5 Public Administration in Italy

Denita Cepiku, Marco Meneguzzo

1 Introduction: Italy and its public administration

Italy is a Mediterranean country considered to belong to the Napoleonic state tradition.

The Italian public administration is considered to be part of a distinctive southern European model of democracy and a distinctive model of bureaucracy (Sotiropoulos, 2004). According to Kickert (2007), it is characterised by formalism and legalism, historically introduced as a counterbalance against political interference. Both are considered major reasons for the rigidity and inefficiency of its bureaucracy. The vast majority of civil servants are still administrative lawyers.

Considering that unification occurred only in 1861, the Italian public administration is relatively young when compared to the administrative systems of other European countries such as France, Spain and the United Kingdom. Still, performance is disproportionately heterogeneous across regions, particularly when considering central, northern and southern Italy.

The Italian public administration is the result of cross-fertilisation of different administrative cultures, including the Rechtsstaat tradition (Austro-Hungarian derived, Lombardia and Veneto), bureaucratic Napoleonic traditions (Piemonte and Sardinia), and weak-state models more similar to the Vatican State and the kingdom of the Two Sicilies (south Italy). These administrative cultures embody vastly differing visions of institutional and organisational models, and a diversity of relationships between public administration, citizens/civil society and other social and economic factors (Meneguzzo, 2007).

Selection and training of civil servants is usually carried out by the administration itself, a factor which has brought about the isolation of bureaucracy. A changing trend has taken place over the past five years, with the National School of Administration relying more on universities to deliver postgraduate master’s programmes to civil servants by accrediting programmes and funding full scholarships.
Administrative elites, such as those developed in France and the United Kingdom (Cassese, 1983), are all but non-existent, and the closeness of career paths does not allow for the development of an education system similar to the ENA in France. Needless to say, Italy does not have established public administration education traditions such as the French grands corps or the English “Oxbridge.”

Since the early 1990s, the Italian public administration has been living in a period of permanent reform that has affected almost every area of public management (Cepiku & Meneguzzo, 2011). Such reforms are based on a managerial frame of reference and focus on effectiveness and efficiency, which is contradictory to the legal frame of reference in terms of legal accountability. As management reforms have to be formulated in juridical language in order to become legally enacted, the legalistic monopoly remained unbroken (Kickert, 2005). A survey of the Italian Department of Public Administration in 2003 reported that as many as 99% of the 1,588 senior civil servants interviewed felt they lacked managerial competencies.

The main public administration reform areas from 1990 to date include: transparency, access to information and fighting against corruption, territorial decentralisation, civil service reform, privatisations and contracting out, e-government, managerial controls and performance management, the creation of independent administrative authorities and executive agencies, government-citizen relations (service charter, customer satisfaction and quality management), administrative simplification, spending reviews and reform of the public expenditure management and accounting systems, among others.

Two main considerations can be seen at a glance: the high political turnover and the rich variety of themes. A consequence can be easily grasped: the combination of political instability and the prevalence of legalism, among other features, has led to a serious implementation gap. There is a recurrence of reform themes in political agendas that is not motivated by a change in reform contents due to some policy evaluation, but rather in a reiteration of normative obligations (Cepiku, 2017). These include: performance management, political-administrative relations, administrative simplification, transparency, e-government and accounting, among others.

Today, the role of the Public Administration and public management academic community remains weak, although it has improved, in designing and guiding public sector reforms. This is true both at the central level, where reforms are designed, and at the individual agency level, where they are implemented.
2 The state of the field of Public Administration in Italy

The distinctive national characteristics of the study of public administration in Italy can be understood by considering: the traditional dominance of the administrative law approach, notwithstanding the coexistence of other competing disciplines, in the study of public administration; and the more recent influence of the Anglo-American managerial approach, New Public Management ideas, and the Italian managerial theory *economia aziendale*.

The Italian public administration is still dominated by lawyers and is obsessed with legalism; thus, it is no wonder that the study of administration continues to be dominated by public law. The major part of the competitions and tests for accessing public sector positions, in any rank or policy area, entail a good dose of public and administrative law.

