

Performance and legitimation in political research: Publications and citations in twelve countries of the extended Baltic area

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is an examination informed by neo-institutional political and related research on two foremost aspects of institutionalization, performance and legitimation. Political research published by scholars of the extended Baltic region by late May r 2013 comprises the study topic. The article considers political research in four selected subfields: general political science, international relations/world politics, public policy, and public administration/public management. The results indicate that Denmark and Norway are “great powers” in the region, with a strong presence in strongly legitimate publication arenas of political research. Looking further at the performance suggested by publications and citations to these, Sweden and Finland stand out no less than Denmark and Norway, and Estonia and Lithuania also receive visibility. Examining performance with the bibliometric “h” index suggests that “size matters”, which accentuates German achievements, although Norway, Denmark and Sweden continue to stand out despite their relatively small population size.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to examine two aspects of institutionalization – performance and legitimation – in the case of political research published by scholars from the extended Baltic region. The article acknowledges four selected subfields of political research: general political science, international relations/world politics, public policy, and public administration/public management. The choice of the subfields is driven by the research purposes; in other studies other subfields can be examined.

Advancing from the southwest along the shores of the Baltic Sea, we can discern nine countries: Denmark, Germany, Poland, Russia, the three Baltic states in the constrained sense proper comprising Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and Finland and Sweden. Acknowledging the Baltic traits in the heritage of a few other countries (Palmer, 2003) we can also include Norway and Iceland to complete the set of the Nordic countries, and Belarus to the east. The population majority lives elsewhere than along the Baltic shores in the largest members of the country set – Germany, Poland and Russia. However, each of those countries has quite a large population on the Baltic Sea. All twelve countries share the predicament – and the possible global handicap – that none of their official languages is the global *lingua franca* of research, English (Paasi, 2005).

In its approach this article represents neo-institutionalism (Peters, 2011) in one of its varieties. The specific variety employed was first launched by Meyer and Rowan (1977). It was later much expanded and diversified, as well illustrated in the monograph edited by Kruecken and Drori (2009). Following the chosen variety of neo-institutional research, this article examines relationships between two central aspects of institutionalization, performance and legitimation. From the same variety of neo-institutional research originates the carrying idea to examine research in this article in analogy with the way that any other institution would be approached, although introducing modifications to fit the topic in hand. Accordingly, this article studies the institution of political research including its selected subfields in the extended Baltic region. The closest parallel in previous research to this article can be found in Schofer's (2003) neo-institutional study of a certain domain of research falling within the natural sciences. From the outside of neo-institutional research, bibliometric studies examining the results of political research also contribute to the background of this article (Butler and McAllister, 2009; Schneider, 2009; Bernauer and Gilardi, 2011; Bjurström, 2011; Altman, 2012).

In one aspect this article examines research with a *performance* emphasis, putting the focus on publication activity that has examined themes that are relevant for political research – irrespective of where the institutional boundaries of political research have been drawn. In another aspect the article puts its emphasis upon the *legitimation* aspect of research, investigating political research that has come out in established publication channels in its own domain. According to the neo-institutional understanding, where a legitimation emphasis predominates, institutionalization has reached pronouncedly further than where the accent is on performance Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977). This article seeks answers to three research questions, each of which is examined in one of the three empirical sections. The first question concerns legitimation and the second and third questions deal with performance:

1. Legitimation question: Within the institutional domain of political research and its subfields, while looking at publication activity and its channels, what has been the relative volume of published research in the twelve countries examined, and with what frequency have the publications received recognition with citations?
2. Performance question A: Irrespective of the domain of publication and the publication channels, what is the relative volume of published political research in its subfields in the twelve countries examined, and with what frequency have the publications received recognition with citations?
3. Performance question B: Irrespective of the domain of publication and the publication channels, and using a bibliometric index deemed suitable, what has been the overall publication performance of political research in its subfields in the twelve countries examined?

