The Fate of Political Scientists in Europe

From Myth to Action

Giliberto Capano · Luca Verzichelli

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To Maurizio Cotta and Giorgio Freddi
who have taught us the passion for the discipline
and how to take care of it

For the next generations of political scientists.
So that they will never forget that being a political scientist does not
only mean
carrying out excellent research, writing brilliant, original papers, and
teaching students;
it also means, first and foremost, contributing towards a better,
democratically sustainable society

PREFACE

The story of this volume is a rather long one. We started writing about the quest for eclecticism and versatility in political science in the early 2010s. At that time, we mainly focused on the problem of political science's *internal borders*: we basically followed an inductive line of reasoning, without any clear theoretical framework, in an effort to remove the obstacles to the growth of the discipline and to reduce the barriers separating generations and numerous *tribes* of scholars. Moreover, our empirical outlook was a rather narrow one in the beginning, since we only dealt with data concerning the community of Italian political scientists. Nevertheless, the critical nature of the challenges faced by political science was quite clear, and we continued to pursue our project and to develop a more systematic, broader comparative perspective.

However, so many things have changed in our professional lives in recent years. First of all, both of us have been engaged with a growing number of research activities and institutional duties at national and international levels, and this has somewhat slowed our project down. Nevertheless, these professional commitments have also strengthened our belief in the need to keep a keen eye on both the present and the future of our profession. The ideas and the report that we have discussed at international conferences, and the organizational responsibilities we have taken on within certain international political science and academic associations, have given us the opportunity to better refine our research questions and develop a broad framework, all of which lay at the core of a project previously presented to "COST—European Cooperation in Science and

Technology" during the course of 2016. Said project[1] included a number of activities concerning the problem of the professionalization of European political science from a multidimensional perspective. Four themes were engaged with by the network of scholars from 37 European countries. These themes were: the evolution of the academic community and its chosen subjects; the degree of visibility of the discipline in traditional and new media; the rates of international mobility and the international circulation of research findings; and the question of applicability and the actual application of political science's products.

Things change. We know this. But the way things have changed during the few past years is certainly peculiar. During the preparatory period, the Proseps network suffered problems regarding the completeness and availability of data due to the financial crisis which had severely hit the academic communities, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe. When these problems had been resolved, and we were finally able to analyse large sets of data, collected thanks to systematic reviews and the launch of a broad survey conducted among more than 11,000 European political scientists, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, preventing us from meeting up during the last year of the project and forcing us to postpone the deadline for the final reports.

Once again, unforeseen events slowed our project down; but, once again, they also further encouraged us to reflect anew on the future of a discipline which, given the historical constraints and the effects of the present crises, looks particularly uncertain. Our doubts about the actual development of political science in Europe, and our desire to understand its potential future, were fed by several intervening factors connected to the aforesaid crises, ranging from the economic slump to the problem of mass immigration, and from the pandemic to the recent war in Ukraine of course. These events have produced considerable uncertainty about Europe's economic stability, which in turn impacts the availability of funding for research and higher education. However, these recent crises have also led to concerns regarding certain specific aspects of the political scientist's profession: for example, decreasing international mobility, the adaptation to changing teaching techniques and variations in the research

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[1] Cost Action CA15207, Proseps (*Professionalization and Social Impact of European Political Science*). The project started on September 2016 and lasted till March 2021 (the end date was postponed for 6 months due to the pandemic). An overall summary of the project can be found at the web page: http://proseps.unibo.it/

agendas of several academic institutions, and these concerns need to be taken into account for the purposes of our interpretative endeavours.

Accordingly, we intend this volume to be a candid reflection based on empirical evidence and connected to the multidimensional discussion we have witnessed over the years. The findings of four Proseps working groups,[2] most of which have already been published, provide solid interpretative analyses of the phenomena at the core of the ongoing and future professionalization of political science. Here we wish to offer a comprehensive summary of this multidimensional process, to provide our views on future scenarios and finally to offer a few simple normative observations.

The point of departure of this volume can be summed up as follows: whatever we choose to define the boundaries of the discipline and the scope of the work of those who accept the label of "political scientists", the fragile, uncertain nature of political science continues to threaten the future development of this scientific community. Consequently, we have to take such a threat into consideration. This is particularly true in the case of European political science, for several reasons.

Firstly, European political science continues to be seen as *less relevant* than other disciplines; and in terms of its overall penetration in the academic environment, it remains less relevant than North American political science. Secondly, European political science continues to be labelled as *less scientific*, particularly when compared to other empirical social sciences such as psychology, sociology and, to some extent, anthropology. This seems to be due to the uncertain epistemological structure of the discipline, which has often been described as a residual mass of disorganized demands. Thirdly, European political science seems to suffer from the presence of other communities of scholars and stakeholders, who are more publicly visible and better able to impact public debate. There are reasons to fear that political science may be much *less impactful* than, for example, sociology, history or psychology. Several studies have already been made of this topic. Even in Europe, the problem of impact has been extensively discussed. However, we argue that this time, European political science has much more to lose if its recurrent problems of impact and social visibility are not dealt with adequately.

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[2] The Proseps working groups were devoted to the state of political science in Europe, internationalization of European political science, social impact and media visibility and the advisory role of political scientists in Europe.

Thus, a comprehensive discussion of the challenges and prospects of European political science seems to be particularly timely. It has been over 10 years since the advent of the recent global recession, and we are now in the middle of a delicate transformation of the political scenario within the European Union (EU) and in many European democracies, and thus we need to pay careful attention to the dynamics of the changes affecting not just the "objects" of our discipline but also its interaction with the surrounding world. Moreover, recent developments like the disastrous effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe, and the Russia-Ukraine war, have created further inequality among and within European countries. This volume thus mainly focuses on three aspects of political science: (1) the *boundaries* (internal and external boundaries) and definitions of the discipline; (2) the *individual characteristics* of European political scientists (background, teaching fields, different experiences of the implementation of research and teaching approaches); (3) the *attitudes and values* of scholars and their perception of their roles and professional mission.

The underlying aim is to offer a comprehensive interpretation based on robust data and to develop a more realistic reflection on the future of the discipline. During these recent, troubled times, we have often reflected on the best way of addressing these issues; and we have concluded that the introduction of the concepts of *fate*—to indicate the criticality of the moment—and of *heroes* may help us offer a positive message and better connect the history of political science to the future goals we have in mind. These concepts are certainly not new. There is copious literature on the future scenarios employing similar ideas: for instance, the image of the potential *tragedy of political science*, or its demise to a state of *irrelevance*, has been recurrent, as has the definition of certain *models* of academic and intellectual profiles that can inspire our work. However, most of the classic works we have reviewed tend to analyse the fate of the discipline in terms of individual aspects (impact, visibility, academic strength, applicability etc.) or even focus on the role played by individual *pioneers* in the establishment of specific sub-disciplines or theoretical approaches.

In this volume, we have chosen to see Fate as a possible (hopefully positive) refoundation of political science on the basis of the many dimensions of professionalization we have explored, thanks to the Proseps project. Furthermore, we have chosen mythological heroes to portray the attitudes that tomorrow's political scientists in Europe should adopt in their work. After all, while it is true that political science is old enough to boast at least four generations of scholars—and we should remember and celebrate the

efforts of the first generation of *founders*—it is also young enough to open a discussion among at least three generational cohorts of professionals. For this reason, we have selected 20 European political scientists with whom we have discussed the qualitative and quantitative data emerging from our project, and whose views on our future as a professional category we have listened to and analysed.

This book recounts this story. Chap. 1 summarizes where we are now through an analysis of the magnitude and the variance of European political science. Chap. 2 focuses on the explanations of this state of things. Chap. 3 examines the present transformations and challenges and ends with an initial analysis of the attitudes of European political scientists in the current health pandemic. Chap. 4 shifts from the interpretative to the normative level, identifying the quest for *engaged eclecticism* and a more specific idea of *critical thinking* to relaunch the professional role of political scientists.

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A special thanks also goes to the colleagues we interviewed (see the list in Appendix B), since they significantly contributed to our understanding of the past, the present and the future of the discipline.

Finally, we are indebted to all of the young scholars we have met in recent years, during the course of the PhD programmes we teach in and at the many conferences we have attended. They may not be aware of the fact, but their enthusiasm for the discipline, and their desire to become "good" political scientists, has genuinely fuelled our work and been pivotal to its completion.

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European Political Science: The Magnitude, Heterogeneity and Relevance of a Divided Discipline

1 PREMISE: POLITICAL SCIENCE—THE YOUNGEST DISCIPLINE FOR THE STUDY OF POLITICS IN EUROPE

The study of politics goes back a considerable length of time and is deeply rooted in the evolution of human societies and their beliefs, preferences and worldviews. However, political science, as a specific discipline anchored to theory-driven empirical analyses of political phenomena, is still in its youth.

While the genetic phase of modern political science dates from the turn of the nineteenth century, and principally concerns the USA and Europe, there is no doubt that this discipline is characterized by its subsequent non-linear development: while in the USA it began to be established between the First and Second World Wars, in Europe its developmental path has been more complicated due to diverging political contingencies. In particular, account must be taken of the asymmetric timing of democratization in European countries, and of the difficult process whereby political science has gradually freed itself of the legacy of other forceful disciplines which have traditionally been considered legitimated to a greater degree when it comes to the study of politics. These vary somewhat from one country to another, although in most cases the predominant disciplines have been public law, sociology, history and philosophy.

To be honest, every European country has attempted to anchor the national development of political science to the idiosyncratic evolution of

the country's academic, scientific and cultural history. For example, in Italy the elitist tradition of Mosca, Pareto and Michels is very often considered a pivotal factor in the evolution of the discipline. In France and the United Kingdom, it was the emergence of an inter-disciplinary set of educational programmes that provided the window of opportunity for the new subject. Indeed, references are frequently made to the establishment, in 1871 and in 1895, of two rather different models of "advanced school" specialized in the study of politics (Favre, 1989; Hayward, 1991). Swedish scholars often proudly point out that the Johan Skytte chair of eloquence and politics had already been established way back in 1622. Finally, even in those countries where long-lasting authoritarian and totalitarian regimes had somehow colonized the space of political science, these traditions somehow influenced the subsequent polyarchic experiences (Berndtson, 2012). Key examples of this include the former Soviet Union, where Marxist Leninism was taught as "political science" for decades, and Spain, where the Francoist regime introduced courses in political law (*derecho politico*) that were to impact the re-establishment of the discipline after the political transition in the 1970s.

Indeed, it is always possible to find predecessors of the discipline accounting for some kind of national tradition in every European country. However, the fact is that being a scientific discipline, political science has specific (albeit variegated) principles that are widely shared by an international community. These principles first emerged in the USA, and have since been strengthened thanks to the work of a few major European thinkers, including Stein Rokkan, Maurice Duverger and Giovanni Sartori. This was inevitable: in the United States a complete set of conditions favourable to the development of an empirical approach to the study of politics had emerged well before this happened in other countries. These conditions were: the political conditions (basically, the establishment of a solid democracy); the cultural condition (the prevalence of a pragmatic view, also from the philosophical point of view); and a less constraining State tradition (whereas in Continental Europe the lengthy evolution of the State meant that the juridical perspective had been adopted as the main analytical lens for the study of political phenomena) (Easton et al., 1991; Almond, 1996)

In Europe, these principles were introduced and subsequently supplemented not only through a complex process that was intrinsically linked to national legacies, but also through a process of adaptation the outcome of which was not just a faithful reproduction of the American template, but something different due to the variegated intellectual roots and institutional

legacies present in Europe (Schmitter, 2002; Meny, 2020). We can safely assume that these differences may be exaggerated: as we will show below, there are significant divisions in the discipline that cut across the European and American contexts; what is undisputable in the case of European political science, however, is that the fragmented context in which it developed, the different timing of democratization of diverse European countries, together with their differing academic traditions, has meant that European political science is a latecomer and is definitively the newest social science to achieve a sufficient level of academic legitimation and a certain degree (not particularly high, unfortunately) of social recognition.

However, even if European political science seems to have an independent life of its own, its youthful character, together with the epistemological problems associated with the discipline, may represent an insurmountable limitation in the present (and future) turbulent times (Ansell et al., 2017; Ansell & Trondall, 2018). Continual crises and global challenges (the 2008 financial and economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, global climate change and so on) provoke recurrent upheaval in the academic and scientific world, since they trigger continuous demands for advice, knowledge and evidence-based guidelines. Such turbulent dynamics can represent a significant peril for European political science, which is required to overcome its traditional myths, epistemological divides and institutional weaknesses in order to provide such answers.

2   Political Science: Its Divisions and Weaknesses

2.1   *The Epistemological Weakness of Political Science*

As a matter of fact, while the (several) European political science communities have their own unique features (due to their history and context), they also share some significant common traits, in terms of their scientific status and social relevance, that have been attributed to the discipline as a whole. The status of political science is still fragile in many places, not only from the viewpoint of its relevance to the academic system, but also in terms of its public image. This fragility may depend on a multitude of reasons, but first and foremost it is embedded in the epistemological status of the discipline. In fact, while political science is undoubtedly a legitimate academic discipline, meaning "the primary unit of internal differentiation of the modern system of science" (Stichweh, 1992, p. 4), its epistemological status and its methodological and theoretical borders fluctuate and are

very often affected by internal disputes and external pressures. An academic discipline is characterized by preserving the following characteristics to a certain degree (Krishnan, 2009):

1. A particular object at the core of its research (e.g. law, politics, society, natural world), although the object can be shared with other disciplines.
2. A body of accumulated specialist knowledge, that is specific to one discipline and should be not shared with others.
3. A set of common theories and concepts, which allows the systematization of a comprehensive corpus of cumulative knowledge.
4. A specific technical language.
5. A set of specific methods.
6. A structured presence in the teaching and research of higher education institutions (institutionalization).

Leaving the institutionalization dimension aside for a moment (see the following section), we shall now focus on the other fundamental dimensions. Political science suffers from a series of problematic issues due to its characteristics and to the significantly different ways that political scientists define their own jobs.

To better understand these problems, it is useful to conceptually treat the concept of discipline in accordance with certain well-known classifications (Biglan, 1973a, 1973b; Becher, 1989; Becher & Trowler, 2001), thanks to which academic disciplines are categorized according to their cognitive attitude (the nature of knowledge) and their social attitude (the nature of disciplinary culture). A discipline's cognitive attitude can be treated by focusing on the epistemological/theoretical dimension and on the grade of applicability. Thus, academic disciplines can be divided into *hard* and *soft*, and *pure* and *applied*, thus giving a four-cell matrix (see Table 1.1). *Hard* disciplines hold well-developed, shared theories and

Table 1.1   The cognitive attitudes of academic disciplines

	Soft	Hard
Pure	History Sociology *Political science*	Physics
Applied	Education Law	Engineering Economics

methods, universal laws and causal propositions; they are cumulative and have generalizable findings, and are highly competitive. *Soft* disciplines, on the other hand, have unclear boundaries, a plurality of theories, different definitions of explanation, loosely defined problems. *Pure* disciplines are self-regulating and have little concern for practical application. *Applied* disciplines are to some extent regulated by external influences (e.g. by professional bodies such as the ones regulating lawyers or engineers) and are focused on the practical application of scientific concepts.

The social attitude of a discipline can be conceptually treated according to a distinction made based on the characteristics of the level of disciplinary identity, and of the way of doing research. According to the former criterion, disciplines can be either convergent or divergent. Convergent disciplines possess uniform standards of research and a stronger sense of cohesion and identity within the group; thus, their boundaries are much more clearly defined. Divergent disciplines, on the other hand, sustain greater intellectual deviance and display a propensity to adapt across boundaries from other disciplines. According to the latter criterion, a discipline can be classified as either rural or urban. Urban disciplines are characterized by a detailed disaggregation of the research problems in small unities, with a great number of researchers studying the same problem. Rural disciplines cover larger fields of research, involve less interaction, and the ratio of researchers to each research problem is lower. Table 1.2 presents the resulting typology.

By adopting these classificatory lenses, political science can at first sight be characterized as *soft* and *pure* from the cognitive point of view, and as *rural* and *divergent* from the cultural/social point of view. As a matter of fact, we may define political science as a *soft* discipline, since we are all perfectly aware that there is no paradigmatic consensus within the community, while our theoretical bases remain highly diversified. Analogously, we may say that it is a *pure* discipline since traditionally there has been very

Table 1.2 Social attitudes of the academic disciplines

	Convergent	Divergent
Rural	History Economics	Education Modern languages Sociology *Political science*
Urban	Physics	Mechanical engineering

little concern regarding its practical application. Indeed, the original attitudes of political scientists and the broad majority of current research topics tend to exclude the practical application of our knowledge.

As far as the focus on the social construction of disciplinary identities is concerned, we may define political science as a *divergent* discipline. Indeed, its levels of identity and cohesion remain very low or generic due to the lack of a common core of discourse-argumentation-theories-methods. Moreover, we may define political science as a *rural* discipline in the sense that there are still few researchers dealing with the same topics, and thus there is limited competition among them (unlike physics, e.g., which is considered an "urban" discipline since there are many researchers working on the same topics).

This lack of a common core in the modes of discourse and argumentation structurally drives high disciplinary fragmentation. Furthermore, there is the vastness of the topics studied by political scientists (ranging from electoral behaviour to public policy, from political institutions to international relations, from political communication to political theory and so on). As a result, political science resembles a kind of confederation of research sectors: its internal borders are often more pronounced than its external ones. Consequently, competition among researchers is relatively low (Capano & Verzichelli, 2016).

The significant fragmentation and division of political science is widely acknowledged. The discipline has always been divided into schools and factions. For decades, there has been a clear methodological divide "between those who view the discipline as a hard science-formal, mathematical, statistical, experimental-dedicated to the cumulation of tested 'covering laws', and those who are less sanguine and more eclectic, who view all scholarly methods, the scientific ones as well as the softer historical, philosophical, and legal ones, as appropriate and useful" (Almond, 1990, p. 7). This divide is still present right now: it is highly probable that many political scientists would not recognize themselves in our classification of the discipline. There are those who embrace rational choice theory or a strongly quantitative approach, who would argue against our classifying political science as a soft discipline. They would consider it to involve sufficiently hard academic endeavour, and probably as more convergent than rural. However, this argument can be easily confuted by the presence of so many other scholars belonging to different theoretical schools, who are more interested in qualitative analysis.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the abovementioned classifications try to embrace a general trend, and this has become something of a challenge. In fact, we are perfectly aware that in recent years, political science has also been subjected to considerable pressure to modify its inherited cultural and cognitive features. As far as regards political science's cultural features, the rural dimension has been challenged by the substantial pressure on scholars to publish as a result of internal academic dynamics. This phenomenon is linked to the evident transformation of research practices, which are now of a much more collective nature. The increasing number of scientific articles co-authored by more than two scholars is the most emblematic indicator of this pattern (Metz & Jäckle, 2017).

Moreover, the divergent dimension has also been affected by the attempt to reduce theoretical variety as well as methodological diversity. This is shown by several elements, two of which merit attention here:

1. the increasing prevalence of quantitatively significant items of research, based on large numbers of cases, published by the most prestigious journals (especially American ones);
2. the increasing propensity to adopt multi-method, increasingly sophisticated, research designs.

These characteristics do not radically change the rural/divergent nature of political science: in fact, qualitative analysis is still relevant, at least in the European scenario. However, if we take a closer look at the development of the discipline, we discover that there are dynamics that are working towards loosening the borders and partially changing the inherited legacy.

As far as regards the cognitive dimension, this has also been undermined by external actors. For example, in the USA a concerted effort has been made by the Republican Party to significantly reduce National Science Foundation funding to American political science departments. The arguments of the leading supporter of this strategy, Senator Tom Coburn, clearly dispute the social relevance of the discipline: "Studies of presidential executive power and Americans' attitudes toward the Senate filibuster hold little promise to save an American's life from a threatening condition or to advance America's competitiveness in the world" (Coburn, 2013). At the same time, the new EU research framework for the periods 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 clearly calls upon all social sciences, including political science, to radically shift towards applied research.

Thus, the lack of any strong, unified theoretical paradigms (such as those that economists apparently seem to have), the fragmentation of research topics and the lack of large-scale joint research projects make the discipline very weak not only in epistemological terms but also from the professional point of view. The consequence is the risk of a weak public image, with the discipline being perceived as socially irrelevant (Flinders, 2013).

2.2   *The Weak Social Relevance of Political Science*

This almost intrinsic nature of political science also facilitates specific patterns of behaviour, which in turn can contribute to political science succumbing to the vicious circle of social and political irrelevance. As Gerry Stoker has pointed out (2010), there are four possible factors underlying the low esteem afforded to political science, which we believe to be closely linked to the aforementioned intrinsic hegemonic cultural and cognitive dimensions of the subject:

1. the temporal de-alignment of the logic of political scientific discovery and its political timing. In the world of real politics, there are very few windows of opportunity for political scientists to play a genuine advisory role (Brans & Timmermans, 2022), and these rare opportunities are often wasted since, owing to their "pure" mission, political scientists want to obtain accurate results from their research, which requires a timescale that the rapid, often erratic nature of political decision-making seldom affords. At the same time, its nature as a "soft" and "divergent" science does not offer policy-makers any potential widely shared solutions.

2. the organizational incentives of academic work. Within pure subjects, these incentives are particularly oriented towards peer reputation, and little or no consideration is given to its value by social and political actors. This means that, unlike most of the so-called applied sciences, political science is almost totally internally driven, with little attention paid to the external environment.

3. the problematic relationship between facts and values, and the prevailing rhetoric of the neutrality of research, that lead the majority of political scientists to pursue description and explanation rather than prediction, prescription and evaluation. From this point of view, there is an evident contradiction between the historical conditions which have allowed the development of political science (in one

word: the consolidation of democratic regimes) and the embarrass-
ment of political science when perceiving itself as a science of
democracy, as suggested by Harold Lasswell (1956, 1963) and
Lasswell and Lerner (1951).

4. the prevailing focus on research questions which are largely discon-
nected from real political and policy problems. This lack of focus on
practical problems, and the "rural" nature of the discipline (which
does not result in any critical mass of scholars working on the same
topic), means that the research design is substantially disconnected
from the most pressing problems faced by existing political systems.
The result is that the knowledge produced is not easily operational-
ized in applied terms. Therefore, political science is overly concerned
with searching for explanations, rather than for political and policy
solutions to important social issues. Obviously, there are some
"practical outcomes", as it were, of political science. For instance,
the spill-over importance from the public policy or "institutional
engineering" subfields has been broadly debated since the begin-
ning of the post-behaviouralist re-establishment of the discipline:
although it is intrinsically a soft-pure discipline, political science can
generate knowledge that is directly usable in improving public pol-
icy (Cairney, 2015, 2016) and the institutional arrangements of
political systems (Sartori, 1994). However, these examples do not
change the general assessment of the situation.

The picture emerging from the above discussion furthers debate on the
relevance and social impact of political science. In fact, such a framework
shows how the internal (some might say "intrinsic") features of the disci-
pline represent a sort of epistemological constraint, that is a hurdle which
needs to be overcome in order to guarantee political scientists a suffi-
ciently wide audience in the social sphere and in political debate. These
internal cognitive dimensions of the discipline make it substantially disad-
vantaged in the battle for a significant reputation. It is at a structural dis-
advantage when it comes to acquiring resources (funding, students),
gaining academic visibility and ensuring society's perception of its pur-
ported utility and legitimacy.

This assessment of the intrinsic theoretical-methodological divides in
political science, together with its propensity to have an almost completely
"curiosity-driven" research agenda, shows its general weakness and poten-
tial social irrelevance. This picture does not necessarily lead to a pessimistic

conclusion (as we shall show at the end of this book). However, it is important to really understand the complex process of institutionalization of political science in Europe, as well as its current state.

2.3   The Problem of Identity: A Discipline that Still Does Not Know What It Is?

The characteristics pertaining to the cognitive and social dimensions of the discipline and to its social perception raise the issue of political science's identity. This may seem an irrelevant problem. In fact, also sociology, for example, is characterized by the same cognitive and socio-cultural properties; but what a sociologist is appears quite clear to sociologists themselves, and also to society as a whole. Then there is economics, which is clearly harder than political science and more readily acknowledged at the social level. The identity problem is an intrinsic aspect of the genesis of the discipline political science developed in order to offer an empirical description and explanation of political phenomena, that is, something whose meaning is arguable and whose practical/empirical dimensions can be investigated by other pre-existing disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, economics, geography, law and history. The truth is that political science is a second- (or third-)generation discipline in the process of specialization of academic fields. It is precisely because the topic of research (the political phenomenon) has been the object of the relative disciplines (a crowded group), that many related concepts existed before the emergence of political science, or are continuously defined by older disciplines (Easton et al., 1991).

Unsurprisingly, political science can be considered a net borrower of concepts from other disciplines and is thus in some way bound to hybridization depending on the theoretical perspective adopted and the topic of research in question (Dogan, 1996). Very few research topics will be excluded from this constitutive dynamic (e.g. electoral behaviour, party system studies). This probably represents a favourable opportunity in terms of potential discoveries, but also an intrinsic limit on building up a shared, complete disciplinary identity. Finally, it should be pointed out that this intrinsic identity problem in the case of European political science may be further complicated by the considerable variance in national cultures and academic systems, which could act to exacerbate fragmentation and disciplinary hybridization. Thus, the question "who are we?" is always going to be important within this discipline.

3 European Political Science: The Long March Towards Professionalization

While sharing a number of epistemological and professional characteristics with a multitude of other branches of learning, as shown above, European political science has its own peculiarities. These are obviously related to the historical path it took towards its institutionalization, that is to say, the achievement of a sufficiently structured presence in the social sphere, and in particular within the institutional systems of higher education and research.

The factors that speed up or hamper the process of institutionalization concern specific cultural and scientific legacies and milieus of each political system; and the different historical development of the discipline from that of American political science is of course a fundamental aspect in this regard. These characteristics are clearly of a national character, although on balance they have something in common that justifies the label of European political science (Schmitter, 2002; Meny, 2020). A common core of values seems to be present in the development of most European political science communities (if not all of them). This is why it will be important to estimate to what extent the intrinsic fragmentation of the discipline in Europe may be offset by the undertaking to share these values during the different national processes of professionalization of the discipline.