One of the most important public competitions for access to management positions in the public sector (corso-concorso) organised by the National School of Government is based on a first written exam including questions on administrative law, constitutional law and EU and international law; a second written exam concerns political economy, public management and economics.

The fairly recent development of public management research in Italy could be considered the result of the administrative reforms that started in the early 1990s (Kickert, 2007; Meneguzzo, 2007). A previous hesitant initiative in the 1970s could be mentioned aimed at introducing scientific management principles, which encountered obstacles related to a formalistic and juridical culture. Public management is only gradually gaining some terrain, both in practice and in academia.

A vicious circle has been in place with reforms in design and implementation conducted by either administrative law experts or business administrations experts (the latter lacking a thorough knowledge of public administration specifics and often acting as consultants to individual agencies implementing reforms), leading to no or negative and unforeseen results, which in turn have weakened the confidence of politicians and practitioners in management theories. Other disciplines such as political sciences, sociology and public economics have hardly been involved.

The Italian public management academic contribution is interdisciplinary and distinctively characterised by the so-called *economia aziendale* approach, a kind of institutional economic theory of organisations. Although the development of *economia aziendale* dates back to the first decades of the twentieth century, it was thoroughly applied to public administrations only in the past three decades. A possible translation of *economia aziendale* may be business management or business administration, even if neither of these...
terms satisfactorily captures its meaning, which corresponds to the German *Betriebswirtschaftslehre*. It is different from the analytical, model-based and econometric focus of the Anglo-American approach and also from the French *sciences de gestion*, since these studies are centred around the capitalist enterprise archetype, focused on individual profitability objectives. Other differences concern the research method (inductive/deductive in the former, mainly inductive in the latter) (Borgonovi, 1992).

The application of the *economia aziendale* paradigm to public administrations in Italy gained more space and interest during the initial phase of the New Public Management wave. It is still at the heart of many reforms applied to the public sector. Two main critiques of this approach have been the excessive focus on accounting and a failure to include politics and, more generally, adapt concepts and tools to public administration specificities.

### 2.1 Public Administration education

A statistical analysis has explored Public Administration education in Italian universities, with the aim of verifying whether the administrative law approach to university-based Public Administration teaching is still prevalent in Italy (Cepiku, 2013).

Information was collected between June and July 2007 from 204 faculties of 72 universities and 2,198 education programmes at different levels were registered and classified. Overall the evidence suggests that the legal cluster, including but not limited to administrative law, is not the prevalent approach in teaching Public Administration in Italy. The public cluster – mainly political sciences and a public economy approach – is widespread at Italian universities. Furthermore, there is a strong, yet more recent, development of the managerial approach. In general, an insufficient supply of PA programmes has been registered in southern regions, which also put a greater emphasis on doctoral education.

Cotta (1996) offers an interesting historical analysis of the Italian faculties of political sciences. They are depicted as multifaceted units covering a variety of disciplinary areas: the main ones are sociology, contemporary history, constitutional and international law, economics, political philosophy and history of political ideas, statistics and political science *stricto sensu*. Faculties of political science began to spread in other universities particularly after World War II, but quite often the first step was to create a programme of political science under the umbrella of a more well-established law faculty. In time, such programmes have generally managed to become institutions autonomous from the faculties of law.
Political science as a specific and autonomous discipline began to gain a role in the university curricula in the 1960s, although in the Italian academic tradition the disciplines of political philosophy, history of political ideas and state theory (the German *Staatslehre*) had existed long before the appearance of political science (Cotta, 1996).

The number of Public Administration programmes taught at the faculties of economics is higher than that taught at the faculties of law and political science. This result is quite interesting, but it does not take into account the disciplinary character of the programmes. In other words, over 37% of Public Administration programmes taught at the faculties of economics also include courses and programmes in administrative or public law.

A description of Public Administration programmes in terms of their disciplinary character brings about a more balanced picture, with law-oriented programmes counting for 31%, economics for 17.1%, management 12.6%, political science for 9.3% and sociology for 1.9%. Law-oriented programmes concentrate on undergraduate studies, while professional and mid-career training is quite under-developed in this disciplinary area. This may be explained by the fact that Italian civil servants graduate mainly in law and want to develop other kinds of competences.