2 THEORY, RESEARCH MATERIAL AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

2.1 Theory

The neo-institutional research that this article represents – but also other neo-institutional work such as that carried out by J.G. March and J.P. Olsen since the early 1980s (see March and Olsen, 1984; Peters, 2011) – arose by and large as a critical response to an alleged hegemony of considerations of performance in research. Those who took other approaches saw this state of

affairs to prevent advances in research. While neo-institutionalists ever since Meyer and Rowan (1977) have not denied the importance of performance, they have come forward with suggestions that besides performance, institutional legitimation may also count. Meyer and Rowan derived from Émile Durkheim's work (see Dobbin, 2009) the notion of "rationalized myths". This term refers to institutional structures, procedures and practices, which have been introduced and implemented in the *name* of performance or other types or rationality, but which in *actual practice* render services to *legitimation* and, by means of legitimation, to institutional cohesion and resilience. From Berger and Luckmann (1991) neo-institutionalism adopted the idea that solidly achieved institutionalization is equal to "taken-for-grantedness". What is solidly institutionalized will no longer be questioned but will be subscribed to automatically, and the orders passed or the ideas promoted by the bearers of such institutionalization are likely to be obeyed or adopted without question (Zucker, 1977).

Educational institutions – including universities in their capacity as providers of education – have received substantial neo-institutional attention from the very point of view of the relationships between performance and legitimation ever since the late 1970s (Meyer and Rowan, 1978). A good deal that takes place within educational institutions may promote performance – pupils or students learn, pass examinations, earn study points, complete degrees, and ultimately possibly obtain a workplace or establish a business of their own. However, a large share of the activities within those institutions – such as strategic planning, quality assurance and numerous of the internal and external accountability practices, let alone explicit university "branding" – rather promotes institutional legitimation. Not only institutional elements that promote performance may be solidly institutionalized to the extent of turning taken for granted, but the same may also hold true of legitimating elements. The latter aspect can be illustrated with two examples. Although the rationale and the utility of the well-known global exercises of university ranking and the strategic planning which many universities vigorously pursue may be critically questioned by many, we hardly imagine that neither of the two practices will be abandoned in the foreseeable future.

Arguably, within academic research both performance and legitimation count. A "litmus test" is provided by publications, which come out through such publication channels as departmental publication series of lesser known universities or in globally less widespread official national languages in national scholarly journals. Despite their possible superior quality over many of the texts published by global refereed journals or publishing companies with entrenched global

market positions, the former publications may seriously run short of institutional legitimation. Therefore a scholar with a national achievement record only may lose in a competition for an academic position to a colleague who can display a more global record, and a research team with only national references may lose to a competitor that brings forward global accomplishments in support of its funding plea. These characteristics suggest that global has been institutionalized in many fields of research – indeed to the extent of having turned taken for granted.

Neo-institutionalism of the variety that this article represents has keenly studied phenomena of institutional innovation diffusion, the modification of innovations for their actual applications, and the sedimentation of the modified elements amidst elements sedimented earlier (Strang and Soule, 1998; Strang and Macy, 2001). Since Meyer and Rowan's (1977) article, accents on the possible "loose coupling" or the downright "decoupling" between performance-enhancing and legitimation-enhancing institutional elements are common in neo-institutional research. Indeed, according to the seminal empirical results obtained by Meyer and Zucker (1989), the resilience of institutions with permanent performance failure is not ruled out provided that they retain sufficient legitimation. For scholarly publication activity this paints a disturbing view of globally legitimate research that performs badly or not at all in actual practice. We certainly should not conclude that global refereed journals that reach a high citation impact for the articles they publish are inferior performers to their nationally, regionally or locally oriented counterparts. However, we should retain sensitivity to the less extreme possibility that more than only a few of the publications reaching global diffusion may deliver in the final end little or nothing at all (Starbuck, 2006).

The neo-institutional approach applied in this article includes delimitations that have to be spelled out. Neo-institutionalism is not alone with those delimitations, but they are shared by quite a number of other groups of research approaches. Importantly, the examination of published research neither in its performance aspect nor in its legitimation aspect suffices to render answers to questions on the ultimate value of research. Conversely, the possibility lacking evidence on the performance, legitimation or both of a study should not be seen as the sufficient proof of the ultimate lack of its value. Adapting the ideas of the greatest thinker that the Baltic region has offered the world, Immanuel Kant of Königsberg, we should find universal values for criteria to engage in the ultimate valuation of the results of research. However, to assess the achievements of political research from such perspectives as those of the promotion of universal

human rights or universal peace definite falls outside the boundaries of the present inquiry by and large.