In this section, we will therefore sum up the main historical points of divergence, as well as the main convergent traits, that determine the nature of the discipline as we know it today in Europe. Obviously, given the present volume's focus on the community of people who practice the discipline, we are principally interested in the historical evolution of political science within higher education and research institutions, where the majority of those we call "political scientists" operate. That is to say, we need to examine a few indicators of the process of (academic) professionalization of political science: the process that we consider to be the necessary harbinger of a broader phenomenon of political science's social institutionalization, which we will come back to in the course of the next chapter.

3.1   A Discipline in Search of Scholars

Politics has been the subject of analysis on the European continent for a great while, indeed since the days of the earliest Greek philosophy. Since then, politics has of course undergone a complex process of conceptualization and reconceptualization, in keeping with historical developments within Europe, while different national trajectories have been witnessed within the political sphere. Furthermore, the study and conceptualization of politics are deeply entrenched in the evolution of the State. It is widely acknowledged that this process of conceptualization was for a long time characterized by a strong normative basis, or was dealt with from a juridical or historical analytical perspective. This was inevitable due to the intrinsic evolution of academic knowledge, and to its specialization that had to reflect the historical developments of the time.

Consequently, while in the USA the first theoretical focus of modern political science was the role of groups and the pluralistic dynamics of the governmental process (Bentley, 1908), in Europe the focus was on élites and the élite-centred dynamics of politics (see, e.g., the works of Mosca, Pareto and Michels). At the same time, in Europe the call for a new discipline tasked with studying politics in a different way characterized the entire nineteenth century, as shown by the work of diverse scholars. These scholars began to examine the question of such a new discipline by separating politics from the State. The first signs of an approach to political science were witnessed in differing forms on either side of the Atlantic, this difference being due to the diverse political situations on those continents. This is something that needs to be borne in mind, as it was also to make a significant difference in the decades thereafter. In the USA, the discipline initially came into being when focusing on an empirical phenomenon, that is, a political process in which pluralism appeared to be the constitutive dimension; in Europe the new discipline had to deal with the presence of a strong State that appeared to use its juridical basis and language to compress and conceal the real characteristics of political phenomena.

We do not know whether these different roots of the discipline could have led to any kind of convergence, owing to the different paths it took in the two continents thereafter. In fact, the new discipline had the opportunity to emerge in the USA thanks to the empirical and quantificative transformations introduced by Merriam and the Chicago school, to the institutionalization of the profession, and to the behavioural revolution

after the Second World War. On the other hand, the new discipline's emergence was stunted in Europe as a result of the dramatic political events between the 1920s and the end of the Second World War, and thus the evolution of European political science was frozen by the political context and its dynamics.

It was only after the war that European political science could resume its developmental path, at least in Western Europe, while in Eastern Europe this had to wait until the break-up of the Soviet Empire. It has been a long process: most countries initially saw the establishment of the first "chair" in political science and of certain national associations of scholars who defined themselves as "political scientists". Describing this process is complicated by the fact that it is not easy to establish when the first chair of political science was created in each of the countries concerned. This depended on national traditions and on an understanding of what political science was. Table 1.3 shows the dates of the creation of such chairs, and also of the respective national political science associations, in 36 different European countries, according to the Proseps (Professionalization and Social Impact of European political science) project's data (which are based on an in-depth analysis of the diverse national paths followed in this process).

What is interesting here is that not only are there "symbolic" dates in several countries, taken as indicators of the start of a lasting tradition in political science, but also that in all Eastern European countries the first chair of political science pre-dates the wave of "democratization" that put an end to those countries' communist regimes. It is interesting that regardless of what political science actually meant, it was considered something worth labelling at least. Various studies have shown that while most political science in the USSR was based on so-called scientific communism (Smorgunov, 2015), at the same time there were streams of research of a more empirically oriented nature (Galkin, 2010). However, despite the fact that there were chairs in political science in such countries, the study of politics continued to be an inextricable mix of Marxism, sociology, legal studies with a little empirical research thrown in for good measure (Chulitskaya et al., 2022). Thus, the real birth, or rather "rebirth", of political science only happened after 1990. The situation in Western Europe was very different. As is well known, there are some cases of chairs in political science that had been established much earlier: the abovementioned Johan Skytte professorship in government in Uppsala dates from 1622, while a number of chairs were established during the nineteenth

Table 1.3 The establishment of the first chairs in political science and of national political science associations in Europe

	Chair	Association
Sweden	1622	1970
Ireland	1855	1982
Turkey	1859	1964
Belgium	1889	1979
Switzerland	1902	1959
The United Kingdom	1912	1950
Germany	1920	1951
Finland	1921	1935
The Netherlands	1948	1950
Israel	1949	1995
Denmark	1959	1960
Serbia	1960	1954
Slovenia	1961	1968
Bosnia	1961	2007 (but inactive)
Croatia	1962	1966
Greece	1963	1957
Norway	1965	1956
Italy	1966	1981
Poland	1967	1957
Austria	1969	1970
Iceland	1970	1995
France	1971	1949
Portugal	1975	1998
Bulgaria	1981	1986
Macedonia	1982	1997
Hungary	1984	1982
Spain	1985	1993
The Czech Republic	1989	1994
Moldova	1989	1991
Russia	1989	1991
Slovakia	1990	1994
Romania	1992	No association
Lithuania	1992	1991
Estonia	1994	No association
Albania	2000	2000
Montenegro	2003	No association
Luxembourg	2006	2012
Malta	2010	No association
Latvia	2010	No association

Sources: Elaboration from the data collected by Proseps country experts

century and the early twentieth century; and as such they indicate increasing interest in the independent study of politics. However, most political science chairs were established in the period after the Second World War.

Unsurprisingly, the pattern of the discipline's development is rather regular, following the waves of democratization. Only two small countries with a limited provision of university subjects (Luxemburg and Malta) established political science courses late, although this has not prevented the emergence of certain *specialists* from these two systems within the international political science community, or even the fair representation of Luxemburg and Malta in the comparative research sector.

As regards the professional organization of the discipline, all national political science associations (with the exception of Finland's) were founded after the Second World War. However, despite the different timescale of institutionalization in the various countries (in the sense that generally speaking, the establishment of a professional academic association should indicate the presence of a group of scholars sharing the same identity), this cannot be considered a definitive indicator of the contemporary "meaning" of political science. Yet the academic development of the discipline has almost always resulted in the establishment of an official political science association. Indeed, similar patterns of institutionalization can be seen following the process of democratization in the countries concerned. The few European countries with an inactive political science association, or no such association at all, tend to be small, relatively young democracies, with the sole exception of Romania where, according to our experts, academic rivalry and the lack of communication among universities have played a role in the difficult process of institutionalization.

Again, national paths matter here. For example, the UK association was set up in 1950 following a disagreement between the London School of Economics, which was pushing for an association of political science, and a group of scholars, led by Oxford University, who wanted the association to bear the label Political Studies. The latter position prevailed in the end, thus indicating that the establishment of the resulting association was driven by scholar of politics from other disciplines (mainly history) (Chester, 1975, pp. 152–4; Hayward, 1991). Likewise, neither can the Association Française de Science Politique, founded in 1949, be considered a pure political science association, but rather a State-driven institutional initiative (represented by the establishment of the National Foundation of political sciences—*Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques*), designed to promote the development of political economics

and the social sciences. As has been observed, the establishment of the association indicated the need for a discipline, although the content was still lacking: "while its library, research units, courses, journals, associations, and funding were in place, it had no readers, researchers, teachers, or authors" (Gaiti & Scot, 2017, p. 2). Finally, a similar trend was observed in Germany as well, where the country's political science association was founded in 1951 under pressure from an intellectual élite with Social Democratic Party sympathies. These intellectuals considered political science to be an "oppositional discipline" compared to existing ones, and one that boasted a potentially innovative scientific community able "to guarantee independent analysis of the Federal Republic's political development and be a control discipline to ensure democratic development" (Kastendiek, 1987, p. 34).

Two of the aforementioned cases—the German and French ones—show how the establishment of a new academic discipline is not necessarily an internal product of the academic world, that is, the outcome of that process of specialization and knowledge development that very often is considered the driver of new disciplines. These two national cases show how, in the case of political science at least, contextual factors and social or political actors can instigate change.

These three national cases are very interesting because they show how problematic the institutionalization of the discipline has been: paraphrasing the title of a novel by Luigi Pirandello (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*), the beginnings of European political science may be likened to those of a discipline in search of scholars invested in it. Such a search has been either an institutional-driven enterprise, as in France or Germany, or a more academic-centred undertaking like in other European countries, where the discipline emerged thanks to the efforts of individuals or group of scholars seeking space for political science. In either case, the need for an independent discipline tasked with investigating political phenomena already existed. But it simply needed agency in order for it to become reality.

3.2   The Never-Ending Saga of Disciplinary Borders

Hence, in every European country, political science has had to struggle in order to free itself from those other academic disciplines that have traditionally dominated the study of politics. These disciplines had traditionally been history, law, and political philosophy or the history of political ideas.

Public law had played a prominent role in continental Europe, where it had provided the modern State with certain core notions which quickly became the go-to tools with which to describe daily political life. The expressions *constitutional theory* or *State doctrine*, for example, were labels applied in several European countries to academic subjects and branches of scientific literature dominated by lawyers. In Germany, the *Rechtstaat* (State of law) tradition had nurtured, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, a first generation of constitutional lawyers who subsequently established a highly prolific school of theorists of *normativism*. This was the main school of thought influencing the later development of modern social sciences after the end of the Nazi regime in 1945.

In Italy and France as well, the impact of constitutional law on empirical political science was patent due to the enormous bearing of normative theories and juridical doctrine on those countries' political élites. Still today, the majority of public intellectuals invited by the media to comment on the political news are referred to as *constitutional experts*, even if they do not discuss constitutional issues at all.

The historical weakness of political science is therefore traceable and explainable in terms of its cultural subordination to other academic disciplines, and in particular to the juridical domain. This is very evident in the three countries already mentioned—Italy, France and Germany—which were probably the first in continental Europe to experience the problem of the "emancipation" of political science. However, a similar scenario was soon to emerge in the Nordic countries as well (Anckar, 1987).

Law is not the only discipline to have contributed towards the late development of political science in Europe. In France, for example, sociology has also played, and continues to play, a significant role (Favre, 1989; Legavre, 2004), with political sociology being specifically seen as a national variant of political science (Boncourt, 2007)

To cut a long story short, European political science as an academic discipline can be considered to be the product of Europe's cultural history and of the segmental development of its national university systems. The historically rooted pluralistic tradition of political study is important here. The "political sciences" is another generic label that has been used for decades now to cover a vast array of courses offered by many higher education institutions. Several universities in Europe still award bachelor and/ or master degrees in political sciences. This pluralistic academic tradition has severely constrained the academic development of political science as a

specific, methodologically separate discipline. As a consequence, the public's perception of the discipline has been clouded and its recognition hindered.

Given this fragmented state of cultural pluralism, the establishment of a professionalized community of political scientists has tended to follow diverse random pathways. Basically, in every country efforts have been made by those interested in establishing an independent field for the study of politics, to unite existing links with the aforementioned hegemonic disciplines. However, and this is an important additional point to make, many of the major political science thinkers in Europe first encountered the discipline, or decided to transfer to it, after they had graduated (in another subject that is). It could not have been otherwise, due to fact that what we call modern political science was not taught at university in their time. This is true, for example, of the first generation of European political scientists, all of whom were born during the second decade of the nineteenth century: Samuel Finer and Mattei Dogan, who both graduated in history; Karl Deutsch, who graduated in international and canon law; Maurice Duverger, who graduated in law and was a professor of public law for many years.

Even the group of younger scholars flanking the abovementioned founders, who were to become leading figures of modern European political science in their own right, had a somehow disparate education. Stein Rokkan graduated in political philosophy and was assigned a chair in political sociology in Bergen after a lengthy academic career at several different American universities. Giovanni Sartori graduated in philosophy and had to wait more than ten years to obtain a chair in political science in Florence, where he actually taught the course in political science whilst being himself a Professor of Sociology. Juan Linz graduated in law and political sciences, and was also a Professor of Sociology, before obtaining a position as a political scientist (at Yale). Jean Blondel, who graduated from the Paris Institute of Political Studies (SciencesPo Paris) in the mid-1950s, was probably the first of the political science "majors" who spent an entire academic career as a "political scientist". Nevertheless, the content of the degree courses offered to several generations of prospective political scientists was the usual mix characterizing the European pluralist tradition of "political sciences". Generally speaking, it could therefore be argued that all of the founders of political science in Europe lacked a university background in political science as such, as was also the case of subsequent

generations of scholars until the establishment of a specific, specialized system of doctoral studies in political science in the majority of European countries.

These personal case-histories not only render the idea of the complexity of the process leading to the independence of European political science communities but are also a reminder of the roots and the precursors of the discipline; all in all, they also partly account for the current differences between the contrasting pathways taken by political science in different countries.

We may therefore argue that the process of political science's liberation from its neighbouring disciplines has not been a simple one. However, in one way or another it has been successful. However, it has occurred at different times, and to different degrees, in the various countries concerned. The differences in the process of institutionalization are mainly due to the characteristics of the diverse national university systems, and to the resistance of the aforesaid neighbouring disciplines. The watershed moment was the process of massification of the university system that occurred throughout Europe from the early 1960s onwards. Due to this process, more public funding was allocated to higher education programmes, which in turn entailed the ability to increase the number of academic posts. Consequently, there was also room for posts in political science, as shown by a comparative study conducted by Hans Dieter Klingemann (2007). The Western European countries surveyed in this study (see Table 1.4), however, are characterized by the different timing and timescale of professionalization: the first systems to display a significant increase in the number of academic political scientists were, understandably, the United Kingdom and Germany, followed by Belgium, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. The last to do so were the Southern European countries, which had to await the *third wave* of democratization. Somewhere in between were France and Italy, the two broad systems from continental Europe that only obtained a significant number of political scientists after a long, complicated phase of liberation from the dominance of political science's neighbouring disciplines (Blondiaux & Deloye, 2007; Freddi & Giannetti, 2007).

Table 1.4 shows a process of academic professionalization that we have defined as successful. However, we should not forget that the combination of university massification during the *glorious thirty years* and the transformation of European higher education systems after 1968 resulted in a substantial increase in academic positions for all the established academic

Table 1.4 Evolution of political science and tenure positions in Western Europe (1960–2005)

	Crucial decade for the increase in numbers	Positions in 2005
Austria	1970s	29
Belgium	1950s	66
Cyprus	Na	3
Denmark	1970s	40
Finland	1960s	40
France	1960s	131
Germany	1950s	313
Greece	1980s	67
Iceland	Na	4
Ireland	1970s	17
Italy	1970s	128
The Netherlands	1950s	61
Norway	1950s	48
Portugal	1990s	40
Spain	1990s	46
Sweden	1960s	42
Switzerland	1960s	46
The United Kingdom	1950s	419

Source: Elaboration on Klingemann (2007)

guilds. In the end, political science was the latecomer among the social sciences when it came to competing for academic resources, and this would explain the fact that even in those countries where such resources proved sufficient, it was not capable of rivalling its closest competitors such as economics or sociology.

This difficult, complex process has undoubtedly been helped by political developments in Europe. The centrality of political parties in the development of Western Europe's political systems has helped the institutionalization of the discipline as much as the recognition it has been afforded by its neighbouring disciplines. At the same time, this process, in which the emergent discipline could only try to operate in the interstices of the existing higher education systems, and within the parallelogram of academic forces, when successful has resulted in a very restrictive perception of the disciplinary borders in question. In other words, the consequence of this process is that political scientists have become very suspicious of any potential "invasion" of their field by scholars and studies from other disciplines. This is paradoxical given that, as previously mentioned, political science is a net borrower of concepts and methods from other academic disciplines.

The defence of disciplinary borders (especially the perception of neutrality and objectivity in studying politics) could also account for a certain tendency that political science has of developing separately from the real world, or rather, of developing theories and conducting empirical investigations that are more driven by the desire to demonstrate its scientific relevance (and thus by internal dynamics) than by the aim of signalling its social and political relevance (by focusing on real problems faced by the contemporary world).

There is another paradoxical aspect of the issue of disciplinary borders, and it concerns the consequences of an incremental specialization of the discipline. As with other sciences, in fact, political science has seen a rapid process of specialization since its initial consolidation. Consequently, the central focus of European political science (comparative politics, and in particular the comparative study of European political parties and institutions) has been accompanied by a number of other specializations. There has been an increase in the number of subfields—like political theory, public policy, European studies and international relations—which has resulted in a significant segmentation of the discipline in terms of the adopted theories and approaches. There are now many political scientists with a kind of dual identity (political scientist *and* historian, or constitutional law scholar, or sociologist etc.). Importantly, this second identity can very often become predominant, and this clearly poses a challenge to political science: it risks being condemned to the status of a rural/divergent discipline.

Finally, there is a third paradox: the segmentation of political science means that at the subfield level, political scientists continuously interact with scholars of other disciplines studying the specific object of the subfield in question. Therefore, policy scholars necessarily interact with economists and sociologists, while political scientists studying the European Union necessarily interact with scholars specialized in European Law and the History of European Integration. Similarly, political scientists working on International Politics necessarily interact with political geographers, political economists, historians of international relations and so on.

Thus, the battle over the borders, which seems to have been won at the higher level, still persists at the lower level where the specific subfields of research, or the focus of individual research, favour exposure to, and often interaction with, other disciplines. Such dynamics may be considered normal, and in a certain sense necessary, in the attempt to understand and explain the object of study. At the same time, working with scholars from different disciplines can lead to the watering down of disciplinary borders, or even to the hybridization of the work of political scientists. While this may well be a fine driver of research excellence, it can constitute a significant challenge to disciplinary identity.

4   What Do European Political Scientists Actually Do?

In Sect. 3 we briefly reviewed the longitudinal trends displayed by the main indicators of European political science's academic professionalization. These trends lead us to conclude that nowadays, the discipline can be generally considered well institutionalized throughout the continent, albeit with certain obvious differences between Western and Eastern Europe, and to some extent between Northern and Southern Europe as well.

We shall be returning to the question of the geo-political distribution of European political science's "record" in the third chapter of the volume, since we are interested in exploring the factors underlying this variance. For the moment however, we are simply going to focus on the late but all things considered, satisfactory trend of political science's establishment within European educational and research institutions in general.

We shall now examine the implications of the previously mentioned paradox of *internal borders*. We know that the potential scope of political scientists' scholarship has always been broad and somewhat vague, thus rendering the *soft nature* of our subject particularly evident to all observers. At the same time, the increasing complexity of our common object—the "political phenomenology" at large—has determined the consequent increasing complexity of the "domains" within political science. This emerges, for instance, from the pioneering studies on the age of maturity of the discipline (Easton et al., 1991).

After all, heterogeneity has always been the quintessential feature of the discipline since the original definition provided by its American founding fathers (in particular, Easton and Almond, who in their works emphasized the multifaceted nature of political science, which targets a variety of different objects and units of analysis). This applies even more so to the European context, where the complexity of the discipline has been nurtured by several recently developed overlapping and inter-disciplinary areas (Political Communication and Media Studies, European Studies, to give two obvious examples). According to Mattei Dogan (1996), one of the founding fathers of the discipline in Europe, political science's heterogeneity is directly connected to its continuous exchanges with neighbouring disciplines, and this makes the work of political scientists particularly important in inter-disciplinary cooperation, as we will see more in detail later. Therefore the multitasking, multidimensional remit of political scientists should be measured in terms of their wealth of interests. This is rather a difficult exercise to do in a truly comparative perspective, due to the different educational and

research systems, some of which group together very different topics and research sub-communities in general, and are sometimes characterized by undefined categories (for instance, a course or a research project generically entitled "political science" or something similar).

On the other hand, it is also difficult to avoid overstating political scientists' variety of research or teaching interests, given the different terminology sometimes used to cover very similar topics. One example of this is the plethora of labels that can be more or less grouped together in the methodologically and epistemologically coherent category of *comparative politics*: comparative political behaviour; comparative political systems; comparative democracies (or comparative non-democratic regimes); comparative political institutions; and so forth.

In order to proceed with our exploration of the future perspectives of a "sufficiently institutionalized", but still largely improvable, discipline "in search of identity", we therefore need to assess the current state of the discipline's internal fragmentation. The question is therefore: what exactly do European political scientists do today? We can try to answer this question by looking at both the variability in research interests, and also the variability in the academic subjects included in courses taught by political scientists. As previously stated, it is difficult to map the variance in the "core business" of political scientists, although we can try to do so by examining both of the abovementioned dimensions.

For example, we can measure the scope of the research conducted by European political scientists by looking at the number of *area of interest* represented within that community. According to Klingemann (2007), this scope was expanding, but was still rather limited, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. To be more precise, the national reports underlying his qualitative survey showed a predominance of research projects dealing with single-country *analyses of political systems* (but this should be distinguished from the study of the European Union's "political system" which is nowadays considered a separate branch of political science), followed by three well-established domains, namely *International relations*, *Policy analysis and Public administration* (another category that should probably be split in two, given the substantive and epistemological differences between these areas) and *Political sociology*. Another important category considered by that survey is *Political theory* (including the history of political ideas), while a much more limited role was found to be played by two minor, albeit significant, areas: Comparative politics and Methodology.

Regardless of our critical comments concerning the ambiguity of some of these categories (which in any case substantiates the general view of an

increasingly complex discipline), the picture provided by the reports produced in the early years of the current century certainly requires updating now. Unfortunately, we cannot replicate a similar qualitative survey in order to compare the "weights" of different political science domains. However, we can provide a reasonable comparative picture by utilizing the data from the Proseps survey,[1] which asked each respondent to indicate up to three "fields of specialization" deserving attention from the political science community, in the country where the respondent worked at the time of the interview.

Figure 1.1 reports the percentages of cumulated preferences recorded by each of these 15 domains (14 options plus a residual category), together with the weighted percentages for each single category included in the pie chart.

Three general implications result from this description. Firstly, the overall nature of political science has certainly become considerably more complex over the last twenty years. This is confirmed by the fact that the variability of the studies previously done by the new generation of scholars is now much greater. Indeed, a greater percentage of them seems to be attracted by specific sub-disciplines that are in some way separate from the "pure political studies" of previous days.[2] Secondly, the main challenges to the traditional domains come from a series of brand-new academic categories (gender studies, security studies and, to some extent, social movements and political economy).[3] Thirdly—and this indicates incremental

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[1] The documentation about the Proseps 2018–2019 survey is available here: http://proseps.unibo.it/action/deliverables/

[2] For instance, fewer than 50% of the Proseps 2019 respondents declared a specialization (equivalent to the highest university degree) in comparative politics, international relations or political theory. That is to say, the sum of all the other fields of specialization now embraces more scholars than those specialized in the classical *core topics* of the first generation of European political science. This is the result of the growing presence of certain areas such as public policy, public administration, methodology and electoral behaviour/public opinion studies, in European PhD programmes.

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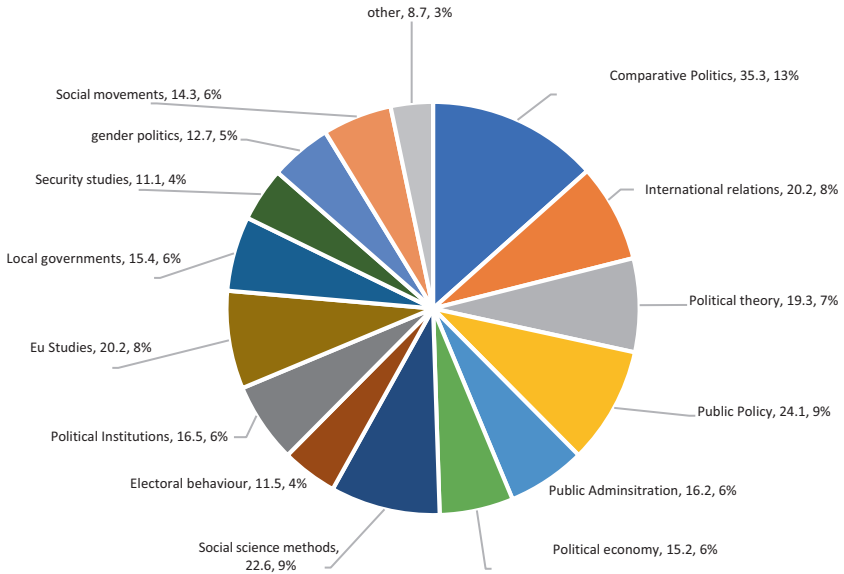
Fig. 1.1 Perceptions of the importance of political science's subfields. (Source: Proseps, 2019 Survey data. Note: the figure reports the distribution of the answers to the question: *Which field of political science do you believe should receive more scholarly attention in the country where you work?* The first figure represents the percentage of respondents indicating each subfield. The second figure indicates the weight of each subfield)

rather than revolutionary change—none of the traditional categories has lost substantial ground to others. In other words, the discipline is becoming increasingly complex and seems considerably richer in terms of the substantive topics it covers, without losing any of its original elements of scientific heritage.

This gradually increasingly complexity (implying richness but also potential weaknesses) is not only the result of an increasing number of fields of study, but also of the different distribution of these domains between diverse countries. Figure 1.2 shows this across-country distribution in terms of the seven most important fields of study (which are very similar to those listed by Klingemann in his 2007 survey).
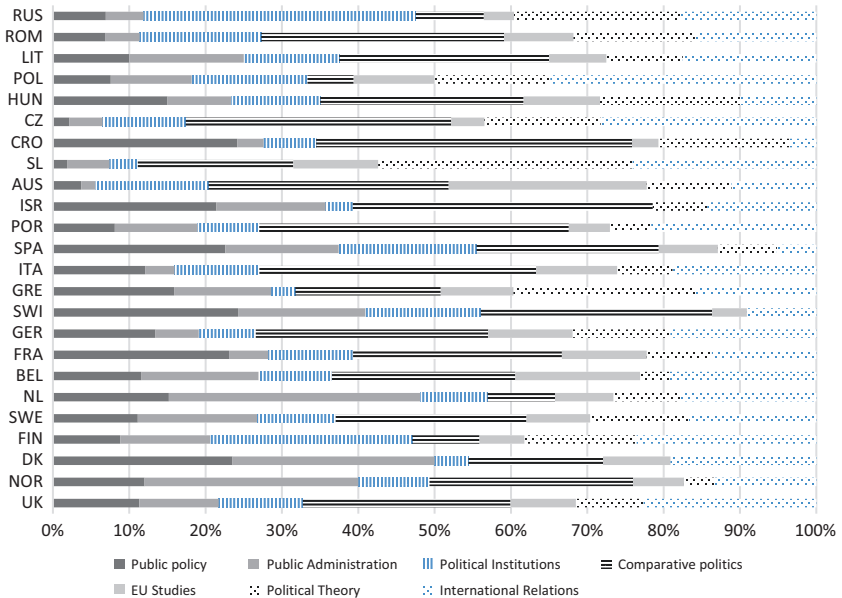
Fig. 1.2 Political scientists in Europe according to their field of specialization. (Source: Proseps, 2019 Survey data. Note: the figure reports the distribution of the seven subfields indicated by Proseps respondents as their main field of specialization. Only countries represented by more than 25 respondents were selected in the graph)

The data shown in Fig. 1.2 are extremely interesting since they indicate not only the specializations within the discipline, but also the significant differences there are among countries. A few points that emerge from the wealth of data in the table are worthy of special mention here, for the sake of this analysis.

