

Nation-builders and market architects: How social origins mold the careers of law graduates over 200 years in Norway

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Abstract

This paper examines the types of work that jurists have historically undertaken and maps how opportunities for legal practice have been shaped by social origins across three centuries: after constitutional independence in the mid-1800s, during nascent industrial capitalism in the mid-1900s, and at present-day advanced capitalism. I analyze historical archive data on law graduates from the 19th and 20th centuries in combination with administrative registry data from the 1990s onwards and employ correspondence analysis to explore how social backgrounds shape careers, considering transformations in class structures and the changing significance of juridical expertise over time. Within each period, jurists have served in very different roles including those that craft and cater to the institutional make-up of the state and the markets. My analysis shows that the impact of social origin on occupational outcomes has undergone significant changes, mirroring shifts in the broader social structure; from the importance of legal and political capital (within regional jurisdictions) in the 19th century to the significance of economic capital as the main structuring principle, but also a greater significance of cultural capital, in contemporary times. The ability to reach

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the most powerful positions among law graduates—within the polity in the 19th century, and the economy in the 21st century—has been differently structured by origins. I argue that expansion of the student body, the declining standing of the university, and heightened differentiation of the social structure and the juridical field have made intimate familiarity with the business world pivotal for forging mutually beneficial alliances between jurists and the increasingly dominant capitalist class. Today, a select group of jurists have managed to connect with and contribute to the rising power of private capital. Thus, the historical tale of jurists cannot be accurately captured by notions of uniform descent from national power structures.

KEYWORDS

correspondence analysis, historical trends, juridical field, jurists, lawyers, social origin

1 | INTRODUCTION

The role of law in the transformation to modernity—its rationality, organization, integrative functions, and modes of domination—placed law at the heart of sociology as a discipline for some of its founding fathers, such as Weber and Durkheim (Trubek, 1972). Meanwhile, law and law professionals in contemporary society have taken a back seat in the sociological understanding of factors contributing to the major transformations of our time, including the profound concentration of capital associated with present-day global capitalism and its associated class tensions. In this paper, I build on the classical interest in law and study jurists in the long *durée* of Norwegian history.

In Norway, the history of jurists is often narrated as a tale of significant societal descent. While jurists were perceived as contributing significantly to the shaping, crafting, and governing of the state during the nation-building years, this has transitioned to “a great replacement” in state and governing bodies (Aubert, 1989) and a more general decline in positions of cultural, economic, and social privilege (Myhre, 2008; Slagstad, 2004). What these wide narrations fail to capture is the heightened diversification of jurists that has evolved historically. Not only are law graduates more diverse with respect to origins and gender, but the types of work in which jurists can engage have diversified, and the wider class structure in which jurists are embedded has undergone significant transformation. Failing to capture this variation could result in overlooking the significant power and prestige bestowed upon dominant business lawyers in contemporary capitalism, as recently discussed by several scholars from different disciplines (Christophers, 2021; Pistor, 2019; Tait, 2020), as well as the sociological significance of class origins for career pathways within this elite professional group.

In this paper, my aim is to explore the roles that jurists have historically undertaken and to trace how their social backgrounds influence specific career outcomes over time. My aim redirects focus from the concept of societal openness, often observed in historical mobility analysis (e.g., Griffiths et al., 2019; Van Leeuwen & Maas, 2010), to the examination of the concept of “probable trajectories” (Bourdieu, 2014a) that manifest at different historical periods. This represents a shift towards investigating *how* social origins are associated with occupational outcomes, moving beyond merely quantifying the extent of its influence. I exploit rich data sources and make use of correspondence analysis to study the opportunities offered and pursued by individuals of different social backgrounds from the

nation-building years in the 19th century until today. I follow the tradition of studying “lawyers in society” (Abel & Lewis, 1989; Sommerlad & Hammerslev, 2021) and approach legal professionals from the socio-historical perspective of power and class relations. I do so by taking cues from the sociology of law as derived from Bourdieu in his study of the juridical field (Bourdieu, 1987) as well as his lectures on the state (Bourdieu, 1994, 2014b). As argued by other sociologists drawing upon these works (e.g., Dezalay & Madsen, 2012; Hammerslev, 2003), the application of Bourdieu’s sociology onto the legal profession entails (i) studying lawyers and law professionals as internally divided, rather than unified as a single profession, (ii) linking divisions between jurists to divisions in the social structure, most notably the state and the field of power, and (iii) recognizing the historical contingencies that shape the relationship between divisions in the class structure and divisions among jurists by applying the triad of habitus-field-capital as sensitizing concepts (Gorski, 2013).

My analysis unveils that the types of trajectories that are “probable” due to origins are historically specific. Whereas origin primarily regulated access to symbolic/legal and political capital (within regional jurisdictions) in the 19th century, the impact of jurists’ social origins today is more clearly governed by economic capital and the heightened significance of legal advice for business interests in contemporary society. The most prominent and powerful positions of jurists have changed over time; this signifies a shift in the position of jurists as *commanders* versus *servants* of business and the state. Whereas jurists in the 19th century were in command of the polity, a present affiliation with public administration is broadly limited to providing legal services and advice within the state or municipal bureaucracy. Conversely, legal services offered to the merchant class and industrial bourgeoisie at the turn of the 19th century are now increasingly accompanied by jurists taking on the command of large capital via executive and managerial positions alongside the services offered through legal advice.

Yet, my analysis demonstrates that the inclination to command the polity in the 19th century and the likelihood of commanding the economy in the 21st century is differently structured by jurists’ social origins. In order to join the national ruling elite during the nation-building years, origins held primary importance in securing narrow recruitment into the university. As the student body diversified and the social structure became more differentiated, the role of origins gained significance in the heightened competition among law graduates. Today, social origin plays an increasingly crucial role in jostling for position among an emergent business elite and attaining the most powerful posts in service and command of private capital.

2 | THE POWER OF LAW AND THE PROBABLE TRAJECTORIES OF LAW PROFESSIONALS

Studying law professionals means studying actors who exercise power. The law, in its essence, embodies symbolic power at its most “quintessential form”; it crafts “performative utterances” that establish ideas as universal, natural, or normative, all the while maintaining an illusion of neutrality and impartiality (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 838; Bourdieu, 1991). The historical significance of the law for modern nation-building is indicative of the performative power of jurists. However, as noted by Bourdieu, the power jurists exercise requires backing from the state—a role the state undertakes as the “central bank of symbolic power.” Consequently, law professionals rely on state legitimation even as they have historically shaped the foundations of modern governance; as such, “the state is a legal fiction produced by lawyers who produced themselves as lawyers by producing the state” (Bourdieu, 2014b, p. 55).

Yet, the historical significance of jurists’ performative power goes beyond state-building; it also resonates with the rise of capitalism, a connection emphasized by Max Weber (Trubek, 1972; Weber, 1978). Katharina Pistor (2019) posits that the law acts as the very “source code” of capital and that it is through legal modules—contract, property rights, collateral, trust, corporate, and bankruptcy law—that assets of different shapes and forms (ranging from land, debt or ideas) become profit-generating capital. This legal framework’s importance intensifies as profit accumulation takes on intricate forms in financialized capitalism. Within this context, business lawyers emerge as vital “protectors” of capitalist property in today’s society (Christophers, 2021). Their expertise becomes indispensable to the

capitalist class, particularly as complex legal structures become pivotal in ensuring profit (see also Harrington, 2016; Swedberg, 2003; Tait, 2020). Jurists are therefore simultaneously servants *and* architects of both markets and the state. However, throughout modern history, the degree to which jurists have been intertwined with societal powers embedded in the state and the markets have varied significantly.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the occupations of law graduates over time and trace how social origins have uniquely influenced the opportunities to practice law since the late 19th century. Studies have shown that recruitment to the practice of law has historically favored those from upper-class backgrounds, which indicates cultural and social cohesion among jurists (Abel & Lewis, 1989; Aubert, 1989; Johnsen, 1988). However, there are differences among jurists of different social origins, evident in career outcomes and pay (Dinovitzer, 2011); this is also the case for Norwegian law graduates with similar exam grades (Aubert, 1963; Hansen, 2001). This suggests that family background holds significance for diverse life choices, inclinations, and capabilities. Family background may bestow law graduates with inherited forms of capital, such as networks, while also endowing graduates with a habitus—embodied dispositions for action and perception—that becomes instrumental in shaping their career pathways. The alignment between one's dispositions and the field of possible occupational outcomes tends to render trajectories “probable” based on class origins (Bourdieu, 2014a). Despite established insights into class-specific payoffs among jurists, a comprehensive record of the “probable trajectories” governing jurists' life prospects across time remains absent. Indeed, historical sensitivity is required for a full appreciation of this concept.

