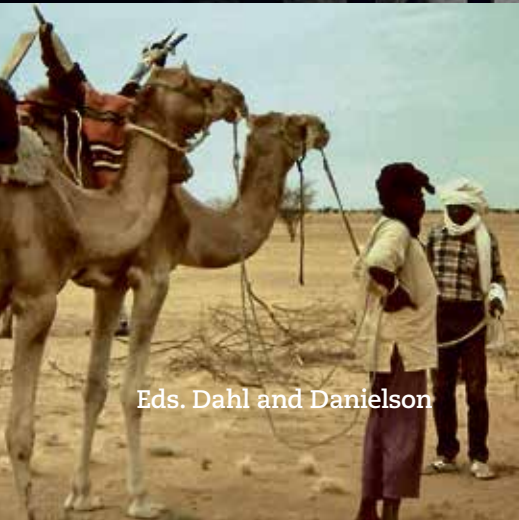




Faculty of Social Sciences  
Stockholm University  
1964 – 2014



Eds. Dahl and Danielson



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# Department of Political Science

Olof Ruin

A PICTURE OF Herbert Tingsten is hanging on the wall of the seminar room of the Department of Political Science on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor in the F building at Frescati. In 1935 he was appointed the first holder of a newly established professorship, the Lars Hierta chair of government, devoted solely to research and teaching in political science. This branch of learning had existed as an independent discipline for many centuries at Uppsala University. In the beginning of the present century, it had also been introduced at the universities in Lund and Gothenburg. The appointment of Herbert Tingsten in 1935 also marks the beginning of political science as a distinct discipline at Stockholm University College (*Stockholms högskola*).

The growth of this new social science community was fairly slow up to the 1960s. Herbert Tingsten himself resigned in 1945 and was succeeded first by Elis Håstad and thereafter by Gunnar Heckscher. Besides the holder of the Lars Hierta chair, the staff remained limited;

the number of students was little above one hundred annually. The PhD dissertations approved were not more than nine before 1960.

My own inside view of the development at the Department covers more than fifty years. In the early 1960s, I became associated with Stockholm University with a PhD from Lund. From 1976 until 1994 I was the permanent holder of the Lars Hierta chair and thereafter I have been allowed to occupy a desk in a corner of *Skogstorp* (the Forest Cot), situated on campus, as a professor emeritus. From the early 1970s until my retirement I also served as head of department, alternating with my colleague Gunnar Wallin. This overview of the development of political science will deal mainly with the consequences of the rapid expansion of student enrolment in the very beginning of these fifty years but also, more briefly, with the research pursued during the whole period.

Most social science departments grew during the 1960s due to free access to higher



The reality of national election campaigns reaches also into Campus – here to the site of the Department of Political Science at Building F of Södra huset. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

studies still being in force. The development at our department was, however, exceptional. In the fall of 1964, the same year as our faculty was formed, 508 new students were registered for courses on the elementary (A) level. During the following years, the number increased by almost 200 students annually. At the end of the 1960s, the Department of Political Science at Stockholm University was for a short time the second largest university department in Sweden.

This exceptional expansion was due to many circumstances. One of these applied to all the Departments of Political Science in the country. They all benefited from an interest in matters political that was increasing among young people. One was special for us in Stockholm, and consisted of the fact that many of our teachers were involved in a popular course in political science, broadcast on the national radio. In order to handle these enormous crowds, large

premises had to be rented in town for lectures and examinations. I remember that I often had to lecture to new students in the main hall of the Norra Latin secondary school in downtown Stockholm. Still, the seats did not suffice and listeners had to crowd along the walls or in the doorway. The office of the Department was located at various addresses during the 1960s, at Kungstengsgatan, Observatoriegatan, Drottninggatan, Ynglingagatan and Hagagatan, before we moved out to Frescati among the first of the downtown departments.