2.2 Research material

When examining the performance and legitimation of the results of political research, alternative aggregate levels of analysis are available, such as the global level, the sub-global regional level including the level of the Baltic region more or less strictly limited, the country level, various institutional levels – such as those of individual universities, research institutes and units and research groups within these – and, ultimately, the level of individual scholars. This article considers only the sub-global regional level in the case of the Baltic region and, subordinated to that consideration, the level of twelve different countries. Options to acquire the research material to study the performance and legitimation of research include utilizing bibliometric databases such as the commercial database Thomson Reuters Web of Science (WoS) or the public domain database comprised of Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) that processes Google Scholar (GS) data, relying on expert interviews in the vein of peer analysis and evaluation, examining the websites of institutions and individuals, and analyzing the merits of the actual published studies. In this article the material comes entirely from WoS. Arguably, this will keep the examination reasonably simple and manageable in size.

The fact that the country level is the most micro level of analysis acknowledged in this article rules out the utilization of PoP and GS; these would have been useful supplements to WoS had individuals scholars, universities or research institutes been examined (Dagiene, 2011). A reliance on WoS must acknowledge its limitations, such as its relatively scant inclusion of many of the publications of political scientists, especially if they engage in more applied varieties of research (Harzing, 2013). WoS may also overrepresent research carried out on “positivist” and “empiricist” philosophy of science presuppositions and, conversely, underrepresent interpretive studies that aim at understanding and criticism (Ouimet et al., 2011). However, all studies must rely at least on some sources, acknowledge their limitations and exclude sources despite their merits. Moreover, there is no evidence that the biases of WoS would lead either to over- or underrepresentation of some of the subfields of political research discerned in this article or excessive accentuation of any of the countries examined.

While seeking answers to the first research question in the first empirical section of this article, the material derives from Web of Science (WoS), and more precisely from a selection of political research journals representing the four political research subfields indicated above. The details of the choice of the journals are considered in that empirical section. While seeking answers to the second and third research questions in the second and third empirical sections of this article, the material derives from general topical searches carried out within WoS concerning the same four subfields of political research. The details of the search procedures are explained in the respective empirical sections. All data were collected in late May in the year 2013.

2.3 Research procedures

While looking for answers to the first and second research questions, the procedures of examination constitute calculating the average number of the relevant publications in the four subfields of political research to each million of population in each of the twelve countries examined. The values of another metric are also calculated: the average number of citations received by each article published by scholars from the country in question in the political research subfields considered. What these procedures may lose their simplicity, is made up for by their intelligibility. The details of the two research procedures are explained in sections 3 and 4 below.

While looking for answers to the third research question a bibliometric indicator is utilized. This is the indicator “h” introduced by Hirsch (2005). The “h” indicator aims to find a balance between accounting for the number of publications on the one hand and on the other the number of citations received by the publications. A unit of analysis – such as a scholar, a university, a research group, or a country – receives the value h if h publications ascribed to that unit have received at least h citations according to the bibliometric data utilized. For example, let us assume that WoS indicates altogether ten publications by scholars from a country in a given field or subfield of research. Let us assume that the number of citations received by each of these form the series 20, 10, 5, 3, 2, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The h index value becomes 3; the index value fails to rise to 4, because no four publications can be found that would have received at least 4 citations each.

The h index certainly has the limitations of a single-figure index developed to characterize complex phenomena. It is understandable that other indexes have been developed which, for instance, give more weight to the overall number of publications or to the number of received

citations than the h index does. Other modifications give more weight to the most recent publications or citations or to the “citation leaders” of each unit of analysis, introduce reduced values of the bibliometric indicators for co-authored publications or self-citations, or account for only the citations to a limited number of publications by the unit of analysis. It is also commonplace to utilize two or more bibliometric indexes in parallel or to supplement bibliometric indexes by means of peer review procedures.