To understand the emergence of these “probable trajectories,” adopting a Bourdieusian lens entails examining the historically contingent organization of the “field” where jurists engage in competitive struggle for dominance. Whereas law professionals are often seen by sociologists and legal scholars as embodying one professional culture and/or serving one overall function in society, the notion of a “legal profession” was rejected by Bourdieu. For him, jurists are embedded within a juridical field characterized by internal divisions, competition, and the quest for a monopoly over the right to shape legal interpretations, all underpinning competing visions. The dynamics within this field, however, are far from static; they evolve over time, influenced by the broader struggles for power and dominance in society. This dynamic interplay intertwines the juridical field with the larger field of power, with the value of legal capital contingent on the extent to which jurists serve and align themselves with those in power (Bourdieu, 1987, 2014b). The distribution and hierarchy of legal practices at any given moment are shaped by a combination of internal competition and societal demand (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 843). While the demand is partially constrained by the supply of legal expertise, internal conflicts in the juridical field are closely intertwined with external power struggles—although not mechanistically determined by them. For example, labor and commercial law gained prestige during the 20th century as organized labor strengthened its position in society and unions became a stronger force in the political field (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 850). Thus, the hierarchization of types of legal work must be understood in the context of transformations of the class structure.

I will investigate “probable trajectories”—the likelihood of diverse career outcomes based on social origins—by drawing on Gorski's (2013) suggestion to apply the Bourdieusian triad of habitus, field and capital as sensitizing concepts in historical analysis. Gorski's framework offers insights into studying historical changes through shifts in field structure (including the shape of prestige hierarchy and its interplay with the field of power), the prevalence of diverse capital types (such as legal, economic and cultural capital), and the forms of habitus of those involved in the legal field, often molded by their class-specific origins. I will draw on historians to contextualize jurists in the Norwegian social structure and outline some central transformations of the juridical field and the class structure. In my empirical analysis, I will then focus on two historically varying aspects that characterize the probable careers of jurists. Firstly, I will uncover which forms of capital take the lead in molding diverse career paths linked to class origins in different eras. Secondly, I will explore whether class origins impact the probability of attaining the most prestigious and influential positions held by jurists during specific historical periods, recognizing that the degree to which there exists a pyramid-like shape of strict hierarchy and pull towards external influence (heteronomy)—what Gorski (2013) dubs “field shape”—is varying over time.

3 | HISTORICIZING LAW IN THE NORWEGIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The societal role and position of jurists have evolved over time. While jurists may hold monopolized legal positions and work as lawyers, prosecutors, or judges (pending additional training), jurists have historically served in various roles beyond litigation and legal proceedings (Johnsen, 1988). The following section provides a historical accounting of the position of jurists in the Norwegian social structure that highlights macro-level transformations of political governance and socio-economic structures at three key moments in time; the nation-building period in the mid-1800s, the coming of industrial society and its associated class structure in the mid-1900s, and the marketized turn from the late 1980s onwards.

3.1 | Nation-building and the senior civil-servant state

In early 19th century Norway, a law degree held significant importance. When the country's first university was established in 1811, it functioned primarily as a law school, issuing more degrees in law than all other subjects combined throughout the century (Johnsen, 1988, p. 56). Law graduates had vast symbolic and political power in society, dominating the university and pursuing careers in decision-makers roles for the state (Aubert, 1989, p. 376). "Historians" refer to the period between the ratification of a constitution and the implementation of a parliamentary system (1814–1884) as *embetsmannsstaten*, or the state of the senior-civil servants (Seip, 1963, 1974), with 20% of the parliament consisting of law graduates and half of the ministers having a background in law (Johnsen, 1988, p. 59). By 1880, 90% of university-educated civil servants in the ministries were jurists (Aubert, 1989, p. 380). The senior civil-servant state was thus "the state of the jurists" (Slagstad, 2015, p. 11) and academics, as senior-civil servants, were the ruling elite in 19th century Norway (Myhre, 2008).

The historical appearance of the senior-civil servants as a cohesive and dominant group reflects the Norwegian standing after the Napoleonic wars. With the Kiel treaty of 1814, Norway was transferred from Denmark to Sweden, yet due to resistance, some degree of independence was ensured including a monarchy, a liberal constitution, and a government. With semi-independence (complete independence was achieved in 1905), questions of rule emerged. Norwegian nobility was close to non-existent (and abolished in 1821) and the economic bourgeoisie had been hit badly by the wars. This facilitated a "vacuum" with few competitors for societal power (Myhre, 2008, p. 29; Seip, 1974, pp. 66–67; Langford, 2021).

Jurists legitimized their right to political power by formulating franchise rules in the constitution that stressed the importance of "independence" for political activity (Sejersted, 1988). Their assertions to engage in politics relied on their institutionalized cultural capital bestowed by their university degrees, enabling them to be seen as impartial figures and rightful leaders (Myhre, 2008, pp. 23–25). Importantly, the seeming impartiality of law ensured "societal trust" necessary for the major transformations that occurred during the 19th century and for developing a modern state (Aubert, 1989, pp. 372–374).¹

Prominent "professor-politicians" ruled by uniting and effectively controlling "academic-intellectual" and "political-bureaucratic" institutions (Slagstad, 2004, p. 69). Yet, jurists dominated more than just national politics. According to Myhre (2008, pp. 25–29), the hegemony of the senior-civil servants extended to both cultural and civil domains. Jurists exerted a significant influence on civil society, voluntary organizations, and the public sphere as well as high culture. Despite their lack of de facto nobility, historians frequently refer to these high-standing senior-civil servants as "noble-like" (Seip, 1963, p. 14) or "mandarin-like" (Myhre, 2004, p. 110).² Both social origins and marriage patterns suggested the existence of "upper-class consolidation" with tight kinship links among academics and between these individuals and the upper strata of industry and business (Aubert, 1989, pp. 390–391).

3.2 | Industrial capitalism and the coming of social democracy

During the 20th century, the prominent position of jurists in the social structure became replaced (Aubert, 1989). Legal expertise nonetheless played a significant role in major transformations of Norwegian society in the period, including catering to the emergent economic bourgeoisie and middle class, facilitating the transition to industrial society, and providing the legal infrastructure of the newly established welfare state (Espeli et al., 2008).

Despite the hegemonic position of lawyers in the 19th century, beginning in the 1870s, their political downfall was imminent. The establishment of a parliamentary government in 1884 marked the shift away from the king (and consequently, his senior-civil servant advisors) being appointed members of the government. Associations and civic life—thus far dominated and controlled by the senior-civil servants—became diversified. The late 19th century also featured the emergence of trade unions and the formation of modern-type political parties. This period also experienced the growth of counter-cultural movements that challenged the cultural hegemony of the academics by favoring the use of the national language (Norwegian, as opposed to Danish), lay religion, and temperance (Myhre, 2008).

In addition to these political and cultural changes, the end of the 19th century also witnessed changing economic conditions that reflected the state-sponsored and jurist-led, transition to industrial capitalism (Sejersted, 1993; Slagstad, 2004). Nascent industrialized capitalism strengthened the power of the bourgeoisie and promoted the emergence of economic elites consisting of merchants, bankers, and industrialists (Myrvang, 2001; Stenlås, 2001). The strengthening of the economic bourgeoisie was to some extent backed by legal expertise. For example, lawyers who specialized in commercial and tax law were influential members of the Norwegian business elite in the 1930s with prominent supreme court advocates serving as board members of major companies and/or acting as juridical advisors and business lobbyists (Espeli, 2010).

The first half of the 20th century featured vast urbanization, the growth of an urban industrialized working class, and the emergence of a new wage-earning middle class together with educated professionals, semi-professionals, and functionaries (Myhre, 2004). The increase in the number of private practitioners and jurists working in industry and commerce that followed in the 20th century was linked to the growth of the middle class (Johnsen, 1988). Often, the services provided by jurists were not strictly based on juridical expertise, as they also included debt collection, managing estates in bankruptcy, and board membership in firms (Espeli & Rinde, 2014). Legal experts also aided in industrialization by establishing infrastructure for transport and communication (e.g., roads and railways) as well as for finance (e.g., banks) and commerce (Aubert, 1989, p. 372).

Functional specialization challenged the generalist vision of jurists as professionals with academic expertise other than law—economists, engineers—gained prominence in both private and public sectors (Johnsen, 1988, p. 60; Aubert, 1989). From 1935 through the following three decades, Norway established a social-democratic welfare state, largely due to the efforts of organized labor and the labor-party-led administration at the time. The new knowledge regime of this “labor party state” was embedded in the social sciences, particularly economics, and replaced the legal knowledge regime crafted by lawyers in the senior-civil servant state (Slagstad, 2004).