### **Unrest at the University**

A few years earlier, the Department had been the first in Sweden to be hit by the student unrest that swept through the Western world. Our overcrowding was partly the reason. Everything had started on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1968, at an international politics lecture for undergraduates. A group of students interrupted the lecturer and accused him vehemently of having been partial in his definition of ‘subversive activities’ and in his illustration of how Soviet authorities tended to take advantage of this kind of activity. After the accusations were made, the protesters left the room and demanded that the lecturer himself be removed from further teaching. This criticism grew rapidly into a harsh criticism of the teaching at the Department as a whole and of the literature required for reading. Mass meetings were organized. Demands were

raised for studies to be structured differently and for students to have more of a say in running the Department. For a few days the media coverage of our department was intense. Even Olof Palme, who at that time was Minister of Education and whom I knew from the time we both had been active in student politics, called and was worried about what was going on at the Department of Political Science in Stockholm.

The turmoil at our place calmed down after two weeks. The revolutionary students moved on and joined other dissatisfied groups at the University. The idea came up that they should occupy their own union building at Holländargatan. Among those we saw on TV mounting the rostrum and later flocking through the streets down to Gustav Adolfs Torg and the Opera House, we recognized quite a number of students from our own department. In the middle of the occupation, Olof Palme unexpectedly turned up and, among all the shouting, gave his passionate speech – often referred to later – about the meaning of democracy and how to express opinions in such a democracy.

The way the Department of Political Science reacted to the unrest that it had triggered off was, I venture to say, rather pragmatic. This applies both to the dramatic days in May 1968 as well as the more quiet months thereafter.

The stormy days in May were promptly recorded and analysed by a student who pre-

Police gather at the entry of the Student Union building at Holländargatan at the occasion of the legendary occupation by leftist students in May 1968. (Photo: Gösta Glase, ©Nordiska Museet)



sented his results in the form of a graduate paper the following year. The student was Anders Mellbourn, who later became a well-known journalist. He showed that the Department leadership was willing to listen to all complaints, talk to the dissatisfied and not take strong action. The leadership at the time consisted of Hans Meijer, who was the holder of the Lars Hierta chair after Gunnar Heckscher, and myself, who had obtained a permanent associate professorship. At the same time as we tried to listen to grievances, we also strongly emphasized that demands for central changes must be attended to in accordance with “the constitution in force”, a political science line of talk that some of us tended to use. The student body had two elected representatives present at staff meetings. Their role was to forward complaints, function as an intermediary and to participate in the decision-making process regarding changes. Of course we understood that this was a very difficult position to hold. Therefore, immediately after the hectic May weeks, the Department embarked upon framing a new constitution, which was to give students more of a say in the running of the Department.

### **Efforts at democratic representation**

Our initiative coincided with attempts of a similar kind instigated by the central educational authorities as a reaction to the student unrest

in the country. The Department of Political Science in Stockholm was, however, expressly allowed to continue its own work, which was strongly suffused with principles of representative democracy. The policy-making mass meetings of the kind that the revolutionary students had demanded in May were regarded as anathema.

A central element for us in making new rules for running the Department was to construe a representative assembly, similar to a miniature parliament. It consisted of all members of the departmental staff and of student representatives who were elected with courses and seminar groups as constituencies. Individual proposals put forward were given in the form of motions on which an executive committee, elected by this assembly, was to make pronouncements. Proposals from the executive committee were in turn drafted by different committees on which teachers and students were equally represented. To accommodate all, the rooms in which we met had to be fairly large, especially as the student representatives initially demanded gallery accommodation for fellow students who were not part of the assembly.

Of course this new decision making procedure took time. Demands were, for example, constantly being made for the guillotine and for a final list of speakers. Furthermore, meetings were often adjourned because of insufficient attendance. Teachers brought up in an



Trophies of academic work exhibited at the elevator exit. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

old-fashioned public servant tradition often felt rather out of place in a setting where various coalitions, many of them unholy, were formed. Others – myself among them – with previous personal experience from student politics felt more at home. In the long run, this time-consuming organization could not be sustained. It contained too many conflicts of principle. The teachers as public employees were expected to comply with central directives whereas students did not need to do so; they furthermore possessed expert knowledge that students did not have. The students, from their side, expected to be on an equal level with the teachers as decision-makers, while they were at the same time subordinate to and dependent on them in their own studies.