1. Comparative politics is no longer a "hegemonic field" in any of the countries considered, but still represents more than 30% of the total, and in fact 40% in Croatia, Israel, Romania, Portugal, Austria, the Czech Republic and Italy.
2. The field of Public Administration accounts for the relative majority of political scientist (around 30%) in the Netherlands and Norway.

3. More than 40% of political scientists in Switzerland, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark are specialized in Public Administration and Public Policy taken together.
4. The EU Studies field is only significantly developed (in relative terms) in Austria and Belgium.
5. Political theory plays a major role in Russia, Greece and Slovakia.
6. Political institutions are studied to a significant degree in Russia, Finland, Switzerland and Poland.
7. International Relations look to be less developed than other sub-fields in Spain, Switzerland and Hungary.

Other conclusions may be drawn from these interesting data. However, for the time being we are going to stick with the above summary, which basically substantiates the initial observation made in this chapter, namely that the different situations observed in each individual European nation with regard to the various aspects of political science's professionalization need to be considered in view of the fact that political science necessarily depends on national contexts and academic legacies.

A final exercise we are going to conduct in order to portray the complex development of political science's internal structure over the past two decades concerns the organization of research by the political science community as a whole. In particular, we shall be focusing on the recent transformation of the most important political science organization in Europe, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). Founded in 1970 thanks to the decisive contribution of a few scholars—Stein Rokkan, Rudolf Wildenmann, Giovanni Sartori, Richard Rose among others, and with the key contribution of the ECPR's first chairperson, Jean Blondel—this association has been the driving force behind the internationalization of European political science. Its first declared goal is to remove the divisions separating European scholars: "breaking down the barriers between the national traditions of the discipline and creating a truly international community of scholars within Europe."[4]

There can be no doubt that the ECPR has achieved that goal; one only has to look at the many activities, and the growing institutionalization, of the entire community achieved thanks to the concerted efforts

[4] Cfr. https://ecpr.eu/AboutUs
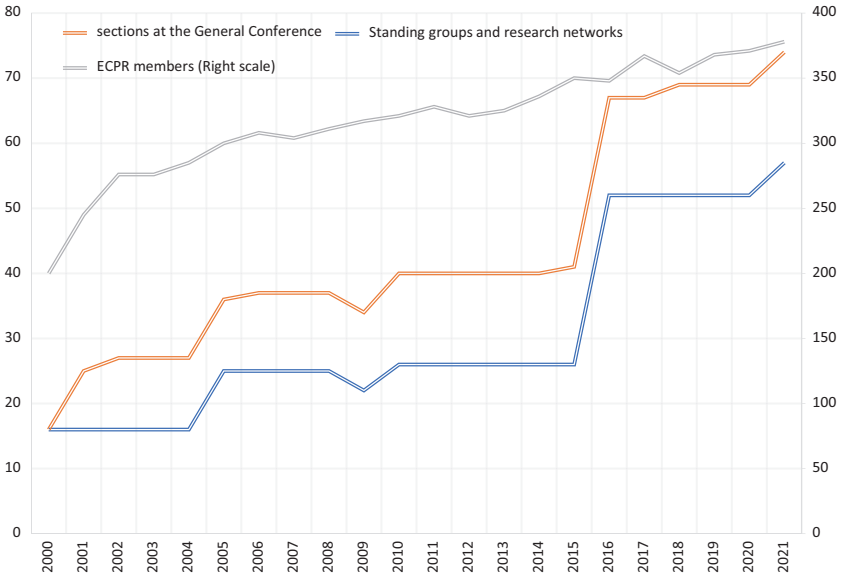
Fig. 1.3 ECPR standing groups and research networks; thematic sections at the ECPR annual general conference; ECPR membership 2000–2021. (Source: elaboration of official data taken from the ECPR website)

of this organization (Deschouwer, 2020). It has striven to reduce gender and generational gaps, to establish a degree of solidarity between richer and poorer research environments, and to launch a fruitful dialogue with non-European communities of scholars. However, what is particularly interesting to note here is that the process of professionalization promoted by the ECPR in recent decades has been based above all on the recognition of the discipline's growing plurality. This plurality is evident from the growing interest shown by the ECPR's journals and events in new projects and research fields. The traditional core of comparative politics has been flanked by other substantive fields of interest, resulting in new editorial initiatives representing the complex world of European political science. Above all, the ECPR has paid constant attention to the "new frontiers" of the discipline, as shown by efforts to represent the complexity of the research agenda through the organization of permanent research infrastructures. Figure 1.3 shows the number of sections present at the ECPR general conference (introduced in 2001), and the

number of standing groups/research networks operating during the same period. If we compare the trends of these indicators to the vitality of ECPR membership (which up until a few years ago was increasing), the picture we get is clearly that of an increasingly proactive, creative community of scholars engaged in the study of a growing range of topics and sectors.[5]

5   A Point of (Re)departure? Crises and New Opportunities for European Political Science

In this chapter we have basically abridged a lengthy story that has already been recounted by certain classical analyses of the history of European political science. In doing so, our goal was not to add new evidence to the picture of the longitudinal transformation of European political science. Indeed, we are perfectly aware of the historical-cultural sedimentation of the discipline in Europe, and the very different timing of its institutionalization and professionalization from one country to another. Moreover, we know that the frenetic relationships built among the multitude of "souls" populating the world of political science are not easily dealt with: internal borders are sometimes perceived as more problematic than external ones, and the soft nature of the discipline remains a serious dilemma.

These characteristics are both a torment and a delight for the members of the European political science community. In fact, these scholars know that these structural divides may undermine their bargaining powers within their professional environment, that is: at their universities and research centres, as well as within those branches of the public administration supporting the higher education system in their own countries. They also know that the weakness of political science may place them in a subordinate position vis-à-vis other academic groups that are more strongly established, and even better "protected" by the organization of scientific

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[5] Furthermore, over the years the ECPR has set up a number of journals, each with very different goals and interests. The classical *European Journal of Political Research,* the flagship journal of the ECPR since its foundation, has been flanked by the *European Journal of International Relations* (1995, previously released as a bulletin of the Standing Group), the *European Political Science Review* (2009) and the *Political Research Exchange* (PRX), an open access journal (2018).

work at supranational level; for instance, by the presence of selected academic sectors within the European Research Council's system of evaluation. In fact, among the panels and related subsections through which the ERC classifies all disciplinary fields, political science gets watered down within a few inter-disciplinary categories, all of which are included in section SH2.

However, the pluralism of European political scientists' contribution, and the flexibility of their methodological tools, may be seen as virtues. For example, political scientists may teach a great variety of courses in addition to those that are part of traditional social sciences degrees. Over the past four decades, the growth in the number of successful paths to a career as a political scientist—via media studies, public administration studies, international cooperation, public policy, geo-politics, just to mention the most frequently followed paths—confirms the eclectic nature of the discipline, which in turn also results in a certain presence of selected, specialized political scientists within the life-long learning and professional training spheres.

Similarly, the rapid rise in the number of multi-disciplinary, dissemination-oriented projects has enhanced the role of political scientists in many ways. Indeed, they represent the ideal "bridge" between different groups of scholars—lawyers, sociologists, historians and economists—who are sometimes unable to interact given their different epistemological bases. As a matter of fact, the intrinsic fragmentation of political science offers them the opportunity to share certain objects of research, or even some of their methodological toolkits. In the end, the *context-driven dynamics* of political science seem to represent the ideal basis from which to rethink and re-launch the role of a discipline that seems to be eternally suspended between reflection and action, and which at the same time appears clouded by its national, country-specific interpretations.

We would like to conclude this first chapter by examining the main objective of this volume, and by fine-tuning the underlying questions it poses. We already know that the near future is going to be a significant challenge for the discipline, and to some extent for every individual political scientist. However, we need to understand whether this challenge needs to be met in purely defensive terms (i.e. by safeguarding the professionalism, the values, the methods and the social roles that have characterized European political science in its century-old history), or whether a more complex, but also more ambitious, objective can be pursued. To the latter end, the idea is to bring together all of the doubts and questions

raised over the past few decades and reformulate them in terms of a new professional and intellectual challenge.

The danger of fragmentation among sub-disciplines, and of the idiosyncratic behaviour of different sectors of the discipline (theoretical "schools", national communities of scholars, methodological "tribes" etc.), can be transformed into an opportunity for political scientists to reconsider for the purposes of their own future. This is a crucial question in Europe in particular, for all of the reasons given above. It should also be pointed out that looking to a "new challenge" does not amount to creating a "new science". As is always the case in scientific discourse, what we are doing is simply transforming pre-existing elements. For instance, when we talk about the need for a new approach to the comprehensiveness of scientific debate (the social role of science, the enhancement of scientific discourse, the "third mission" etc.), what we are doing is rephrasing something that one of the founders of modern political science already had clear in his mind. Harold Lasswell was pointing to this need when he argued for a *policy science for democracy* when proposing a specific model of engagement in social and political problems on the part of political science scholars, aimed at preserving and improving democracy (1948, 1951). A model in which political science is pivotal to the integration of the various normative and descriptive frames applied to the collective consideration of important policy issues; whereby, in doing so, "political science is the policy science, par excellence" (Lasswell, 1956, p. 979).

Furthermore, Lasswell, together with other champions of American behaviourism (such as Gabriel Almond, 1966), may be borne in mind when reviewing the role of political science in a public debate dominated by *evidence-based decisions* and by the quest for adequate communication between the scientific community and the public sphere. This type of debate should involve a public informed by the social sciences also through "the dissemination of insight on a vast scale to the adult population" (Lasswell, 1948, p. 148).

Once again, this is particularly relevant (and somewhat desirable today) in European society. Indeed, the problems of a lack of social dissemination and of social apathy were traditionally less important in Europe than elsewhere. However, in times of mistrust and disenchantment, this is no longer the case.

We could examine hundreds of examples pointing to the risks of political science's oblivion (Ricci, 1984) present in Europe today; but we can also point to the fact that the current scenario may represent an

opportunity to re-launch the discipline in the near future. The different aspects of political scientists' scholarship may be mentioned here. For example, their comprehensive knowledge of international relations; the opportunity they have to produce advocacy and evidence-based support to domestic policy-makers; the communication skills they can transfer to young politicians and newer generations of opinion makers. However, the best example may be the capability of political scientists to present the results of their research to non-academic audiences in order to enhance electoral participation and further a better understanding of the electoral system. Traditionally this has been a concern for many North-American scholars. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the difference between the participatory gaps in the USA and Europe remains evident, as shown by Donald Green, one of the most eminent American scholars involved in the debate on the nature of electoral democracy. In the volume *Get out the vote!*, written jointly with one of his associates (Green & Gerber, 2008), Green provides a clear example of advocacy (in this case, for aspirant campaigners and political motivators), basing his work on the strict, coherent application of the experimental method. The main argument of this volume is that only a careful mix of scientific knowledge and a proactive approach to applicative and participative experiments can save American democracy from decline. Just two decades later, Europe is now running exactly the same risks. Indeed, perhaps it will face an even worse scenario, given the inability of several European countries to respond to populist discourse and authoritarian trends (Urbinati, 2019).

Ultimately, we may conclude that such "torment and delight" for European political scientists—the possible transformation of an endemic and multidimensional weakness into a major opportunity—will represent a key issue in the years to come, involving all professional aspects of the discipline: teaching, research, third mission and social activities.

In this scenario, the recent crises have clearly increased political scientists' sense of awareness, since they have been forced to react, as have all academics, to the challenges of our times. However, they have also had the chance to test their ability to be more visible and more proactive in formulating diagnoses and possible cures for the ailments afflicting today's society (Real-Dato & Verzichelli, 2022).

Of course, when we talk of crises we are referring to a number of very different phenomena. After the Twin Towers tragedy on 11 September 2001, at least three types of crisis undermining the foundations of modern democracy (and particularly the stability of democracy in Europe) were

identified. Indeed, these crises have called into question very different aspects of the functioning of both domestic politics and the European Union (EU) system. Some of them are clearly of a transnational dimension and may be connected to exogenous factors deriving from the domestic effects of global events.

The 2008 Great Recession and the subsequent Eurozone crisis (Stiglitz, 2016), and the 2015 refugee crisis (Castells et al., 2017), belong to this first category of crisis. Although they should be explored separately due to the very different scope of their respective impact on our discipline, they may be assimilated also in terms of the specialization of the necessary skills (not all political scientists can be considered "experts" in economic or migration policies), and in virtue of the level of possible engagement due to knowledge of these related fields (local governance, national governance, EU governance, international organizations etc.).

Other crises that specifically affected certain European countries were the result of issues or events within a specific polity. This is clearly the case of independence and/or secession crises like those witnessed in Scotland, Catalonia and Belgium, or of the broader issue of Brexit in the United Kingdom. We can consider these episodes as being the "hunting ground" of specific sub-sets of political scientists, such as experts in constitutional and administrative reforms for example. However, so many skills (including an understanding of the normative theories of politics, and also of international politics) are often required in order to answer the major questions arising in the context of such crises. This is another type of phenomenon that has speeded up the quest for "personal engagement" in domestic debate, albeit with very different results in terms of the efficacy of political science's dealing with the issues in question (Real-Dato et al., 2022, with regard to the Spanish-Catalonian case).

A third type of crisis concerns the long-term effects of reform within our democracies (Pritoni & Vicentini, 2022; Koikkalainen, 2022). The decline of formerly super-resistant élites and party systems in Europe is clearly related to the new quest for direct democracy, unmediated decision-making and responsive action. The nature of the debate about the crisis of representation may vary in terms of its focus and scope, but there is no European nation that has not been affected by this problem over the two past decades. Although we cannot argue that such a situation will result in a sort of *permanent transition* of our policy-making systems, we must admit that the search for new policy paradigms and solutions has often been breathless in recent decades. This is also reflected in the pessimistic

tone of many important works by political scientists, who more or less denounce the crisis of liberal democracy (Mair, 2013; Urbinati, 2014; Tormey, 2015; Howe, 2017).

The COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak in 2020 represents another critical event that has captured the attention of political scientists around the world. This crisis will undoubtedly overshadow previous post-Second World War crises: its disruptive effects in many countries worldwide will call into question key aspects of their respective political systems. Such aspects will include the normative and ethical principles underlying the behaviour of public authorities (particularly in democratic countries), the role of the state in the management of the economy, citizens' attitudes towards democracy and states' capacity to protect their society by providing adequate safety nets. This argument seems to apply even more so to the future of political science in Europe. Indeed, we could argue that the pandemic represents a sort of ultimate acid-test for European political scientists, acting simultaneously as a brake on the constant process of emancipation of the discipline, and as a stimulus for a community of academics who are supposed to be familiar with the catch-words of the last couple of years: emergency, crisis, policy solutions, sustainability, trade-off (between the economy and health) and so on.

Given that we are perfectly aware that COVID-19 may affect the overall profile of all academic disciplines, the reality of political science—and in particular European political science—may be taken as a paradigmatic test of the discipline's maturity, due to the importance of the long-term implications of the scholarly community's reactions. As we have already pointed out elsewhere (Capano et al., 2023), we need to assess the degree of "awareness" of European political scientists, and thus to measure their "predisposition to adaptation", and to understand if this kind of reaction hides different aspects of professional adaptation (which we may call passive, proactive and innovative adaptation).

We are not convinced, as many claim, that nothing will be the same after COVID-19. However, the pandemic has had, continues to have, and in the future will probably still have, a significant impact on socioeconomic systems, political relationships and public policies. Uncertainty and ambiguity will characterize the coming years in terms of the real socioeconomic and political impact of the pandemic, and of what to do to cope with that impact. Again, as every critical juncture in history shows, the coming years will be full of unexpected, or consciously pursued, change as well as the unexpected, and not necessarily desirable or fair, persistence of the status quo. The world of science and of academic institutions will undoubtedly

be called upon to make a greater contribution to society in its effort to deal with crises (the next pandemic, climate change, dramatic migration processes, increasing social inequality). This scenario will represent a serious challenge to European political science, and will require a significant reconsideration (and, as we firmly hope, renewal) of its characteristics, professional patterns and mission. This challenge is unavoidable, and we shall be coming back to it in the conclusive section of the present volume.

The Legacies: Explaining the Richness and Heterogeneity of European Political Science

1   Premise

Political science is to be considered a relatively new academic subject within the European scenario, having only seen the light of day during the second half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, as we have seen in Chap. 1, the discipline has grown significantly thanks to the extension of higher education in all European countries between the 1960s and 1980, to the transition to democracy of the South-European authoritarian regimes, and to the democratization of the former communist regimes in Central-Eastern Europe.

In the previous chapter we also emphasized the considerable diversification of the degree of academic institutionalization within Europe, as a result of several factors that can be roughly classified in the following way.

First of all, different national traditions regarding the study of politics have played a role (Berndtson, 2022). In most of continental Europe, for example, political science has been characterized by the traditional "pluralistic" conception of the subject. In some countries, the historical hegemony of law as the pivotal discipline in the study of politics was evident during the aforementioned period. In others, the role of the State underlay the theoretical endeavours of the first generation of political science scholars.

A second important group of factors concerns the different timing of the processes of democratization in the various countries, while the third

dimension to be taken into account concerns the different characteristics of individual higher education systems in Europe, as well as all the other institutional and contingent conditions for the potential development of political science.

In such a complex context, the development of political science has been characterized by diverse, specific national paths, stories and results. At the same time, a process of convergence can be perceived (Meny, 2010). This process is rooted in the paradigms shared by Western-European scholars—and later by the global community of scholars—since the end of Second World War. In this chapter we aim to reconstruct this complicated picture of the convergent processes and local specificities witnessed for decades.

The first section of this chapter will be devoted to the historical patterns we have identified through our research. More precisely, we are going to examine the evolution of about thirty national communities of political scientists in Europe, in an attempt to identify the different trajectories followed by the discipline in recent decades throughout Europe. This reconstruction of the most important routes taken towards political science's consolidation will be based on a comprehensive assessment of the literature, together with some original data we have collected within the context of the Proseps project. In particular, we shall be using the data set from the 2019 survey conducted just before the start of the pandemic, other sources of information connected to the working groups' efforts, and of course our interviewees' recollections. The main purpose of this section is to offer a simple, but robust, classification of the national trajectories followed towards disciplinary consolidation.

The second section will shift from the level of history to that of memories. In other words, from a discussion of the degree of institutionalization of the whole community of scholars comparatively analysed as at macronational level, to our interviewees' recollections of their past experience, and their thoughts on the present and future of the discipline. In order to formulate this picture, we sought help from a number of scholars representing three generations of the current community of European political scientists. This section's main goal is to describe the longitudinal evolution of the discipline by examining the different orientations of European political scientists.

This qualitative mapping will permit us to formulate an initial interpretation of the evolution of political science in contemporary Europe. In

particular, we will deal with the multiple dimensions identified by different generations of scholars, and the capabilities developed to date by political scientists which, according to our interviewees, represent a fundamental legacy for the profession in the near future. This "pluralistic legacy" of the discipline was at first shaped by the European positivist paradigm, and then influenced by American behaviourism, and is continuously mediated by a number of specificities at both domestic and national levels.

The last section of this chapter will expand on the definitions of these legacies and present a typology of ideal figures that will be recalled in our empirical analysis.

Four metaphorical figures in particular will be involved, in an attempt to envisage the prospective scenario for European political scientists: we associate the attitudes that our interviewees aspire to, with four epic heroes whose personalities will be used, in a rather provocative manner, to indicate the distinctive features of European political scientists. Aeneas, the first of the four heroes, will be indicated as the ideal-type of the fully devoted scholar, who represents all of the most important capabilities of the European political scientist, but who, for this reason, is very difficult to find in reality. On the other hand, the figure of Sisyphus represents the risk of a diminishing willingness to cultivate such capabilities, thus reducing the professional and intellectual action of political scientists to an irrational acceptance of their fate as losers. Odysseus and Achilles, in turn, represent two types of scholars who maximize one of the two most important capabilities of a political scientist—the institutional devotion of the disciplinary *saviour* in the first case, and the individual desire to leave a personal intellectual legacy in the second case—whilst however neglecting the other important aspects of the profession. Our analysis will associate these archetypes to the characters that emerge from the recollections and views of the first three generations of European scholars.

By following this approach, we establish a classification which we then use to achieve this volume's first goal, namely to provide an original and comprehensive map of the cultural and intellectual heritage of political science in Europe, by comparing different origins, different processes of institutionalization and also all information we can glean from individual stories and views. We believe that this is the first step towards offering a clear and original interpretation of the richness of the roots, experiences and "values" of European political science.

2   Historical Patterns of European Political Science

2.1   A Short but Important Record

The Proseps survey dataset compiled during the course of 2019 helps us to reconstruct the state of European political science just before the emergence of the pandemic. The overall picture is that of a sound discipline and one with a wealth of practicing scholars and significant ambitions.

As shown in the previous chapter, the discipline is now present in all corners of Europe. Despite differences in the process of institutionalization, we can argue that a hard core of specialists is now well established in every single European country. Dedicated PhD programmes and national associations have mushroomed in recent decades. Furthermore, the degree of internationalization of the new generations of researchers, although significantly variable across countries, is considered acceptable by many European scholars.

Certain indicators appear to reveal the diachronic nature of the consolidation of Europe's political science community. All of these indicators can be related to the aforementioned dimensions, three of which are:

- (a) the density of political science in all higher education institutions;
- (b) the appeal of political science on first degree and PhD programmes;
- (c) the perceived quality and penetration of political science's research findings.

Before analysing and comparing the individual characteristics and views of three generations of European political scientists, we are going to examine the discipline's historical evolution. There is considerable literature available for this purpose. For example, we know a lot about the development of the discipline in Western-European countries (Easton et al., 1991; Klingemann, 2007). Since the 1980s, the quality of publications and the internationalization of European political science during its phase of consolidation have been studied in some depth. There are studies of the overall variance in the attitudes of political scientists (i.e. Brush, 1996; Keeler, 2005), and even in-depth analyses of certain large national communities (e.g. the study of Italian political science findings by Plümper & Radaelli, 2004). Comparisons of European and American findings are also available (e.g. Norris, 1997). More recently, the internationalization and

integration of national political science communities and associations in Europe have been studied by Boncourt (2015, 2017).

Figure 2.1 combines some of the milestones of European political science's development with the other two aforementioned dimensions. Political science's appeal as an academic discipline in Europe has increased thanks to the incremental consolidation of the supranational associations, in particular the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), and subsequently the European Political Science Association (EPSA) and the European International Studies Association (EISA). The establishment of several PhD programmes has been another fundamental step towards enhancing the discipline and furthering the mobility of scholars in Europe.

The same figure also shows the turning points identifiable from the experiences of European higher education systems, and from the development of European Union policies and actions in the fields of education and research. These policies have certainly encouraged the dissemination of political science in those countries where the discipline was either weak or absent altogether.

Similarly, the few examples we have selected from the most oft-quoted political science findings are sufficient to map the pace of innovation in the history of European political science. The story that emerges is also one of success, since the construction of a pluralistic, "dense" discipline is grounded in a wealth of studies. The bridges with the American schools of thought (the behaviourist school, and above all the rational choice approach) have never been burned (Adcock et al., 2007). However, the development of the European political science sector in recent decades has been characterized by a great deal of autonomy and creativity (Meny, 2020), ranging from the literature on neo-institutional approaches to the recent debates on constructivism and inter-disciplinarity.

Of course, a reconstruction of the theoretical grounds of European political science's development is an overly ambitious goal for this volume. What we are going to examine is simply the magnitude of change witnessed in a relatively short period of time. The profession of political scientist in Europe, from the early days of the modern discipline (1950s) to the present time, has changed significantly. In order to better describe this process of change, the bottom of the figure indicates three generations of scholars: those who inherited the discipline from the *founders* at the beginning of the 1960s; those who then consolidated the discipline; and those who are currently working to constantly make it stronger (the so-called *young lions*).

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s onwards
Professional Organization	Unesco activities First IPSA congresses (Zurich, The Hague, Stockholm, Rome)	Several national PS associations are formed	Foundation of the ECPR Launch of the journals: *European Journal of Political Research* and *West European Politics*		Johan Skytte Prize Launch of EU Research Framework Programmes Launch of the *Journal of European Public Policy*	First ECPR General Conference European Conference of PS Associations Foundation of the EPSA	Foundation of the EISA First female chair of the ECPR
Teaching & Learning	Grants from American institutions to train young Europeans in US	First political science PhD programmes in Western countries	The level of school leavers enrolled at university is higher than 10% in Western Europe	Several reforms in Europe expand HE programmes New PhD programmes in Western Europe Launch of the Erasmus programme	"Bologna process" for standard & quality in Higher Education	Erasmus+ scheme	European Higher Education area European University Initiative
Paradigmatic changes	Impact of behavioralism	European criticism of behaviouralist thought and the launch of large-scale comparative empirical projects	Rational choice	New-Institutionalism(s)	Constructivism/Ideational turn	New advancements in quantitative methods	Eclectic approaches
Generations of political scientists	*Founders*		*Emeriti*		*Seniors*		*Young Lions*

Fig. 2.1   The historical map of European political science

In fact, the last row in Fig. 2.1 indicates the different generations of European political scientists who have written this short, highly concentrated history. Of course, those who were instrumental in re-establishing political science in the 1950s are no longer with us. Nevertheless, some of the scholars who worked with those founding fathers on consolidating European political science during the 1950s and 1960s are still here and could therefore be interviewed. Consequently, our interviewees fall into three categories (see below). Firstly, there are the *Emeriti*, a category consisting of scholars who retired from academia during the second decade of the twenty-first century. Although they cannot be considered among the founding fathers (the very first generation of European political scientists), they have undoubtedly played an important role in the consolidation of the discipline in Western Europe, having received their post-graduate education during the 1960s and working in their respective national university systems for the following fifty years.