3.3 | Marketization and the neoliberal turn

During the past 50 years, law has played a critical role in ensuring individual rights, including in feminist movements and “state feminism” (Dahl, 1987; Hernes, 1987) and debates regarding the increased juridification of political and private disputes have surfaced (Slagstad, 2015). However, perhaps the most characteristic role of law and lawyers in contemporary times is servicing private capital (Espeli & Rinde, 2014).

During the 1980s, Norway experienced a bank crisis and economic unrest that resulted in significant challenges to the overall economy as well as to private households. In response, many of the regulatory tools of social democratic governance were abandoned, resulting in the adaptation of marketized administration, deregulatory measures, and privatization (Fagerberg et al., 1990). As noted by Espeli et al. (2008), jurists were among the key architects

tasked with facilitating the legal infrastructure for new markets during this neoliberal turn and they continue to assist big businesses in navigating these new political and social terrains. By the end of the decade, the market for legal services was largely dictated by private capital, and lucrative prospects for remunerations and heightened presence in company boards increasingly aligned business lawyers with the interest of capital (Albrechtsen, 1974) that in turn reinforced class divisions (Johnsen, 1988, p. 91). On the board of large corporations, the “trust function of law” served in a legitimizing role for the business community (Aubert, 1989, p. 387).

The shift from social democratic governance to neoliberal “marketized” ideology is reflected in the organization of the current legal marketplace, which has become more complex and intertwined with international markets (Hammerslev, 2020; Papendorf, 2016). This has led to the liberalization of the juridical field and an influx of non-legal professionals in for example, corporate counselling, which has increased competition for business lawyers. In addition, the legislative monopoly of the state became increasingly challenged by international and transnational legal frameworks, including the World Trade Organization and the European Economic Agreement (Dezalay & Garth, 1996; Espeli & Rinde, 2014; Papendorf, 2016; Pistor, 2019). Globalization and heightened competition from non-legal expertise have been met with organizational restructuring; inspired by Anglo-American legal firms, jurists responded to these changing conditions with organizational mergers into large law firms tailored to the needs of larger corporations. Today, a small group of large, Oslo-based law firms competes for the highest-paying clientele (Papendorf, 2016). As a result, the image of the independent private law practitioner has been replaced by firm affiliation, and lawyers today are often hired employees offering commercialized services in a fiercely competitive market (Espeli & Rinde, 2014).

3.4 | Educational expansion and the feminization of law

Figure 1 displays the number of law graduates in Norway each year since 1785, by gender. The y-axis highlights key events that provide a context for these graduation cohorts in historical time.

Figure 1 shows that the number of law graduates in Norway has increased exponentially over the centuries. Law studies historically had an open-door policy with no specific entry requirements, and the surge of law graduates since the 1960s reflects the educational expansion (Johnsen, 1988, p. 67). The number of lawyers in Norwegian society tripled over three decades, with a sharp increase compared to other western European countries (Espeli & Rinde, 2014, p. 65). The number of female graduates has also significantly increased since the 2000s.³

Some variations in the size of the student body are also shown in Figure 1. Reductions in the number of law graduates occurred around World War I (WWI) and in the early 2000s, and professional closure strategies were enforced during both periods to tackle economic hardship and increased competition in the labor market (Espeli et al., 2008; Hansen & Strømme, 2021). The earlier growth in the number of graduates in combination with an economic depression dampened demand for legal services during WWI. Likewise, during the 1990s, overproduction of law graduates led to heightened competition in the labor market and an overall decline in jurists' income vis à vis those available to other university graduates. The closure strategies included lobbying for policies to restrict access to legal work from other professional groups in the 1930s and implementing *numerus clausus* in the 1980s and the 1990s to limit the number of students entering law. In the years that followed, the law once again constituted an elite field of study with both strict entry requirements and high incomes in the labor market (Hansen & Strømme, 2021).

However, as the student body grew in size, inequalities among law graduates were intensified both within the university and the labor market (Strømme & Hansen, 2017). For example, despite educational expansion, the impact of class origin on examination grades has remained stable or in some cases increased (Hansen & Strømme, 2021). As the pool of law graduates increases, the competition for the most prestigious posts may intensify which raises questions about how social origins equip law graduates with means to positions themselves at times of social transformation.

The three periods outlined in the foregoing are historically fascinating for studying this question due to their differences in the overall social structure and political governance, the shape of the hierarchy of the field of juridical work, and the selectivity of the graduation cohorts over time. Table 1 offers a summary of the main features of these dimensions.

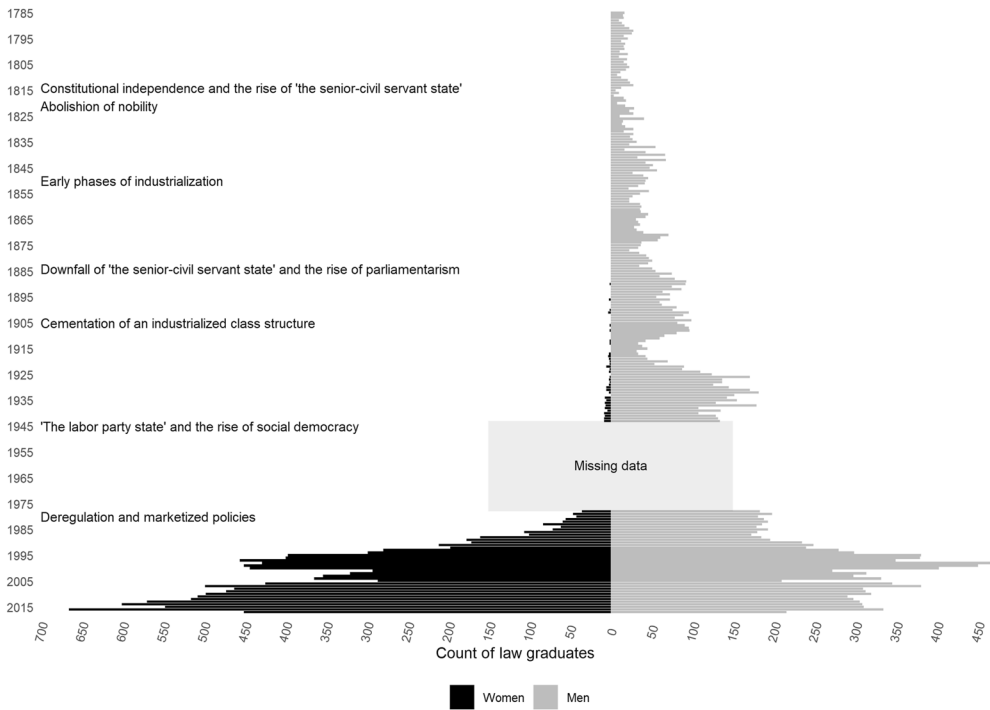


FIGURE 1 Number of law graduates by gender and graduation year. Key events in Norwegian history that shaped socio-economic structures and jurists' career prospects are shown along the y-axis. No data for graduation cohorts of 1944–1977 were available. Before this gap, the data were obtained from the “academics archive.” After the gap, the data presented were obtained from administrative registry data (see Methods section for further information).

TABLE 1 Summary of the historical contextualization of jurists in three different periods.

Period	Societal structure	Forms of governance	Shape of field hierarchy	Legal professionals
Mid-19th century	Agrarian society and status divisions	Senior-civil servant state	Hierarchized; jurists as the ruling elite	Highly selective origins
Mid-20th century	Industrial capitalism and the rise of the middle- and working classes	Beginnings of social democracy	Less hierarchized; servants to the state and the market	Selective origins
Early 21st century	Financial capitalism and the pulling away of the capitalist class	Neoliberal turn and marketized governance	Hierarchized; liberalized legal field and competition for private capital	More diverse origins

4 | DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

I use two data sources to examine the class origin-specific occupations of jurists at three critical historical periods. These periods include those who were occupationally active during the heyday of the senior-civil servants (the graduation cohorts of 1818–1837), those active during nascent capitalism and the beginnings of social democracy (the graduation cohorts of 1887–1906), and those active in the aftermath of the marketized turn and the advent of financialized capitalism (the graduation cohorts of 1990–1995). As evident in Figure 1, the size of the student body has undergone significant fluctuations over time, prompting the necessity to combine cohorts—an approach

commonly used in historical mobility analysis (e.g., Van Leeuwen & Maas, 2010). In the initial two periods, I pool 20 cohorts to study fine-grained occupational divides among jurists. It is worth noting that previous studies on historical class mobility with a broader scope often tend to group cohorts, sometimes pooling 15 (e.g., Miles, 1999). In contrast, during the final period, I pool only 5 cohorts for two reasons. Firstly, extending the cohort range to include pre-1990s law graduates may inadvertently capture labor market dynamics that precede the “marketized” restructuring of juridical work—a central focus in the final period’s investigation. Moreover, the limited availability of occupational data hinders the inclusion of recent graduates as this would affect the viable timeframe for a meaningful comparative analysis of their occupational peak with the life-course dimension observed in the initial periods. Secondly, the imperative for heightened cohort pooling in the 19th and 20th centuries, necessitated by low frequencies, is alleviated in recent decades due to a larger student body.

