The places of Political Science in Italy: The University of Torino and the University of Calabria at Cosenza

interviews with Alfio Mastropaolo* and Giorgio Giraudi‡

With this issue we start a journey across Italy to visit the places where political science is taught. IPS will visit both large and small universities, places where political science has a long tradition and others where it was implanted more recently. The goal is to draw a map and also to assess what is the state of the discipline in Italian universities. Before starting we will only remind a few numbers (updated to October, 2010) which give a first rough measure of the situation of Political Science in Italy:

Faculties of Political Sciences: 37

Academic staff:
Full professors: 62; associate professors: 53; assistant professors (ricercatori): 85; post docs (assegnisti di ricerca): 47.

PhD:
- 5 Programs (University of Milano, University of Pavia, University of Siena, University of Torino, SUM Firenze)
- number of enrolled PhD candidates per year: approx. 20/30

Some of these programs (for instance Firenze SUM) involve a consortium of more than one university. There are a few other programs where political science is part of a broader set of disciplines (Lucca IMT, etc.).


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The University of Torino

*Interview with Alfio Mastropaolo*

**IPS:** The University of Torino can be rightly defined as one of the birthplaces of Italian political science. Norberto Bobbio (1909-2004) and Paolo Farneti (1936-1980) launched in the 1970s an important initiative to create a new school of PS. Could you tell a little more about this story and about the special characters of the “Turin school”?  

**AM:** The defining characteristic of Political Science in Turin is its interdisciplinary nature – there are strong links to Political philosophy, Sociology and History. The fact that we have a small group of scholars in our department serves to encourage interaction with the other disciplines, both as regards the research undertaken and the methods used.  

**IPS:** Please describe the organization of PS in Turin, who are the people involved and their subfields of specialization. How many new people you have recruited in the last five years?  

**AM:** Political Science in Turin is within the Political Sciences Faculty and is housed in the Department of Political Studies. In recent years, we have hired three new assistant professors. However, during the same period, we have also lost one full professor, two associate professors and two assistant professors. We currently have 6 post-doctoral research fellows in the department.  

**IPS:** we would like to know about the main research fields covered in Turin, and could you please list also some of the most important research projects pursued individually or collectively?  

**AM:** Elites, political power, political communication, local government, parties, democratic theory, deliberative democracy, international relations are the main research fields. In the department, there are projects currently running on local power and deliberative procedures. The department is also involved in a number of international research projects on European identity and populist parties. The department has invested heavily in doctoral and post-doctoral research on a range of non-European states such as Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lebanon, China and India. We are also home to the very active Observatory on political communication (http://www.politicalcommunicationmonitor.eu/).  

**IPS:** in the field of postgraduate teaching which are the Master and PhD programs with a predominant political science character? Could you illustrate their specific features? Are there also programs of this level which are done in cooperation with other disciplines?  

**AM:** The PhD programme in Political Science has cooperated closely for many years with the Sociology PhD programme, particularly as regards research methods. The space given to Political theory reflects the long tradition of the subject in Turin, encompassing figures such as Norberto Bobbio and Alessandro Passerin d’Entrèves.
IPS: In the current difficult situation for Italian universities which are the most serious problems for Political Science in Turin? Do you have any special programs for the future?

AM: Like all state universities, we are faced with the problem not only of regeneration, but of survival. The introduction of the PhD programme however was an opportunity for regeneration which has proved very fruitful. The number of students in the programme who did not graduate in Turin is very high and we have invested a lot of resources in sponsoring field research not only in Italy and Europe, but also in the Middle East and Africa. We are also currently planning a new PhD school in Political, Social and Anthropological Sciences. The budget cuts however have made life extremely difficult, not least as regards replacing staff who have retired with talented younger members of the profession. For a relatively small discipline such as Political Science, this is obviously a very serious problem indeed.

IPS: What should attract a young person to Turin to make his/her PhD, or after this for starting a research and teaching career in this university?

AM: Those doing their PhD or pursuing post-doctoral work in Turin who wish to conduct empirical research are strongly supported in a whole series of ways by the department. In addition to the obligatory and interdisciplinary courses which they must attend in the first half of their doctoral studies, there are a wide range of possibilities for them to present their work and discuss it both inside and outside the department. There is also now a dedicated website, run by the PhD students in the department (see http://www.dotduepuntozero.org). PhD Students and young researchers are also strongly encouraged to develop an international profile and, in recent years, many of them have presented papers and organized panels at high-profile meetings such as the ECPR Joint Sessions, the ECPR General Conference and the PSA Annual Conference. The department places particular importance on this aspect and provides considerable financial support to PhD and junior researchers both to travel to international conferences and, through a special translations fund, to publish their work in English. Indeed, in recent years, a number of PhD and postdoctoral fellows from the department have published articles in highly-ranked, peer-reviewed journals and this is something which we regard as extremely welcome and vital for the future development of the department.

IPS: Thank you Alfio!