3 PUBLICATION ACTIVITY WITHIN THE LEGITIMATE INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN OF POLITICAL RESEARCH IN TWELVE COUNTRIES OF THE EXTENDED BALTIC AREA

Five journals from five research fields were selected with due acknowledgment of their bibliometric impact value – but with no exclusive reliance on that value – on the following additional principles: (a) the journal name explicitly indicates its scholarly orientation, (b) there is no reference in the journal name to a world region except for Europe, nor to an individual country, and (c) more than only a few publications by scholars from the twelve countries examined have appeared in the journal. In the field of general political science the selection comprises *Political Analysis*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *West European Politics*, and *Journal of Politics*, in international relations and world politics *World Politics*, *International Organization*, *International Security*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and *Journal for Peace Research*, in public policy *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Governance*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Review of Policy Research*, and *Policy Studies Journal*, and in public administration and public management *Administration & Society*, *International Public Management Journal*, *Public Administration*, *Public Administration Review*, and *Public Management Review*. The first subfield of political research posed difficulties of choice for such reasons as the heavy American concentration of many of the highest impact journals, in which also European scholars may publish. The choice was easiest in the second subfield because of the standing of the two journals mentioned first from that subfield at the very top of the Web of Science list of the highest impact journals. The public policy subfield and the public administration/public management subfield posed no particular difficulties of choice, although neither of the subfield stood out as equally compact as the international relations/world politics subfield.

It is undeniable that the selection of the four sets of five journals represents a compromise. However, no particular reason came up to suppose that with a different set of journals in each

subfield the results obtained would have turned out to be pronouncedly different. We can also put a note on the selection of subfields; one or several of such possible further subfields as European studies, political theory or voting studies could have been taken up separately, and public administration/public management and also public policy could have been given less importance or possibly combined into only one subfield. However, compromises can hardly be avoided in studies of this kind. Possible later studies could introduce other aspects than this article.

Denmark and Norway stand out as “great powers” in the results of the first analysis round (Table 1). The number of research articles in relation to population and the number of citations per article are generally high in both countries in all four subfields of political research examined. Denmark is relatively strongest in public administration/public management and Norway in international relations/world politics, although the number of citations per article stands out as low in the latter country. Sweden lags behind Denmark and Norway and parallels Finland in general political science, parallels Denmark and Norway in international relations/world politics and public policy research, but lags behind Denmark and Norway in public administration/public management research. However, Sweden clearly beats Finland in the field mentioned last; in that field Finland’s scholars appear have found it difficult to make their publications attract citations. Certain widely cited articles in general political science research by scholars from Finland clearly raise the “citation per article” ratio to a reasonably high level, whereas in this comparison Finland stands out as hardly more than a “developing country” in public policy research that has come out in legitimate publications channels of political research. German scholars beat or equal their colleagues in the best performing Nordic countries in attracting citations in international relations/world politics and public policy, although this takes place with comparatively low publication numbers relative to Germany’s large population. From among the other seven countries Estonia – with a population of only 1.3 million – stands out strongest, although we should put a note on the low absolute numbers of relevant publications by the small country’s scholars.

TABLE 1. Relative publication and citation frequencies in twelve countries of the extended Baltic area, selected journals in the legitimate domain of political research

General political science	International relations/ World politics	Public policy	Public administration/ Public management
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	Art./1 mill.	Cit./ art.	Art./1 mill.	Cit./ art.	Art./1 mill.	Cit./ art.	Art./1 mill.	Cit./ art.
Denmark	8.6	6.5	10.7	6.0	15.5	10.9	20.9	5.7
Germany	2.4	7.3	1.6	17.2	2.6	13.1	1.0	3.7
Poland	0.2	6.6	0.3	3.5	0.1	5	0.2	1.7
Russia	0.0	0	0.0	8.7	0	0	0.0	0.5
Lithuania	0.7	0	0	-	0	-	0.7	0
Latvia	0	-	0	-	0	-	1.0	1.0
Estonia	1.5	21.5	1.7	11.5	1.5	2.0	2.3	0.7
Finland	3.5	32.1	9.4	7.5	1.9	8.3	2.8	1.2
Sweden	3.9	8.5	17.8	9.4	7.9	12.9	4.7	5.2
Norway	10.2	11.2	144.9	3.8	10.8	13.1	11.1	6.0
Iceland	10.0	3.3	3.3	10.0	0	-	0	-
Belarus	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

Explanation: "art." means "articles", "cit." means "citations" and "mill." means "million inhabitants". Calculated from WoS (2013) data of 22 May 2013.

Note that this section focuses on heavily *institutionalized* aspects of the four subfields of political research it covers. In the terms of neo-institutional research the outstanding quantitative results of some of the countries examined – especially Denmark and Norway – indicate their success in the *institutional legitimation* of their research results in those fields of political research in which they empirically stand out. The publications by the Danes and the Norwegians not only come out in remarkable numbers in political research journals, but they also succeed to attract citations. However, the first analysis round tells little of the *performance* of the scholars of each of the twelve countries in examining the topics of political research in the four subfields that this article covers. The performance aspect will constitute the focus of the two next sections.

