

Eight years of development: the Italian academic community of Political Scientists within Universities and Departments

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The present report focuses on the development of the Italian community of political scientists, in terms of tenure positions, according to the latest information provided by the Italian Ministry of University and Research. The period considered covers eight years (from 31/12/2000 to 31/12/2007). We will focus both on the trend recorded by political scientists within the overall Italian University system as well as on their presence within Italian departments. The period considered is particularly interesting being following two important reforms implemented at the end of the nineties in the Italian University system (see Capano 2002). On one side the reform of the undergraduate system, with the introduction of a "three-plus-two years" pathway. On the other side the reform of the university recruitment system which established a system of local recruitment for posts at all levels. In this sense, the picture that is depicted here should be assessed in this wider perspective, being in some extent even the result of adaptation to the demands imposed by the reorganization of the Italian University.

A stronger community

As Table 1 and 2 illustrate, the development of political scientists in the period considered has been effective. The number of tenure positions increased in eight years from 150 to 199 (+32.7%), with a more conspicuous increment among assistant professors (+40.7%) than among associate professors (+38.1%) and full professors (+20.4%). As Table 2 shows, this increase is remarkably higher than the overall rate of growth in the number of university professors (+19.1%). This is true, in particular, for associate and assistant professors. However, if we compare this trend with the one recorded by Area-14 (i.e., the area comprising social sciences – including political science – according to the Italian Ministry of University and Research definition) the development of the political area seems less impressive, being quickly put into perspective. Indeed, the weight of the political scientists within Area-14 reduced in eight years from 12.5% to 11.5%, due to a rate of growth considerably lower (-10 points), mainly related to the dynamics concerning Full Professors (increased by 46% in Area-14 and by less than an half of this value in the political community)¹. Moreover if we compare the development of the different social disciplines comprising Area-14 (see Table 3), we discover that both sociology and sociology of culture and communication doubled the increase in absolute value of political scientists from 2001 to 2008 (the data for 2000 are not available in this context). While if we consider just the rate of growth, political scientists place themselves in the middle of the "chart" (at the seventh place out of 14 social disciplines).

Table 1: The Academic community of Political scientists (2000-2007) and their weight within the Italian university system and Area-14

	N Political scientists		% political science over the Italian university system		% political science over Area-14	
	Situation at 31/12/2000	Situation at 31/12/2007	Situation at 31/12/2000	Situation at 31/12/2007	Situation at 31/12/2000	Situation at 31/12/2007
Total	150	199	0.3%	0.3%	12.5%	11.5%
Assistant Professors	54	76	0.3%	0.3%	11.7%	11.5%
Associate Professors	42	58	0.2%	0.3%	11.3%	11.0%
Full Professors	54	65	0.4%	0.3%	14.7%	12.1%

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

Table 2: The rate of growth of Political scientists compared to Italian Academy and Area-14 (2000-2007)

	political scientists	Italian university system	Area-14
Total	32.7%	19.1%	43.5%
Assistan Professors	40.7%	19.8%	43.3%
Associate Professors	38.1%	8.6%	41.1%
Full Professors	20.4%	30.4%	46.0%

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

Table 3: The absolute and relative growth of Political scientists compared to the other disciplines within Area-14 (2001-2007)

Discipline	Absolute growth	Relative growth
Sociology – sps/07	+96	28.4%
Sociology of culture and communication – sps/08	+81	43.1%
Political science – sps/04	+42	26.8%
Economic sociology – sps/09	+42	36.2%
Political philosophy – sps/01	+29	36.7%
History of political institutions – sps/03	+17	35.4%
Sociology of law – sps/12	+14	35.0%
Urban and environmental sociology – sps/10	+13	20.0%
History of international relations – sps/06	+12	22.2%
History of political thought – sps/02	+9	6.2%
Political sociology – sps/11	+8	25.8%
History and institutions of Africa – sps/13	+3	8.8%
History and institutions of Asia – sps/14	+2	8.3%
History and institutions of America – sps/05	-4	-9.8%

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

One of the most intriguing point arising from the previous tables is related to the different development presented by each level-position (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Full Professors). Figure 1 illustrates this. What really stands out is the distinguished inverted-U trend showed by the associate-professor position compared to the other two levels. As a result of this trend, the level of associate professors has been the largest one in the Italian political science community in four out of the eight years considered here (see Figure 2). Only recently (since 2006) the entry position in the Italian university (i.e., the assistant professors) has become the largest one in the political field.