Our special constitution was abolished during the 1970s. In principle, the same decision making model was adopted as in most other university departments. The attempts to practice ideas taught in courses on constitution in daily departmental life remained vivid in the memory of the staff for many years. For some, these memories were rather painful; for others, filled with a certain nostalgia. For the staff, the unrest of 1968 and its immediate consequences continued, for a long time, to be looked upon as fairly recent events, while for new waves of students, often expressing different kinds of demands, it was seen as pre-history.

### A period of decline

Our overflow of students diminished during the 1970s and early 1980s. This was partly due to the general decline in the number of new students, and partly because the organization of undergraduate studies in well-coordinated study programmes disfavoured political science. In addition, the discipline as such had lost its former popularity. Thereby, a department which had been almost inundated with students began to worry about the lack of them.

Again, a change occurred in the middle of the 1980s. The well-coordinated study programmes were loosened up and interest in matters political was also rising, a rise coinciding to some extent with the assassination of Olof Palme. The student population has thereafter



The departmental annex, *Skogstorpet* (The Forest Cot), has housed some of the department's researchers and emeriti. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

remained both large and stable with minor annual variations. Now, in the spring of 2014, the Department has 525 students registered at the undergraduate level, 139 at the master's level and 46 at the PhD level.

Naturally, the fluctuation of the number of students also influenced the size of the departmental staff. In the expansive 1960s, new teachers had to be hired continually on a permanent or non-permanent basis, but later stabili-

zation also occurred in this respect. Furthermore, the Lars Hierta chair was supplemented with two new chairs, one, to begin with, was held by Kjell Goldmann and the other by Daniel Tarschys. Now, in the spring of 2014, the total number of people employed at the Department of Political Science is 89. The staff consists of two holders of a chair, seven university lecturers promoted to professors, 27 university lecturers, four teachers with a lower



rank, and 31 researchers all differently financed. Finally, there are 13 people carrying out administrative duties. Political scientists are today also part of the staff at Score, the multi-disciplinary centre which was founded in the early 1980s.

### **Lines of research**

It is also natural to use Herbert Tingsten's extensive political science production as a starting point for a short overview of the research pursued at the Department. Three different perspectives, each associated with a related academic subject, were accommodated in his work as well as that of other political scientists of his time. One perspective was legal, stemming from constitutional law, another historical, arising from the study of history, and a third idea-oriented associated with philosophy. Tingsten also introduced a totally new perspective, a behaviouristic one shared with the subject of sociology. His remarkable and many-sided production is today primarily remembered for works on ideas and ideologies, particularly those about fascism, problems of democracy and the ideas of the Swedish Social Democratic party.

Political science research at our Department during the almost seven decades that have passed since Tingsten left his professorship has covered all dimensions of the discipline. However, there have been variations of both empha-

sis and orientation over time. Scholars in political science, like scholars in other disciplines, have shown a natural tendency to be influenced by issues of current general interest in their selection of objects for research. There continues to be areas where many researchers tend to congregate regardless of time. I shall limit myself to three such broad areas and add two more specific ones that have lately come into focus.

One broad area is the study of political institutions and public policy. Institutionally oriented works have dealt with the system of parliamentarism and parliamentary proceedings, with the office of Swedish prime minister and proceedings inside the ministries. Particularly, many scholars at the Department have been involved in a study of public administration, regarding both the recruitment and the activity of central bureaucrats. The policy oriented studies have covered different policies, particularly those on educational, constitutional and environmental matters. In a political science department situated in the capital of a country, it appears especially fitting to be interested in a study of central political and administrative entities.

One type of institutionally oriented research pursued at our Department was in focus at all political science departments in the 1970s and 1980s. It concerned the local authorities, the municipalities. How do they function, how are

their relations to the central authorities in Stockholm, etc.? This research was not least influenced by a national policy of merging small local entities into larger ones at the time, partly in order to facilitate a transfer of duties from the centre to the periphery. For a welfare state, often overburdened with tasks to be handled centrally, a move towards decentralization was seen to be of great value.