The second generation of scholars is that of the *Seniors*. These are mature academics who received a PhD or equivalent qualification during the late twentieth century before becoming active political scientists, with domestic and supranational responsibilities in their universities, associations, editorial teams and recruitment committees at both domestic and European levels.

The third and final category is that of the *Young Lions*. This category comprises those scholars who joined the discipline in the early years of the twenty-first century and have since been employed as professional academics in Europe. This younger generation resembles the previous one from certain points of view—for example, in terms of its post-graduate education, strong methodological basis and significant international experience in terms of both higher education mobility and publications. However, these scholars are different from their predecessors in significant ways. Increasing competition and the emergence of a global system of research dissemination (especially after the emergence of the Internet) indeed created a totally novel environment for scientific training. The most evident sign of this new environment went under the name of *publish or perish*. However, many other innovative aspects have characterized the professional development of this new generation of scholars: new methods of scientific assessment, new teaching and learning techniques, new forms of public and civic engagement and so on.

The historical map, and even our diachronic reconstruction of the age groups of scholars, could of course be improved. Nevertheless, the

description we have provided is sufficiently detailed to show that the generations of European political scientists who have been active from the foundation of the discipline up until the present day have seen professional opportunities, levels of academic internationalization and the organization of research change substantially. Moreover, the theoretical foundations of the discipline have multiplied over the course of the years, and there has been continuous innovation in the methodological tools employed. This simplified, albeit undeniable argument will form the basis on which we formulate our analyses of the density of European political science and of the different patterns of institutionalization of the discipline.

2.2   The Density of Political Science Within the European Higher Educational Area

Let us start measuring the density of political science as a discipline within the panorama of Europe's higher educational institutions. Figure 2.2 shows a map of the *density of European political scientists*, measured over the course of 2018 as a simple ratio between the number of scholars counted by the Proseps experts and the overall number of higher education institutions, for each European country. The figure clearly shows different patterns between the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom on the one hand, where the mean number of political scientists is close to, or even higher than, 1 per university institution, and most Central-Eastern European countries (and some Southern European countries such as Portugal) where the mean number of political scientists is very low, on the other hand.

Of course, this indicator has its limits, due to the presence of higher education systems and institutions whose mission is not inherently that of cultivating social science disciplines (super-specialized HEIs, polytechnics, art academies etc.). This may of course determine a very different weight of the denominator in our ratio. Nevertheless, the unbalanced geographical distribution of political scientists in Europe is clear, and this may be considered the point of departure of our analysis.

A second indicator to take into account is the *political science teaching programme density*, meaning the simple ratio of the number of HEIs where at least an undergraduate degree in political sciences (including a core of political science subjects) is offered, to the official number of HEIs registered in the country. As Fig. 2.3 shows, two patterns of density are clearly visible, thus confirming to some extent the cross-country
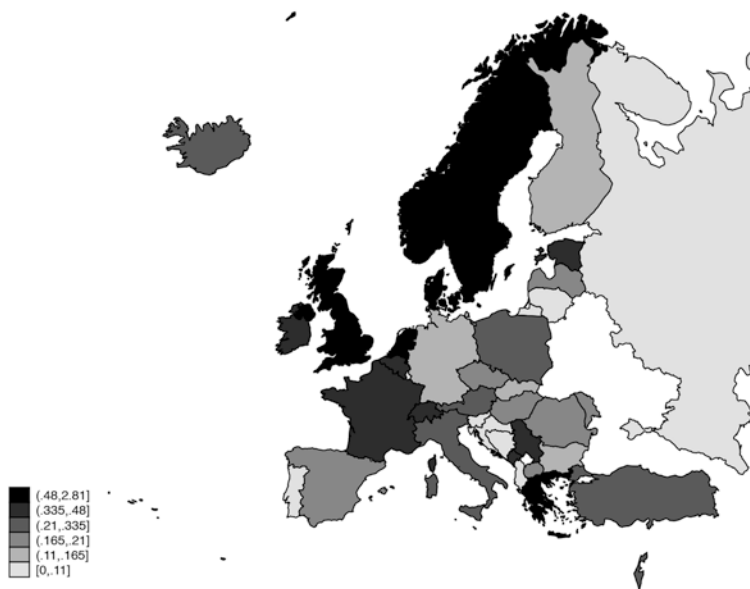
Fig. 2.2 Density of political scientists in European higher education institutions in 2019. (Source: Proseps Expert Survey)

distribution already seen. The United Kingdom, most of the Nordic countries (Norway, Iceland and Denmark), and a few Western countries (above all, Italy, the Netherlands and France) perform much better than the Central-Eastern countries and other "latecomer democracies" from Southern Europe. However, even Germany, Finland and Israel are characterized by a relatively low degree of political science density.

This clearly uneven picture can be misleading: the evolution that we previously described concerns the whole European continent, and even those countries only recently "converted" to political science have significantly increased the number of political science degrees and academic posts they offer. We need to remember that unlike in the case of the hard-science academic disciplines, the density of political science in the pre-1990 university systems of the Central-Eastern European countries was basically zero. As previously mentioned, politics or political theory courses were basically a reformulation of Marxist philosophical thought. Even more evidently, the academic presence of political science has rapidly increased
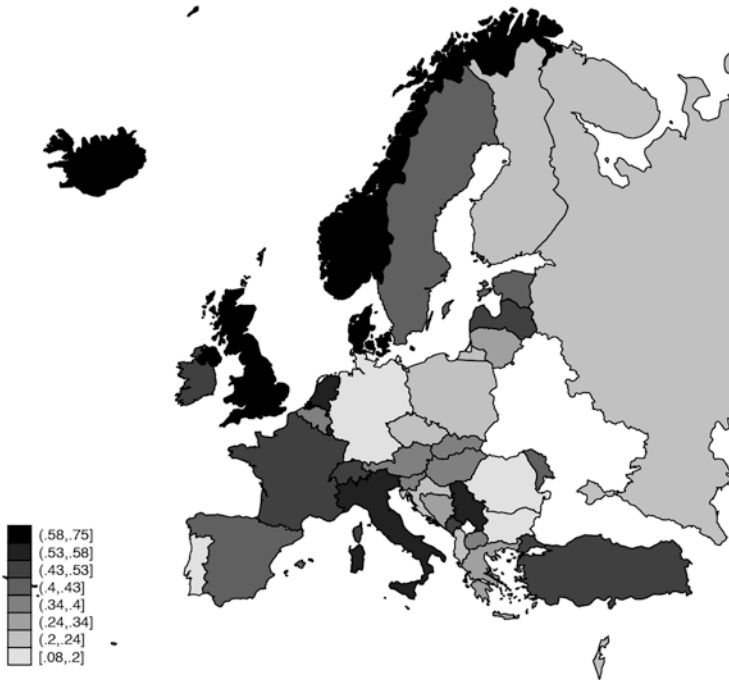
Fig. 2.3 Density of political science programmes in European higher education institutions in 2019. (Source: Proseps expert survey)

in all Southern European countries that passed from authoritarianism to democracy in the course of the 1970s.

This diachronic framework appears clear enough, even though it cannot be verified fully in terms of the figures concerned. In short, the evolution of academic political science in Europe has been profoundly affected by an asymmetrical distribution of resources, and there do not appear to be any signs of a recent re-balancing of this gap (with the partial exception of Turkey, Serbia and, to some extent, the Baltic States).

Overall, the indicators of political science density portray a situation that could be defined as a hare and turtle scenario: while the "richer" systems continue to offer political science courses (and, therefore, prospective positions in political science teaching and research) in a broad number of HEIs, the newer democracies with limited or no experience of political

science are struggling to increase the number of courses due to the absence of a political scientific culture and the limited competitiveness of current courses compared to STEM schools or to other social science degrees.

These considerations bring us to a second aspect of the analysis, which concerns the appeal (to potential students) of political science as a university subject. Once again, the recent trend has been not particularly encouraging, partly due to the exponential rise in the number of new social science courses not necessarily related to political science (e.g. media studies), and to competition from STEM courses. Table 2.1 indicates the total number of higher education institutes where the country experts engaged in the Proseps Cost Action project found, at the end of the 2008–2018 period, subjects pertaining to political science. Two additional items of information are also reported in the table: the trend compared with the previous decade (according to the experts' evaluation) and the trend concerning the launching of post-graduate and PhD programmes in the same countries.

Overall, stability seems to be the main key to understanding the state of European political science in terms of the discipline's presence on university curricula; and stability basically means the stability of the very clear divide between those areas characterized by the strong professionalization and institutionalization of the discipline, and those areas with very unstable, if not always weak, rates of institutionalization. In the largest countries, the same trend can also be seen within the political system. Italy is a paradigmatic case of the unbalanced distribution of political science resources, given the difference between the Centre-North area (where Giovanni Sartori, Norberto Bobbio and Bruno Leoni rebuilt the foundations of social science in the second half of the nineteenth century) and the South, where lawyers and historians have hindered the true emancipation of political science (Capano & Verzichelli, 2016).

The information remains rather imprecise given the lack of systematic and reliable data with which to control the diachronic evolution of political science. However, Table 2.1 reveals a few cases of an increase in the teaching *firepower* of political science. For example, Portugal and France have recently undertaken radical reforms of their universities' social science curricula, which seem to have had positive effects. Israel, on the other hand, seems to be suffering a crisis with regard to the "vocation" of political science within the higher education system of that democratic polity.

Table 2.1 European academic institutions offering political science subjects (2019) and recent trends concerning undergraduate and post-graduate courses

	HEIs offering political science courses (2018)	Comparison with previous decade (undergraduate courses)	Comparison with previous decade (graduate courses)
Albania	7	Increasing	Stable
Austria	22	Stable	Stable
Belgium	9	Stable	Stable
Bosnia	2	Stable	Stable
Bulgaria	8	Stable	Stable
Croatia	1	Stable	Stable
Czech Republic	28	Stable	Stable
Denmark	6	Stable	Stable
Estonia	2	Stable	Stable
Finland	6	Stable	Stable
France	103	Increasing	Increasing
Germany	429	Increasing	Stable
Greece	28	Stable	Stable
Hungary	64	Increasing	Stable
Iceland	1	Stable	Stable
Ireland	7	Increasing	Stable
Israel	7	Decreasing	Stable
Italy	23	Stable	Increasing
Lithuania	45	Increasing	Stable
Luxembourg	1	Stable	Stable
Netherlands	10	Stable	Stable
Norway	15	Stable	Stable
Poland	8	Stable	Stable
Portugal	17	Increasing	Increasing
Slovakia	14	Stable	Stable
Slovenia	1	Stable	Stable
Sweden	19	Increasing	Stable
Turkey	268	Increasing	Stable
United Kingdom	98	Stable	Stable

Source: elaboration on data provided by Proseps country experts

Finally, we must consider the issue of organizational trends at the international level. Following Klingemann (2007), we can use ECPR membership and the ratio of this figure to the overall number of political science research units, in order to get a good idea of international organizational density.

As Table 2.2 shows, the very few cases of increased density testify to the difficulties experienced by the discipline during the recent decade of crises.

Table 2.2 Membership of the ECPR by country (2019) and ECPR organizational density (2006–2019)

	ECPR organizational density (2006)	Number of ECPR members (2019)	ECPR organizational density (2019)
Albania	Na	0	0
Austria	75	5	23
Belgium	76	7	41
Bosnia	Na	0	0
Bulgaria	Na	0	0
Croatia	Na	0	0
Czech Republic	Na	8	51
Denmark	100	4	67
Estonia	Na	3	100
Finland	54	6	60
France	22	8	10
Germany	52	55	78
Greece	80	2	26
Hungary	Na	5	22
Iceland	100	1	100
Ireland	83	2	16
Israel	Na	4	28
Italy	38	14	30
Latvia	Na	1	13
Lithuania	Na	2	18
Macedonia	Na	0	0
Malta	Na	0	0
Netherlands	67	10	71
Norway	100	10	60
Poland	Na	6	46
Portugal	7	5	50
Romania	Na	2	20
Russia	Na	3	2
Serbia	Na	2	18
Slovakia	Na	3	21
Slovenia	Na	1	25
Spain	69	11	31
Sweden	92	14	74
Switzerland	56	9	90
Turkey	Na	4	8
United Kingdom	56	34	33

Source: Klingemann (2007) integrated by data provided by Proseps country experts

The backlash experienced by the Greek representation within the ECPR after the economic crisis clearly reveals the present difficulties, while other continental and southern European countries have suffered similarly in this regard. Most of the Central-Eastern countries remain some way off the average ECPR membership density, thus confirming the importance of path dependencies in the development of the European political system. The smallest among such countries are still not officially part of the ECPR network (although this does not mean that a good rate of circulation among individual researchers cannot be possible, as the key cases of Malta and Croatia show). On the other hand, a remarkable number of countries are now represented in this organization, thus marking the truly comprehensive Europeanization of the discipline, which is something that was still unimaginable in the 1990s.

This process of Europeanization is also reflected at the third level of the analysis, that is, the analysis of the prestige and impact of research findings. However, here the divide between Western European (in general) and Central-Eastern Europe is still very evident, as recently demonstrated by Ghica (2021) in her comparative analysis of publications in the most important journals in the field.

We can therefore conclude this historical reconstruction by pointing out a new "point of departure": all the indicators measured just prior to the emergence of the pandemic reveal certain signs of European political science's vitality. However, this has not prevented the community as a whole from suffering the intrinsic problems of internal pluralism and diversity in terms of resources, cultural heritage and disciplinary sensibilities. Strengths and weaknesses both persist. This has to be kept in mind when discussing such a complex, fragmented, multidimensional "science". European political science proudly boasts a *history* of pluralism, and all of its components have already learned how to protect the *memory* of this pluralism.

2.3   What Institutionalization?

As said, all the information we have already discussed testifies to the short, but important, history of political science in Europe. In this section, we are going to look at certain aspects of that history and reveal the main strengths and weaknesses of the discipline. More specifically, we are going to provide a brief review of the interpretative accounts provided by the

literature, while the next section will try to disentangle the most important substantive features of the history of European political science; and then it shall focus on selected accounts of the disciplines' evolution in different European countries.

The comparative analysis of political science's consolidation across Europe has been a recurrent theme, since scholars have often been concerned with the risks of parochialism and a lack of communication among national political science communities. The supranational goal of the ECPR's founders in the early 1970s (see above) has therefore been the main *mantra* of many scholars, even within the domestic and local arenas (Meny, 2020). As previously mentioned, the battle has been not won everywhere, although remarkable progress has been made in every single European country.

However, comprehensive assessments of the differentiated historical paths taken by the discipline are few and far between. Nevertheless, there have been some interesting recent attempts to provide a generalized interpretation together with certain reflections on specific case studies.

We have already turned to the work of Klingemann, who gathered information on the state of political science at the beginning of the twenty-first century in seventeen Western-European countries (Klingemann, 2007), whilst also providing a general overview of the discipline in Central-Eastern Europe (Klingemann, 2002).

Other evidence emerged recently from two robust cross-sectional analyses conducted with the support of the ECPR (de Sousa et al., 2010; Boncourt et al., 2020), and with a specific focus on Central-Eastern Europe, in a recent volume edited by Ilonszki and Roux (2022).

We are not going to provide a comprehensive review of the insights emerging from this literature. Our present goal is simply to elaborate on the actual meaning of the concept of the institutionalization of political science, by distinguishing a general point of view (the room afforded to political scientists in their social and professional systems) from an internal point of view (what political scientists think about the history and institutionalization of their discipline).

Let us start from the former (external) point of view. Scholars tend to see political science's institutionalization in a positive light. The volume edited by Boncourt, Engeli and Garzia, for example, offers a series of reflections on the cultural richness of European political science. Despite a number of criticisms, there has clearly been an increase in visibility and, to

a large extent, an improvement in the scientific outcomes achieved over the past seventy years. The problems of a very segmented evolution are also evident, and this is particularly relevant in times of difficulty for European democracies. A final take from Kris Deschouwer (2020) exemplifies such a positive, albeit prudent impression: "Some of these internal European boundaries are problematic, because they reflect inequalities and the lack of true integration. The dominance of the North-West of Europe in what is considered to be the mainstream defines and treats especially East-Central Europe as peripheral. Further, while the community of political science has greatly expanded, it does remain rather homogenous, with only a gradual and slow improvement in the gender balance and with a striking underrepresentation of people of colour."

Political science in Europe has travelled a long way and is now stronger than before. However, at a time when facts, figures and scientific underpinning are losing their legitimacy, when populism is rising, when those in power increasingly prefer a gut feeling over sound and scientific policy advice, and when some of those in power are directly and effectively attacking the very existence of a science critical of power, it requires considerable strength and persistence. It needs a strong and diverse community of scholars who are committed to political science and who believe in its necessity and relevance. There are many achievements to look back on, as well as many challenges to be aware of, but also great prospects for a bright future.

The data on the growing population of practicing political scientists (*see above*), and on the resilience of relevant degrees and PhD programmes during a period of economic and social crisis like the 2010s, confirm such an optimistic view. Roughly speaking, all the markers both on the demand-side and on the supply-side of our model of measurement of institutionalization (Klingemann, 2007) seem to work well.

So far so good then? Well, not really. Indeed, not at all it has to be said. First of all, a number of criticisms have been raised, also recently, with regard to the representativeness of the discipline. The most urgent question remains the inertia of a "young and gender-blind" conception of political science (Dahlerup, 2010) which persists among most of the oligarchies guiding the scientific community. However, the risks of de-institutionalization continue to be related to the age-old questions raised by Klingemann (2007) among others: solving the problems of the discipline's identity in Europe; promoting a common market for political

science; organizing common data infrastructures and studies; pursuing a balance between the cognitive and normative elements of political science.

Moreover, the quest for a truly balanced diffusion of the discipline as a whole remains a challenge, as several data sources show. In this regard, the problem of the Central-Eastern region of Europe remains a priority. The volume edited by Ilonszky and Roux (2022) deals precisely with the academic and social institutionalization of political science in that region. The analysis of this phenomenon from a very broad comparative perspective highlights a number of specificities that the authors tend to account for using path-dependent factors of continuity and resilience.

Indeed, several contextual narratives need to be borne in mind, ranging from the changed direction of an academic discipline that was once devoted to the cultivation of scientific socialism (Ilonszki, 2022), to the new pressures impacting a specific area like the Balkans (Boban & Stanoievic, 2022) and the regimes characterized by populist, illiberal leaderships (Vilagi et al., 2022).

As correctly pointed out in the conclusion of the aforementioned volume (Roux, 2022), the overall picture that emerges from the comparative analysis of the processes of institutionalization of Europe's political science communities is a rather complex one characterized by considerable diversity. From an external point of view, political science in the cluster of continental Western countries seems to be institutionalized to a significant degree, while Central-Eastern Europe (including the Balkans) still represents the "weak side" of political science in Europe.

Let us now consider the "internal view" of the process of institutionalization; that is to say, the perception of those who define themselves as political scientists. In order to explore this dimension, we will first examine the attitudinal data from the 2019 Proseps survey, which we shall be analysing in depth in the next chapter. In particular, we are going to explore the responses to two initial questions from the survey dealing with the notions of political science's "visibility" and "impact" (Berg-Schlosser, 2006).

Table 2.3 reports the responses of some 2275 respondents to a question about their perception of the visibility of political scientists compared to other intellectuals or academics. Even when conducting a detailed control by geographical area, no major differences emerge other than in regard to the Nordic countries, where a much larger group of respondents argue that political science has a considerable impact on the general public. Significantly enough, this vision is much more pronounced than in the UK, where on the contrary a large majority of scholars, while considering

Table 2.3 Visibility of political scientists compared to other academics

	Area						Total
	UK	Northern Europe	Western Europe	Central-Eastern Europe (EU)	Southern Europe	Central-Eastern Europe (non-EU)	
No impact at all (%)	6.7	1.2	5.0	2.5	8.3	7.8	5.2
Some impact on the general public (%)	80.8	49.4	82.9	72.0	74.1	72.8	74.4
Considerable impact on the general public (%)	12.5	49.4	12.1	25.4	17.7	19.4	20.4

Source: Proseps 2019 survey

Note: The table reports the distribution of the answers to the question: *With regard to the visibility of political scientists in comparison to other academics or public intellectuals, would you say that in your country*

political scientists sufficiently visible, do not believe them to have any great impact on public debate. The other areas considered in the table do not show any evident discrepancies. Even the scholars from Central-Eastern Europe consider the work of political scientists to be significantly visible.

Northern Europe includes: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden. **Western Europe** includes: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Switzerland. **Central-Eastern Europe (EU)** includes: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. **Southern Europe (EU)** includes: Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain. **Central-Eastern Europe (non-EU)** includes: Albania, Bosnia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Russia, Serbia.

Table 2.4 concerns the perception of the transformation of the discipline over time and considers a question about the impact of political science in the decade following the 2008 financial crisis. As expected, the regions where the discipline plays a stronger social role (Northern Europe and, to some extent, Western Europe) tend to perceive a degree of continuity, while political scientists from Southern Europe express a more optimistic vision, whereby political science is judged to have had a greater

impact since the beginning of the crisis. This optimism seems to be even more evident than in the UK, while the only region where the impact of political science is believed to be declining is that of Central-Eastern Europe. This is particularly important in terms of the degree of institutionalization of the discipline, since it confirms that the real risk of the de-institutionalization of political science is only present in those political systems where the transition to democracy happened at the end of the twentieth century.

The figures shown in Table 2.4 reflect the models mentioned above almost perfectly: the cluster of *Nordic countries* (with the partial exception of Finland which represents the less "Americanized" academic system) and the UK have the most highly institutionalized political science communities in Europe. However, the British community seems to be today more endangered than in Western and Southern Europe.

Hence, our data confirm common knowledge regarding the complexity of political science's development in Europe. At the same time, the amount of qualitative information we have recently gathered through the Proseps project—and partially analysed already (Ilonszki & Roux, 2022)—may point to further elements of complexity. The existence, persistence and

Table 2.4 Opinions about the impact of European political scientists' work since the 2008 financial crisis

	Area						
	UK	*Northern Europe*	*Western Europe*	*Central-Eastern Europe (EU)*	*Southern Europe*	*Central-Eastern Europe (non-EU)*	*Total*
Increased impact (%)	38.2	16.5	23.3	16.8	42.9	28.9	27.3
Decreased impact (%)	14.6	6.6	9.9	17.6	8.6	18.1	11.9
Remained the same (%)	47.2	76.9	66.8	65.6	48.5	53.0	60.9

Source: Proseps 2019 survey

Note: The table reports the distribution of the answers to the question: *in your opinion, since the 2008 crisis, and compared with the former situation, has the impact of the work of political scientists on public debate increased, decreased or remained the same?* For the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3

hybridization of a number of national traditions are important, and the specificities of each single case lead to a number of departures from the usual "geo-political interpretation" of the segmentation of European political science. National traditions may be linked to the largest, most influential countries. In this regard, we can follow Berndtson (2012) and argue that British, French and German political sciences represent highly independent models, different from the American one. However, if we want to show the impact of history on the evolution of political science, then the national criterion needs to be applied. Ilonszki and Roux (2022) show that the characteristics of political science in Central-Eastern Europe vary considerably from one country to another; and the same is true of other European areas.

A detailed examination of all these specific narratives is not envisaged in this volume. However, we think it important to mention some of the events and traditions that render certain European political science communities very different, and in any case very interesting when trying to understand the complexity of political science as a whole.

2.4   Classifying the National Trajectories of the Institutionalization of European Political Science

The preliminary analyses we conducted confirm the considerable variability of the discipline's development, which is a result of different national contexts and cultural legacies. In order to carry out a more sophisticated comparative analysis, we need to hone our information by highlighting the main patterns, or at least the similarities, present in order to simplify such a fragmented framework.

With the purpose of obtaining an initial, immediate picture, we have based our analysis on one of the indicators employed by Hans Dieter Klingemann (2007), namely a summary of the availability of reports written in English concerning the development of political science in Europe (Table 2.5). More precisely, we have supplemented the list of sources used by Klingemann with a few works published in English over the past decade and reported the first time that each European country was covered by these reports (starting with the well-known UNESCO report of 1950), and the regularity of available reports on each political science community. This indicator may represent a starting point for a qualitative analysis, since the longstanding presence of reports and the frequency thereof indicate when a process of institutionalization started and how successful it has been.

Table 2.5 Reports on the development of political science communities in Europe (1950–2021)

	Year of publication of first report in English	Regularity of published reports
Austria	1950	Continuous
Belgium	1950	Continuous
Bosnia	2021	Sporadic
Bulgaria	2002	Discontinuous
Croatia	2002	Discontinuous
Czech Republic	2002	Discontinuous
Cyprus	2007	Sporadic
Denmark	1982	Discontinuous
Estonia	2002	Continuous
Finland	1982	Discontinuous
France	1950	Continuous
Germany	1950	Continuous
Greece	1991	Sporadic
Hungary	2002	Continuous
Iceland	1982	Discontinuous
Ireland	1991	Discontinuous
Israel	No	–
Italy	1950	Discontinuous
Latvia	2002	Continuous
Lithuania	2002	Continuous
Luxembourg	1996	Sporadic
Macedonia	2018	Sporadic
Malta	2021	Sporadic
Moldova	2010	Sporadic
Netherlands	1950	Discontinuous
Norway	1982	Discontinuous
Poland	1950	Discontinuous
Portugal	1991	Discontinuous
Romania	2002	Discontinuous
Russia	2018	Sporadic
Serbia	2021	Sporadic
Slovakia	2002	Discontinuous
Slovenia	2021	Sporadic
Spain	1950	Continuous
Sweden	1950	Continuous
Switzerland	1950	Discontinuous
Turkey	2018	Sporadic
United Kingdom	1950	Continuous

Sources: Unesco (1950); Andrews (1982); Easton et al. (1991); Newton and Vallés (1991); Quermonne (1996); Klingemann (2007); Klingemann et al. (2002); Eisfeld and Pal (2010); Krauz Moser et al. (2016); Ilonszki and Roux (2022)

The case studies indicated in the table, together with a reasonably comprehensive review of other classic works on the history of political science (Rose, 1990; Klingemann et al., 1994; Easton et al., 1991; Daalder, 2003), are useful for the purpose of producing a qualitative assessment. In short, we argue that the diffusion of a plethora of national communities does not indicate a random form of development, since the advance of *political science's capabilities* (Klingemann, 2007) tends to display certain regularities due to important intervening factors. Following Easton et al. (1991), we may therefore argue for a *parallel development* which would have been more likely than a scenario of random *diffusion*. Again, this very much concerns the cultural attitudes of the earliest group of scholars who established political science in each European nation. However, other variables are at play here: in particular, the pace of democratization and the type of democratic regime, the resources invested in public research and teaching institutions, and the organizational nature of the higher education system concerned.