To obtain data on law graduates from the 19th and 20th centuries, I utilize “The Academics Archive,” a compilation created by sociologists during the 1960s. This database, digitized accessible through The Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD), includes lists of law graduates until 1943 and contains information about the occupation of the graduate and the occupation of their father. These data have been compiled from university yearbooks, anniversary books prepared for alumni, encyclopaedias, protocols for the national archive, and other historical documents (Aubert, 1960, pp. 9–13). Data limitations prevent me from determining which type of law diploma each graduate received during the first period of study, as until 1847, Norwegian graduates were issued two types of diplomas based on language. Graduates in Latin were more likely to be of more privileged origins and faced better career opportunities than graduates in Norwegian,⁴ but the differences in diplomas did not affect marriage prospects (Aubert, 1960). These caveats notwithstanding, “The Academics Archive,” is of good quality, with only 5% of entries missing information on both the graduates’ and parents’ occupations. I use the occupation registered as a “career peak” to identify the most prestigious position attained post-graduation.

Significant efforts have been made to make historical occupational titles comparable over time, and the HISCO classification has proven tremendously useful for researchers interested in studying historical mobility patterns related to questions of societal openness (van Leeuwen, Maas and Miles, 2004). However, for my specific research purposes, this classification scheme poses two challenges. First, the study of occupational outcomes among jurists requires a more nuanced perspective finely tuned to the specific occupational landscape of jurists during the historical periods of interest. This scheme collapses occupational distinctions into joint HISCO codes such as “lawyers,” “other lawyers” etc.⁵ Secondly, and perhaps more crucially, since my objective is not to assess the overall “openness” of jurists’ life chances over time but instead to outline the content of probable trajectories as they unfold in history, the changing sociological significance of occupational titles at different times becomes an object of study rather than a problem to overcome. I therefore study the occupational titles that are reported in the original sources drawn from Aubert (1960). In my analysis, I strive for as detailed occupational information as possible, only grouping occupations when their size is too small for meaningful individual study (typically around 5%).

To examine law graduates in the 21st century, I employ anonymized administrative registry data encompassing comprehensive population-wide details on education, occupation, and income. The data contain intergenerational linkages that provide the same information for the law graduates’ parents. To assess the occupations of the law graduates, I rely on registered titles in the data (the Norwegian standard of ISCO [STYRK]) and examine the highest-paying position reported in 2017. This ensures comparable measurements with respect to the life-course data from previous periods, as the 1990–1995 graduation cohorts have an average age of 52 years in 2017. I operationalize law graduates with no occupation as private-practicing jurists, which is corroborated by their capital income. For parents, I register the occupation of the parent with the highest class position recorded in the censuses performed in 1970 and 1980 or registry data from 2003. Appendix A lists the English translations of occupational titles used for all three periods under study.

My focus on exploring “probable trajectories” departs from the question of “societal openness” that features historical mobility research. Such questions are often met by log-linear mobility tables. While these tables are adept at quantifying the overall connection between origins and destinations, they often fall short in capturing the intricate and nuanced relational patterns that underlie the careers of jurists, rooted in their specific social backgrounds.

To achieve this, I employ correspondence analysis as a valuable tool. Correspondence analysis helps identify key dimensions that drive the association between categorical row and column variables in contingency tables, such as the association between jurists' occupational outcomes and their parents' occupations.

When dealing with numerous values of categorical variables, it becomes increasingly challenging to identify patterns and interpret relationships within contingency tables. Correspondence analysis aids in this regard by generating graphical representations, which emphasize the most significant relationships in the data. In these biplots, row points located near the center of the graph signify a weak relationship with the column variable, while those on the outskirts indicate a stronger association. Furthermore, it allows us to identify oppositional profiles; row points positioned at opposite ends of the plot are inversely associated with the column variable (Hjellbrekke, 2018). For example, if judges are positioned in the center of the biplot, this suggests a weak association between social origins and the likelihood of becoming a judge. Conversely, if attorneys and clerks are located in the outskirts, but at opposite ends of the plot, it implies that social origins are more strongly related to these occupations, and attorneys and clerks are unlikely to share similar upbringings. These trajectories represent "probable" outcomes based on different social origins, and a key objective of correspondence analysis is to uncover the most salient divisions among these probable trajectories.

This technique enables me to identify which divisions, represented as underlying dimensions, are most central in shaping the relationship between parental occupations and jurists' careers. This resembles principal component analysis but applies to categorical data (Hjellbrekke, 2018). In my analysis, I will highlight the two most important dimensions that differentiate jurists' careers based on shared backgrounds and those that differentiate social origins based on shared career outcomes. To provide a sociological interpretation of these divisions, I will focus on the categories that contribute most to the dispersal of each dimension, but I display the geometry of all categories in the analysis. Appendix B provides statistics for the first five dimensions of each analysis for the three historical periods.

I examine symmetrical maps in which both jurists' and parental occupations are represented as principal coordinates, as discussed in the literature (Greenacre, 2007, pp. 267–268). Because both the row and the column profiles of the contingency table belong to different "spaces," care must be taken to avoid overemphasizing any potential one-to-one relationships in the distances between occupation and parental occupation in the symmetric map (Greenacre, 2007, p. 72). Strictly speaking, proximities and distances are restricted to interpreting types of social origins (i.e., which origins tend to foster similar occupational outcomes?) or types of occupations (i.e., based on similarities in origins, which occupations are typical?). Proximities between occupation and family origins cannot be directly determined from these analyses (e.g., all judges have fathers who were judges), but do hint at a *relative* inclination of those with specific origins to engage in specific types of work (Hjellbrekke, 2018, p. 25).

5 | THE PROBABLE TRAJECTORIES OF JURISTS AT THREE HISTORICAL PERIODS

5.1 | 1818–1837 graduation cohorts: The heyday of the senior-civil servants

The first period under study captures law graduates who completed their exams in 1818–1837 and whose careers have matured during the heyday of the senior-civil servant state. This period is of particular interest because of the highly hierarchized nature of juridical work wherein (some) jurists served as the national ruling elite (Myhre, 2008).

As seen in Table 2, which outlines the occupation and paternal occupation of the jurists in these cohorts, the types of occupations undertaken by jurists at the time were highly hierarchized. The position held by most of the jurists were related to administrative oversight and executive functions of judicial expertise in managing public affairs. Combining state executives (including state ministers, director generals, principal officers), regional executives (including mayors, councilors, bailiffs, county governors [*amtmenn*], chief district judges [*sorenskriver*⁶], police chiefs and sheriffs, as well as customs officers and ministry clerks (*departementsfullmektig*), the positions held by most of the jurists of this period are captured (69%). Although most positions did not require law credentials, ~40% of the jurists

TABLE 2 Career peak and parental occupation for law graduates in 1818–1837 by percentage.

Graduation cohorts of 1818–1837 (mean age at graduation: 25 years)				
Career peak	N	%	Father's occupation	%
Bailiff	77	19.25	State/regional executive	15.75
Chief district judge	67	16.75	Merchant	15.25
District court attorney	50	12.50	Parish priest, bishop	13.75
Customs officer, state archivist	46	11.50	Judge and jurist	9.50
Judges	32	8.00	Captain, lieutenant, colonel, general	9.25
State executive	31	7.75	Proprietor, executive, landowner	7.75
Copyist	27	6.75	Lower-level functionary, steerman, railway, education, and arts	6.50
Regional executive	27	6.75	Police and customs	6.50
Ministry clerk	16	4.00	Workers and craftsmen	5.75
Superior court attorney	15	3.75	Farmer	5.25
Police chief, sheriff	12	3.00	Estate manager	4.75
Total	400	100.00		100.00

held positions monopolized by law graduates, including judges, chief district judges, and attorneys. Among the latter groups, there were also internal hierarchies related to the jurisdiction of the court, including differences between superior and district courts. Seven percent of the jurists held the position of copyist as their career peak.

Another reason why this historical period is of sociological significance is the selectivity among mid-19th century law graduates. The fathers' occupations listed in Table 2 shows that 71% had dominant class origins such as state/regional executives, judges and jurists, army officials, and proprietors and merchants. Conversely, there is an underrepresentation of law graduates with fathers employed as workers or farmers. While direct comparisons for the entire population are unavailable, the 1801 population census reveals the dominance of farming activity during this period, with 83% of the 0–10-year-olds belonging to farming families.⁷ Therefore, the 5% of law graduates with farming origins is historically unparalleled.