Finally, if we consider the weight of PhD programmes as an indicator predicting the development of the disciplinary area, we can see that economics and law are well in the forefront, followed by political science and management.

Law is the predominant disciplinary area (31.1%), but not the main cluster, which is the public one with 41%. This can be easily explained by considering the high homogeneity of the legal cluster (matching with law) and the high fragmentation of the other two clusters, especially the public one, split into several different disciplines. While undergraduate programmes are prominent in the legal cluster, in the public cluster there is a strong relevance of PhD programmes, and in the corporate cluster the emphasis is on professional training.

The disciplinary approach adopted in teaching issues such as accounting and administrative science merits a further analysis. We would expect accounting (public, regional or national) to be taught mainly at the faculties of economics and to adopt a managerial approach. However, 70% of the programmes in accounting are characterised by a legal approach.

Programmes entitled “Scienza dell’amministrazione” include only undergraduate courses and one bachelor’s degree at the faculty of political sciences of the University of Palermo. 80% of the courses pertain to the political science disciplinary area (therefore to the public cluster) and are mainly taught at the faculties of political science. Nonetheless, nearly 20% of the courses are taught according to the legalistic approach.
2.2 Main research themes

The following tables illustrate the main topics addressed by articles published in the most important Italian academic journal on public management, *Azienda Pubblica*. 362 articles from 1996 to 2006 and 232 articles from 2007 to 2018 were analysed. The two timeframes represent two different waves of public administration reforms in Italy. These were classified according to the areas of research (table 1), government levels addressed and research strategies.

In the first decade, public administration reform, innovation, planning and control, and accounting systems are the issues that emerge most often in academic/scientific articles (114 articles). There are surprisingly few articles addressing institutional decentralisation and devolution (12), processes which have been of great interest in Italian public administration since 2000. Also infrequent are articles referring to e-government and interdisciplinary issues, with only ten articles in ten years on administrative theories.

Other research issues more in line with the current trends of public management and the progressive evolution towards public governance are emerging: these are human resources management and leadership development, government-citizen relationships, public and institutional communication, public accountability and social/environmental responsibility, inter-institutional networks and strategic management.

Data from the last decade (2007–2018) show the stable presence of accounting research and the emergence of new themes such as performance management, presumably following a major reform approved in 2009. Attention to some topics has sensibly weakened: these include marketing and quality management, privatisation and liberalisation, leadership and human resources management.

The analysis of publications on public management and administration in Italy offers other interesting information on the levels of government researched and the methodology adopted. In the first decade, regional and local administrations were the most analysed organisations (161 articles). The attention given to the local level of government is easily understandable when one considers the higher innovation rate of these administrations. This is the direct effect of greater managerial autonomy, the direct election of mayors and close contact with citizens. Furthermore, the type of activities included in local governmental functions – service delivery as opposed to the policy-making activities characterising ministries and regions – may explain the viability of applying managerial principles (*economia aziendale* and New Public Management) and techniques. Such greater attention to these levels of government is confirmed in the following decade. New entrants are
universities, which have been affected by major performance, financial and human resources management reforms. Attention to healthcare organisations has also increased. International comparisons or best practice analysis of foreign public administrations now attracts less attention.

Table 1  Main themes addressed in Azienda Pubblica articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting*</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and human resources management</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and managerial controls</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other issues**</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration reform and innovation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, quality, customer relationship management</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local public services, privatisation, liberalisation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability and social, environmental reporting***</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-institutional networks</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic management</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution, decentralisation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational change</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance management</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative theories</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government-business-non-profit relations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Government</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public value</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public procurement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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* Two special issues on accounting included.
** Special issue on corruption included
*** Special issue on accountability and social reporting included.
Regarding the levels of government researched, local governments were the most frequent objects of analysis in both periods. Interestingly, attention to foreign best practices has significantly weakened in recent years (from 30 articles in 1996–2006 to only 3 in 2007–2018). While regions were extensively investigated in the first period, universities and healthcare organisations are more often analysed in the second period.

A final feature of Italian research on public management is represented by the predominance of qualitative research in the first decade (324 articles out of 362). In the second decade there was some improvement, with fewer articles on generic literature reviews and more articles employing methods such as action research and simulations. The case study method remains equally important.

