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BJØRN MO FORUM

Brief Description of PhD Project

Title: The Political Dynamics of Governments' Appointment Powers in High-Merit Administrative Systems

Appointing people to serve in the various functions of government is a core decision-making power of cabinet governments in parliamentary democracies. Ministers and cabinets often make the final decision on political as well as administrative appointments – also in democracies with a meritocratic recruitment system for administrative appointments. The purpose of the project is to contribute to our understanding of how different cabinet practices for administrative appointments develop, change, transcend, and are impacted by government turnover in parliamentary democracies with high-merit bureaucracies. The research will mainly draw on insights from the literature on bureaucratic politics and the politicization of bureaucracy, using principal-agent theory to model how (prime) ministers and the cabinet make appointment decisions with competence-loyalty trade-offs under institutional constraints. The project has a longitudinal focus on Norway, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. The project will seek to provide new insights into government decision-making in general, and specifically into the political mechanisms of how cabinets decide on non-political appointments.

Work Experience

01.2023–present	Doctoral Research Fellow Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo. Participant in the research project: The Political Executive: Cabinet Government Praxis Between Laws and Norms (POLITEX), PI: Jostein Askim. Researching politicization of bureaucracy and governments appointment power – as well as cabinet decision-making in parliamentary democracies more generally.
01.2025–07.2025	Visiting Student Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute. Liaison Professor: Simon Hix.
06.2022–12.2022	Research Assistant Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo. Research project: The Political Executive: Cabinet Government Praxis Between Laws and Norms (POLITEX), PI: Jostein Askim. Tasks: data collection, analysis and visualization, literature searches, and developing a PhD research proposal.
10.2021–04.2022	Higher Executive Officer Department of Employer Policy in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. Working in the secretariat of the Top civil Servant Remuneration System Committee (Lederlønnsutvalget). Tasks: assisted in carrying out ca. 20 semi-structured interviews with top civil servants. Had the main responsibility for designing, distributing and analyzing a survey to ca. 200 top civil servants.
10.2020–12.2021	Research Assistant Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo. Research project: Public leadership, organizational performance, and trust in government (PART), PI: Tobias Bach. Tasks: Data collection, coding and statistical analysis in R.
02.2021–04.2021	Internship Trainee Department of Employer Policy in the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization.

Education

08.2020–06.2022	University of Oslo Master in Political Science (120 ECTS). GPA: A/B 4.71/5.00. Specializing in quantitative methods, comparative politics and public policy & administration. Wrote my master's thesis (45 ECTS) on the politicization of top civil servants in Norwegian ministries 1884–2021.
06.2019–08.2019	London School of Economics and Political Science Summer school (15 ECTS). Subjects in international relations.
08.2017–06.2020	University of Oslo Bachelor in Political Science (180 ECTS). GPA: A/B 4.48/5.00. Specializing in the European Union, international organizations and quantitative methods. Supporting subjects in economics and history.

Publications

1. Forum, B. M. (Forthcoming). Norway: Minister or Messenger? Two Career Paths in the Executive Triangle (COST Action CoREx, WG-2 on Careers, Norway Country Report).
2. Rasch, B.E., Forum B. M. & Bucur C. (2026). Parliamentary institutions and portfolio allocation in coalition governments. In Democracy at the Crossroads – Challenges for Governance and Representation: Essays in Honour of Thomas Saalfeld, edited by Jorge M. Fernandes, Javier Martínez-Cantó. Routledge.
3. Bach, T., Forum, B. M., & Hesstvedt, S. (2025). Norway: Formal and informal politicization in a merit bureaucracy. In Handbook of Politicization and Political Patronage, edited by B. Guy Peters, Colin Knox, Francesco Panizza, Conrado Ramos, and Katarína Staroňová. Edward Elgar Publishing.
4. Askim, J., Forum, B. M., & Tranøy, B. S. (2024). The Party Politics of Policy Endurance: Parliamentary Settlements in Norway, 1980-2021. In Pathways to Positive Public Administration an International Perspective, edited by Patrick Lucas, Tina Nabatchi, Janine O'Flynn, and Paul 't Hart. Edward Elgar Publishing.
5. Forum, B. M. (2022). The Political Dynamics of Administrative Turnover: The effects of political change on the careers of top civil servants in Norwegian ministries 1884-2021 [Master's Thesis, Universitetet i Oslo]. <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/95839>

Working papers

1. Askim, J., Forum, B. M., & Høyland, B. Pattern of Deliberation in Norwegian Cabinet Conferences 1945–1985.
2. Forum, B. M. Meritocracy under Political Arbitration: Cabinet Discussions of Bureaucratic Appointments in Norway 1945-1985. (presented at EGPA 2025).
3. Forum, B. M. & Hesstvedt, S. Party Representation on Government Advisory Commissions. (presented at ECPR 2024, Nasjonal Fagkonferanse i Statsvitenskap 2026).
4. Forum, B. M., Askim, J., & Mangset, M. Constraining the Prince: The Architecture of Merit-Based Recruitment. (Under review)
5. Forum, B. M. Bureaucratic Turnover Under New Governments: The Moderating Effect of Bureaucratic and Political Layering. (Under review).

Conference & Workshop participation

2026	Nasjonal fagkonferanse i statsvitenskap. Offentlig politikk og administrasjon – Trondheim (Norway) 6-8 January.
2025	WhoGov Workshop on political elites – Oslo (Norway) 1-2 September.
2025	EGPA 2025 Conference. PSG VI: Public Personnel Policies – Glasgow (Scotland) 26-29 August.
2024	ECPR General Conference (paper presenter and panel co-chair) – Dublin (Ireland) 12-15 August.
2024	NoPSA XX Nordic Political Science Congress – Bergen (Norway) 25-28 June.
2023	ECPR General Conference (paper presenter and panel discussant) – Prague (Czech Republic) 4-8 September.
2023	ECPR Biennial Conference of the Standing Group on Regulatory Governance – Antwerp (Belgium) 12-14 July.
2023	Nasjonal fagkonferanse i statsvitenskap. Offentlig politikk og administrasjon – Kristiansand (Norway) 9-11 January.
2022	PAR Symposium Paper Development Workshop "Temporal Dynamics and Longitudinal Research in Public Administration" – Bergen (Norway) 27-28 October.
2022	EGPA 2022 Conference. PSG III: Public Personnel Policies – Lisbon (Portugal) 6-9 September.

Scholarships and grants

- Småforsk 2025 (NOK 120 000). Research grant from Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo towards project on Norwegian Cabinet Conferences (with Jostein Askim and Bjørn Høyland).
- The Research Council of Norway (NOK 149 000). Funding for Research Stays Abroad for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellows.

Teaching Experience

2023-2026	Political-bureaucratic relations in the central administration (lecturer) – Graduate level, University of Oslo
2023-2024	Introduction to public administration (seminar tutor and lecturer) – Undergraduate level, University of Oslo
2023-2024	Ministerial steering of state agencies (lecturer) – Executive Graduate level, University of Oslo
2024	Digital Data in Political Science (seminar tutor) – Undergraduate level, University of Oslo
2024	Introduction to quantitative methods and research design (seminar tutor) – Undergraduate level, University of Oslo
2023	Public policy theory (seminar tutor) – Undergraduate level, University of Oslo

Supervision Experience

2023-2024 Supervisor on Master theses (3 students) – Graduate level, University of Oslo

2024 Supervisor on Bachelor theses (12 students) – Undergraduate level, University of Oslo