The origins of the 19th-century jurists are undeniably selective, and many jurists were employed in positions that provided them with considerable political and societal influence. But how were opportunities for legal practice shaped by social origins? Which forms of capital were decisive in shaping diverse career paths, and did origins heighten the likelihood of ascending to positions within the national ruling elite? To address these questions, I turn to correspondence analysis, aiming to outline the primary divisions in such “probable trajectories” arising from social origins.

Figure 2 displays the two main divisions in the trajectories of jurists during the first period under consideration. The black triangles represent jurists' occupations, and the red circles represent fathers' occupations. To account for the sensitivity of correspondence analysis to categories with small percentages, I group attorneys regardless of court position and include police chiefs, sheriffs, and ministry clerks among regional executives.

The first dimension, depicted horizontally in the graph, accounts for 42% of the variance. It highlights the predominant division in trajectories, showcasing a distinction between occupations monopolized by law graduates and less prestigious roles that do not require legal qualifications. On the left side of the space, we find jurists like judges and attorneys engaged in legal practice within courts. On the right side, we observe roles such as copyists, customs officers, but also state archivists. Thus, the primary way social origins influenced “probable trajectories” in the 19th century was by determining the capacity to wield symbolic power through legal practice in the courts versus engaging in humbler roles outside of the juridical domains.

Which origins played the most influential role in shaping divergent trajectories among their sons? Figure 2 indicates that the most notable difference in career outcomes becomes apparent in the trajectories experienced by the sons of merchants compared to the probable paths encountered by jurists of varying origins—

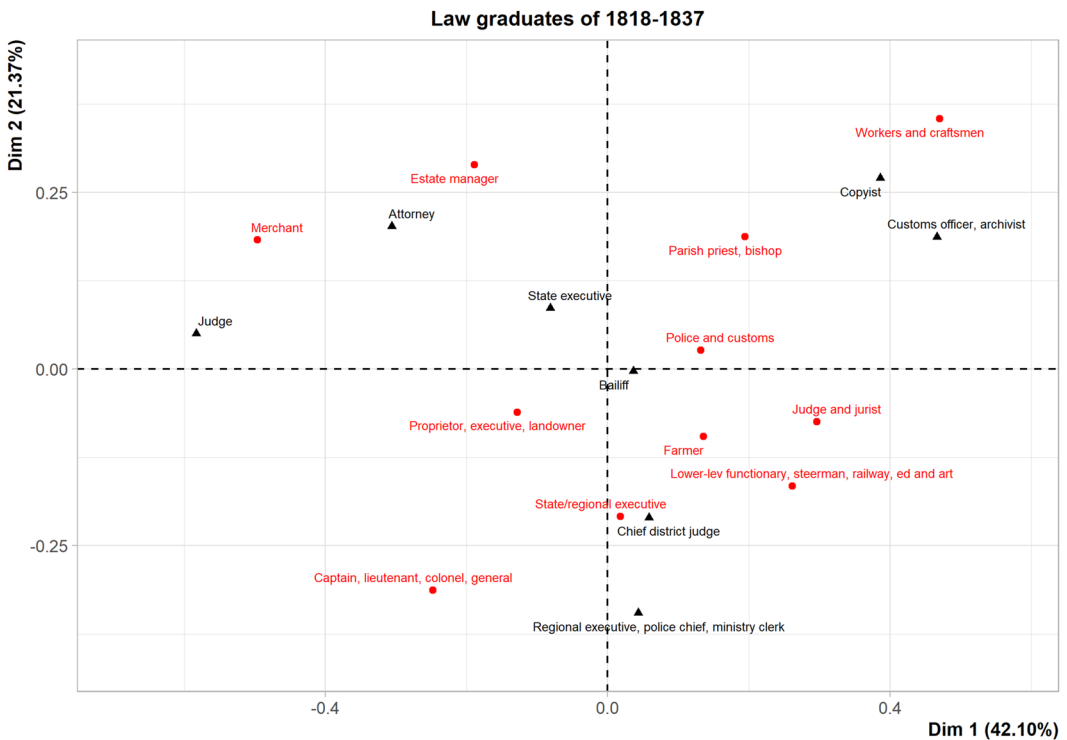


FIGURE 2 Correspondence analysis of career peaks (black triangles) and fathers' occupations (red circles) for the law graduates of 1818–1837. The first two dimensions are shown.

encompassing working class, legal, and clergy backgrounds. While not displaying a one-to-one correlation, the proximity between fathers' occupations and jurists' professions implies that, for instance, the offspring of merchants exhibited a greater likelihood of pursuing legal practice within the courts, in contrast to the sons of the upwardly mobile working class, who showed a higher tendency to assume roles such as copyists or customs officers (Hjellbrekke, 2018, p. 25).

The second dimension is represented vertically on the graph, accounting for 21% of the variance. This dimension distinctly underscores the importance of regional officialdom in shaping both careers and family backgrounds. Within the domain of juridical work, this dimension segregates jurists who transition into civil service roles within regional jurisdictions—like police chiefs, county governors (*amtmen*), and chief district judges (*sorenskriver*)—located in the lower areas of the graph. In contrast, those jurists engaged in less prestigious roles, including copyists, custom officers, but also state archivists, and attorneys, occupy the upper regions of the graph. A parallel trend emerges when examining their origins, where jurists with roots in senior civil service roles (including military officials) stand apart from those with more varied backgrounds, such as workers, merchants, and priests.⁸ Overall, the second dimension underscores the pronounced influence of regional officialdom on both career pathways and family origins in the 19th century.

Interestingly, social backgrounds do not seem to significantly stratify access to political executive positions within state administration such as becoming state ministers, director generals, or principal officers. The pinnacle of the juridical field at the time—with a strictly hierarchized structure of state executives at the top—is therefore only weakly associated with origins. Among jurists in the late 19th century, the origin-specific trajectories were instead manifest along other types of work following divisions of legal capital and geographically confined political capital.

TABLE 3 Career peak and parental occupations for law graduates of 1887–1906 by percentage shares.

Graduation cohorts of 1887–1906 (mean age at graduation: 25 years)				
Career peak	N	%	Father's occupation	%
Superior court attorney	376	26.40	Merchant	14.04
Supreme court attorney	169	11.87	Farmer	11.45
Chief district judge	104	7.30	Proprietor, executive, landowner	10.96
Regional executive	98	6.88	Lower-level functionary, steerman, railway	10.60
Self-employed in business	81	5.69	Education and arts	9.48
Judge	75	5.27	Self-employed jurist, judge	9.41
Principal officer	73	5.13	Doctor, dentist, officer	7.94
Ministry clerk	72	5.06	State/regional executive	7.72
Employee in private business	68	4.78	Parish priest, bishop	6.95
Police chief, sheriff	67	4.71	Workers and craftsmen	6.46
Registrar	58	4.07	Police and customs	4.99
<i>dead after 5 years</i>	56	3.92		100.00
Customs officer, state archivist	48	3.37		
Minister, director-general	46	3.23		
<i>Emigrated</i>	33	2.32		
Total	1424	100.00		

Note: Categories omitted from the analysis are indicated in italics.

5.2 | 1887–1906 graduation cohorts: Nascent capitalism and the beginnings of social democracy

As noted above, both the social structure and the role of legal professionals underwent significant transformations by the turn of the 19th century. The graduates within the 1887–1906 cohorts practiced law during an era of emerging industrial capitalism, and the early phases of the rise of the social-democratic welfare state and the expansion of public administration.

Table 3 reveals that in comparison to law graduates from approximately 70 years earlier, the cohorts graduating between 1887 and 1906 experienced a notable departure from executive roles and state engagement. This transformation led to a less hierarchized structure within the field of juridical work. There was a significant expansion in the percentage of attorneys, more than doubling since the earlier period, with an increase in those in the supreme court. Despite this, there was no corresponding increase in the percentage of law graduates service as judges, which fell from 25% to 13%. Private business activity also rose, about 10% of the law graduates engaged in private business either as employees or in self-employed positions. The fraction of law graduates who emigrated and/or died prematurely was comparatively small, as shown in Table 3. Since I have no information about their occupational outcomes, I leave them out of the analysis.

The historical transition from an agrarian society, organized around the cultivation of land, to the emergence of an industrialized class structure is echoed by the social origins of the law graduates at the time. Again, while direct comparisons for the entire population are unavailable, the social origins of 10–25-year-olds in the 1900 census suggest a decrease in the percentage from farming families to 54%, with one-third of the population having working-class origins. However, farming origins increased among law graduates, accounting for the second largest group. Nonetheless, the selectivity of jurist origins in the 20th century remained high, with 57% having parents who were state or regional executives, bishops and priests, proprietors, executives and merchants, and elite professionals (doctors, dentists, officers, jurists, and judges). Only 6% of law graduates had working-class origins, despite a third of the population coming from this group.