2.3 Academia-practice relations

The Public Administration and management field of study is considered to fare better than other academic disciplines in terms of theory-practice relations. This is in part attributed to its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature as well as, as far as the Italian tradition of economia aziendale is concerned, the inductive-deductive research approach.

Two empirical surveys have investigated such a link.

In Cepiku (2011), elite interviewing was undertaken involving 26 senior practitioners and 37 academics; 15 and 23 semi-structured interviews respectively were obtained. The key informants came from all over Italy and the practitioners were from both central and local government.

Is there a rigour–relevance gap in Italian public management? Almost all of the key informants believed there was a significant gap between research and practice in public management in Italy. Just two scholars out of 23 did not see a gap, and one of them said that the relevance of public management research for practitioners was higher than the relevance of private management studies for businesses.

Practitioners were also asked to distinguish between the different types of research they had access to. Most said that a more serious gap existed with reference to research carried out by management consulting firms and Italian universities. Research carried out by professional associations and national/regional innovation units was also perceived as barely useful.

The practitioners said that the academic research they accessed through international journals was the most useful.

Why is there a gap? Most of the key informants thought that the gap was a result of the papers in academic journals being of little practical relevance.
and also the inadequacy of research methods. This, they thought, was due to the lack of dialogue and movement between the two sectors. As one practitioner stated: “Both worlds are excessively inward-oriented and this discourages collaboration between researchers and public managers, apart from consultancy activities.”

Other perceived determinants, especially by academics, include poor accessibility and comprehensibility of scholarly publications to practitioners; the absence of an evidence-based culture among practitioners; and the poor autonomy of public managers from politicians.

Researchers have little knowledge of the public sector context and especially of political-administrative relations. In a senior practitioner’s words, “An in-depth acquaintance of management scholars with the real functioning mechanisms in public administrations (political-administrative relations, the characteristics of the public employment etc.) would help raise the credibility of their research and their engagement in reform programmes.”

Where is the gap? The key informants were asked to identify the areas in which the gap is most evident. Academics and practitioners were more in agreement on management topics (performance management, financial management, quality and customer relationship management, strategic management, human resources management), and less so on interdisciplinary issues (trust, ethics and integrity, workforce ageing).

Academics were seen to have a strong orientation towards issues firmly rooted in a discipline such as strategic planning, financial management, human resources management and marketing. Very few articles were published on issues that practitioners considered highly relevant – for example network management, public sector workforce ageing, ethics and trust.

The strong preference for the case study method in the academic study of public management, although still regarded as rather low in status by some methodologists, represents a research method that is ideally suited to creating managerially-relevant knowledge (Pollitt, 2008). Evidence at the international level shows that only 53.8% of public management research is qualitative (Pitts, 2007); this compares to 91.3% in Italy.

It is worth noting that the ability to conduct quantitative studies in Italy is hampered by the lack of comparable data over different administrations and over extended periods of time. One of the academics interviewed commented, “Lack of empirical evidence is one of the main weaknesses of public management research in Italy. The collaboration between scholars and public managers could contribute to both orient research on more relevant issues and give researchers access to qualitative and quantitative data.”
2.4 Attitudes towards solutions for bridging the gap

During the interviews, the attitudes of the two groups to the main approaches suggested by the literature (M2K based on a convergence of roles or co-production based on complementarity) were investigated.

A shared and prevailing preference for co-production – maintaining the distinctive characteristics of the two groups and on a complementarity of roles – was found. Sixteen out of 21 academics and nine out of 11 practitioners thought that co-production was the solution: “[t]erritorial based and institutional partnerships should be established, though safeguarding the necessary autonomy of scientific research.” The co-production approach was also considered as something that needed to go beyond treating public managers simply as users of research, or relating to them purely for funding or data gathering.

Furthermore, in the words of one academic, “The involvement of public managers … serves as a means of empirical testing of the theories…co-production does not only contribute to create practical knowledge but also to strengthen the rigour of theoretical models.” In a similar vein, “co-production helps scholars to develop theories that are grounded in reality.”

One practitioner highlighted the need to “institutionalise” partnerships, first of all by acknowledging the time and commitment that involvement in research activities requires.