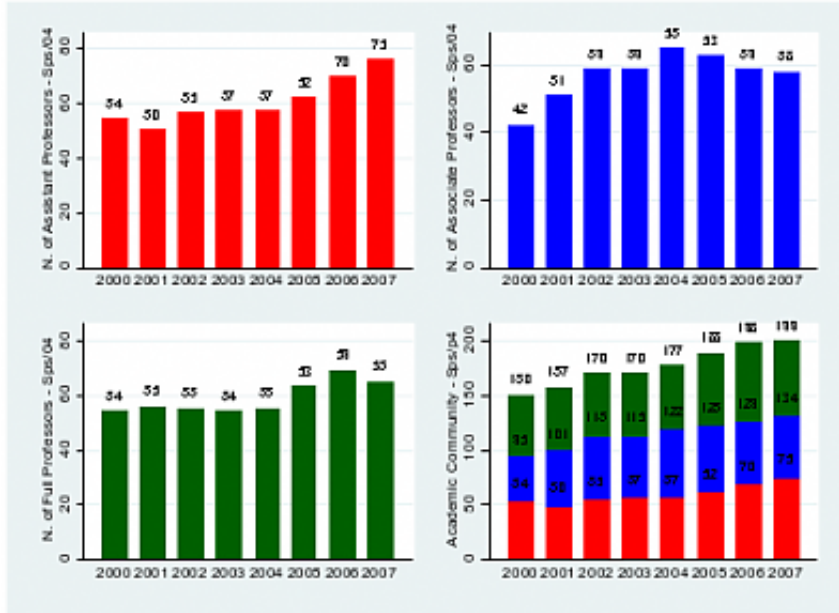


Figure 1: The evolution of each level- position within the academic community of political scientists (2000-2007)

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

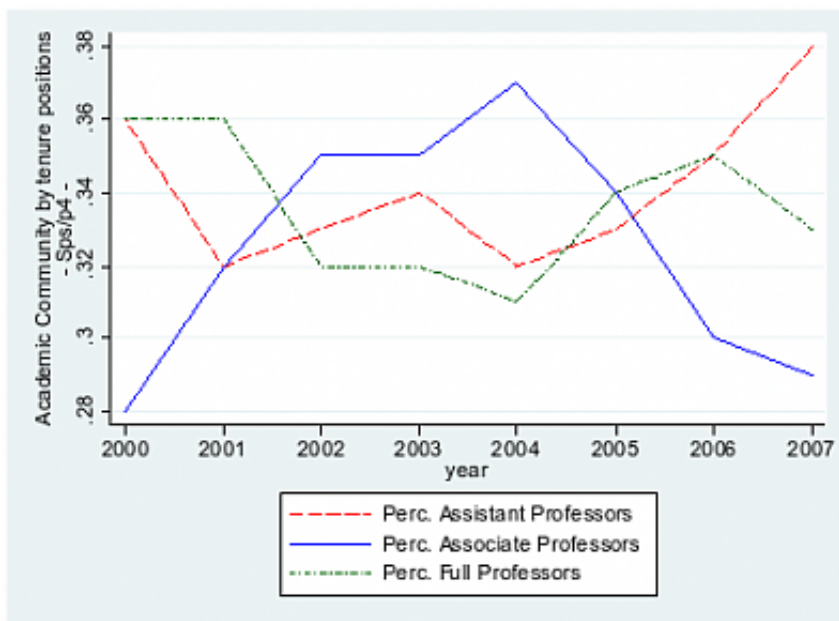


Figure 2: The weight of each level-position within the academic community of political scientists (2000-2007)

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

In this regard, Table 4 illustrates the distribution of tenure positions by each level in, respectively, the political science community, Italian University and Area-14. As can be seen, the distribution looks remarkably similar in the three situations. Only the weight of Full Professors among political scientists is slightly higher (notwithstanding the lower rate of growth, as previously noted, recorded by Full Professors in the political science community compared to the other disciplines in these last years).