4 PERFORMANCE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH IN TWELVE COUNTRIES OF THE EXTENDED BALTIC AREA BY PUBLICATION TOPICS

The examination was continued with the support of the topical search expressions "political science", "international relations", "world politics", "public policy", "public administration" and "public management" applied to Web of Science data. The values of the same indicators as those used in section 3 were calculated. The values first obtained separately for "international relations" and "world politics" on the one hand and on the other for "public administration" and "public

Denmark	5.9	2.5	19.3	5.4	1.7	2.8	9.3	1.4
Germany	3.9	2.8	4.2	5.3	3.9	4.2	2.7	4.0
Poland	0.4	1.1	0.6	1.3	0.4	0.5	1.1	0.8
Russia	0.1	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.1	6.2	0.1	0.5
Lithuania	3.0	0	4.7	1.6	1.7	2.8	9.3	1.4
Latvia	1.5	0	0	-	1.0	0.7	1.0	0
Estonia	3.8	0	7.7	1.3	5.4	3.6	10.8	4.1
Finland	2.8	4.4	12.2	2.1	11.1	4.9	10.7	7.0
Sweden	6.0	4.8	10.4	5.1	15.8	6.9	11.7	4.6
Norway	5.1	5.2	25.1	22.8	19.6	9.5	20.4	6.7
Iceland	16.7	2.6	0	-	6.7	0.5	10.0	5.7
Belarus	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

Explanation: Calculated from WoS (2013) data of 23 May 2013. The column headings indicate the search clauses utilized in WoS. For the abbreviations see the explanations to Table 1.

What can be made known of the publication arenas of the scholars from the extended Baltic region of twelve countries from their work examined in this section? Let us take a look at the publications with the most citations published by scholars from each country examined as indicated by Web of Science (WoS). A verbal account on this issue without a supporting summary table is enough in this case.

Let us first consider what the search expression “political science” delivered. Although in some of the countries the most cited publications had come out in journals situated within the institutionalized field of political science, these did not include any of the journals of that subfield examined in section 3 above. Some of the other journals indicated that actually came up are widely acknowledged, such as *European Journal of Political Research*, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* and *Electoral Studies*. However, several other journals transcend the conventionally legitimate institutional boundaries of political research, such as *International Environmental Agreements* accentuating the important and much studied theme of environmental politics and *Organization Science* indicating the common interactions between political research and organization research in Norway first generated by the March-Olsen co-operation indicated above. *Scientometrics* and *Journal of Pragmatics* also came up as citation leaders for political research articles among the twelve countries examined. This suggests nothing but the relevance of general questions of

information and communication in political research, but also the relevance of political research as one of the study themes in those special fields.

The results received with the search expressions “international relations” and “world politics” suggest that within those fields, scholars within legitimate and institutionalized political research – examined in the previous section – occupy important positions. From among the journals taken up in the previous section above, *International Organization*, *World Politics* and *Journal of Peace Research* stand out as the foremost academic media of publication in several of the twelve countries examined. In certain other countries among the twelve *European Journal of International Relations* and *International Studies Quarterly* appeared as citation leaders, and in one country the general journal *European Journal of Political Research* proved to hold the citation leader position. Analogous leader positions attained by other journals for work published by scholars in other countries of the extended Baltic area examined were scattered among several journals. *British Journal of Sociology*, *European Urban and Regional Studies* and *Global Networks* stood each out as the citation leader in a single one among the twelve countries.

The search expression “public policy” turned out to bring into the examination published research that transcends the limits of legitimately institutionalized political research to a pronouncedly greater extent than its counterparts did in the three other subfields examined. Public health research in the widest sense proved to be – perhaps unexpectedly – the predominant research field of public policy research. This was the case in no fewer than nine of the twelve countries examined. For interpretation, we cannot but suggest the empirical importance of public health research as recognized public policy research published by scholars of the extended Baltic area. The exceptions comprised Poland with the international journal *Urban Studies* as the flagship journal with most cited publications of that country’s scholars. The same position was held in Lithuania by its domestic refereed scholarly journal *Inzinerine Ekonomika – Engineering Economics*, which is a multi-disciplinary journal mostly publishing articles in English. No citations on Belarus were indicated in WoS in this analysis.