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**The numbers of Political Science in Torino**

**Academic staff:**
- full professors: 5; associate professors: 1; assistant professors: 3; post docs: 6

**PhD Program:**
- “Political Science & International Relations”
University of Calabria at Cosenza

Interview with Giorgio Giraudi

IPS: The University of Calabria at Cosenza was created in the 1970s as an experiment of a new campus like university. Since its beginnings it has had a small but significant presence of political scientists. Could you tell a little more about this story and about the special characters of the Cosenza team of scholars?

GG: The University of Calabria was for some decades divided into five faculties: Economics, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. In the end of 1990s two new faculties were added: the faculty of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Political Sciences. The latter is organized in three different core curricula at BA level (Laurea triennale): Political Sciences, Administration Sciences, Social Works and Sociology, enrolling around 200 students per curriculum. At MA level (Laurea magistrale) there are three other programs: Political Sciences and International Relations, Sciences of Public Administrations, Sciences of Policies and Social Works, enrolling approximately 100 students each. Classes of political science were present from the beginnings in the study program of the faculty of Economics, but the discipline as such really flourished only with the creation of the new faculty of Political Sciences during the Nineties. The new team was instructed by Prof. Piero Ignazi and over the time the faculty provided the resources for increasing the number of academic personnel.

IPS: Please describe the organization of PS in Cosenza, who are the people involved and their subfields of specialization. How many new people you have recruited in the last five years?

GG: The Faculty of Political Sciences is further divided in departments. All the political scientists belong to the Department of Sociology and Political Science, currently headed by the sociologist Pietro Fantozzi. The political scientists specializations cover different subfields of political science: Francesco Raniolo (full professor) teaches Political Science and Comparative Politics; Giorgio Giraudi (assistant professor) teaches European Politics; Donatella Viola (assistant professor) teaches International Relations; and Maurizio Cerruto, recruited in 2008 as assistant professor, teaches Administrative Science. During the last five years only Maurizio Cerruto was recruited.

IPS: We would like to know about the main research fields covered in Cosenza, and could you please list also some of the most important research projects pursued individually or collectively?

GG: The scientific activity of Francesco Raniolo was focused during the last five years on the following research areas: Party organizational analysis (PRIN-COFIN 2006; 2009); local politics in the South of Italy (ex Murst 60% 2007-10); the quality of democracy, within the project headed by Prof. Morlino (Sum-Italia) on the quality of democracy in Europe (PRIN 2007). The scientific activity of Maurizio Cerruto concentrated on the following research areas: Party organizational analysis (PRIN-COFIN 2006; Mastropasolo & Giraudi, The places of Political Science in Italy - Torino & Cosenza
the quality of democracy, also within the project headed by Prof. Morlino. During the last years Dott. Giorgio Giraudi has conducted research in the fields of European integration and Europeanisation of Italian policies and institutions. He has taken part in several research projects; among them: (PRIN-COFIN 2005-2008); Europeanisation and the Italian Mezzogiorno (URGE 2006-2009 - Unità di Ricerca sulla Governance Europa: The institutional evolution of the European Union); individual projects on European integration and regional policies and politics.

**IPS:** in the field of postgraduate teaching which are the Master programs with a predominant political science character? Could you illustrate their specific features? Are there also programs of this level which are done in cooperation with other disciplines?

**GG:** The Faculty of Political Sciences has offered over the years a Master program of first level (after the Bachelor degree) and one of second level (after the Master degree) in a multidisciplinary prospective: Criminality, Deviance and Penitentiary System; Governing Together. Manager of socio-institutional Networks for Development; Policies and Social Works for Families; Gender Politics and Policies; Third Sector and Social Politics. In addition, within the School of Public Administration, first level Master in Public Management and Management of Territorial Administrations are provided and a Postgraduate Course in Gender and Public Administration.

**IPS:** In the current difficult situation for Italian universities which are the most serious problems for Political Science in Cosenza? Do you have any special programs for the future?

**GG:** The most serious problems that our team has to face are: 1) shortage of personnel and economic resources; 2) quite low level of internationalization; 3) the peripheral position of our university in the transport system (high costs of travelling and accommodation and a lot of time wasted in order to reach even the most important Italian and European cities and, on the other side, quite high costs for organizing local events that can attract professors and students from abroad or outside the region).

**IPS:** What should attract a young person to Cosenza to conduct his/her master level studies, or after this for starting a research and teaching career in this university?

**GG:** The added value of the Political Sciences Faculty of Cosenza is its attitude to integrating different study fields in a multi-disciplinary prospective. Furthermore, the Faculty counts many professors coming from other Italian universities and provides at the same time a rich program of students formation, and a good environment for a productive research. A plus for the students of the University of Calabria is that the Faculty is well connected with local political institutions providing some chances for training programs and job placement.

**IPS:** Thank you Giorgio!
The numbers of Political Science in Cosenza

Academic staff:
1 full professors; 3 assistant professors

National research grants (PRIN) awarded to political scientists (2006-2009):
- Since 2009, “What do political parties do? Challenges, adaptation and change in the political institutions” a joint project of the University of Florence, the University of Trieste, the University of Bologna and the University of Calabria (national project director: M. Tarchi, University of Florence);
- Since 2006, “Italian Observatory on party change” a joint project of the University of Florence, the University of Trieste, the University of Bologna and the University of Calabria (national project director: M. Tarchi, University of Florence).