Table 4: Distribution of tenure positions by level (political science community, Italian university and Area-14) (31/12/2007)

	Political Scientists	Italian university system	Area-14

Assistan Professors	38.2%	38.1%	38.4%
Associate Professors	29.1%	30.2%	30.5%
Full Professors	32.7%	31.7%	31.1%

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

The presence of political scientists in the Italian Departments

Table 5 reports the distribution of tenure positions in political science between Italian Departments, as well as the respective weight within each of them². As can be seen, there is a great deal of variation, with few departments clearly standing out. Indeed, there are thirteen departments where the weight of Political scientists is equal or higher than 15%, four with a weight higher than 25%, and finally only one department ("Scienza Politica" of the Faculty of Political sciences in Bologna) where the Political scientists represent the majority of the members. Moreover, the first four departments in terms of weight are even the ones that currently boasts the largest percentage of political scientists in the country, comprising all four together more than 1 tenure position in Italy out of 3 (37.2%).

Table 5: The distribution of tenure positions in political science between Italian departments and their relative weight within each department and considering the entire political science community (31/12/2007). In italics the departments with a weight over the median

University	Faculty	Department	N of Political scientists	% Political scientists in the Department	Relative weight on the entire political science community
BOLOGNA	Political sciences	SCIENZA POLITICA	24	70.6%	12.1%
FIRENZE	Political sciences	SCIENZA DELLA POLITICA E SOCIOLOGIA	14	43.8%	7.0%
TORINO	Political sciences	STUDI POLITICI	13	30.2%	6.5%
MILANO	Political sciences	STUDI SOCIALI E POLITICI	13	27.1%	6.5%
GENOVA	Political sciences	SCIENZE POLITICHE E SOCIALI (DI.S.PO.S.)	4	23.5%	2.0%
MILANO "Cattolica del Sacro Cuore"	Political sciences	SCIENZE POLITICHE	6	20.0%	3.0%
BOLOGNA	Political sciences	POLITICA, ISTITUZIONI, STORIA	9	19.1%	4.5%
URBINO "Carlo BO"	Political sciences	STUDI SU SOCIETA , POLITICA E ISTITUZIONI	6	18.2%	3.0%
PADOVA	Political sciences	STUDI INTERNAZIONALI	4	18.2%	2.0%
TRIESTE	Political sciences	SCIENZE POLITICHE	7	17.9%	3.5%
PADOVA	Political sciences	STUDI STORICI E POLITICI	8	17.0%	4.0%
PAVIA	Political sciences	STUDI POLITICI E SOCIALI	7	15.9%	3.5%
MILANO	Political sciences	STUDI DEL LAVORO E DEL WELFARE	3	15.0%	1.5%
TRENTO	Sociology	SOCIOLOGIA E RICERCA SOCIALE	6	13.6%	3.0%
CATANIA	Political sciences	ANALISI DEI PROCESSI POLITICI SOCIALI ED ISTITUZIONALI	7	13.5%	3.5%
PISA	Political sciences	SCIENZE DELLA POLITICA	3	13.0%	1.5%
SIENA	Political sciences	SCIENZE STORICHE, GIURIDICHE, POLITICHE E SOCIALI	5	11.4%	2.5%
	Political				