The search expressions “public administration” and “public management” took up three of the five journals examined in section 3 above as the arenas of publication for the most cited articles by scholars in some of the countries examined – *Public Administration*, *Public Administration Review* and *Public Management Review*. From among other journals in the same institutionalized research field, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* stood up in one country in “public administration” and in another in “public management”, and *International Review of*

Administrative Sciences stood out in a sole country in “public management”. *Governance*, categorized in this article as a public policy journal, came up in one case of each of the two search expressions of “public administration” and “public management” and *Journal of Common Market Studies* was the citation leader in one country in “public administration”. *Inzinerine Ekonomika – Engineering Economics* was again a citation leader in Lithuania, this time with search expression “public administration”. There was a number of other journals with citation leader positions in “public administration” or “public management” in other of the twelve countries, such as journals in public health research, research on the environment, information management research, or psychological research.

5 PERFORMANCE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH IN THE TWELVE COUNTRIES OF THE EXTENDED BALTIC AREA IN TERMS OF THE BIBLIOMETRIC INDEX “H”

The third and final round of the empirical analysis is comprised of an examination in terms of the bibliometric index “h”. The same topical search phrases in WoS as in the previous section 4 were utilized, but the results for “international relations” and “world politics” and those for “public administration” and “public management” were now indicated separately (Table 3). Joint examinations of “international relations”/“world politics” and “public administration”/“public management” were considered, but because suggesting certain extended interpretations of the results, the separations were retained.

In the third analysis, it turned out that “size counts”. Germany came out much stronger than in the two previous rounds of examination; it received the highest h values in all six subfields except for public management. However, Norway certainly transcended its relatively small population size – just over six per cent of the population of Germany – in the subfields of international relations, public policy and public management. Denmark and Sweden also proved to be significant performers as suggested by Table 3, whereas Finland generally obtained lower values than the three other larger Nordic countries. Size also mattered for Russia and Poland, both of which obtained better visibility in the third analysis round than in either of the first two rounds. In the third round Estonia and Lithuania appeared as emerging countries rather than countries which had “already arrived”. The third analysis round did not suggest particular conclusions on Iceland and Belarus.

TABLE 3. Performance in the terms of the index h and political research topics in the twelve countries of the extended Baltic area

	Political science	International relations	World politics	Public policy	Public administration	Public management
Denmark	6	11	5	19	6	7
Germany	15	21	9	25	10	9
Poland	2	2	1	5	2	0
Russia	1	4	0	5	0	1
Lithuania	1	1	0	2	2	2
Latvia	1	0	0	1	0	0
Estonia	1	2	2	2	2	1
Finland	6	6	2	11	6	6
Sweden	10	10	5	22	9	7
Norway	7	17	8	19	9	14
Iceland	2	0	0	1	1	1
Belarus	0	0	0	0	0	0

Explanation: Calculated from WoS (2013) data of 23 May 2013. The column headings indicate the search clauses utilized in WoS. The figures in the table are values of the index h. The index h indicates the number of publications by scholars from a country with at least h citations. For the abbreviations see the explanations to Table 1.

The separation of “international relations” and “world politics” and the separation of “public administration” and “public management” suggests some “value added” in the last empirical round of examination. Arguably, in both cases the latter elements of the two pairs of search expressions represent a more “modern” or, possibly, “late modern” emphasis. We may suggest that modernization or “late modernization” within the confines caught by the h index values has advanced furthest in “international relations”/“world politics” Sweden, Norway and Denmark, which have relatively more than the other nine countries been turning towards “world politics”. In “public administration”/“public management” Norway and Denmark are in the lead, followed by Finland and Germany, in turning towards “public management”. However, these results do not convey any evaluations of the changes indicated. For their proper assessment, we should have criteria in hand to assess the comparative merits of “international relations” and “world politics” on the one hand, and on the other those of “public administration” and “public management”. Evaluating those major trends within political research fields is an interesting challenge but definitely falls outside the bounds of this article.

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this article has been to examine two aspects of institutionalization, both much examined in neo-institutional research, namely performance and legitimation. The article has pursued that task while studying the results of political research published by scholars of an extended Baltic area of twelve countries in four selected subfields of the general field. The research purpose was implemented in one round of empirical examination that accentuated the legitimation aspect of research and two rounds with an emphasis on the performance aspect of research.