On the basis of the abovementioned literature, we may argue that three *historical patterns* can be identified that help to simplify the picture.

1. The Northern-European model of development, including the prototypical example of the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and the unique case of the United Kingdom. Roughly speaking, this model may be considered to include a cluster of countries where political science boasts a lengthy tradition (dating from before initial developments in the USA), but one that has been closely linked to the main scientific achievement of the American community of scholars. This latter aspect is the result of the direct impact of the American intellectual and academic environment on Northern-European political science, which has also been affected by the high degree of mobility to and from the wealthiest Northern-European universities since the early days of post-behavioural political science.

2. The continental model of political science. This model to some extent resembles the Northern-European model: Belgium, for instance, displays certain similarities to Nordic countries in terms of the discipline's academic profile. Of course, the continental model may be considered excessively broad, as it covers peculiar cases like the French one (Leca, 1991). Furthermore, it includes countries at different

stages of their political development (such as the latecomer democracies like Spain, Greece and Portugal). However, the academic systems of all these countries share a longstanding pluralistic tradition in political studies. In all of these countries, the development of political science has been hampered by the legacy of the "political sciences".

3. The Central-Eastern European model of political science. The consistency of this model also requires carefully examination given the diverse sources of the discipline's inspiration in the Eastern European countries (Unesco, 1950; Ilonszki & Roux, 2022). However, the very fact that it was not until the 1990s that a new process of institutionalization emerged is, by definition, a key element of political science's convergence throughout post-communist Europe.

The data regarding the institutionalization of political science recently gathered within the contest of the Proseps project generally confirm the validity of this vision of European political science based on three separate histories of the discipline's development. The historical sedimentation of the academic discipline is what results in the clear difference between the strong figures for Northern Europe and the weak figures for Continental Europe, and of course within Eastern Europe. A similar picture emerges if we look at the figures for IPSA membership of national associations of European political scientists, together with the data regarding the history of political science PhD programmes.

3 Three Generations of Political Scientist: Memories, Legacies and Visions

3.1 Three Generations: How Many Types of European Political Scientist Exist?

The approach we adopt in this volume differs from, and in some way is complementary to, those works we reviewed above dedicated to the history and institutionalization of political science in Europe.

The data regarding the state of the discipline, briefly reviewed so far, and the attitudinal data from the previously mentioned Proseps survey (which we shall be examining in the next chapter), are to be complemented by a number of accounts resulting from interview with 20

representatives of the European political science community. We have selected our interviewees based on a longitudinal perspective, that is, by considering the three generations already discussed: five interviewees are from the *Emeritus* class, the majority (nine interviewees) from the *Seniors* class and six are *Young Lions.*

Basing our argument on the abovementioned literature, we believe that, with the passing of time, the generations of European political scientists have become increasingly similar as a result of internationalization, despite the resilience of local and national distinctiveness. Therefore, European scholars' sense of unity is expected to grow stronger (in terms of reputation and relevance), thus encouraging the scholarly and intellectual formation of thousands of academics all around Europe.

However, the presence of the aforesaid country-specific factors remains strong enough to hypothesize a considerable level of domestic constraint, especially where academic recruitment is concerned. For this reason, we cannot assume that the idea of a "European political scientist" represents a unitary model. Rather, we should consider it a sort of benchmark to be aspired to, and one that is increasingly visible thanks to the internationalization of the scientific community. With the passing of time, the characteristics of "internationalised" and "European" models of scholar have become more relevant in all national contexts, but several domestic peculiarities and constraints have certainly not disappeared.

Moreover, other specificities may have arisen due to the different levels of integration of given sub-communities and sub-disciplinary fields. We may argue, for instance, that many experts in international relations and comparative politics may be more inclined than political theorists towards certain internationalization practices. We may also assume that the larger and wealthier universities and institutions may be more inclined to carry out international research, and thus become drivers for the supranational integration of their scholars. On the other hand, less important, poorer universities may find internationalization and innovative research practices more problematic. These factors are not easily controlled using extensive, superficial surveys only. For this reason, we have opted for a mixed research approach whereby we ask our interviewees specific questions about the impact of their backgrounds and training experiences.

3.2   *Difficult Legacies: Still Too Few Women; Still Too*
Little Inclusion

Among the critical reasons of dissimilarity among the European political scientists, the persisting male predominance and the difficult access to the academic career for the scholar coming from less privileged and minority groups still play a relevant role. We do not have systematic data concerning the gender distribution and the generational distribution within the European communities of political scientists. However, the profiles of the respondents to the Proseps survey confirm the negative impact of these two factors: the female component of our sample of scholars is lower than 35% of the overall number of interviews, and the measure is even lower if we take only the tenure positions into consideration (31%). Although relevant differences may be noticed across countries, it seems that the preclusion to female remains rather transversal in most of the European realities. These figures are in line with previous assessment from the recent literature (Norris, 2020; Engeli & Mugge, 2020).

A similar trend may be noticed looking to the mean age of European political scientists. Quite a large number of respondents to the 2019 survey ($N = 2308$) had indicated their year of birth, showing a mean age of less than 50 years. However, if we take into consideration the only tenure office holders, the mean age goes up to almost 51 years, with significant differences across countries.

Therefore, two variables like academic ageing and gender distribution cannot be neglected in the attempt to map the historical emergence of multifaceted group of European political scientists. In the remaining part of this volume, we will try to take in count the visions of the "next generation" of scholars, comparing them to the attitudes of their older colleagues. Moreover, we will include in our analyses, where possible, an adequate assessment of the attitudes expressed by the female component of European political scientists. This control is fundamental given the persisting biases that bring, in several European realities, to a systematic reiteration of the gender gap. The success of the legal provisions recently introduced to reduce the gap, and the concrete changes already achieved for women's status in the profession in some selected countries (Bates & Savigny, 2015) do not cancel this negative legacy of the first phase of institutionalization of the discipline, which is rather evident in all the pillars of academic recognition (Engeli & Mugge, 2020).

In the final part of the volume, we will argue that the question of gender gap will have to be monitored carefully in the years to come. Indeed, we know already a lot about the glass ceiling impacting the career prospects of female political scientists. However, much less attention has been given to assessing the long-term impact of this clear imbalance on the new expectations of the generations of scholars who had to be trained in times of crisis. Such information appears to be particularly relevant today, given the undeniable additional costs that female scholars have had to bear (and continue to bear) during the current pandemic.

3.3   Memories of the Past and Visions for the Future

As previously mentioned, we asked the twenty scholars we interviewed to describe their experiences as political scientists, by providing definitions, anecdotes and images pertaining to such. Here we offer just a short recap of the responses we received concerning the first two dimensions covered by our lengthy interviews. The content of the remaining parts of the interviews will be analysed in the remaining chapters of this volume.

The content of relevance here can be subdivided into three areas: the historical evolution of the discipline; the profession and role of political scientists; and the weaknesses/strengths of the discipline and the related challenges.

– *The historical evolution of the discipline in Europe. It is well institutionalized, but is it perhaps too fragmented?*

One dimension we dealt with during our interviews concerns the evolution (or the involution) of the discipline. In particular, we tried to stimulate people's thoughts on the achievements of political science in Europe, by scrutinizing the pros and cons of the outcomes achieved so far. This assessment has also been connected to other literature on the impact of the current challenges to the discipline, the necessity to select new questions and topics, and the persistence of criticisms, weaknesses, bad professional habits and biases; and in particular, to those criticisms and remarks often connected to arguments concerning the uncertain future of political science and the expectations gap (Flinders, 2018).

What have European political scientists got to say about the evolution of the discipline? An examination of a complex array of arguments and speculation reveals a generally positive view of the results achieved by

political science, judging by the answers given by a large majority of respondents. Indeed, several scholars underline the achievements of what is perceived as an expanding discipline capable of gathering significant knowledge. As an Emeritus scholar and one of the leaders in the field of public policy and administration observed:

> I would say that progress has been extraordinary. The number of European political scientists who have adopted the most up-to-date approaches to the study of political phenomena is clearly evident.

In accounting for this positive assessment, some respondents underlined the crucial role played by transnational networks of scholars and the European academic associations, which together have managed to preserve the unity of a discipline despite the costs of its intrinsic internal pluralism. One of our seniors argues:

> I think that (political science) still exists. It can be divided, in some sense. But, in essence, it is there … ECPR plays an important role in connecting European political scientists.

This positive view of the discipline's historical development is also confirmed by the autonomy achieved by the European discipline after decades of subordination to the paradigms and quality of North-American political science. One of our seniors clearly describes this transition:

> Now you have a new situation … I think this is a degree of major methodological progress. … European political scientists now have much less to learn from the Americans and even from their British colleagues.

Such a constructive assessment seems to corroborate the vision of a virtuous transformation, contrary to the idea of the discipline going backwards underlying the old mantra of the tragedy of political science (Ricci, 1984).

It is important to point out here that respondents differed in their views of the characteristics of the discipline in terms of its continental status and internal coherence. Many of those interviewed, regardless of their generation, agree that fragmentation and excessive specialization are significant characteristics of the discipline. This is clearly implied by one senior scholar:

when I began to read about this, and I began to work on this field, I was absolutely sure that these classics, Rokkan for example, or a little bit later Schmitter, I was absolutely sure that when I read them I got a view, a picture of political science, of the major questions and of Europe, permitting me to understand them … now, I think our profession is so specialized, so many things go into details, details that are not always that interesting furthermore. So, I often have the impression that all this is not so important anymore, that there is no broad European view, no real message about political science or about our world as such.

To be clear: all the respondents are completely aware that specialization is an essential structural dimension of the evolution of the discipline. However, at the same time many of them recognize the risks that such unavoidable dynamics can represent for the community of European political scientists as well as for their disciplinary identity. For example, two "young lions" specialized in International Relations observed how their field is not very closely linked to the main body of political science because

our subfields do not communicate as much as they do. For example, I no longer work with political scientists. I deal mostly with geographers, anthropologists and historians,

… or even because of a strong methodological divide within the subfield:

while scholars of electoral studies have a more standardized training, clear outlets for their publications and clear training trajectories compared to IR scholars in Europe. IR is still strongly divided between positivists/quantitative scholars and non-positivist/qualitative scholars.

This process of specialization, while representing a necessary step in the development of political science, is considered to result in the abandonment of a broader view of political phenomena, and this could be detrimental to the discipline. As an "Emeritus" clearly stated:

[W]e may observe a problem, a problem (first seen in the United States) of excessive specialization and the gradual abandonment of any general theory of socio-political action. In other words, as I go through the journals of political science in both Europe and the United States, I see very in-depth

analyses of small segments of political action, and the gradual disappearance of grand theories trying to deal with the big problems, like the old masters did, meaning those who lived and worked in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

There is a clear awareness that this specialization can be detrimental, but also that it is driven by the system of incentives of the existing academic world, which is very different from the one in place in the recent past. As one senior scholar observes:

[I]n the process of reproduction of the discipline—we are teaching at PhD level in a highly specialized way. … I finished my PhD 30 years ago and I had a very general training, you know what I mean? And now a PhD student, very often starts immediately to specialize … this is not only true in the field of comparative politics, also in public policy. … So, on the one hand we agree on the fact that we are risking excessive specialization, but on the other hand the system pressurises us into producing highly specialized young scholars.

Finally, what emerges from the interviews is that the majority of respondents clearly believe there is a significant divide between American and European political science, and also an internal division within European political science. This latter division is not one of different theoretical approaches, which constitute a kind of horizontal divide characterizing the profession of political scientist everywhere; it concerns other dimensions that emerge as the cornerstones of European political science. Those dimensions are political scientists' greater focus in terms of their objects of research, and their closer attention to conceptual work. All three generations of scholars tend to agree on this point. As an Emeritus scholar told us:

What is distinctive, what is different, are the realities and phenomena you are studying, and the approach you adopt in doing so.

This is echoed by a "young lion" and a "senior scholar", both of whom point to a difference in both content and the attention paid to conceptual reflection.

I think it's a focus on political parties. I think that American political science has lost touch with the notion of political parties, different types of government, the impact that different types of government regimes have on politics

and policy. I think that's something we do in Europe that they don't really do very much [in the States]. It is also a question of adopting a plurality of methods, I think in the ECPR we do not have this completely sterile debate about the qualitative and the quantitative. So, we kind of accept everything, as long as it's more or less sound in terms of its research design, while I think in the APSA they still have a lot of problems. And I think in European political science, we care much more about the definition of what is political, in the sense that we still have quite a lot of people working on social movements, for example, maybe not in Italy so much, but in other countries in Europe we believe that social movements are part of political science, like social cleavages, that kind of stuff, while in the US they will clearly consider that as outside the mainstream, more or less. (*young lion*)

I think European political science was initially (and still is) more conceptual in its focus. So there's a dominance of conceptual work. Maybe this also comes from the fact that we have very different nation states in Europe, compared to the US system, we have very different state traditions. I think the predominance of concepts is one thing. I also think it's difficult in terms of topics. … I just think of these people in Oslo and so on, these people who also made this link to the political science literature, but also they had these guys in Stanford … so it might be difficult to identify a difference, but probably, I think. … Of course, Europe also has a stronger focus on political parties because we have a greater variety of parties and party systems, a more highly diversified analysis of the study of interest groups, a stronger focus on state traditions. And also, in terms of theoretical background, maybe a stronger base in classical political theory than in the USA. (*senior*)

What is interesting here is that the majority of our experts argue that disciplinary fragmentation, different paths of consolidation and methodological pluralism do not prevent European political scientists from developing diversified capabilities. The variance of skills and methods is not a problem per se. Indeed, it may still be perceived as a plus factor of European political science.

– *The Profession and Role of the Political Scientist*

In the initial part of the interviews, the respondents recounted their experiences as political scientists. Anecdotes, "legends" and memories can help provide a good understanding of the degree of consistency among the several possible definitions of the discipline, and among the different ways that the profession of political scientist can be conceived. This

assessment has to consider two things here: the longitudinal dimension, by comparing the opinions of different generations of scholars; and the country-specific cultural constraints and different research interests represented in our panel of interviewees. Our questions were designed to encourage a rather broad and spontaneous set of reactions. We began with respondents' initial approach to the discipline (how did you first become interested in political science?), before then moving on to the more specific reconstruction of the fundamental elements of our interviewees' career development.

We also tried to identify the main distinctive features of "European political science", by focusing on a few possible issues and provoking the respondents with some puzzles. Said issues included the importance of intellectual formation/training, the role of the classics (and the definition of what a classic is), the difficulties of overly broad research agendas, the trade-off between academic engagement and room for intensive, "undisturbed" research. Thus stimulated, our interviewees could present what they believed to be the arts and crafts of the contemporary profession, as determined by the gradual affirmation of methods and research practices. Last, but not least, they were put in a position to describe the steps towards a good and fruitful "style of academic life".

As expected, the answers revealed a significant degree of complexity, and once again confirmed the imperfect, rather vague definition of "roles". However, a few robust items of evidence can be taken from such a complex picture.

First of all, respondents tended to agree on the basic reasons why they chose careers as political scientists: the example of the North-American academic system was a recurrent theme among Emeritus scholars, while the seniors and, above all, the younger respondents, often made reference to their European mentors.

This is consistent with the evolutionary map described above, and also with our expectation of a process of emancipation of European political science, which does not however negate the influence of its American predecessors. As mentioned in Chap. 1, political science as a separate academic discipline did not exist in Europe until the Second World War. In fact, all of our interviewed Emeritus scholars have a background in other disciplines (mainly history, law or old European style "political sciences"). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the emergence of a renewed political science in Europe was part of a "political" process based on

American foundations. This point is clear from the recollections of the older scholars we interviewed. As one of them pointed out:

> [A] few US foundations play an important role through their investing in Europe. In the UK, not only in Italy, and also to a degree in France, as well as an enormous amount of money in Germany. I'm speaking about Western Europe, and about the transformation of European political science into a much more Americanized political science.

These roots have been completely forgotten by the following generations, and this point is crucial since it indicates an insufficient intergenerational transfer of information, stories and narratives.

A second factor that our interviewees agreed on in the main concerns the importance of academic training and the independence of political science from the cognate disciplines. Several scholars spent time describing the costs of the difficult establishment of the discipline in academia which underlies the aforementioned paths of institutionalization.

Even in those cases where the consolidation of the academic discipline appears more challenging—in Central-Eastern Europe for example—the importance of this investment of time (and the consequent capabilities of political scientists to build academic institutions) is unanimously stressed by several interviewees. The vision of a mature discipline that can result in the development of a multitude of capabilities that enhance the role of political scientists as a collective body, consolidated across generations and disciplinary profiles, leads us to give a generally positive evaluation of the self-awareness achieved by European scholars on the whole. In other words, the presence of a significant skill set comprising academic, teaching, research and media skills is the very proof of the discipline's solidity and credibility.

It proved much more difficult to interpret the considerable variance in the answers our respondents gave when asked about their sources of inspiration and their professional agendas. What clearly emerges is the intrinsic pluralism characterizing the political science community. Some respondents, for example, were very much in favour of a changeable and permeable research agenda and stressed the importance of reconsideration and hybridization. Others, especially the youngest generation, emphasized certain very specialized and coherent topics and approaches. Here, however, their different individual stories show how the decision to become a

political scientist can be based on extremely different reasoning. This may vary from:

> "I was interested in political stability and the crisis of democracy"
>
> to
>
> "it was not a vocational decision, it was mostly a matter of opportunities and circumstances. So, when I finished my studies I had two options: either preparing to be a civil servant (which I liked), or the quickest option to achieve some form of economic independence was to get one of these fellowships, which provided quite a decent income. So, I mean, I had no vocation to be a political scientist.",
>
> or from
>
> "I was interested in the effects of power on society and individual lives"
>
> to
>
> "I always feel I never really chose a career … you know, you go to school, you go to university, you have a vague idea of being a school teacher or something, I didn't know any other jobs, and then, you know, you've got a good degree so you're going to do research and then once you're doing your doctorate, you obviously start thinking about getting an academic job."

Even more evidently, acknowledgement of the maturity of political science is not accompanied by the same idea of priorities for each single practicing political scientist. Obviously, senior and Emeritus scholars tend to place greater importance on their achievements as academic institution builders. However, the impression remains of a highly segmented group: some of the respondents clearly prioritize individual objectives (especially when they talk about their research), while others mention the accomplishment of collective results as crucial goals.

This third item of evidence can in fact be interpreted as a systemic variance resulting from the range of political science's substantive content, and even to the asymmetric development of the very sense of a political scientist's role. However, the different interests and roles are often correlated to different sets of theoretical and methodological tools, and this substantiates the perceived segmentation of European political science's bittersweet existence: it is a sign of its autonomy and broad outreach, but also of its very confused and unstable values and priorities. Furthermore, what clearly emerges from the interviews is that "what you do" determines your view of the discipline and its role.

In this regard, the division between the major subfields of the discipline (IR, comparative politics and public policy) is rather important.

Finally, there is a certain degree of concern about the way in which young generations are professionally trained; this regards not only the issue of specialization, but also the extensive methodological training that is now considered a cornerstone of every political science PhD programme. A senior scholar presents this problem very well when she says:

> Methodification is a good thing. It's part of the professionalization of the discipline. But when it becomes too much a part of a business model requiring publications, I think it becomes detrimental. So I have seen academics be promoted simply because they had a dataset or a method to offer. But if you were to ask them: "do you know what your research questions are?", they wouldn't have any. Also, I do think that this method of education can be excessive. It's good, we have this formalization of methods, but in the end this process of professionalization should contribute towards relevant research.

However, this did not prevent respondents from expressing their doubts about the substantial inefficiency characterizing the academic environment, as well as making a number of remarks about the gaps that political scientists have to cope with in the current social and political scenario (Flinders, 2018). We shall come back to these doubts very shortly here, as well as in the next chapter.

– *Weaknesses/Strengths and Related Challenges*

All our interviews show our respondents' significant awareness of the weaknesses and strengths of the discipline, and thus of the related challenges. They all distinguished between internal and external environments in terms of the discipline's strengths and weaknesses.

As regards the internal environment, meaning the academic role of political science, the major strength that emerges from our interviews is its capacity to provide a detailed, full, and in a certain way configurative, image of the complexity of political phenomena. As a young lion observed:

> [W]e are able to make the connection between politics and policy, which we do not see in other disciplines … economists usually do not understand the economic policy side of things very much. And if you look at sociology, sociologists usually do not fully understand policy either. So, I think we are the only one who can make this link between politics, party competition and party expectations on the one hand, and policy action on the other. So that's

how I see European political science: we are able to consider political factors, environmentally related factors and policy action. And I think we are quite unique in this.

Obviously, this image of the discipline is at risk of appearing ecumenical, when we consider all of the divisions we have been emphasizing up until now. However, it also looks to be the genuine aspiration of all of our interviewees.

At the same time, one concern emerging from our respondents' considerations is the capacity of political science to defend its borders from other disciplines, especially economics. This point is clearly raised by various interviewees. For example, one "young lion" mentioned a certain well-known problem that political science has (the fact that it is a net borrower of concepts and approach from other disciplines), stating that:

> it is a young discipline and it lies between other disciplines that I think have a greater competitive edge than political science does. I mean, political science mostly focuses on political processes, it doesn't focus on outputs like economics or psychology or even law do, for example … the story of political science has centred on political process … and I think this makes political science a weaker competitor than its neighbouring disciplines, also because everyone can proffer their opinion about political processes. In some way they use the same vocabulary that political science uses when talking about democracy, when talking about representativeness. … I think this fact that political science deals with topics on which most people are qualified to have an opinion, is one of its weaknesses. We don't possess a highly specialized topic and we don't possess a specialized approach.

As we know, this weakness is a structural problem inherent to political science, a science that focuses on political phenomena which are not the exclusive preserve of political science and political scientists. However, the fact that the younger generations of political scientists see this problem as a kind of disciplinary handicap is somewhat worrying for the discipline's future. This point is strongly reiterated by older scholars who have been familiar with this issue for a long time, and thus have seen it develop over time. This is clearly testified to by the concern expressed by one particular senior scholar:

> academically one thing I see as a problem (it's quite a longstanding problem) is that to some extent political science relies on, or simply adopts, theo-

ries that have been developed in other disciplines econometrics, econometric modelling … in my view, basically you study economics but with a focus on some kind of political topic. … In extreme cases you could say that if you have children who want to become political scientists you can tell them: "you have to study mathematics, and then read the political science textbook and move over to that discipline" … this in my view is the real challenge facing our discipline, since if you just import methods and theories from other fields, this can be detrimental. And I see this tendency to a certain extent.

Thus, there is a shared awareness that the greatest academic weakness lies in the difficulty of defending the borders of the object of one's analysis—the disciplinary borders previously mentioned—and the tendency towards the quantification/economization of the discipline, which could destroy its (already problematical) identity.

What is interesting is that the individual accounts we gathered from our interviewees reveal a genuine two-edged perception of what academic political science is, and of its inherent precariousness. While scholars are very proud to belong to a discipline capable of grasping the complexity of political phenomena, they are also concerned about the risk of other disciplines, considered more powerful from the scientific point of view, encroaching on its sphere of operation. This comes across as a kind of inferiority complex inherent in the discipline, and one that persists despite the significant level of academic institutionalization of political science.

This inferiority complex strongly emerged when we asked our interviewees about the strengths or weaknesses of the discipline in terms of its social relevance. What is astonishing here is the shared belief that political science is really weak in terms of the way it is perceived from the outside, and thus is not particularly relevant.

On this point, a "young lion" offered the following clear-cut, pessimistic opinion:

I think, definitely, governments have absolutely no idea what we do, unless we are traditional style, and we comment on elections or that kind of stuff, or you deal with public policy; but I do a lot of work on public policy, so it might be easier for me in my subfield, because there's always been a kind of direct link between government and public policy, as long as it is public policy evaluation, for instance. So, I do not see why I always have to justify my existence as a scholar, but I can see that may be different for the disci-

pline as such. … I'm usually contacted because I'm a public policy specialist, rather than because I'm a political scientist, so I can see the difference. I think for other subfields the approach may be a little bit different, but I do not think we possess any kind of trademark. And I don't know, sometimes I wonder whether we are good at anything. I think we are good at most things, but we are not as strong as economists in terms of our predictions, and we are losing ground to data science. So in in terms of big data we have never evolved as political scientists, I think we completely lost that opportunity, as did the Americans, not just us Europeans, but I think we in Europe are getting overwhelmed.

This point is reinforced by a senior scholar not belonging to the public policy subfield, who observes that:

I do think that political science can be relevant, indeed should be relevant, to society. But I do feel that there is a distinction between what I think political science is and what I might think about public policy. And it seems to me that if you're a political scientist, or if you're a scientist, you're going to be sceptical … you might believe something, but your belief in it might not be total. So, you might have a certain amount of belief in something but how much do I believe? 60% or something? I'm sceptical, I'm always questioning things. If you're working in the public policy field, you don't do that. You can't go to the government and say: Well, this might work or that might work. You've got to say: Do this! You've got to be convinced and convincing. So, I think if you're doing public policy, you've got to really push things, even if you're not totally sure about them, because otherwise government won't listen, and people won't listen.

In one way or another the internal and external dimensions of political science, in terms of its weaknesses and strengths, come together and present a few challenges regarding the academic side of the discipline in its external role. The first challenge concerns the capacity to work on important social problems. As an Emeritus scholarly has clearly stated:

I think political science should deal with problems that are relevant to the community, and not problems driven by the endogenous interests of the discipline. We don't only have to sharpen the data analysis, but need to look around and say: what's really the most urgent problem as perceived by the political community or at all levels now? And start from there, and then ask research questions about important differences. We have to formulate "why" questions and try to offer answers to those "why" questions? Why do

labour market policies produce different outcomes in response to the challenges of COVID in different member states, for example? And then look to see whether there are theoretical answers already there or whether empirical material needs to be looked at, in order to come up with new hypotheses, with new answers which very often come from the data, if you really look into the data.