ROMA TRE	sciences	STUDI INTERNAZIONALI	3	10.3%	1.5%
CATANIA	Political sciences	STUDI POLITICI	3	10.0%	1.5%
NAPOLI "Federico II"	Sociology	SOCIOLOGIA	4	9.5%	2.0%
MILANO	Political sciences	STUDI INTERNAZIONALI	3	9.4%	1.5%
CAGLIARI	Political sciences	STORICO POLITICO INTERNAZIONALE DELL'ETA' MODERNA E CONTEMPORANEA	2	9.1%	1.0%
SALERNO	Political sciences	TEORIA E STORIA DEL DIRITTO E DELLA POLITICA	2	8.7%	1.0%
della CALABRIA	Political sciences	SOCIOLOGIA E SCIENZA POLITICA	4	7.7%	2.0%
SALERNO	Literature and Philosophy	SOCIOLOGIA E SCIENZA DELLA POLITICA	2	7.1%	1.0%
ROMA "La Sapienza"	Communication sciences	INNOVAZIONE E SOCIETA (DIES)	2	6.3%	1.0%
ROMA "La Sapienza"	Political sciences	STUDI POLITICI	3	6.0%	1.5%
BOCCONI – MILANO	Economics	ANALISI ISTITUZIONALE e MANAGEMENT PUBBLICO	2	5.9%	1.0%
SASSARI	Political sciences	ECONOMIA, ISTITUZIONI E SOCIETA	2	5.3%	1.0%
TORINO	Political sciences	SCIENZE SOCIALI	3	4.9%	1.5%
PERUGIA – University for Foreigners	Italian Language and Culture	SCIENZE DEL LINGUAGGIO	2	4.7%	1.0%
PALERMO	Political sciences	STUDI SU POLITICA, DIRITTO E SOCIETA	2	4.4%	1.0%

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

This uneven distribution can be even assessed in the box-plot of Figure 3 that displays the distribution of the weights within each department. The rectangle represents 50 per cent of the cases, with the whiskers (the lines protruding from the box) going out to the smallest and largest value. The line inside the rectangle is the median value and corresponds, in our case, to a value of 12.2%. There are two cases that report a value widely different from the general distribution: the department of "Scienza della Politica e Sociologia" in Firenze (with a weight of 43.8%) and the aforementioned department of "Scienza Politica" in Bologna (with a weight of 70.6%)³. Two further insights arise from Table 3. First, the relative weight of political scientists in the departments of South of Italy reported in the Table is generally low (and lower compared to the general median), with the sole exception of the department of "Analisi dei processi istituzionali ed istituzionali" in Catania. Second, a significant presence of Political scientists within the different departments can usually be found just in the traditional faculties of political sciences. There is even in this case an exception: the department of "Sociologia e ricerca sociale" at the Sociology University of Trento presents a weight higher than the general median (13.6%).



Figure 3: Box-plot of the distribution of the weights of tenure positions in political science within Italian departments (31/12/2007)

Sources: Italian Ministry of University and Research (www.miur.it)

An assessment

There are three main conclusions that can be derived according to the quantitative information previously displayed⁴. First, the Italian political science community has displayed a very pro-active nature in the past eight years, which has led to increase by one third its presence in the nation's universities. Second, albeit growing faster than the overall Italian university system, the trend of political science has been nevertheless lower than the one recorded by several other social science disciplines included in Area-14. Third, and finally, the distribution of Political scientists between Italian departments shows a substantially scattered situation, with almost 40% of the entire political science community concentrated in just four departments.

Footnotes

¹ Still it is worth noting that the weight of the Political scientists within the faculties of political sciences has increased in these last years, passing from 6.4% in 1999 to 7.2% in 2008. See Capano and Verzichelli (2008).

² In Table 5 we considered just the departments where there is an effective "political science core", i.e., more than one political science scholar.

³ More technically, the Department of "Scienza della Politica e Sociologia" is an outlier with respect to the general distribution (i.e., a value between 1.5 and 3 box lengths from the upper edge of the box, where the box length is the interquartile range), while the Department of "Scienza Politica" is an extreme-point (i.e., a value more than 3 box lengths from the upper edge of the box).

⁴ In this report we have focused on one single aspect (i.e., the number of tenure positions and its distribution) concerning the development of the Italian political science community during the last years. Of course, there are other dimensions no less important. See Capano-Verzichelli 2008 for a wider assessment of the state of the art of political science in Italy. See also Morlino 1991, Freddi and Giannetti 2007.

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