A second broad area, closely related to the previous one, is the study of political parties and interest organizations.

Party oriented works, published at our Department, have dealt with ideologies, strategies, leadership and membership of different parties as well as with relations between them. Less has been done in Stockholm on election behaviour, although Tingsten was once a forerunner for this kind of research. Our studies of parties have often, as far as Swedish conditions are concerned, been influenced by a characteristic trait of the national party system during most of the past century. A multitude of parties existed, but at the same time, they tended to divide into two distinct sides with one party, the Social Democratic one, dominating one side.

Works on interest organizations have mostly been oriented towards those on the labour market. Again, as far as Sweden is concerned, this research has often reflected another feature that is characteristic of our political system. We have talked about the existence of a form of

“corporatization”. This means that interest organizations not only seem to generally have great importance but that they also have deliberately tended to be integrated into formal governmental policy making.

A third, broad area is the study of international politics and development in the third world. Mostly around the middle of the period this area attracted many scholars at the Department. Their works, generally published in English, have often received international attention. The international politics oriented research has covered both foreign policy, conducted by central actors, as well as the principles, both old and new, adhered to on the global stage. The development oriented research has foremost been concentrated on countries in Africa but also on parts of Asia. This type of research has been very much in tune with the great attention given in Sweden to offering aid to developing areas.

The two specific study areas, which have been in focus during the past two decades, are further examples of research on issues of current interest in society. One is gender research. The Swedish government has not only generally stressed the importance of a policy of equality between the sexes but has also established research positions solely reserved for gender studies. The Department has shown a particularly great interest in this area of research. An extensive number of books have been pub-



The Department of Political Science also houses CESAM, a unit for education in and research on the learning and teaching of social science disciplines. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

lished. Mostly they have dealt with women, and their position in political life but also with many other problems that they tend to encounter in daily life. The other specific study area that has come into the foreground lately con-

cerns the EU and the Europeanization of politics. It is a natural consequence of Sweden having been a member of the EU since the middle of 1990s. The research in this area at our department has dealt both with the complicated decision making structure of the EU as well as with the effects of the union membership on our own political structure and policies.

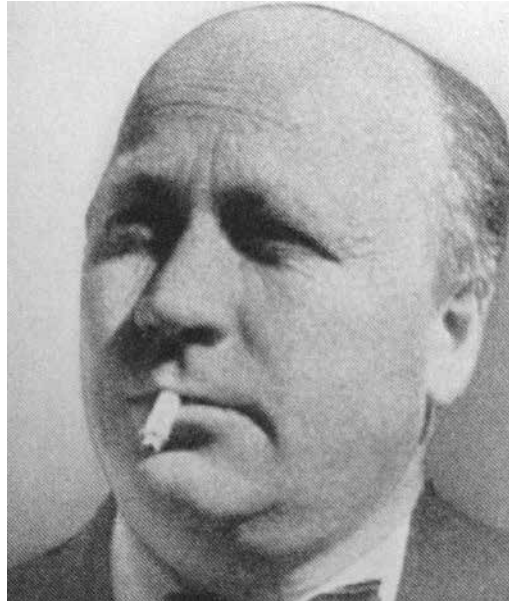
The coexistence at the Department of Political Science of these different study areas during the past fifty years has been rather peaceful. The shifts in attention that have occurred from one group of issues to another have as a whole not produced bitterness or resistance. Nor has the use of new research methods caused internal problems. An illustration of the tranquil development in this respect is for example that the wave of Marxist-oriented analysis, which shook many social science departments in the country during some years, did not hit the political science community, either in Stockholm or elsewhere.