The focus on important social and political problems can strengthen political science's sense of disciplinary identity and can also help to deal with the problem of applicability and prediction (the second challenge), which political scientists too often think is not part of their job. Too often political scientists think that they cannot predict future developments, whereas according to one senior scholar:

> [P]olitical science can predict types of events; it can predict certain things regarding collective action on problems. It won't know exactly what's going to happen, but it understands the nature of the problem, it knows how certain mechanisms work. So I think it can predict, it just can't predict in the way in which policy analysts and politicians want us to.

To sum up then, according to the accounts our interviewees provided us with, political science ought to be more aware of its own potential, and political scientists should believe more strongly in their scientific capacities and in the advice that they can offer to the outside world.

4   In Pursuit of a Model of Political Scientist

4.1   One Syndrome and Three Myths

The analyses developed in this chapter, based on various Proseps databases and the in-depth interviews conducted for the same project, confirm that notwithstanding political science's weaknesses and fragmentation, European political scientists are not overly concerned by the discipline's state of health. This is confirmed by the data we collected just before the emergence of the pandemic. In other words, the "normality" of the period before year 2020 is considered by the scholars we interviewed and by surveys as, if not exactly a golden age, then a reasonable period of maturity of the discipline.

At the same time, several asymmetries and variances emerge. National and sub-disciplinary specificities, different sensibilities, inter-generational gaps and a persistent gender imbalance characterize the contemporary scenario. The more we delve into the details of the professional and intellectual essence of political science, the more complicated the picture becomes. The optimism displayed by the political science community a few months prior to the emergence of the pandemic was based on one simple argument: if we remain faithful to our "giants", the virtuous cycle of political science will continue and any "tragedies" will be avoided. The problem is that the giants in question are extremely diverse, and each brings different, somehow contradictory examples to the table.

Looking through the feedback from our interviewees, what emerges is a certain agreement on the need for political scientists to possess several specific capabilities. Now, we want to select the most crucial capabilities in order to relate them to the possible ideal-types of political scientist that remain valid models for the members of the current community. In doing so, we have decided to have a little fun with the definitions of select ideal-typical figures, by giving each of them the name of an epic hero. We chose such an impertinent adaptation of mythological figures instead of undertaking the difficult task of placing real political scientists in one category or another, as this operation would in any case be biased and partial.

We start with the selection of two fundamental attitudinal dimensions, representing the basic drivers of effective action towards increasing the capacities of the discipline (Fig. 2.4). These dimensions are:

		Individual propensity to achieve the collective goals of the discipline	
		Low	High
Individual propensity to impact the public sphere	High		Highest impact of political scientists
	Low	*Syndrome of uselessness*	

Fig. 2.4 The two-dimensional space of the most relevant capabilities for political scientists

a. *Individual propensity to achieve the collective goals of the discipline*. In short, this means holding the view that the profession of political scientist is a collective effort on the part of a body of scholars. The mission is therefore that of *increasing the impact* (in terms of both teaching and research outcomes) *of the collective community of scholars*. The focus is therefore on those capabilities that enhance the discipline at a systemic level, namely: presence in the academic curricula, number of scholars recruited, quantity and quality of the departmental/national publication record, ranking of curricula and PhD schools and so on.

When this dimension is maximized by the scholar's attitude, the discipline is considered to be strong, since it produces a great number of scholars who adapt to the needs of the scientific community in order to achieve collective goals.

b. *Individual propensity to impact the public sphere*. This attitude focuses on the idea of a discipline which is the sum of individual contributions. Therefore, political scientists directly add value to the discipline in the social and public sphere, when they are, as individual researchers and intellectual, more vocal, visible and prestigious at an individual level. The recognition and social penetration of each outcome are more important than the collective impact of the community. The focus here is on the effective influence of each single action (specific and specialized publications, the role of individual political scientists in the media, the individual careers of political scientists within academia etc.). As a consequence, the discipline is considered to be strong when it produces a considerable number of scholars who share approaches designed to ensure social visibility and personal relationships with politicians, decision makers, academic élites and the media.

Figure 2.4 shows the ideal space formed by the intersection of the two dimensions: obviously, if the position in both the dimensions is close to zero, the risk of frustration will be high, since political scientists realize their lack of effective capabilities and therefore feel useless. On the other hand, only when the position in both dimensions is maximized will political scientists perceive their capabilities in all possible professional *missions* to be considerable.

Fig. 2.5 One syndrome and three myths for European political scientists
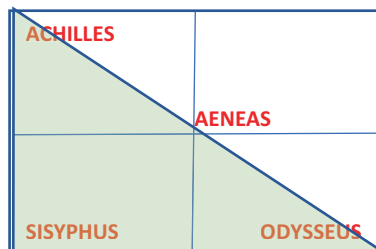
As said, it would be very difficult (and certainly very debatable) to position each individual famous political scientist in this space. Much more simply, and provocatively, we try to fine-tune a typology within this space, in order to reveal the myths of several generations of scholars, and their possible obsession with the risk of oblivion. Figure 2.5 shows the four ideal figures we wish to propose as possible "models" of the political scientist.

Hence, the figure represents a potential space for our vision of today's political scientists in Europe. Ideally, all of them should endorse a simple assertion based on the assumption of the rational, synoptical capabilities of all members of the scientific community: political scientists should therefore preserve the capacity to maintain high professional standards to adapt their research agenda, to update their paradigms and to gather evidence-based knowledge. At the same time, political scientists must be capable of prioritizing the most important actions to be taken at each given moment in their professional lives. This ideal type of a good professional attitude can be seen as the linear projection of the positive assessment made so far by this variegated scientific community. We associate the mythical figure of *Aeneas* with this perspective: a devoted political science "hero" continuously dedicated to achieving the collective goals of the discipline (including research, teaching and other academic obligations), who is always in control, is able to prioritize and if necessary to renounce all individual goals for the sake of the collective.

We know, however, that human beings are not always capable of meeting their responsibilities. In any case, a modern political scientist who wants to pursue the two aforementioned virtues would not lead a very happy life: due to the scarcity of resources and time constraints, he/she

would often have to settle for more modest goals. For this reason, we have hypothesized that the propensity to produce a general impact and the propensity to achieve the collective goal of the discipline tend to cancel one another out, and the actual space of applicability of the two capabilities is shown by the coloured triangle in Fig. 2.5.

While the mythical figure of Aeneas is difficult to emulate, we all have a clear idea of the opposite attitude, that of a counter-ideal-type, which is sometimes a true obsession for political scientists: working each day without any certainty that one's efforts will be duly recognized. This may apply to individual research agendas (especially when these are not connected to key networks or debates), and even to all academic outcomes concerning teaching obligations and civic engagement (when a discipline is neglected or not adequately recognized in the academic environment). As a matter of fact, the impression of constantly producing research and academic results with no relevance can be a common frustration in the academic environment. Political scientists are no strangers to this frustration, because despite being proactive, internationalized, passionate scholars, they are not always recognized and rewarded by their own cultural and academic systems.

We now bring *Sisyphus* into the discussion, since this counter-hero can represent the feeling that one has worked hard for nothing, and that all progress achieved by modern political science until now leads nowhere. This is a real danger we all have to face right now, particularly as it may be necessary to reorganize the whole research and higher education system in a post-pandemic scenario (see Chap. 4).

However, the likelihood of a strongly regressive trend characterized by the marginalization of political science, at least in those European countries where the discipline is institutionalized, is a limited one; as is the prospect of seeing an army of budding *Aeneas*. When a political scientist wishes to emulate a specific virtuous model, it is more likely that he or she will select a specific talent to the detriment of other capabilities. On the basis of the above analyses, we deduce that two capabilities are particularly difficult to combine in one single action: the capability to envisage political science's collective goal and the capability to impact the public sphere. These two dimensions are theoretically distinct, but a particularly clever approach could in theory marry the two. However, due not only to the limited rationality and the egoism of individuals, but also to the scarcity of resources, it is quite likely that scholars will end up selecting one of the two aforementioned capabilities.

In the first case, scholars will be more oriented towards cultivating the skills required to assure a future for their scientific community. We have chosen the myth of *Odysseus* to indicate the corresponding ideal-type, since the good of the community for some political scientists may be somewhat akin to the love for "family" and "followers" that Odysseus displayed during his hardships. A modern-day Odysseus in the political science field is a scholar who performs best when considering the collective values of the discipline, and thus the impact that his/her work could have on future generations of scholars. Using a more contemporary definition, we can consider this ideal-type as being close to the concepts of *mentor* and *institution builder*.

Achilles, on the other hand, is the equivalent of the ideal-type political scientist focussed mainly on the impact of his/her work—or rather, all disciplinary achievements but in particular his/her own work—on public debate. Talent and scholarship may certainly help this kind of scholar to contribute towards major collective enterprises. However, he or she does not appear very interested in this kind of impact. Rather, he or she assumes that the future of the discipline is somehow subject to its capacity to reach out to policy-makers, the media and ordinary people. The modern-day Achilles as political scientist does not tend to share the values of, or a commitment to, the "collective community" of scholars, but seems more interested in individual action; he or she basically craves for glory and fame and attempts to reach a "collective audience". The figures that we often label as *public intellectuals* or *independent scholars* to a degree fall into this ideal-type category.

The Current Scenario: Mapping Fragmentation and Transformation in European Political Science

1   Premise

This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the state of European political science. Unlike previous selective analyses of the varieties of political science across Europe (for instance, Klingemann, 2007), or recent studies of the evolution of sub-disciplinary domains in Europe (de Sousa et al., 2010), we offer an account of the present scenario by investigating different sources of data including surveys, official documents and qualitative interviews. These facts and figures, indeed, allow us to offer a robust and precise description of the complexity of European political science. In particular, we rely on three types of sources: the 2018–2019 Proseps Survey of European political scientists' attitudes towards political science; other datasets developed by the same project via flash surveys and initiatives from its internal working groups; and finally, the main findings from more than twenty open-ended interviews with knowledge holders—both young and senior experts in the discipline.

Exploring such a wealth of data will enable us to map the attitudes of European political scientists and their capacity both to achieve the discipline's collective goals and to impact the public sphere with continuity and credibility. This will allow us, in the fourth and final chapter, to offer a more tangible analysis of the challenges, together with further observations regarding the concrete likelihood of avoiding the *syndrome of Sisyphus* we presented in the previous chapter, and also to consolidate a number of new professional models.

In order to do so, the chapter includes an initial section dealing with the current structure of the community, its internal pluralism and its external perimeter. These dimensions will be explored by looking at different indicators obtained from the abovementioned sources. This is consistent with the core theme of the book, namely that of assessing the key aspects of the disciplinary sphere based on the views of the "experts", the assessment emerging from a broader set of respondents and the outside world's image of the discipline as per the most visible findings of our research.

The following section will focus on the main aspects of the redefinition of political science's potential impact on the public sphere. The Proseps Survey data will help us to reconstruct the opportunities and ideas that may help scholars find a visible, productive role beyond their usual *comfort zone* within academia. Once again, we shall complement the data-driven reconstruction based on our surveys (see Appendix 1), with an assessment of the statements set out in our political science testimonials (see Appendix 2), in order to account for the gap between European political scientists' perceived potential in terms of their visibility, social impact and relationship with the policy-making sphere and the effective outcomes they can actually achieve in these difficult times.

A third section will focus on the evidence emerging from our data concerning the transformation and perceptions of political scientists' "everyday business". It will also give account of the criticisms and self-criticisms of the three generations of political scientists we interviewed. After reviewing trends and figures, we raise the question of what European political scientists are currently lacking in order to achieve a satisfactory level of *professionalization*. This will immediately lead us to another question about the main measures to be taken—both at the systemic level and in terms of the individual actions of each single political scientist—to positively adapt the political scientist's work as a researcher, teacher and disseminator of knowledge. The ideas we are going to explore can be encapsulated by certain terms we have either invented or taken from the literature, namely those of the *traveller* (Tronconi & Engeli, 2022), the *commuter* and the *fixer*.

We shall return to the theme of adaptation in the fourth and final section of the chapter, where we shall deal with the changes expected and/or determined by two decades of crises, from the impact of 9/11 in 2001 to the aggression of Ukraine and the return of warfare in Europe. Political scientists are supposed to be more familiar than other scholars with notions such as *crisis resolution* and *institutional performance*. Some of them are

professional knowledge holders in the field of policy analysis. Most of them teach courses about global challenges. The possible effects of the global crises witnessed in the first two decades of the twenty-first century thus constitute a sort of "unavoidable topic of interest" for their research agenda.

Here, we shall specifically focus on the response to COVID-19 and on the subsequent phase of reflection. In fact, the said health crisis has been seen as a fundamental critical juncture or "policy punctuation" to be carefully analysed (Hogan et al., 2022), and not only for its obvious effects on health policy, welfare systems and public policy in general. Educational systems, inter-generational relations and even psychological behaviour are also at stake. That is why we have chosen to use selected data taken from the final period of the Proseps project, to discuss the perceptions and expectations of European political scientists in regard to the post-pandemic era.

2 Winners, Losers, Strangers: Re-thinking the Shape of the European Political Science Community

Let us start with a basic outline of the current European political science community. In our attempt to map the variance, fragmentation and uniformity of the discipline, we shall be paying particular attention to the following aspects thereof.

1. The effective consolidation of a multitude of sufficiently *autonomous and methodologically recognizable "sub-disciplines"*. We have already described the issue of the discipline's fragmentation. Here we shall use the answers to some of the questions in the Proseps 2018–2019 survey, to better understand the autonomy of selected sub-sets of political scientists in Europe. Also, the internal fragmentation of the discipline will be reconstructed on the basis of the definitions provided by the respondents to our qualitative survey.
2. The *pluralism of theoretical approaches*, which can be in some way measured by the "self-positioning" of political scientists in an open-space realm of potential knowledge, which is generally defined here as the space of European political science, or by an ex-post overall assessment of their outcomes.

3. The *effective variance in the use of specific methods* and professional tools from one setting to another, whose assortment points to both the richness and the complexity of our scientific community. In particular, we want to clarify the effective degree of uniformity (or, on the contrary, the risk of inconsistency) in the set of methodological requirements that political scientists consider as unquestionable "working tools" for the discipline as a whole.

2.1   The External and Internal Borders of European Political Science

Who exactly are today's European political scientists? The comparative analysis of the density and complexity of the discipline is particularly difficult, not only due to the different levels of information pertaining to academic subjects and personnel, from one country to another (or even across universities). Indeed, the description of academics' areas of interest and publication records, taken from all of the CVs read by our Proseps country experts on the web page of each single European political scientist, reveals an extreme range of variation, since we have counted more than 400 "labels" spontaneously added by the respondents to the short set of sub-disciplines we had suggested to them.

Here we have to consider how this variety of information may also be impacted by other structural factors, such as the procedural and legal constraints on the visibility of academics at national or local level, which do not really affect the five general dimensions of political science institutionalization (stability, identity, autonomy, reproduction and legitimacy) (Ilonszki & Roux, 2022, 34), but render the individual representatives of the discipline clearly distinguishable. Such factors also include: the adoption (or otherwise) of an official line governing the hiring of political science academics; the presence (or otherwise) of an official "political science" subject area in the university curricula; and the compulsory presence of a certain number of credits linked to this discipline by national and local regulations.

Even if we limit our analysis to the Western-European scenario, where the aggregate degrees of institutionalization remain relatively homogenous (see Chap. 2), there remains a great deal of variability as things stand. In those countries where an official academic definition of the discipline is ensured by the legal obligation to recruit within a set of *scientific*

disciplinary sectors,[1] the external visibility of political scientists can be established relatively easily. Conversely, in countries like the United Kingdom or Ireland, the recruitment system does not contemplate any clear disciplinary distinction, which makes the definition of the political science community much more uncertain. Similarly, the number of political science credits in the study plans of BA or MA programmes is clearer in more strictly regulated higher educational systems, although a further element of variance may be that of sub-national regulation. In Germany, for instance, formal accreditation of the disciplinary subjects depends on federal states' regulations, whereas national legislation is extremely binding in France. Once again, flexibility resulting from de-regulation emerges in the English-speaking countries' academic systems.

All in all, the picture varies enormously, since neither the external borders of political science nor its internal ones can be pinpointed through comprehensive quantitative analysis. This is certainly a limit, but also a first important piece of information confirming the vagueness of the official definition of the discipline of political science. This vagueness is currently in danger of becoming increasingly pronounced given the proliferation of new programmes and courses inspired by catchy, original denominations and by a variety of inter-disciplinary subjects (i.e. *gender studies*, *big-data* and *artificial intelligence*, *sustainability* etc.).

2.2   The European Political Science "Tectonic Plate": An Analysis of the Proseps Survey Data

The aforementioned difficulties may be partially overcome by utilizing an important original source of information to begin describing the complexity of European political science. That source of information is the 2018–2019 Proseps Survey. We started by describing the panel of about 11,000 scholars included in the contact file, elaborated by the Proseps country experts, covering 35 different countries. Unfortunately, the contact file could only be compiled with complete information on each

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[1] For instance, political science in Italy is one of the fourteen sectors of Scientific Area number 14 (*Political and Social Sciences*). Adopting a broader definition of political science, we can find practicing political scientists operating in at least other two sectors: *Political Philosophy,* which in fact is considered by Italian regulations to be a related disciplinary sector (meaning that a professor of political philosophy can be a member of a board appointed to hire a political science researcher), and *Political Sociology.*

scholar's areas of interest in the case of less than half of the entire popula-
tion (5005 individuals).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the Proseps dataset offers some
pointers through its over 10,000 entries (national coders could observe up
to three areas of interest for each individual included in the contact file).
This collection of keywords is rather indicative since it reveals a significant
number of repetitions. More specifically, the most commonly found 273
keywords (those indicated by at least 2 political scientists) were mentioned
4983 times. The 55 keywords shown in Fig. 3.1, in the form of a Pareto-
chart, are mentioned by at least 20 political scientists, but the tail of the
chart will be much longer: even after the recoding of very similar couples
of keywords, and after excluding from the list any indication of the coun-
tries the respondents come from, we still have 330 different entries.
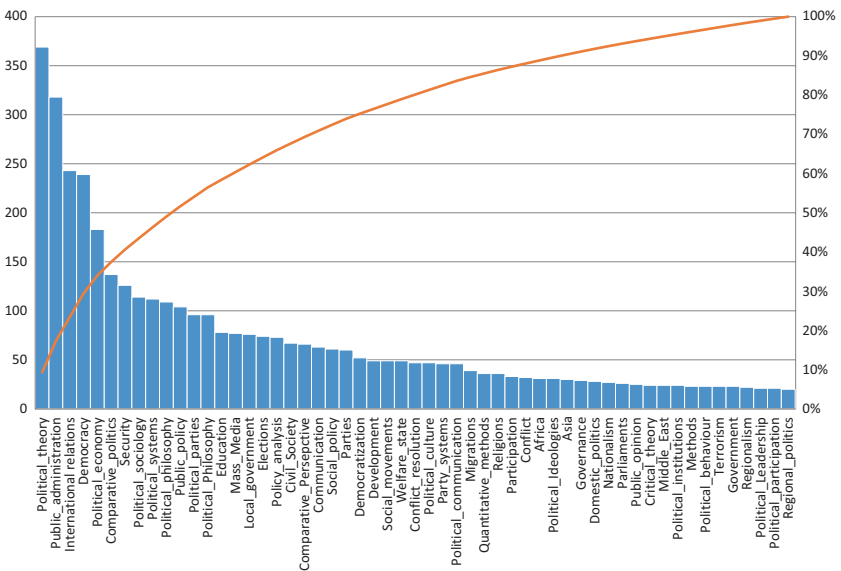
Fig. 3.1 The most recurrent interests of European political scientists. (Note: the
Pareto chart has been created on the bases of the most recurrent selections of 5005
European political scientists whose profiles have been compiled in the Proseps
contact file)

As one can see, some of the typical "areas" often indicated by previous studies (e.g. Klingemann, 2007) as cornerstones of the discipline are present here. However, even such a partial and experimental cataloguing process shows how people's perceptions of the objects of the discipline vary. Indeed, several of the objects identified by our country experts reflect typical sub-disciplinary areas, such as *Political Theory, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Public Administration* or *Public Policy*, while many others look more like points of contention among different disciplinary approaches. The latter include notions such as *Conflict* (or even *Conflict resolution*), *Welfare, Democracy, Elites, Ethnic Politics* and so on. In some cases, the keywords seem to point to other concepts which, by following a logic of disciplinary demarcation, should be indicated as competing "social sciences". Indeed, our list of subjects includes the following key words: *Constitutional/Public Law, Economics, Political Sociology* (as well as other forms of sociology), *Anthropology* and *History*. In other cases, the respondents' comments point to the specific methodological features of research (*qualitative* or *quantitative methods*, *QCA* etc.*).

Finally, we may argue that the concepts representing the substantive objects of the disciplinary enquiries have changed significantly. This is simply an impression, given that we have no data with which to conduct a diachronic check. However, it is fairly clear that the use of relatively new keywords like *Climate, Diversity, Bioethics* and *Big Data*, and probably other rather common concepts such as *Soft Power* and *Migration,* is customary at present, and reflects the need for differently structured teaching programmes (see above) and ongoing changes in the world of research.

Although it remains an impression, the result of our exercise using the list of subjects provided by our country experts as their favoured "areas of interest", would seem to confirm the variety of European political scientists' research agendas; and at the same time, it seems to point to the clear porosity of the discipline's borders. Indeed, several scholars believe that a political scientist has to share both the "object" and (to some extent) the "method" with other academic disciplines, which ought to be considered complementary rather than rival fields.

Further exploration of the internal borders of the current community of political scientists is provided in Fig. 3.2, which summarizes the answers to the question concerning their main research interests. Unlike in the analysis presented in Chap. 1, which is based on raw data regarding those categories most frequently chosen by respondents, here we run a
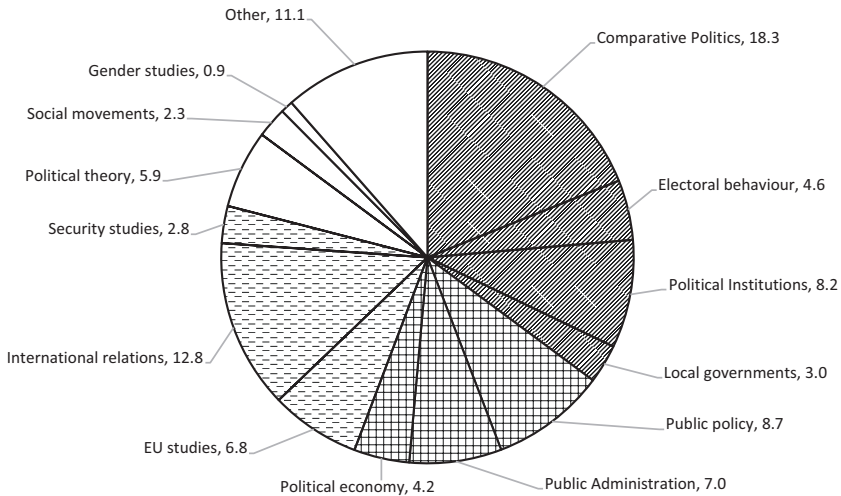
Fig. 3.2 European political scientists' main areas of interest. (Note: the original question was: *What is the field of specialization of your highest university degree?* Source: Proseps Survey 2019)

subjective recoding of the residual categories, which returns a clearly balanced distribution among fifteen categories.

On the one hand, the complexity of the community is confirmed: our processing of the responses we received reveals a rather complex picture that is to some degree consistent with certain recent interpretations of the difficult processes of professionalization and institutionalization (Boncourt, 2020; Ilonszki & Roux, 2022). On the other hand, a consolidated division of labour among political scientists also emerges. We have re-coded our entries in four sub-disciplinary "families" which seem to be rather well established, albeit of very different sizes. While the "pure methodologists" (included in the residual category "other" in Fig. 3.2) account for no more than 3.2% of the population, and pure "political theorists" account for around 6%, the other three families remain of a substantial entity: experts in institutional analysis (comparative politics, electoral behaviour, local politics, political institutions and élites) make up more than 30% of the sample. The family of experts in international studies and European politics account for more than 20%, while the family of public policy and public administration scholars accounts for just below 20%.

Table 3.1   European political scientists' backgrounds by geographical area

		UK	Northern Europe	Western Europe	Central-Eastern Europe (EU)	Southern Europe (EU)	Central-Eastern Europe (non-EU)	Tot
Politics	N	109	136	368	196	260	86	1155
	%	42.7	40.2	43.0	45.3	50.4	45.7	44.7
Policy & administration	N	54	122	249	91	135	29	680
	%	21.2	36.1	29.1	21.0	26.2	15.4	26.3
International studies	N	92	80	239	146	121	73	751
	%	36.1	23.7	27.9	33.7	23.4	38.8	29.0

Source: Proseps Survey 2019

Note: for the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3

The breakdown of the three main families of interest into six geographical areas (Table 3.1) offers further interesting pointers: first of all, there are no huge differences (and thus the idea of an ideal division of labour is confirmed). However, while the discipline of "politics" remains stronger in the Western/Southern areas, "policy studies" as a discipline is clearly more popular in the North, while the British system reveals a special interest in international studies. Even the breakdown regarding Central-Eastern Europe (which is sub-divided into EU and non-EU countries) reveals that none of the three macro-areas of interest attracts a massive number of scholars. It is likely that the other sub-disciplines, in particular the political-theory category, continue to account for a considerable number of political scientists.

The comparison between this distribution and the preferences expressed by the respondents regarding the future indicates a rather stable situation. Although with the evident cross-national dissimilarities, none of the traditional objects of political science seems to be neglected. As a matter of fact, the multiplicity of research interests (Deschouwer, 2020) remains a strength acknowledged by the majority of European political scientists. However, such complexity looks much more problematic than in the old days of the re-foundation of the empirical study of politics and, all things considered, also compared to just three decades ago. Indeed, about 15% of our respondents cannot be recoded in any of the abovementioned families of (recoded) areas of interest. In some cases, this recent tendency towards complexity can be accounted for by the growing importance of

the relatively new areas of study considered in our questionnaire. This is so in the case of gender studies (1% of our respondents declared that this was their only area of interest) and of social movements (2.1%). Another 10.9% of miscellaneous answers, labelled "other" since they were not explicitly considered in the Proseps questionnaire, include those scholars who indicate *political communication* or *media studies* as their only area of interest. This probably means that our taxonomies will have to be revised in the near future, since the distribution of political science "objects" is clearly still evolving. We will return to the idea of the increasing mobility of the internal borders of the discipline when we examine the need for professional flexibility as a response to the challenges of our time. For the time being we just wish to point out this slow, yet inexorable, movement: a sort of relentless shift along political science's "tectonic plates".