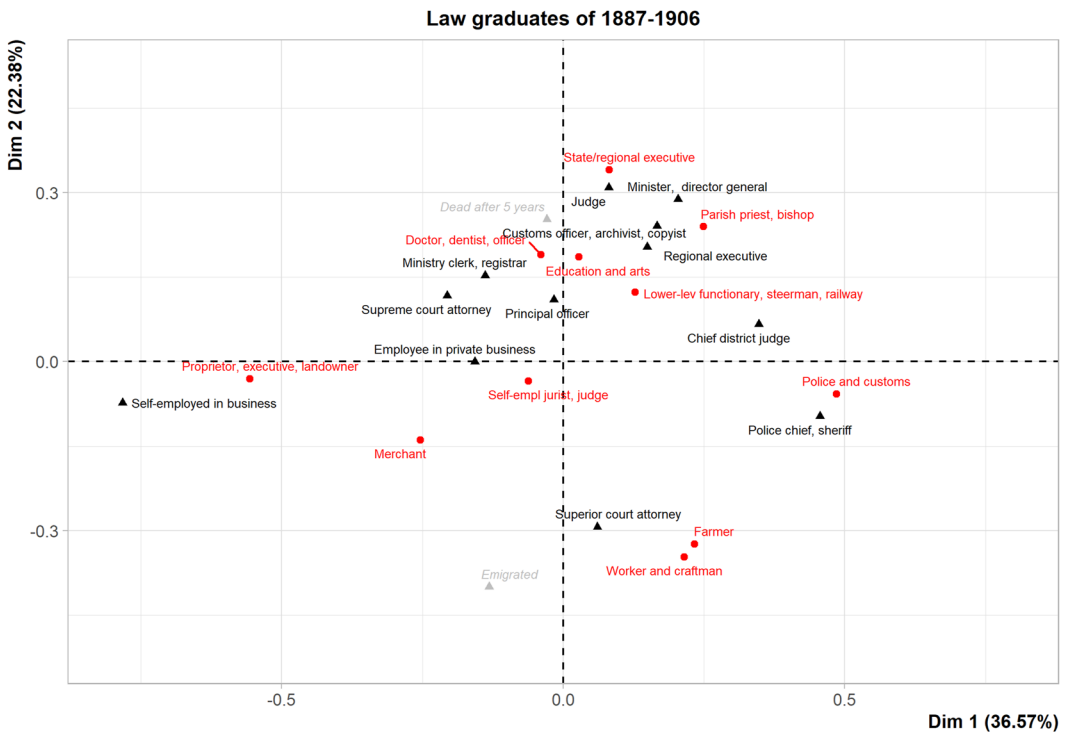


FIGURE 3 Correspondence analysis of career peaks (black triangles) and fathers' occupations (red circles) for the law graduates of 1887–1906. The first two dimensions are shown. Passive categories are marked in gray.

As the jurists no longer served as the national ruling elite in Norway, and with a profound change in the occupational landscape of jurists, the question of how the relative persistence in the selective origins of the law graduates fostered “probable trajectories” in the second period arises.

Figure 3 displays the two main dimensions that structure the relationship between occupation and social origins for jurists who graduated in 1887–1906. To reduce the impact of small percentages, I combine ministry clerks (*departementssekretær*) and registrars (*justissekretær*). In addition, jurists who died prematurely or emigrated are deemed “passive” in this space, meaning that they do not affect the analysis. These passive categories are marked in gray.

The first dimension, accounting for 37% of the variance, highlights the most central differentiation in “probable trajectories” during the 20th century. This division hints at a hereditary logic within both the penal system and private business. On the left side of the space, self-employed jurists engaged in business pursuits are discernibly separated from those within the prosecution and penal systems—occupying roles such as police chiefs, sheriffs, and chief district judges—positioned on the right side of the space. A similar pattern divides the origins that played the most influential role in shaping divergent careers among their sons. We find fathers who were merchants, proprietors, executives, and landowners, to the left side of the space, and those with fathers in the police and customs, to the right.

The second dimension, accounting for 22% of the variance, portrays a hierarchy of prestige within roles monopolized by law credentials, delineating a separation between judges and superior court attorneys. This dimension also highlights the distance between attorneys within the supreme court and those within the superior court, attesting to the selectivity of supreme court attorneys during that period. Interestingly, these attorneys rarely employed their legally protected title for courtroom prosecution; instead, they capitalized on its associated prestige to secure economic rewards and establish a presence in other societal domains (Espeli & Rinde, 2014, p. 61).⁹

The analysis of origins reveals that this second dimension captures a distinct divergence in trajectories between upwardly mobile jurists with farming and working-class backgrounds, in contrast to those whose fathers held senior

civil servant and state official positions. Consequently, the second dimension provides support for Aubert's analysis (1989: 396–398), which underscores how the role of a superior court attorney transformed into a pathway for upward mobility among previously marginalized classes. Notably, the coherence of life opportunities for upwardly mobile jurists with farming and working-class origins in the 20th century stands out, particularly when compared to the trends observed in the late 19th century.

5.3 | 1990–1995 graduation cohorts: The marketized turn and financialized capitalism

The final period includes law graduates from 1990 to 1995 whose careers matured during the first two decades of the 21st century, reflecting the current turn to heightened marketization.

This period saw a significant increase in business activity among jurists testifying to the heightened permeability in the boundary between the juridical field and the field of business (Gorski, 2013). Table 4 shows that 29% of these jurists hold top positions in companies or are business professionals, 11% are private practice lawyers, 9% are employed lawyers in law firms, and 5% are lawyers in for-profit companies in financial or non-financial industries.¹⁰ The decline in the percentage of graduates employed as judges and the increase in private practitioners may reflect the rise of conflict resolution practices outside of court proceedings (Aubert, 1989; Johnsen, 1988). By the late 1980s, only 25% of lawyers' income was derived from litigation and many lawyers received income from legal counselling provided to businesses or real estate investment, financial management, and board membership in corporations (Johnsen, 1988, pp. 60–84).

Instead of the ministry posts that were typical of the 19th century, jurists who find work today within public administration primarily provide planning and judicial advice as hired lawyers or public servants—only 1.6% of the

TABLE 4 Career peaks and parental occupations for law graduates of 1990–1995 by percentage.

Graduation cohorts of 1990–1995 (mean age at graduation: 28 years)				
Career peak	N	%	Parent's occupation (dominant)	%
Productions and operations department manager	437	14.97	Worker	16.24
Public servant: Judicial advice	402	13.77	Proprietor, chief executive, corporate manager	15.93
Private practice jurist	307	10.52	Teacher, journalist, artist	9.90
Lawyer in law-firm	249	8.53	Professor, school leader, architect	8.46
Director and chief executive	218	7.47	Engineer	7.85
Prosecutor, lawyer in non-profit and public administration	215	7.37	Management official in public administration	7.57
Business professionals	195	6.68	Accountant and business professional	7.40
Public servant: Other	175	6.00	Natural scientist	7.19
Lawyer in for-profit companies	153	5.24	Medical doctor	5.93
Non-judicial work ^a	146	5.00	Secretary and clerk	5.89
Public servant: Economic and planning	133	4.56	Private practice jurists	5.52
Professor, teacher, architect	132	4.52	Farmer	2.12
Judge	110	3.77		100.00
Senior government officials and legislator	47	1.60		
Total	2919	100.00		

^aNon-judicial work is a composite category that includes law graduates who were not occupationally active and were receiving welfare benefits (likely retired), occupations in the middle classes, and lower-status occupations such as social workers and computer system designers.

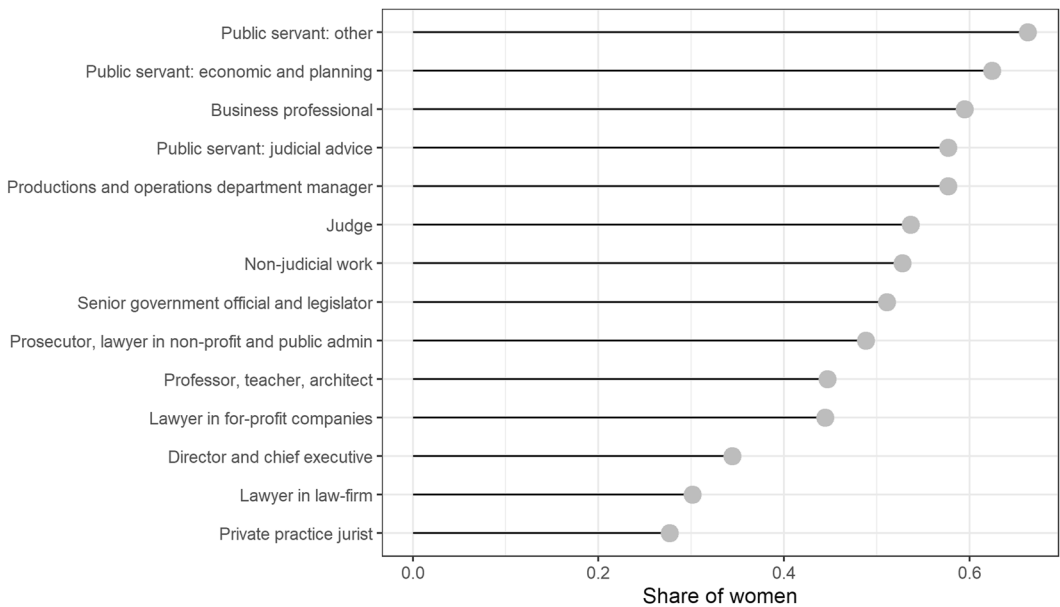


FIGURE 4 Distribution of female law graduates of 1990–1995, by occupation.