Several respondents from both groups called for strengthening trust as a fundamental condition for any partnership between researchers and public managers.

Italian practitioners are increasingly becoming interested in pursuing high-level education, but several said they were unhappy with the role played by the National School of Government (SSPA).

In sum, the gap was clearly reported as a “lost before translation” gap and manifested itself in two ways:

– Low relevance of current or published research.
– Insufficient academic research on high relevance issues – academics focus more on rigour.

The problem was found in both cases to be one of knowledge production rather than knowledge transfer.

A more recent survey, conducted by Cepiku, Ferrante and Lovergine (2019), aimed at highlighting the views of Italian public managers on the relevance, use and impact of academic research in their day-to-day jobs. A questionnaire was sent to 561 public managers who had accessed public employment through
the National School of Government and 211 individuals (37.61%) replied. Most of the respondents (72%) worked in central public administrations.

Public managers who entered public administrations through the National School of Government exam and subsequent training are considered to be younger, with higher education levels, better knowledge of foreign languages and more international experience compared to the average public manager. They share the same centre-southern geographical origins and legal background, are strong supporters of reforms but often frustrated by a diffused resistance to change and innovation (Mattarella, 2009).

The findings show that public managers access academic research through professional journals (44.1%) and newspapers (40.3%). Preferences for different academic disciplines considering their relevance to practice include: law (90%), management (67.8%), administrative sciences (55.5%) and economics (47.9%).

Almost 87% of the interviewees highlighted the relevance of academic research in their work, and 96.6% considered (in total or in part) academic research a source of conceptual frameworks to use currently in their work. 93.5% of the respondents recognised the contribution of academic research to providing a common language.

56.3% of the respondents resorted to academic research more than once a year, while 11.5% declared they never used it.

40.8% of the interviewees considered the results of academic research to be as important as the competencies they possess.

The case study method was considered the most useful for producing relevant results for practitioners (65.4%).

61.6% of the public managers collaborated with academicians as experts and consultants in policy design, while 38.4% interacted with them during training and education activities.

In summary, the findings supported the literature stream that views the practice-academia missing link as a problem of knowledge-production rather than one of knowledge-transfer. In fact, more than half of the respondents did not have an access problem, but many fewer used academic research. Moreover, they preferred qualitative methods, as compared with academic disciplines that have become increasingly specialised and quantitative.
3 Efforts within the Public Administration community to reflect on the future of the field

Two important venues have recently hosted a debate on the future of the Public Administration field of studies.

The first was an important event entitled “Lo stato dell’arte della ricerca italiana sulla Pubblica amministrazione in una prospettiva europea” (“The state of the art of Italian research on Public Administration from a European perspective”), which took place in November 2017 and was promoted by the National School of Government in collaboration with the EGPA-IIAS.

It gathered scholars from all academic areas interested in Public Administration including the Italian society of political science (SISP), the Italian academy of management (AIDEA) and the Italian association of management engineering (AIIG). It also gathered disciplinary streams such as public management, law, public policies and sociology of organisations.

The law group included streams different from administrative law such as administrative history and administrative science. Administrative law focused on topics such as public procurement and administrative transparency.

Public management scholars debated themes like the evolution of managerial reforms in different types of public administration in the past four decades and the “New Public Management by law” that features Italian reforms (Ongaro, 2009). Other key issues discussed included performance management, change management by organisation theory scholars and public network management.

The political science approach – organised through academic associations such as the Italian Political Science Association (AISP) and the Italian Association of Evaluation (AIV) – focused on key public policies and on European governance and better regulation.

A fourth disciplinary approach is represented by management engineering, which has been increasingly recognised in Italy, which also hosted the annual 2017 EGPA conference at the Polytechnic of Milan. The focus was on the use of ICTs by public administrations, e-Government and the design and management of public works and infrastructure.

Therefore, the future of academic research builds on four well-balanced pillars, of which three are represented in EGPA permanent strategic groups (Ongaro, 2019). In particular, two permanent strategic groups – i.e. Public network policy and management and Financial Management and public sector accounting – are characterised by a strong coordinating role of Italian scholars. Significant Italian participation is also observed in the groups on Sociology of the State: reform and resilience and on Justice and Court administration.
Beside disciplinary specificities, some themes are characterised by a strong multi- and interdisciplinary nature. Among these, it is worth mentioning transparency, accountability and government-citizens relations, fighting corruption and the topic of public governance, which is developed through the collaboration of the public management, political science and public policies approaches.