This article searched for answers to three research questions. The first one of these, called the “legitimation question”, asked: Within the institutionalized domain of political research and its subfields, while looking at publication activity and its channels, what has been the relative volume of published political research in the twelve countries examined, and with what frequency have the publications received recognition with citations? Denmark and Norway stood out in the institutionally legitimated publication arenas of political research, Sweden did somewhat less so, and Finland was pronouncedly weaker. The achievements of German and Estonian political research, as suggested by the first analysis round, should also be noted.

The second research question was one of the two “performance questions” asked: Irrespective of the domain of publication and the publication channels, what has been the relative volume of published political research in its subfields in the twelve countries examined, and with what frequency have the publications received recognition with citations? The four larger Nordic countries, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, stood out as coequals by and large in the analysis. Besides the achievements of Estonian scholars, those of their Lithuanian colleagues received mentioned, whereas the examination hardly emphasized the other six countries investigated.

The second performance question asked: Irrespective of the domain of publication and the publication channels, and using a suitable bibliometric index, what has been the overall publication performance of political research in its subfields in the twelve countries examined? According to the results, “size matters”: Germany stood out and Russia and Poland also received visibility. Norway, Denmark and Sweden continued to stand, whereas Finland’s achievements appeared as less formidable. The third analysis round represented Estonia and Lithuania as

emerging countries in political research rather than countries that had “already arrived”. We should separately examine if this derives from their relatively recent rise into countries in which political research offered to the global scholarly community is keenly pursued.

The results underline the importance of the delimitations made in the theoretical sub-section at the beginning of this article. Neither performance nor legitimation suffices for an ultimate criterion to assess the results of research as excellent, and neither lesser performance nor lesser legitimation suffices for the ultimate negative evaluation of research.

Empirically, this article has exploited bibliometric methods and data. Both together are amply used as management tools to assess scholars who apply for academic positions, research teams that apply for funding, academic programs that apply for accreditation, and universities that crave to retain or increase their national funding or to ascend in the global university rankings (Kauppi and Erkkilä, 2011). Arguably, bibliometrics can also be applied with accents of “liberal learning” as has been done in this article. We do not have to be content with the conclusion that such liberal learning necessarily remains without practical consequences. Possibly, the members of each disciplinary community of scholars may try to take the reins of the bibliometric exercises concerning their scholarly field. If they succeed, they may invent antidotes to short-sighted applications of bibliometrics too “tightly coupled” to future funding of scholars, research teams, and academic institutions. The antidotes may also work against efforts to reallocate research funding to politically preferred purposes that lack both global scholarly legitimation and credible possibilities to enhance global scholarly performance. Unfortunately, peer review, frequently suggested as an antidote to exhaustive reliance on bibliometric exercises (Russell, 2009), is not enough alone by far, because the choice of the peers commissioned to do the reviews may be slanted.

All twelve countries of the extended Baltic area examined in this article have official national languages, none of which is the global *lingua franca* of research, English. This imposes upon the scholars of those countries a dual challenge. They have to succeed in a language which is not their own to win or retain global scholarly recognition on the one hand, and on the other hand to nurture workable ties with the national, regional and local communities for the sake of parochial rather than global legitimation. However, we should notice important differences between the twelve countries examined. Three of them are considerably large in population and the main countries of their official languages with 40 to 200 million native speakers and with important national cultural and other traditions and achievements – Poland, Germany and Russia. Several

among the twelve countries comprise the main countries of smaller linguistic communities with below four to over 10 million native speakers – Lithuania, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Belarus. The official national language has less than one or over one million native speakers in Estonia and Latvia, and only over a third of a million speakers in Iceland. The larger the linguistic community, the wider the specialization and diversification of scholarship can be expected to be in research carried out in the respective language. However, the results of this article suggest that countries with small populations and a national language with few speakers may transcend the limits of their modest size and that a large or medium population size does not guarantee that the scholarship pursued in that country turns strongly global. In the latter case possible universal criteria to assess research as an institution suggest that we have the challenges of capacity development and inclusion on our hands. This challenge concerns each of us as political researchers given our calling as guardians of our share of universal values including those of human rights, peace, a healthy public sphere, and unyielding and vigorous political democracy.

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