority should be given to subjects likely to interest all political scientists whatever their current occupational position, and thus the conferences are *not* organized in order to attract primarily the academic community. The conferences of recent years have discussed the following themes:

1973: Multi-National Corporations

1974: The education of political scientists and the needs of Norwegian society



1975: a) Access to information from governmental bodies and private business

b) Policy research: Public planning of social science research

1976: The study of power: The Norwegian project on the study of the distribution of power in Norway.

The activity of the organization has been gradually escalated in recent years, partly as a reflection of a widened representation on the Board, which until 1974 was composed entirely of political scientists in Oslo. From 1974, the Board has included at least one representative from Bergen, and from 1975 on, one representative from 'the districts'. It should be noted that 65 % of all candidates in political science live and work in Oslo, 11-12 % live and work in Bergen, while the rest work in other cities, a few even outside cities. Close to 4 % work in other countries as members of the Norwegian diplomatic corps.

Since 1974, a newsletter (*Statsviteren*) has been published quarterly and distributed to political science candidates as well as institutions, organizations and the media.

The Board of the organization has established several sub-groups to deal with subjects of special interest to political scientists, as, for example, one on the future organization of research in Norway, another on access to information from public organs (governmental administrative bodies).

The organization evaluates public initiatives affecting political scientists *qua* political scientists and makes comments or statements on these. Finally, the organization has started to keep better track of the employment which political scientists have been able to find, and has made efforts to assemble more systematic statistics on the 'when, where, what, and how' of Norwegian political scientists. This report is in fact a direct product of those efforts.

#### NOTES

1. See the official account in *Universitetet i Oslo 1911-1961* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1961), Vol. I, pp. 138-141.
2. Information on the number of teaching positions has been kindly supplied by konsulent Jens Andreas Wold, University of Oslo.
3. A third full professor of public administration was appointed during 1977.
4. Information has been kindly supplied by konsulent Kjell Sælen, University of Bergen.
5. Information on total student loads has been supplied by the secretariats of the Institute of Political Science, Oslo, and the Institute of Sociology, Bergen.