1990–1995 graduates hold senior government positions. Others in public sector work include prosecutors. Table 4 also reveals that 5% of jurists are currently law professors or other teaching professionals or working with other symbolic forms such as architecture.

Jurists from working-class origins slightly outnumber those from privileged business backgrounds today, although they remain underrepresented compared to the population at large. While 16% of the 1990–1995 law graduates were from working-class families, this group accounts for 46% of the population. Conversely, those with parents who were proprietors, chief executives, or corporate managers amount to 16% of law graduates, but only 5% of the population. When including parents in business professions or private practice, almost 30% of the early 1990s law graduates came from families engaged in private business.

Women's entry into law mostly occurred in the third period studied (as shown in Figure 1), with research indicating a gendered labor market for jurists across countries (Menkel-Meadow, 1989). In Scandinavia, women lawyers are more often employed in the public sector, less likely to reach partner level, and invoicing their services more restrictively than their male counterparts (Hammerslev, 2020, p. 184; Espeli & Rinde, 2014, pp. 68–70). Figure 4 outlines the share of female law graduates of 1990–1995 within each occupational outcome. Of the studied jurists in the 21st century, women make up 49%, with a notable overrepresentation in public-sector work, such as public service, production and operations management, and a marked underrepresentation as managers of companies and among lawyers working in private practice or law firms. Thus, opportunities for juridical work are undoubtedly stratified in contemporary times. Given the significant shift in the permeability of boundaries between the juridical field and business, the increasing tension related to status differences among lawyers, along with the growth and diversity of the student body, it is crucial to consider how social origins render specific occupational outcomes possible in the 21st century.

Figure 5 shows the two main dimensions that structure the relationship between occupation and class origin for the 1990–1995 law graduates. Due to their low frequencies, I set senior government officials and legislators and farming origins as passive categories in this space (in gray).

The first dimension, accounting for 37% of the variance, shows that the most important way origins structure careers today is by lubricating the likelihood of converting law degrees into economic power. This dimension separates jurists who work as business professionals, directors and chief executives, on the right side of the space from



FIGURE 5 Correspondence analysis of career peak (black) and parent's occupation (red) for the law graduates of 1990–1995. The first two dimensions are shown. Passive categories are marked in gray.

those who do not engage in judicial work on the left side of the space. A similar distinction emerges when examining their origins, where jurists who originate in dominant business families or those with parents who were private practice lawyers are separated from jurists with origins from the working or middle class employed in cultural work (e.g., teachers, journalists, or artists).

While the first dimension emphasizes economic business logic for both origins and careers, the second dimension highlights the significance of cultural capital and dominant positions in the cultural sphere, such as professors and academics, in separating both careers and origins.¹¹ This dimension accounts for 20% of the variance and shows that careers in the cultural sector, like academia and architecture, but also business professionals are represented at the top while jurists in private practice are located at the lower end. With regards to origins, this dimension distinguishes between parents who were professors, architects, and school leaders at the top and those who were private practice lawyers or worked as secretaries or clerks at the bottom of the graph.

Table 5 offers a summary of the three correspondence analyses of law graduates in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries detailing the two most defining dimensions in which origins mold jurists' careers.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Over the past two centuries, the social position and power of jurists have varied greatly. By exploiting rich historical archives and population-based administrative data, I have explored the relationships between jurists' origins and their careers. My analysis demonstrates that jurists were never one uniform professional body, and that their historical inclinations for types of work were “probable” according to social origins. Moreover, the historical tale of jurists is not one of uniform descent, but dominant business lawyers are key players in the rising power of economic capital today.

TABLE 5 Summary of key findings from the three correspondence analyses.

	1. Dimension	2. Dimension
1818–1837 graduation cohorts: The heyday of the senior-civil servants		
Accounts for total variance	42%	21%
Main opposition: Juridical work	Credentialed juridical work versus less prestigious work	Regional officialdom versus less prestigious work
Main opposition: Origins	Distinctiveness of merchant-upbringing	Distinctiveness of senior-civil servant upbringing
1887–1906 graduation cohorts: Nascent capitalism and the beginnings of social democracy		
Accounts for total variance	37%	22%
Main opposition: Juridical work	Private business versus penal system	Hierarchy within credentialed juridical work
Main opposition: Origins	Private business versus penal system	Civil service versus farming and working-class origins
1990–1995 graduation cohorts: The neoliberal turn and financialized capitalism		
Accounts for total variance	37%	20%
Main opposition: Juridical work	Private business versus non-judicial work	Cultural sector work versus private-practicing jurists
Main opposition: Origins	Business origins versus working-class and cultural middle-class origins	Cultural upper-class origins versus private-practicing jurists and secretaries and clerks

However, over time, social origins have become increasingly decisive in jurists' ability to connect with emergent groups of power and thus reach the most powerful posts.

During the nation-building years, Norwegian jurists held exceptional prestige and power, which aided them in shaping the polity, the economy, and the civil society in their image. During this period, nearly 70% of the law graduates were employed as state or regional executives. Equally striking was the narrow recruitment into law degree programs. Considering that Norway was largely a farming society at the time (i.e., 80% of the population), the fact that 70% of law graduates originated from families belonging to the upper strata of business, clergy, military, civil service, and law is a testament to the nature of the selection process that took place during this era. Among law graduates, social origins were primarily linked to the mastery of symbolic power through legal discourse, as evidenced by the likelihood of engaging in litigation, as well as to the tendency for holding political power within a limited jurisdiction, both as distinct from the likelihood of engaging in less prestigious work.

In the 20th century, political and economic transformations altered the juridical field and jurists' positions in society. This is most clearly reflected in the relative retreat of jurists from state-executive functions and the corresponding surge in the number of attorneys. Jurists continue to emerge from socially exclusive backgrounds, although upwardly mobile sons of farmers became more numerous in their ranks. During this period, origins mold occupational outcomes following a business logic as distinct from a prosecuting, legal, and penal logic. Origins also structure a prestige hierarchy among monopolized legal work, reflected in the likelihood to become a judge as opposed to a superior court attorney.

In contemporary society, closely mirroring the strengthened position of the capitalist class in society (Savage, 2021), the heightened competition among law practitioners, and the liberalization of the juridical field, economic capital is even more prominent than in prior centuries. More than half of contemporary jurists are engaged in private business as chief executives, managers or business professionals, private-practice lawyers, or hired lawyers in for-profit companies, with a third originating from private business families. The most defining impact of class origins today is expressed in the likelihood of engaging in private business (as opposed to non-juridical work), followed by the significance of cultural capital for types of work, which includes jurists who become professors (Bühlmann et al., 2017).

In summary, the *probable trajectories* that arise from social origins reflect specific historical social structures. This has shifted from the significance of (regional) political and symbolic/judicial capital during the first period to economic capital as the main structuring principle, but also a greater significance of cultural capital, in contemporary times.

Since the 19th century, the relative standing of jurists in the social structure has changed significantly, impacting the shape of the hierarchy of juridical work. The prominent place of state executives and public officials in the 19th century has been replaced by the dominant position of jurists within private business in contemporary society. Arguably, this shift reflects transformations of the field of power and the role of law in sustaining power and domination, suggesting the need to analyze legal professionals in tandem with class tensions and social transformations. In the 19th century, legal experts' seeming neutrality and independence helped ensure a "trust function" in political-executive positions (Aubert, 1989) and the academics at the time enjoyed relatively scarce competition for national influence, owing partly to the nascent economic bourgeoisie and the recent liberation from Swedish dominion (Myhre, 2008).