2.3   The Perimeter of European Political Science According to the Experts

The open-ended interviews conducted by a trans-generational group of experts (see above) constitute a second source we can employ to obtain a more accurate description of the complexity of European political science. In particular, the responses to the first part of our standard interview offer a number of anecdotal and historical views of that science. We shall try to answer two separate questions here:

(a) what are the original "cognate disciplines" that political science ought to be associated with (and, to some extent, distinguished from)?
(b) what are the prevailing views regarding the evolution of European political science?

The first thing that stands out when reading the interviewees' responses is the vagueness of European political science's epistemological origins. All of the emeritus professors we interviewed mentioned their specific, rather conflicting, ideas regarding political science as a mission and a discipline. In some cases, they argued that in recent times this complicated vision of the foundations of political science had re-emerged in the form of fragmentation. This point is made clear by two *emeritus professors* who observe the following:

I was really surprised to observe that the young generation was working on very specific topics. I remember a PhD dissertation dealing with the parents of pupils in a school… that's to say, you know, there is a council of parents in a school and the PhD was tackling with this … this was very, very strict. It seems to me we are now moving only to micro politics …

… as I go through the journals of political science in both Europe and in the United States, I do not see very many in-depth analyses of political action, but the gradual disappearance of theories dealing with the big problems.

However, another experienced scholar describes the fragmentation of today's political science as not necessarily being a problem. The risk of a loss of focus remains, but the wealth of an increasingly complex discipline is also evaluated:

[B]ut again, the division up until today has resulted in a situation where there is a different fragmentation, a different strong fragmentation in terms of subfields, such as, as you know very well, policy studies, democratic studies, studies of political parties or representation. Here, you have separate tables again but of a different kind from the separate tables Gabriel Almond had in mind, because Gabriel Almond had in mind separate tables in terms of approach, while here we are speaking of separate tables in terms of empirical research on topics, and then, of course, within the subfields we even have fragmentation in terms of the different ways of analyzing the same topic. Today the picture is a very complex one.

Quite obviously, other generations of scholars tend to underestimate such fragmentation. However, the *seniors* we interviewed also indicated the need to deal with the question of complexity. The point is that specialization is inherent in modern political science, and is necessary given the discipline's weak nature and complex subject matter. However, the political science community has a duty to temper differences and to connect different political scientists. The following excerpt from the views of a senior scholar illustrates this point:

I hadn't really thought in those generational terms, it just seemed to me that as political science becomes more mature and bigger, specialization is going to happen and that's a good thing, because specialized people can actually go deeper. … What pluralism means is lots of different people doing lots of different things in different specialisms, and they can learn from each other, and they can talk to each other. I think it's important. I mean, I've always

believed that a department ought to have a kind of departmental research seminar which everyone's goes to … you know, I really hate when you ask people: "Why don't you come to the seminar?" And somebody says "It is not my topic" or "I don't do normative stuff" or something like that … you're a political scientist, you should be interested in all of these things.

Although generally more optimistic about the pros of a fragmented discipline, recent generations of political scientists do not underestimate the centrifugal dynamics that make some restricted sub-communities of scholars isolated and "outsiders". One of the youngest of our interviewees clearly points this out:

I think that the differences between subfields will increasingly widen. But I still think that political science will be as relevant as it is today. Subfields, as a result of this effect, tend to inter-communicate increasingly less. So I realized that, for example, just participating in your Cost Action, what you guys are talking about is something that I don't always understand, although our basic background is the same, it's just that our research interests took us in different directions. So I think that our subfields will communicate less than they currently do.

For example, I don't work with political scientists anymore. I mostly work geographers, anthropologists and historians. These are people I find much more interesting since my work is very critical and highly qualitative. And it's very hard for me to share a research interest with European political scientists, because they have different approaches. So I don't see any danger for the science as a whole, but I see less communication within the science per se.

2.4   *Increasing Methodological Complexity*

Disciplinary fragmentation and the spread of theoretical approaches are not the sole reasons for the complexity for political science. Indeed, the three generations covered by our set of interviews have certainly lived through a period in which the methodological tools of political scientists have significantly changed. We have collected a number of unusual impressions from the older scholars, pointing to the fatigue involved in such difficult methodological training. For example, they mention the difficulties experienced in finding adequate support (in terms of resources, statistical skills and data availability) for the purposes of certain specific research topics, or the slowness of the first generation of computers that they had

to use to complete their early work. Younger colleagues, on the other hand, while unanimously stressing the importance of methodological adequacy as a requisite in the process of political science institutionalization (Ilonzski and Roux 2022), sometimes seem surprised by these accounts, and in any case, they do not know the cost of this lengthy process of methodological development.

The data collected by Wagemann et al. (2022) confirm that regression analyses have gradually become the most common method adopted in articles published since the beginning of the new millennium, with their share rising from about 10% (of all European political science articles) at the end of the 1980s, to over 50% in the early years of the new millennium. However, no prevalent technique has emerged in the never-ending changes in adopted methods. Multivariate analyses are still used in around 50% of the articles published, while a recent shift towards *mixed methods* has been witnessed. Qualitative comparative analyses, process tracing and historical methods, ethnography and also grounded theories seem to display periodic phases of resilience, thus offering credible alternatives to a significant share of the political science community. The clear advance of quantitative methods can therefore be accounted for by the following specific factors: the emergence of specialized journals, the consolidation of certain sub-disciplines and the growth of identifiable segments of users.

Finally, there is the increasing variation in the ways that research is organized, due to the emergence of very different kinds of "environment". The increase in co-authorship and international joint studies (Ghica, 2021; Carammia, 2022) is a rough, albeit significant, indicator of this kind of complexity, which nevertheless seems to be much less evident in continental Europe than in the USA and (to a lesser extent) the UK. Once again, the phenomenon of co-authorship is correlated to the specific use of multivariate analysis and to the greater network capability of male-based teams (Deschouwer, 2020; Verney & Bosco, 2021).

2.5   No Winners, Inevitable Losers, Too Many "Strangers"?

All in all, the idea of great complexity accompanies a rather optimistic, encouraging picture. Professional political scientists aim to cover diverse questions and to interpret political change by employing a multifaceted set of epistemological and methodological tools, since they are committed to a multitude of individual tasks, while not forgetting the collective goals of the discipline. The generally positive assessment of a plural, intrinsically

compound discipline leads us to believe that the predominant perception of recent developments is a constructive one. The majority of the Proseps Survey respondents, and all of our testimonials, confirmed that none of the traditional areas of the discipline had lost its appeal, despite the clearly differing views offered regarding the relevance of one or another field.

Therefore, we would argue that recent developments have not resulted in a paradigmatic change in the structure of the community: we do not see any "winner" in the battle for the predominance of the research agenda or of the range of academic subjects on offer. However, some of the traditional problems are still well evident. The first such problem is that the existing gaps are not easy to bridge. In particular, the difficulties that female scholars have in affirming themselves, and the obstacles to the full training of the new generation of scholars, especially in those small and/or poorer countries where pluralism struggles to be established, remain.

Moreover, the increasing complexity of the discipline entails a problem of incommunicability. Several of our respondents have stressed the lack of cooperation between specific groups (i.e. international relations experts and comparative politics experts) or even among generations and "schools" of political scientists. Of course, the hyper-specialization of the approaches together with the multidimensionality of methods tends to fuel such lack of cooperation, resulting in a kind of surrender by those scholars who *cannot understand* their colleagues (a problem well noted in the USA since the early seventies, when the spread of formal analysis was accompanied by an upsurge in rational choice). Even more problematic is the lack of communication determined by the attitude of the scholars who *do not want to understand* their colleagues. This would indeed be the prelude to a definitive fragmentation of the community into a number of weak and rather irrelevant groups of "ideologists" who tend to see other groups as strangers, if not rivals.

3   Ivory Towers Versus the Public Sphere? Redefining the Public Mission(s) of Political Scientists

3.1   Different Aspects of Political Science's Social Activism

In a recent assessment of political scientists' ability to deal with the difficult issues faced by several European democracies, Real-Dato and Verzichelli (2022) propose a framework built on three dimensions of

Table 3.2 Three aspects of political scientists' public engagement

	Lower level of engagement	*Mid-level of engagement*	*Higher level of engagement*
Partisanship	Observer	Broker	Partisan
Visibility in the public realm	Invisible	Present	Mediatized
Impact in the public sphere	Inconsequential	Inspirer	Impactful

Source: Adapted from Real-Dato and Verzichelli (2022)

engagement (Table 3.2): partisanship, visibility in the public realm and impact in the public sphere. The basic idea is that of an empirical space where the different experiences of the communities of political scientists are located in specific political circumstances. The first aspect may be defined as a continuum between a purely *partisan role* and that of *neutral observer*, while the midpoint may be marked by a *brokering role*, where the participants maintain a neutral stance but do intervene in political debate by proposing solutions or alternatives.

The dimension of visibility can be conceived as the extent of the general public's familiarity with the work of political scientists. The lowest level of visibility corresponds to that of the *invisible scholar*, while the highest level to that of the *mediatized scholar*, with the latter familiar to newspapers readers, prime-time TV viewers and social media followers. The mid-point is that of the scholar who participates in the debate but is not immediately publicly recognizable.

The third aspect is that of impact, that is, the ability to influence policy-makers' decisions (John 2013). In this context, political scientists can be: *inconsequential* (when they have no impact at all)*; inspirational* (when they feed policy-makers' ideas without being directly acknowledged for such); or *impactful* (when their contribution is effectively recognized).

The survey conducted in the study, edited by Real-Dato and Verzichelli, confirms the difficulties that many European political science communities have in coping with different types of challenges, ranging from domestic democratic crises (e.g. the crisis ensuing from claims for independence in Catalonia) to supranational crises (such as the bailout referendum in Greece) and to a multitude of policy-related crises. This obviously applies to public debate in "ordinary times", especially where political scientists represent a small, relatively marginal portion of the intellectual élite.

Here we are not dealing with the question of political scientists' partisanship, much debated from the advent of behaviouralism until the recent *perestroika* debate (Monroe, 2005). On the contrary, we are going to use the available data and the qualitative information we have gathered from our experts regarding the problems of visibility and policy advocacy.

3.2   *Media Presence and the Problem of Visibility*

With the aim of establishing the predominant models of the contemporary political scientist in Europe, we have identified a second dimension called "the individual propensity to impact the public sphere", which we define as the tendency to enhance the social and public sphere by becoming more vocal, visible and prestigious at an individual level. Actually, we know that such a general attitude may be the result of a number of different factors that are not necessarily correlated. Political scientists may be more or less inclined towards political activism and the role of *opinion maker*. Or they may aim to perform a specific advocacy function in one or more policy-making areas.

But what exactly makes political scientists inclined to perform one of these proactive roles in the public sphere? Political scientists are aware of their potentially important role. They know they have things to say, and their academic institutions tend to broadcast their views through a multitude of channels. Many of the official webpages of university departments and research centres include a "connect with me" page, linking people to the social media resources produced by academics. In some case, the presence of academics in broadcast reports, policy briefs and even local blogs is clearly a key aspect of their visibility (one typical example of such is the engagement of several political scientists from the *London School of Economics and Political Science*).

The Proseps Survey data show that participation in the public domain is not uncommon among political scientists: about 62% of our respondents affirmed that participation in public debate is part of their mission, and that they had appeared in the media over the course of the preceding three years. However, both the type and the intensity of their participation differed significantly. If we look at the type of media outlet concerned, a generational gap emerges. Indeed, in the traditional media, senior scholars (over 50 years old) tend to be more proactive than their younger colleagues, since they appear more often on TV (41% compared to 29%), on the radio (49%/39%) and in newspapers (56%/49%). On the other hand,

junior scholars use Twitter (60%/54%) and Facebook (60%/58%) more often than senior scholars do.

However, upon closer examination, the media activism of European political scientists appears relatively limited: only a small minority of respondents appear to be highly active in the media, since fewer than 15% of them stated that they had appeared on the radio at least once a month, while 20% had written in newspapers (local or national) and 22% had appeared on TV (local or national).

The difficulty of establishing themselves as opinion makers is particularly evident among female academics: overall, there is a clear gap, in terms of media visibility, between female and male political scientists: 55% of female political scientists stated that they had had some media experience over the course of the previous three years, while this value rises to 66% in the case of male scholars. Moreover, the gap increases if we consider the aforementioned indicator of continuity (presence in the media on at least a monthly basis). Here, the impact of female political scientists is significantly lower than that of their male colleagues in all three traditional media (TV, radio and newspapers), whereas there is no gender difference as far as Twitter and Facebook utilization is concerned. Evidently, female scholars are still structurally neglected by the media system, and consequently they look for a (relatively) broader presence in social media where there is no need to be "invited" by anyone.

Hence, speaking to society is considered part of an academic's professional mission, and yet not all political scientists seem to be sufficiently predisposed to engaging in public debate. Individual preferences and priorities—for instance the need to devote most, if not all, of one's time to what is considered a key professional duty (teaching or conducting research)—may account for this limited visibility. However, the gender gap that tends to exclude female scholars from being present in the media, and the clear generational divide in terms of the use of different media outlets, gives us to believe that structural factors are at work shaping political scientists' attraction or aversion to traditional and new media. A clear, albeit rough picture of these factors is presented in Fig. 3.3 showing the distribution of the evaluations given by political scientists regarding their visibility in their countries (the questionnaire actually refers to "the country where you work").

A partial satisfaction with the visibility of political science already emerges from the aggregate distribution, which shows a community almost divided in half: 55% of respondents consider political scientists very
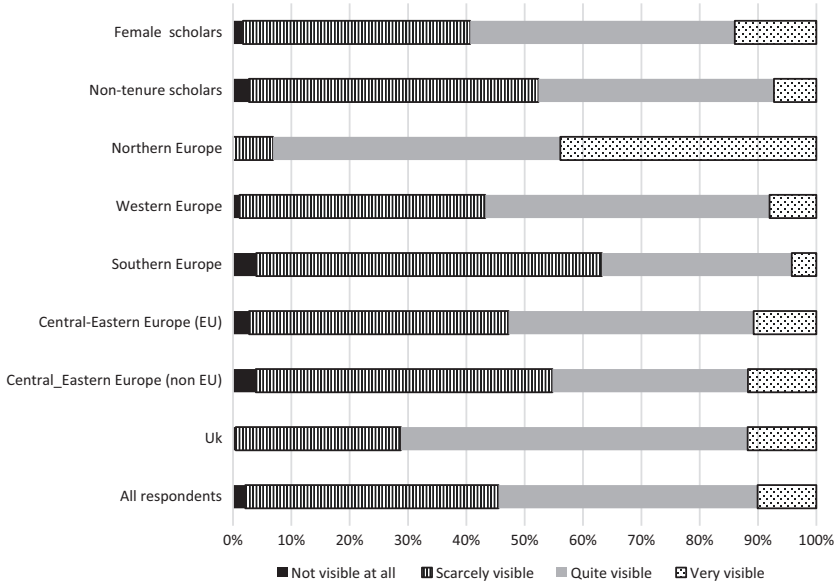
Fig. 3.3 Views of the visibility of political scientists in the public sphere. (Note: the original question was: *Overall, how do you evaluate the visibility of political scientists in … [your country]?* For the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3. Source: Proseps Survey 2019)

or (much more often) quite visible, while the remaining 45% judge their colleagues to be scarcely visible.

Female scholars do not deviate from this pattern, thus confirming the structural problem of visibility also affecting women in academia: in other words, female scholars—who on average enjoy less well-consolidated careers compared to male scholars—think more about "usual business", and in particular their teaching duties, which probably stops them thinking very much about the problem of visibility. On the other hand, junior scholars (i.e. those under the age of fifty) display rather negative views compared to the population of political scientists as a whole, since more than half of them deem their public visibility to be poor.

Negative views on the visibility of academics are even stronger in Central-Eastern Europe and (above all) in Southern Europe. Two separate contextual determinants may be identified here: the relative weakness of the discipline in Central-Eastern Europe and especially in non-EU

countries (see Chap. 2) and the negative vision of visibility in Southern Europe. This latter element may be explained by the political characteristics of the media system in this area (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995), where high level of media polarization (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) may negatively influence the media presence of political scientists, in comparison to lawyers, economists and hard scientists.

3.3 Political Scientists' Attitudes Towards Policy-Making and the Problem of Advocacy

The entity of political science's impact on policy-making has long been debated (Ricci, 1984; John 2013; Flinders, 2013). Undoubtedly, the increasingly broad scope of the public policy agenda and the important issues concerning the reform of democratic institutions and public administrations have made this debate even more interesting. Theoretical reflections on the future application of political science in the policy-making sphere have also influenced the way it is taught (Malici & Smith, 2018), and an increasingly important line of research (see, e.g., Bandola et al., 2021) now consists of exploring new patterns of the discipline's position within society.

Not surprisingly, the Proseps project has focused on the question of the applicability of political science, and in particular on the role of policy advisors. A detailed volume sets out the findings of a research team focusing specifically on this question (Brans & Timmermans, 2022), with robust evidence provided of the potential, and the (clear) weaknesses, of this perspective. This is a timely piece of research since, as clearly stated by Jean Blondel in his foreword (2022, viii), "the rise of behavioural approaches to political science and the further development of the discipline sparked a rapprochement between political scientists and policy-makers".

To translate this into the terminology mentioned in the typology introduced above, we could argue that several political scientists (even) in Europe seem to be no longer *inconsequential,* but now play the weak role of *inspirers* without having any truly effective role. Moreover, the degree of institutionalization of political science as an academic discipline, together with specific contextual factors like gender, the degree of democratic openness and administrative tradition, may slow this process down. Here we simply report a few findings regarding European social scientists' current advisory role, whereas Brans and Timmermans et al. (2022) and

the twelve qualitative country studies included in the volume should be referred to for a more detailed reconstruction.

Figure 3.4 shows three clear findings, and several hints of fragmentation, regarding the attitudes of European political scientists towards their public engagement. 60% of them confirm that this kind of activity should be somehow subordinated to the scientific testing of any politically relevant idea, although full agreement with this assertion is rather weak (around 20%). The idea of the clear utility of public engagement to political scientist's career is one that is shared by only 42% of respondents, while fewer than 10% are in full agreement. Finally, a clear majority agree with the idea that public engagement is part of the profession of political scientist. It is worth pointing out, in any case, that the broad minority of those respondents who "somewhat agree" have doubts about the effective relevance of this activity to the overall development of the profession.

This latter observation is connected to a few, albeit significant, departures visible in Fig. 3.4. First of all, female political scientists appear more idealistic about the relevance of the profession's advisory role, but at the same time are pessimistic about its utility for career purposes. Moreover, scholars from Central and Eastern Europe appear (relatively) less convinced of the need for scientific testing as a requisite for public engagement, while they are clearly more likely than others to see this activity as a career incentive. On the contrary, the *Nordic model* emerges once again as offering opposing views: political scientists from Northern countries are convinced of the natural role of engagement but tend not to see this as a springboard for their careers.

Figure 3.5, built in the same way but concerning predispositions about the role of public engagement, confirms very similar lines of distribution. In particular, while no major differences emerge when introducing sociographical variables ("under 50" and "female" respondents), the geographical variable continues to throw up certain differences. Scholars from the North take it for granted that "political scientists should become more involved", and they also mostly reject the idea that political scientists "should refrain from direct engagement". Southern European academics, on the other hand, appear somewhat reluctant to stress the professional obligation to engage in public debate, and the necessity to provide the broad public with evidence-based knowledge.

For reasons of space, we are not going to report details for the other areas, which follow quite clear trends. The UK and Western Europe tend to follow the Nordic pattern, while the respondents from the non-EU
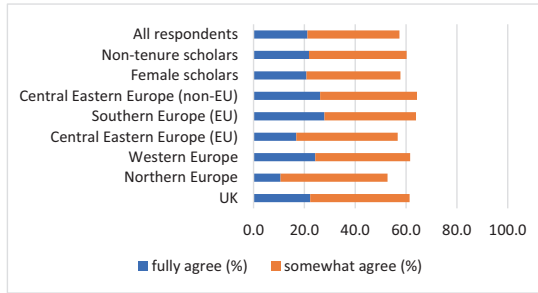
They should engage in media or political advisory only after testing their ideas in academic outlets
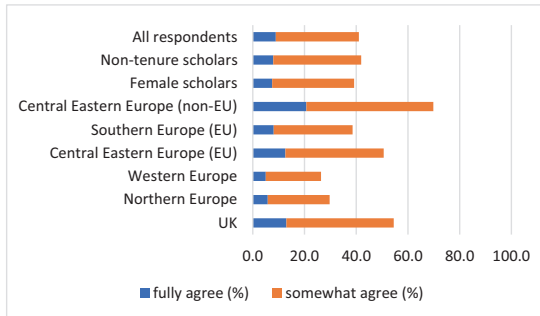
They should engage in media or political advisory because it helps them to expand their career options
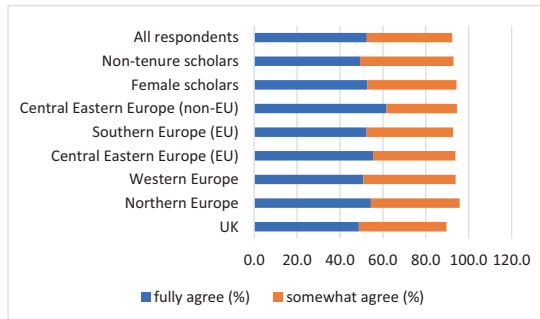
They should engage in media or political advisory since this is part of their role as social scientists

Fig. 3.4 The participation of political scientists in public debate. Selected questions. (Note: for the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3. Source: Proseps Survey 2019)

countries of the post-soviet area and the Balkans are even more likely than their EU colleagues to claim some role as opinion makers, data scientists and policy advocates. These are all clues to the existence of a clear cultural

Political scientists should become more involved in policy making

Political scientists have a professional obligation to engage in public debate

Political scientists should provide evidence-based knowledge and expertise outside academia

Political scientists should refrain from direct engagement with policy actors
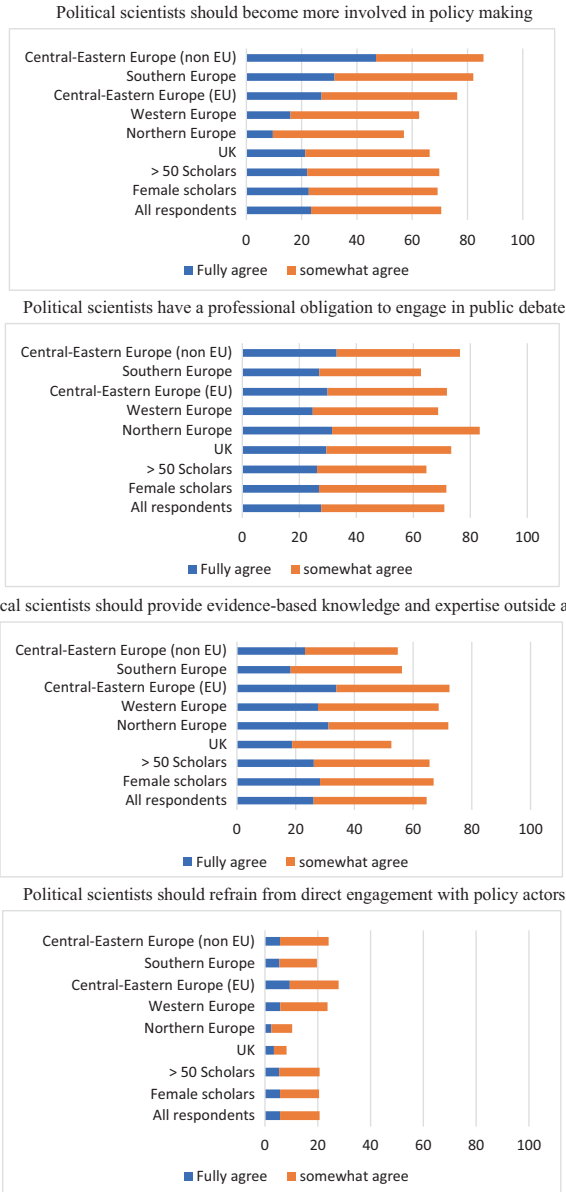
Fig. 3.5 Attitudes of European political scientists towards public engagement. Agreement with four assertions. (Note: for the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3. Source: Proseps Survey 2019)

gap between political scientists' perceptions of their roles across Europe; and in particular, it points to a divide between those from North-Western Europe and those from Eastern Europe.

These findings are corroborated by most of the qualitative interviews conducted with three generations of European scholars. Stimulated by a quotation from Arendt Lijphart about the importance of normative incentives for the profession,[2] several respondents strongly agree with the idea that empirical research should be somehow oriented towards prescriptive conclusions. They do not preclude the possibility of transforming such incentives into some sort of advocacy role. However, very few of them offer any precise "agenda" as policy advisors, or indeed act as "reform inspirers". Obviously, this is more the case of those scholars dealing with public policies, who are in fact the most vocal in denouncing the difficulties involved. One of the "young lions" perfectly illustrates this need:

> For sure, our capacity to be relevant to the policymakers is threatened, has always been threatened by the jurists and the experts in legal disciplines and also by the economists. I mean, I think that despite that we have, in my opinion, very good theories and quite interesting methodological instruments, we are not too sophisticated for the policymaker to understand us, and at the same time we are able to be scientific enough to be credible. But despite this, actually, we play a very marginal role in the relationship with policymakers, and we are not that present in the media.

3.4   Advisory Roles Among Contemporary European Political Scientists

The concerns we have just reported are certainly influenced to a degree by political scientists operating in a country (not the UK or a country from Northern Europe) where their professional role is a consolidated one, and includes their acting as policy advisors. There is further evidence of this, moreover. Following Timmermans et al. (2022), we may indeed conclude

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[2] The quotation is the following: "I see my research as starting with a normatively important variable—something that can be described as good or bad, such as peace or violence. I then proceed to investigate what produces these different outcomes. Finally, I conclude by presenting prescriptions, that is, measures that would produce the desired outcome. I don't see a tension between normative concerns and an aspiration to do science. In fact, I think a normative, prescriptive conclusion can be drawn from most empirical relationships" (Lijphart, quoted in in Munck & Snyder, 2007).

that the policy advisory role of European political scientists is currently highly differentiated.