### Engaging with the world

The results of studies undertaken at the Department, regardless of the type of area, have of course had a certain impact on the surrounding society. This applies hopefully to all social sciences. Individual political scientists have also, like other social science scholars, been expressly asked for advice and have themselves occasionally recommended a course of action

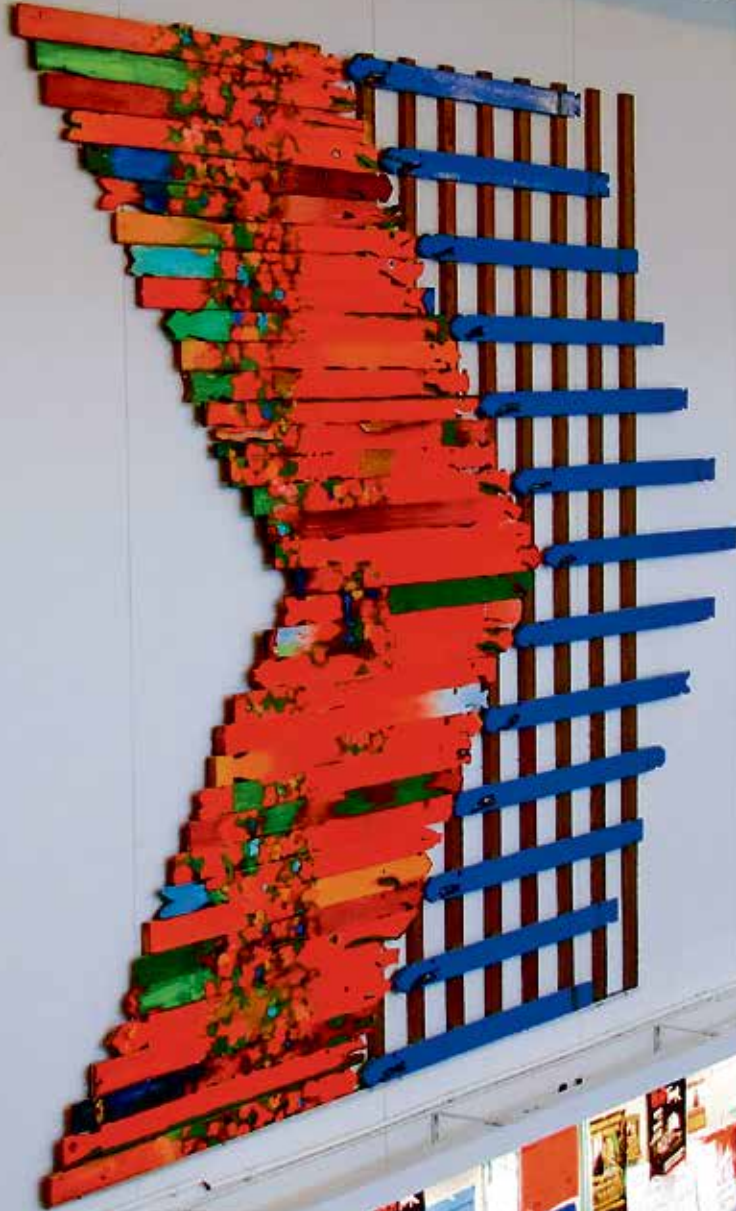
to be followed by public authorities. Still, in my view, political science as a discipline is more reluctant than many other branches of social science to provide recommendations for action. The research ethos is more descriptive/analytical than normative.

I would like to finish this essay by underlining that political scientists, particularly in Stockholm, at the same time as they adhere to this ethos in their position as scholars, have often been willing to engage in the outside world. Herbert Tingsten left his chair to be the editor-in-chief of the liberal newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. Elis Håstad and Gunnar Heckscher combined their professorships with being conservative members of Parliament before they both left their chairs to go on to other positions in public administration. Likewise, during the following decades, researchers at our department have had important positions in political life or public administration. The latest examples of this pattern are Daniel Tarschys and Björn von Sydow. The former was a liberal member of Parliament for 15 years and the latter is still a Social Democratic member of this assembly after earlier having been Minister of Defence and Speaker of the Parliament. The belief that it is possible to pursue research on political matters objectively, and at the same time engage in politics, has thus been put into practice at the Department of Political Science at Stockholm University.



**Herbert Tingsten 1876–1973**

Enno Hallek's 'Elm Power to the People' (1971), is placed between buildings E and F close to the lecture rooms used by Political Science. It commemorates a well-known tree-hugging action in the Stockholm city centre, an iconic event from the times of the student revolution. (Photo: Mats Danielson)





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