As seen, historical transformations, including political mobilization from below, the rise of parliamentary democracy, the emergence of an industrialized class structure, and the changing demand for expertise from governing elites, supplanted the once-prominent role of jurists in society. During the 20th century, jurists increasingly engaged in business activities, resulting in a more permeable boundary between their legal roles and business interests. However, it was not until recent decades that this pulling towards business interests solidified into a firm hierarchy within the juridical field. This transformation can be attributed, in part, to the growing dominance of private capital in the modern era (Savage, 2021). Today, the juridical field exhibits a pronounced hierarchy, with the pinnacle positions now occupied by those who serve and protect capital (Christophers, 2021; Pistor, 2019; Tait, 2020). To borrow from Gorski's (2013) terminology, the "field shape" has evolved from a triangle-like hierarchy in the 19th century to one that lost its footing in the 20th century, only to regain a hierarchical form in contemporary times.

Interestingly, in the 19th century, origins structured the inclination to convert law degrees to legal capital and political capital within regional jurisdiction, but the likelihood of becoming the national ruling elite was not distinctly "probable" for jurists of specific origins. How should we interpret these findings?

One possible interpretation is the historical standing of the university and its capacity to infer a consecrating effect on its student body. As noted by the historian Jan Eivind Myhre (2008), jurists' access to national political and cultural power in the 19th century was legitimized at the time by their institutionally concretized cultural capital, what we in Norwegian call *dannelse*, in German *bildung* and sometimes translated to *self-cultivation* or *formation* in English. Suggestively then, the historically specific standing of the university and its "ethos" at the time, and the wider historical context wherein academics were met with few competitors for national power, allowed for the efficacy of the consecrating effect of the university for those who were admitted access—admittedly a highly select student body.

Over time, the significance of generalized consecration issued by university diplomas in the field of power has waned. After all, the symbolic value attributed to the knowledge regime of the *bildung*-dispositions acquired through university attendance in the 19th century was already replaced by the 20th century (Aubert, 1989; Slagstad, 2004). The jurists who wield the most power today are not guaranteed authority solely based on the aura of *bildung* radiated by their university diplomas but rather from their adept handling of complex legal modules that can be employed to protect and enhance the pursuit of capitalist profit and private wealth. Upon entry to the university and the labor market today, jurists face a highly competitive environment (Hansen, 2001; Hansen & Strømme, 2021; Strømme & Hansen, 2017). Thus, the role of origins in ensuring restrictive recruitment *into* law education during the earlier period may have been replaced by the increased role of origins for career opportunities *after* entry into the university in contemporary times. The ability to connect with and serve the capitalist class may depend more on embodied dispositions, which are cultivated through familial socialization, and other forms of inherited capital, rather than relying solely on the generalized cultivation symbolized by university degrees.

In contemporary times, business-oriented upbringing may make interpersonal affinities in morality, values, cultural interests and outlooks more significant for the ability to jostle for position and foster "kindred world-views"

between jurists and a thriving capitalist class (Herlin-Giret, 2021; De Keere, 2019; Flemmen et al., 2017; Bourdieu, 1987, p. 842, Toft & Hansen, 2022). Further unpacking such “homology effects” between lawyers and their clientele (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 850) may help us understand how social backgrounds stratify lawyers' ability to connect with emergent groups of power today. Moreover, understanding pathways to become a dominant corporate lawyer today should also consider the impact of geographical proximities and careers within dominant organizations on the networking and career opportunities of Norwegian jurists (Dezalay & Garth, 2016), particularly since all the major Norwegian law firms are headquartered in the Oslo region (Papendorf, 2016). Research suggests that cultural matching is particularly crucial for hiring in elite law firms (Rivera, 2012), but regrettably, the relatively few individuals employed by such large firms in the chosen cohorts limit the ability to capture their importance in this analysis. Moreover, the available data do not provide information about the impact of origins on specializations, like business law, legal aid, labor law, or women's law. My analysis is therefore more attuned to occupational divides in society than to hierarchization of positions and internal dynamics within the juridical field. To properly understand the evolution of the latter, however, both internal struggles and the associated societal demand should be scrutinized (Bourdieu, 1987). Similarly, diversity in the student body should be studied more thoroughly, and questions regarding the feminization of different specialties, and formal and informal status hierarchies, and gendered and racialized barriers to the highest-paying positions and dominant law firms remain important subjects for future research (see e.g., Lyng, 2010; Midtbøen & Nadim, 2022).

My research has outlined the changing position of lawyers in society, and the ways in which origins make trajectories “probable” covering nearly 200 years of Norwegian history. While the empirical findings pertain to Norway, the application of the triad of habitus-field-capital as “sensitizing concepts” offers valuable insights for historical analysis of jurists more broadly (Gorski, 2013). My analysis suggests that the permeability of the legal field evolves alongside changes in the broader social structure. As the hierarchy of legal professions shifts with the ebb and flow of power dynamics, the role of one's background in shaping “probable trajectories” changes as well. This evolution is reflected in the relative weight assigned to different types of capital—from legal and symbolic to (regionally confined) political, economic, and cultural. In particular, the opportunities for societal power among jurists are conditioned on dynamics in the field of power and the “marketability” of the capitals jurists possess. These overarching dynamics may also be relevant in other national contexts.

The legal infrastructure of capitalism and the significance of legal discourse in safeguarding and protecting private fortunes today—as made evident by the use of trusts for purposes of tax mitigation—calls for further attention to jurists' performative power in contemporary society (Harrington, 2016; Pistor, 2019). This necessitates the reintegration of jurists into sociological discussions as agents of social transformation, while also acknowledging that the juridical field is both enabled and constrained by state power and evolves in conjunction with changes in the class structure and the field of power. While Norwegian jurists were once part of the national power elite, their historical trajectory cannot be summarized simply as a decline in societal influence. Today, a select group of jurists have successfully aligned themselves with and actively contribute to the rising power of private capital. Therefore, a unified notion of the “law profession” fails to capture the significance of jurists for contemporary power relations. To understand the contemporary pathways to these powerful positions, it is necessary to recognize the distinct advantages that flow from business origins and the historical contingencies that gives such origins purchase in contemporary society.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of contemporary jurists in this study are available for researchers through Statistics Norway. Currently, only researchers from Norwegian institutions are allowed access, pending approval by Statistics Norway and The Norwegian Centre for Research Data. The data for jurists from the 19th and 20th century are available through The Norwegian Centre for Research Data, pending approval.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Above all, the jurists ensured trust among "the leading strata of society" due to their social and biographical affinities to other members of the dominant class (Aubert, 1989, p. 374; Aubert, 1960)
- ² Elsewhere, however, Myhre (2008, p. 34) refrains from the use of the term "mandarins" as it suggests a completely isolated caste.
- ³ Figure 1 includes individuals who have completed a law degree. The gender skew in the female/male ratio is likely to be more extreme if one maps those who enter training for a law degree over time. In the years of educational expansion, one-third of all students who engaged in this training dropped out before completing a degree. This likelihood was more pronounced among female students (Johnsen, 1988, p. 67).
- ⁴ Similar differences were reported for Danish jurists at this time (Hammerslev, 2003).
- ⁵ For instance, *byfogd, sorenskriver*, would be grouped in the HISCO-code 12210 from the Norwegian 1900-census <https://historyofwork.iisg.nl/search.php>.
- ⁶ *Sorenskrivere* were the highest state officials within regional districts at the time.
- ⁷ The census data are retrieved from the North Atlantic Population Project (NAPP) <https://www.nappdata.org/napp/>. For the 1801 census: The Digital Archive (The National Archive), University of Bergen, and the Minnesota Population Center. *Census of Norway 1801, Version 1.0*. Bergen, Norway: University of Bergen, 2011. For the 1900 census: The Digital Archive (The National Archive), Norwegian Historical Data Centre (University of Tromsø) and the Minnesota Population Center. *National Sample of the 1900 Census of Norway, Version 2.0*. Tromsø, Norway: University of Tromsø, 2008.
- ⁸ Estate manager origins are also positioned at the high-end of this space. However, because the contribution of this modality to the second axis is slightly less than average, I focus my interpretation on the remaining above-average modalities described in the text.
- ⁹ According to Espeli and Rinde (2014, p. 61), the professional disputes involved in ensuring privileges awarded in association with the title of a supreme court attorney are unparalleled by those in any other profession in Norwegian history.
- ¹⁰ The occupational classifications are not consistent across data sources. This is particularly evident among advocates. In the archival data, I employ the term attorney (*sakfører*) and the data offers information about supreme court (*høyesterett*), superior court (*overrett*), and district court (*underrett*) jurists. In the registry data, *advokat* is referenced. I use the English term *lawyer* for these jurists in the third period and distinguish between those who are engaged in financial and non-financial companies from those who are employed by non-profit companies or in public administration. In addition, I single out those lawyers who are employed by law firms.
- ¹¹ It is also worth noting, as detailed in Appendix B, that the most important career category for the third dimension is public servants involved in economics and planning—reflecting what Bourdieu (1998) called "the right hand of the state," engaged in ministering budgetary and economic concerns.

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