The second event was the eighth Azienda Pubblica workshop, held in Venice in June 2018, on the theme “Managing innovation in the public sector. Theory and practice.” The key theme related to the challenges of innovation and change in the public sector. Most of the papers focused on accounting; key issues were accounting harmonisation, accrual accounting and measurement. Public expenditure management and spending reviews were also a recurring topic. Other issues included public value, the need for a renewed élite and public leadership, managerial controls, corruption prevention, coproduction, networks and public-private partnerships.

The main levels of government analysed were regions, hospitals, universities and government-owned enterprises.

4 Elements of futures of Public Administration

It is important to mention that Italian academia in general is undergoing a severe brain drain due to the cuts in research funding. For instance, researchers of Italian nationality are highly competitive in winning ERC projects (second only to German scholars), but rarely choose to develop their research in Italian institutions. The latter also fail to attract foreign researchers. The data of the past ten years are dramatic: university students have decreased by 20%, professors and administrative staff by 18%, and overall resources (already below the EU average) by 21% (less 6.6 billion euros from the state). In ten years, PhD positions have been reduced by 40%: in Italy there are 0.5 PhD students for every 1,000 inhabitants compared to 1.7 in the United Kingdom and 2.5 in Germany.

These data explain the decreasing interest of Italian scholars, including those working on public administration, in national journals and, more generally, research published in Italian.

As regards national publication outlets, the main national academic journal remains Azienda Pubblica, founded in 1988 by a group of scholars from the Bocconi University. It hosts mainly public management research, but also research from other approaches as well as from practitioners. Administrative law outlets include Amministrare, Giornale di Diritto Amministrativo,
Rivista di Diritto amministrativo and the Rivista trimestrale di Scienza della Amministrazione.

The attractiveness of national academic journals was discussed in September 2018 in Verona in a round table entitled “The future of national scientific journals: addressing the internationalisation challenge,” organised by the Italian Society of Accounting and Business Administration Scholars (SIDREA). The driver for internationalisation has been emphasised by the classification of academic journals by the National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research and by the AIDEA. Both are strongly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon model of A-ranking journals. As far as management journals – including public management – are concerned, all journals are in the English language. Thus, Italian scholars have no incentive to publish in Italian. Moreover, the availability of A-ranking journals that have Public Administration as part of their aims and scope is quite limited compared to other disciplines which are part of the economic sciences area.

A paradoxical effect has been that the choice of research topics by Italian public management scholars is often based on the expectation of what could more probably be published in an A-ranking journal. In other terms, supply guides demand (Mussari, 2018).

As a consequence of the brain drain and of the increased national competition, the presence of Italian scholars in international journals, books and conferences has grown steadily, hand in hand with the number of expatriates in the United Kingdom, France, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and Spain.

The international contamination of research topics has resulted in more comparative research and in the introduction of new themes such as, for example, public service motivation.

A weak international influence is exercised by Italian administrative law scholars on the administrative law schools in Latin America (Brazil and Argentina), and inside networks such as the IIAS and the Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo (CLAD).

A third internationalisation trend is supported by the EU fund on inter-regional collaboration (Interreg) but also by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which contribute to comparisons and debate between Italian, Swiss, Austrian, French and, to a minor extent, Tunisian and Slovenian scholars on topics of public governance and management.

A final consideration refers to the education role of the Public Administration academic community. The low attractiveness of the public employee, due to the turn-over freeze and the public opinion perception of civil servants,
makes undergraduate programmes struggle with a low number of students. The reverse is true of postgraduate and professional training programmes in which public management disciplines thrive.

In sum, some resilience can be observed: the brain drain, along with academic career reform, has led to greater internationalisation; the disciplinary fragmentation is slowly evolving towards multidisciplinary efforts; disconnected specialised research triggers research on grand questions such as sustainable development goals, digital government, non-profit-making management and social innovation.

References


