



Sven Steinmo
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Scientific Leadership Profile

Sven Steinmo's work has had an impact in at least three fields of Social Science: institutional theory, comparative public policy and comparative historical analysis. He is perhaps best known for his work in institutional theory, having been one of the founders of the sub-field of Historical Institutionalism. His book with Kathleen Thelen, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism and Comparative Analysis*, is widely considered to be one of the defining statements in this area of research. His first monograph, *Taxation and Democracy: Swedish, British, and American Approaches to Financing the Modern State*, also contributed to institutionalist theory and was one of the first analyses of taxation policy to be written by a political scientist. This book was awarded the *Riker Prize for the Best Book Published in Political Economy in 1992-3*, by the American Political Science Association.

In addition to his contribution to institutional theory, Steinmo has published in a number of policy fields including fiscal policy, tax policy, health policy, education policy, and pension policy. His work is also unusual in its range of countries. For example, his most recent book, *The Evolution of Modern States: Sweden, Japan and the United States*, (Cambridge, 2010) is the first in-depth comparative historical analysis which examines the evolution of three democratic welfare states in three continents. This book is concurrently being published in Japanese by the highly respected Iwanami Press.

Steinmo's contribution and work have been recognized in a number of ways. He has received a number of internationally recognized fellowships and awards including: *The Gabriel Almond Award for the Best Dissertation in Comparative Politics*, the *German Marshall Fund Senior Research Fellowship*, the *Abe Fellowship*, and the *STINT Scientist Award*. He has also been granted an *Honorary Professorship in Comparative Politics* at the University of Southern Denmark, and was honoured with the *Norwell Visiting Professorship* at the Institute of Future Studies in Stockholm Sweden. He is currently a *Senior Research Fellow* at Nuffield College, Oxford University. He has also been a Visiting Professor at the Institute for Social Sciences at the University of Tokyo, Visiting Lecturer at Sciences Po, University of Bordeaux, a Visiting Scholar at the Max Planck Institute in Cologne Germany, and a Visiting Scientist at the University of Gothenburg. Steinmo's articles and books have been translated and published in a variety of languages including Chinese, Spanish, French, and Japanese.

Steinmo's most recent book, the *Evolution of Modern States*, breaks new ground by bringing evolutionary theories developed in linguistics, anthropology, biology, and economics into the study of social and political institutions. It was honoured with the "Gunnar Myrdal Prize" for the best book published in 2010, by the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy in 2011. His work

on evolutionary theory and institutions has also attracted attention from beyond political science.

Steinmo's current project, "*Willing to Pay? Testing Institutional Theories with Experiments*" also breaks new ground by bringing historical/institutional analysis together with the experimental methods and logics. Funded by a European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Researchers Grant, this project focuses on tax policy and tax compliance in a diverse set of democratic states. Specifically, the project aims to better understand the relationship between citizens' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, on the one side, and their political institutions and the outcomes they produce, on the other. It is clear that tax compliance varies enormously in different societies, but it is far less clear *why*? The project begins with a critique of some of Steinmo's own work by acknowledging that historical comparative analysis can be over-determined. At the same time, most experimental work to date has not engaged the social, institutional and cultural context in which participants in these experiments make decisions. The aim of this project is to see if we can't use these two methods and thereby discover more satisfying answers to the rather basic question – why do political outcomes vary so much in different democracies? Is it because people want different things in different polities, or is it because they are offered very different choices? Experimental methodology to date has rarely (if ever) been used to test the kinds of theories and explanations that Historical Institutionalists scholars have forwarded to explain variation. At the same time, Historical Institutionalists have not (to date) had the tools or methods available to test their arguments and theories. The current project is an attempt to see if we can't bridge this gap and build across these methods.

Steinmo actively contributes to his profession. For example, he was elected to the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association. Subsequently he was elected to the executive board of the *American Political Science Review*. He also served as Trustee of the Association. In 2010 he served as President of the Politics and History section of the APSA as well as on the Executive Committee of the Council for European Studies. He founded and directed the Tocqueville Institute at the University of Colorado.

Steinmo has organized several international conferences which have subsequently led to co-authored edited volumes including *Structuring Politics* (Cambridge University Press), *Growing Apart: Europe and America in the 21st Century*, with Jeff Kopstein, (Cambridge University Press) and *Restructuring the Welfare State: Political Institutions and Policy Change*, edited with Bo Rothstein (Palgrave/McMillan).

Interdisciplinary cooperation and learning has long been in the center of his professional life. While at the European University Institute he organized multiple interdisciplinary and international conferences which have brought together evolutionary psychologists, economists, political scientists, cognitive scientists and sociologists with the aim of building bridges across these disciplines and their ways of looking at the world. His book, *The Evolution of the Modern State*, was in many ways a product of these meetings and learning processes. Earlier in his career, he directed the International Affairs Program at the University of Colorado from 1993 to 1995. From 1996 to 2000 he was also Director of the internationally recognized "Conference on World Affairs" in Boulder, Colorado. This conference brought over 125 scholars, political leaders, artists and intellectuals together for a week-long set of open panel discussions and events which attracted public audiences of over 70,000 people in the final year of his directorship.

Finally, Professor Steinmo enjoys teaching very much - both in large lecture classes as well as in smaller seminars. He uses the "Socratic method" in his teaching in both, large and small classes, with the intention of engaging students in active learning and critical thinking. In his view, the main goal for a teacher is not to impart specific knowledge about facts or history. Instead, the ideal is to help students learn how to think and to give them tools to help them think critically. He has been awarded a large number of teaching awards for his teaching during his career for large classes, small seminars and for one on one mentoring. He especially enjoys mentoring students and younger scholars and has supported a number of successful younger scholars, who are now working in various diverse institutions around the globe including: Notre Dame, Brown, Odense, Oxford College, the Max Planck Institute, the University of California, Colorado State University, as well as several other organisations including, for example, National Public Radio, McKenzie Consulting, and the European Union.