We can justifiably argue that a large part of European political science academics tend to leave their "ivory towers" and engage in different kinds of policy advisory activities. Consequently, the share of "pure academics" accounts for just 20% or so of the political science population.

The "expert advisor" category reflects the potential of many political scientists to acquire the skills and attitude needed to offer advice, usually under specific conditions and following requests from a given recipient, that is to say, without having any strong, constant dedication to such a task. According to Timmermans et al., this category currently represents almost 27% of the population.

Another step towards the highly professionalized role of advisor is represented by the "opinionating scholar". This category of scholar places the emphasis on an interpretative and normative role, and takes a number of personal initiatives and engages in the offering of advice and views, but constitutes a rather volatile presence in public debate. This category represents roughly one-half of the population of political scientists in Europe. This therefore reduces the space for a fourth category, that of the "public intellectual", to only about 4% of the population. This would comprise those capable of combining *techne* and *phronesis* (i.e. evidence-based assertions and normative judgements).

As previously mentioned, this aggregate distribution reveals clear patterns of fragmentation primarily caused by structural factors such as legal tradition and administrative culture. The development of a specific field of specialization like public policy analysis is clearly correlated to the increase in academics' external undertakings (and consequently, to the reduction in the number and importance of pure academics). This is truer in the North of Europe (with Norway considered the benchmark) and in the United Kingdom, while three large Continental European countries like France, Germany and Italy show how political science's consolidation has been accompanied by the average academic's relatively limited experience in the advisory field, which reflects the predominant role of traditional pure academics.

Besides geo-political position and substantive specialization, there are other determinants that are crucial in shaping the different roles of political scientists and the intensity of their functions. These include age, gender and type of employment contract (Timmermans et al., 2022), all of which have a clear, strongly predictive effect. Overall, we may summarize

the findings of the Proseps study as follows: older and more experienced academics with tenure tend to be more active in an advisory capacity than their younger colleagues, especially as far as general skills or specific sub-disciplinary skills (for instance, those of comparative politics or international relations) are concerned. It is even more evident that these factors interact with gender, which proves to be a crucial intervening element, since female scholars are somehow penalized in playing the role of advisor. This is the same phenomenon we indicated when discussing media visibility. Hence, female political scientists tend to abstain much more often than males; and when engaging with the public they take on the role of experts, remaining closer to evidence-based considerations while getting less involved in public debate. This gender gap is common across all spheres of professional affiliation, and constitutes, as conveniently remarked by the authors, the main concern for the future development of a serious advisory role for political scientists. Incidentally, this consideration would appear to be in line with other recent reflections (for instance Talbot & Talbot, 2015) on the ineffective use of advice in many policy domains, compared with other actors such as legal consultants, economists, IT experts and hard scientists.

4 Travellers, Commuters, Fixers: Re-defining the Business of Political Scientists

4.1 Tocqueville's Children? European Political Scientists and Their Internationalization

So far we have described the contemporary scenario regarding European political scientists by illustrating the figures for the degree of homogeneity and solidity of the discipline (Sect. 1), and by analysing political scientists' own perceptions of their public mission and their capacity to impact society (Sect. 2). In order to complete the picture, we need to return to the propensity of political scientists to nurture their own "professional style" in order to enhance the solidity of the community, to produce a credible internal selection process and ultimately to achieve the discipline's collective goals.

Among the innumerable indicators to be found in the literature on institutionalization, and in historical accounts of the development of political science at national and supranational level (see Chaps. 1 and 2), we have selected a few dimensions that appear particularly relevant to any

comprehension of present changes. The first such dimension is that of internationalization, here conceived not just as the measurement of the impact that a given scholar's individual research may have, but also in more comprehensive terms. Thus "having an international impact" means creating several capabilities: that of participating in important academic events, of publishing in first-class outlets, of engaging with eminent scholars through long-term cooperative projects, and finally, of being well versed in innovative forms of teaching and learning.

Such a complex set of features is not easily assessed. Fortunately, the Proseps project has given rise to a rather good set of sources and studies. These include a recent article (Tronconi & Engeli, 2022) dealing with three fundamental facets of internationalization: building international networks, being involved in the activities of international publishing and carrying out research and academic exchanges in conjunction with foreign universities. After running an accurate data reduction analysis supported by qualitative evidence, the authors come to the conclusion that three separate, independent types of internationalized political scientists have emerged in contemporary Europe. These three types are the networked researcher, the international editorial manager and the traveller. The characteristics of the first type include the extensive use of English as a lingua franca, publications in good international journals, work with international co-authors and involvement in international research teams. The *international editorial manager* tends to operate as the editor of journals and books, and work as a reviewer, while preferring the production of international monographs to that of articles. The *traveller,* as the name suggests, is characterized mainly by his/her specific cross-border activities, involving long periods spent abroad, teaching, studying and working in teams.

Tronconi and Engeli's study controls several factors indicated by the literature as determinants of internationalization, producing a series of confirmations and disconfirmations as a result. Gender, for example, does not appear to have any great impact on internationalization, while the control by career stage seems to show that the *Erasmus generation* has had a positive impact on the travelling aspect of internationalization. However, the factor that captures the attention of the scholars most is that of the organizational and financial support provided by academic institutions. The development of both networked researchers and travellers seems to be impacted by the availability of research funding available for the purposes of the internationalization of the faculty.

This inference leads to a strategic issue for European political scientists: the need to facilitate comprehensive internationalization, with special attention having to be paid to the new cohorts of scholars. No matter what their core interests are, they should be trained as natural-born transnational *Tocqueville's children,* in order to avoid parochialism and overly narrow research agendas.

This, however, automatically leads to the question of resources. Indeed, two problems arise concerning the redistribution of resources: the first is the geographical divide, clearly marked in the study, between academic institutions in richer countries on the one hand and the universities located in other European areas (in particular, in Central-Eastern Europe and, to some extent, the Mediterranean countries).

In fact, the question of geographical patterns (among those questions concerning internationalization) has come to our attention: that is, the question of the opportunity to spend time conducting research and teaching abroad (Table 3.3).

In this case, we have changed the groups selected since we want to show how the British community (as a benchmark of internationalization) and the non-EU countries from Eastern Europe and Balkans (as a benchmark of isolationism) remain clearly polarized. Here it is easy to immediately consider cultural traditions (in particular, the established links between British and US academia) and financial constraints as the main reasons for the disharmony that unfortunately is putting an increasing distance between European academic communities.

A second potential factor underlying this phenomenon, albeit one that is impossible to control using the Proseps Survey data, is the difference between the centre and the periphery of all European universities. This factor appears to overlap to a certain degree with the divide between virtuous, research-oriented universities on the one hand and small teaching universities on the other hand. Both these problems need to be addressed by the professional associations concerned, but they also require substantive policy plans to be put in place at national and supranational levels. Massive investment and a constant focus on the mobility of younger generations of scholars are therefore the preconditions for a positive process of internationalization which avoids certain well-known phenomena (Norris, 2020), such as a one-way brain-drain or the inaccessibility of research networks to representatives of poorer countries.

Public funding and the need for "policy creativity" to ensure career incentives and quality standards are key elements of internationalization

Table 3.3 Working time spent abroad by European political scientists (%)

	All respondents	Female Scholars	< 50 Scholars	Uk	Northern Europe	Western Europe	Central Eastern Europe (EU)	Southern Europe	Central Eastern Europe (non EU)
I did not work abroad	32.4	32.3	32.3	20.2	29.9	35.1	28.9	29.1	40.5
Less than a month	27.0	27.3	26.2	25.8	25.8	21.9	32.9	26.9	27.9
Between 1 and 5 months	24.9	22.9	24.1	36.2	28.8	23.6	8.5	24.0	13.0
Between 6 and 12 months	8.9	10.0	8.5	7.5	7.6	9.9	21.9	7.9	8.7
More than 12 months	7.0	7.5	7.9	0	0	7.1	8.5	7.5	6.8

Source: Proseps Survey 2019

Note: the table reports the distribution of the answers to the question: *Over the last three years, how much time have you spent working in countries other than the one in which you reside (%)*. For the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3

also according to a more qualitative study, conducted once again using the Proseps data, by Kostova et al. (2022). This study identifies persistent geo-political and cultural differences in four European countries: two of said countries have recently joined the EU and display a relative lack of public support for internationalization (Czech Republic and Bulgaria), while the other two are characterized by (culturally different) traditions of integration and of support for higher education policy (Finland and France).

Not surprisingly, several passages from the interviews we have collected emphasize the challenge of internationalization: the experts reveal genuine acknowledgement of the consolidated ranking among Western countries (with the US and UK communities still clearly predominant), but they also point to the risk of the increasing degree of geographic diversity that seems a feature of international cooperation. The European political science "market" appears capable of including "newcomer communities" (among others, Estonia, Poland and up to the 2022 crisis, the Russian community as well), but also features a persistent (and widening) gap between other countries (especially the Balkan states that are not protected by EU-related funding schemes) and the core of European political science.

Another observation made by some of our experts connects the question of the internationalization of academic life to the point we have already made of the difficulty that peripheral university environments, especially those of Eastern European countries, experience in advancing comprehensive strategies of development and cooperation. This actually confirms an inverse relationship, previously tested (Timmermans et al., 2022), between internationalization and the consolidation of a fundamental advisory function. Indeed, international mobility may reduce the capacity of scholars to maintain close relations with policy-makers who are usually members of local or domestic organizations. From this point of view, of the three types indicated by Tronconi and Engeli the figure of the *traveller* seems to be the one requiring the most urgent enhancement, since it can be somehow shaped by good policy plans at the domestic level, as well as by the individual strategies of political scientists. Networked scholars and editorial managers are also fundamental; however, these figures need to be strengthened through a bottom-up process of internationalization.

4.2   Eclecticism and Flexibility: What Are the Drivers of a European Standard?

The latter reflection about the importance of travellers leads us to another crucial aspect of the discipline's development that was mentioned in several of the interviews: the quest for the capacity to adapt to different challenges.

This is actually an old dilemma, according to the classics of behaviouralist political science (in particular, Easton, 1953 and Roberts, 1967). Gabriel Almond also referred to theoretical and methodological eclecticism as the antidote to fragmentation (the famous *separate tables*) in his APSA presidential address (1988). Later, several appeals were launched for an open-minded eclecticism in more specific domains such as international relations (Katzenstein & Sil, 2008) and comparative politics (Przeworski, 2019). All these claims basically constitute an invitation to combine formal theories, different approaches and, where necessary, methodological instruments, in order to remedy the currently fragmented state of political science.

Here, we discuss a comprehensive notion of eclecticism relating to all dimensions of a political scientist's professional life: methodological adaptation is important not just to the production of research, but also to the divulgation thereof at the social level. New abilities in the fields of media dissemination and public engagement also entail a certain level of eclecticism, since it is often necessary to summarize findings from interdisciplinary research teams and help these complicated networks remain sufficiently unified in order to produce better quality research. Finally, as regards teaching, an extraordinary degree of complexity had already emerged during the period prior to the pandemic. In recent decades, scholars have posed new questions about the ideal mix of different techniques (i.e. frontal classes vs. collaborative or mixed methods), levels of analysis (i.e. modules vs. seminars), levels of interaction, levels of "gamification" and so forth. Even those who were reluctant to adapt have had to accept the use of distance-learning tools during the ongoing pandemic, and the result is a rather multifaceted world of teaching approaches. This need for eclecticism seems particularly pertinent if the discipline's different missions are to be interconnected. In a previous article regarding the Italian case (Capano & Verzichelli, 2016), we demonstrated the problematical emergence of certain forms of eclecticism, due to the excessive fragmentation and the internal struggles that preclude a significant public

status for the discipline, despite its academic institutionalization and the quality of research.

Obviously, those who consider professional eclecticism as a vital investment for their future tend to be concentrated in the cohort of scholars that we have called the *young lions*. However, these are also scholars who fully realize that adaptation is at one and the same time a necessity but also a very risky form of investment of one's time. The trade-off between the two demands on new political scientists (the need to be highly specialized as professional researchers and also to be a relevant member of the community) appears rather clear in the mind of one of the *young lions* we interviewed:

> I mean, this specialisation requires people to have better training in methods and to be better prepared to compete with other political scientists. And also, I think this specialization brings political science closer to other neighbouring disciplines. On the other hand, maybe this specialization forces political scientists further from the important issues, especially from the important normative issues, or makes it more difficult to connect these very specialized topics to working on important questions.

A reflection on the potential for innovation in the everyday business of political scientists had already got underway prior to the pandemic. A few weeks before COVID-19 first emerged (between the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020), a Proseps flash survey asked the same target group of European political scientists a number of questions about the foreseen transformation of the discipline, their personal preferences concerning such a transformation and also their opinions regarding the role of national communities and professional associations. Here we report the distributions of the first set of questions (Fig. 3.6) concerning the transformation of professional life in ten years from now (i.e. in 2030). The radar graph shows the degree of agreement (very much agree or rather agree), controlling by geographical area.

As the figure clearly shows, almost all of the suggested scenarios seem to convince the respondents. Only the idea that "*teaching activities will lose relevance*" was not shared by many, with a minority of European political scientists agreeing with this prediction (21.4%). All the other options reflect a remarkable level of expectation, ranging from 43.4% (in the case of the prospective scenario "*virtual teaching will be as important as traditional classes*") to 72.5% (in the case of *research will be a team task*).
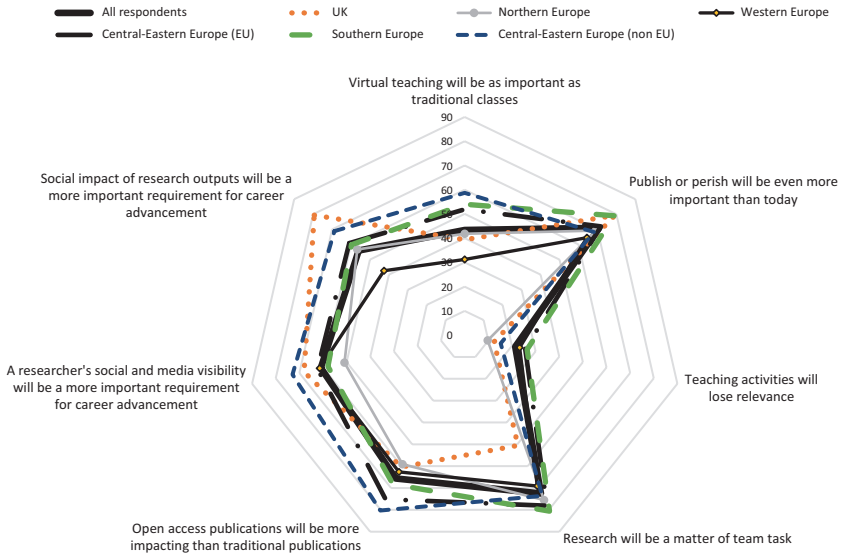
Fig. 3.6 Views of future changes in the work of political scientists. (Note: the chart reports the rates of agreement to seven assertions following the question: for the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3. Source: Proseps Flash Survey January 2020. *N*: 1455)

We have excluded the control by gender from the chart since it does not show very relevant alterations, although in one category (*virtual teaching is as important as traditional classes*) female scholars are clearly more focussed, being the difference greater than 15 percentage points. A control by six communities from different European areas (meaning political scientists working in these countries, rather than actual citizens from such) returns a rather homogeneous pattern. The only distribution offering a substantial degree of difference is the scenario "*the social impact of research will be a more important requirement for career advancement*". In this case, the scholars from the UK are twenty points ahead of their colleagues in their belief in said statement. This has probably to do with the unique long-term impact of research assessment in Britain compared to that witnessed in other European higher education systems.

Another aspect of the question of eclecticism to be taken into account is the increasing demand for flexibility in the specific mission of teaching. This argument has recently been at the centre of debate regarding the

intrinsically cross-sectional nature of political science subjects, especially in innovative graduate programmes (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2010). As a substantive response to this challenge, political scientists try to be flexible by offering both methodological and substantive courses at different levels. In other words, they alternate monographic modules (from each sub-discipline) to methodological and theoretical subjects, thus corroborating the idea of a fundamental core of professional instruments to be shared across the internal borders. Table 3.4, reporting the distribution of subjects offered by the respondents to the Proseps Survey (in the first column) and the subject taught by those who also teach methods (second column), offers clear evidence of this spirit of flexibility. The question posed in this case left the respondent free to choose between different sub-disciplines, while the period to be taken into consideration was that of the past three years. Unlike other categories of instructors who tend to pick related subjects (comparative politics and political institutions, international relations and security studies, public policy and political economy etc.), the sub-group of 578 respondents declaring that they had taught method is distributed across a universal range of other fields of expertise, said distribution being basically in keeping with said sub-group's share of the whole population. Indeed, only the *electoral behaviour* category tends

Table 3.4 Fields of teaching of European political scientists (%)

	All respondents	*Methodologists only*
Comparative politics	35.7	38.6
International relations	26.4	16.4
Social science methods	25.2	100
Public policy	23.4	16.8
Political institutions	19.6	13.3
Political theory	16.2	12.5
EU studies	18.9	9.3
Public administration	15.5	7.4
Electoral behaviour	11.7	19.6
Security studies	10.3	4.7
Local government	7.9	4.2
Political economy	7.6	6.2
Social movements	6.9	7.3
Gender studies	3.6	3.5
Other	14.4	14
N	2291	578

Source: Proseps Survey 2019

to be specifically associated with methodologists (which is to be expected given the common use of survey analysis and quantitative methods in the field); while on the other hand, international relations and EU studies are subjects infrequently offered by lecturers with experience in the teaching of methodology.

This evidence backs up the existing belief that methodological instruments are a crucial pillar of political science, and ultimately represent the element binding the entire discipline together. At the same time, further qualitative analyses are needed to establish whether this unity is evenly distributed throughout Europe, in all types of universities and across the various different generations of political science teacher. The inevitable suspicion of a strong imbalance across countries (in particular between Western European and Eastern area) is corroborated by the data presented in the previous chapters. Moreover, even in those academic realities where all the political scientists from every generation and subfield are brave enough to switch from one teaching level to another, from a course on social science methodology to a substantive course, and from an international interactive class to a traditional course offered in the local language, the problem of lasting quality emerges. This is why contemporary political scientists, in order to preserve their high standards, need to be not only travellers but also commuters: in other words, they need to be professional teachers constantly prepared to update and improve an assorted range of syllabi and seminars.

4.3   Extra-Academic Experience and University Management: Looking for "Political Science Fixers"

Our political science testimonials describe a community that is very much alive, rather internationalized and eager to transform its mission by accepting new professional challenges and new methodological and epistemological tasks. All of them see the current situation as a glass half-full. However, the difficulties we have described and analysed, based on our data and qualitative accounts, should not be underestimated.

The old generation of *emeritus* scholars tends to stress the "artisan" nature of the founding period during the latter half of the twentieth century, by underlying the importance of isolated founders and of the academic and political *allies* of modern political science. However, they also realize that the problem of political science's development in the new millennium cannot be faced by adopting the same pioneering approach. One

of our interviewees, when talking of the advantage that the wealthier European countries have had when it comes to organizing teams of political scientists since the old days, states the following:

> The nations where this was done faster and better were the Netherlands and Scandinavia … [there] you had the first examples of departments specialized in political science, meaning the analysis of political action in governmental organisations and in society as well. Then, this phenomenon began to be visible elsewhere. There are some British universities where there are departments of political science, there are some German universities that do this. But in the rest of Europe things are more difficult, so the clear definition of a research object is on-going but not yet complete. Take, for instance, [my country]: with few exceptions, there is one professor of political science in a university, with no opportunities for cooperative endeavour. Today, it is impossible to carry out competitive research in these conditions. [Emeritus]

Certain *young lions* added that in their view, a modern discipline today necessarily needs the right division of labour together with a cooperative approach. They stress the importance of internationalization starting from the initial training period (graduate students' network, summer schools and schools on social science methods, international co-authorship projects), since they know that the only way to truly master the discipline is to learn the art and craft of political science at the international level. However, many of the interviewees make the point of the importance of a good mix of high international standards and familiarity with the academic environment that a young political scientist is about to enter. In some cases, this requires an increasing, proactive disposition towards academic duties and institutional activities (as was true in the past). In other cases, there is a belief that familiarity with the (local) environment basically means being prepared to curb one's scientific ambitions in order to meet the expectations of academia. In such cases there is a clear trade-off between high standard training and short-term career achievements. In any case, it is evident that compared to the old days when competitiveness was very much more limited, a number of *political science fixers* are now required who can combine some of the characteristics already described (including those of the *traveller* and, above all, those of the *commuter*) with a proactive willingness to work for a given institution, and in doing so to pay specific attention to innovation in teaching and learning.

Our belief is that political scientists are nowadays much more inclined to operate as fixers. Of course, this is a deceptive issue given the lack of inter-disciplinary data. However, what we can offer is an "identikit" of the current profile of European political scientists by looking at their experience as academic managers and at other kinds of direct political and social involvement during (or prior to) their academic careers.

Let us start with some information regarding academic management. The Proseps Survey included the following question: *over the past three years have you held any academic administrative office.*[3] 38.6% of respondents answered positively. This fell to 34% among female scholars, to 15.6% among non-permanent (i.e. non-tenured) academics, and appeared rather homogenously distributed across the different geographical areas concerned. Overall, a significantly high number of political scientists hold formal office within their universities' system of governance. This confirms the presence of a good number of *pure academics* who have little time for other commitments. However, in some countries (the UK and the Northern European nations) high academic commitment does not prevent political scientists from working in other, more political capacities or even acting as policy advisors.

What is relatively weak (compared to other academic categories such as that of lawyers, or even philosophers and historians) is political scientists' direct involvement in the political arena. Figure 3.7 maps the political and social engagement of the Proseps Survey respondents, showing that none of the categories included in the questionnaire attains values of over 20%. Hence, the overall share of political scientists characterized by their direct political engagement is roughly half that of those who decide to invest their time in the field of academic governance.

It should be pointed out that several respondents declared more than one form of political engagement (e.g. party involvement plus legislative office) or social experience (for instance, involvement in interest groups and media). This actually means that there is a minority of "politically engaged" academics within a population dominated by non-engaged scholars. Indeed, those scholars who declared having held none of the aforementioned offices represent 58.8% of the entire sample.

The figure reveals two interesting findings across the control groups. First of all, the distribution of female scholars and of untenured academics

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[3] The questionnaire specified the offices of: *Rector/Chancellor, Deputy Rector/Chancellor, Dean, Vice-Dean, Director of Department or Director of Research Centre.*
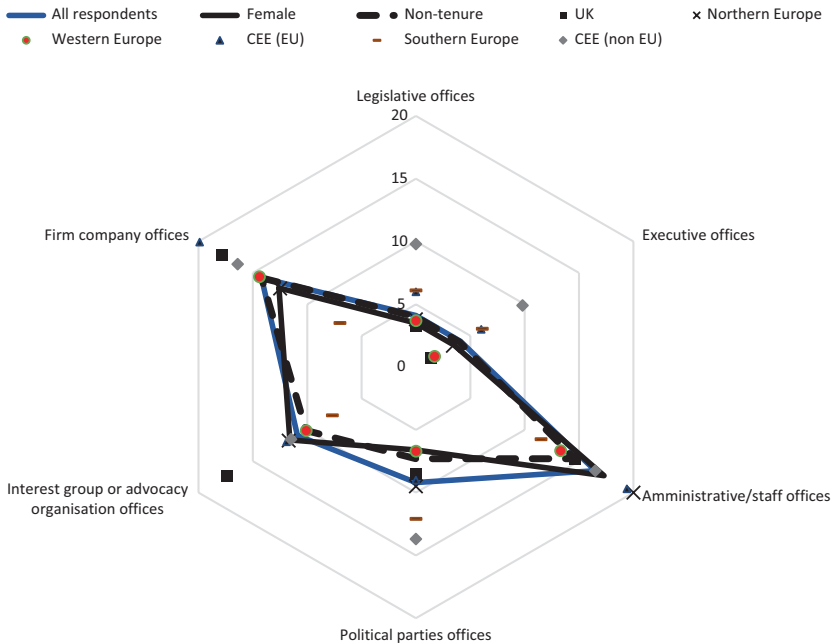
Fig. 3.7 European political scientists with political and social experience (%). (Note: the table reports the distribution of the answers to the question: *have you held political or administrative offices outside academia before or during your academic appointment?* For the composition of geographical areas, see Table 2.3. Source: Proseps Survey 2019)

does not deviate significantly from the whole population. This basically confirms that direct political engagement cannot be considered a key factor in the establishment of a career within academic political science, but is rather a random effect of personal commitments.

Conversely, the markers corresponding to groups of scholars from given geographical areas deviate significantly. In particular, scholars from Central and Eastern Europe are on average more involved in such extra-academic activities (in particular, political-administrative offices and firms). This actually means that social scientists in these newer democracies from the former Communist bloc tend to display a significant degree of social (if not political) engagement. This calls to mind the classical passage from Pareto (1916) about the replacement of one élite cluster by another in

order to protect the system from the threat of any dramatic change in the nature of the ruling class.

Another partial deviation from a low number of office holders applies to the cluster of UK-based scholars, who show a more pronounced propension to advocacy organizations and firms. On the other hand, Southern European scholars are more active as purely political office holders (executive, legislative and staff offices), thus confirming the more binding nature of politics with society (and therefore academia) in Mediterranean democracies compared to Northern ones.

5   THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE COMPLEXITY OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL SCIENCE

5.1   *Crisis, Opportunity: Not Necessarily a Turning Point*

All the critical dimensions we have analysed so far point to the uncertainty and transformation of European political science since the beginning of the twenty-first century. As shown above, the scope of political science research, as well as political scientists' attitudes towards visibility and public engagement, has constantly been the subject of controversy. As a matter of fact, some of the doubts and reservations expressed by our "founders" are reflected to a degree in the perplexities expressed by subsequent generations of scholars. The interviews we conducted constitute a good proxy of the current complexity of political science. However, we should not underestimate the positive message they contain concerning the level of professionalization and institutionalization, the average degree of internationalization and the common acknowledgement of an important core of methodological and epistemological elements.

Moreover, the debate regarding political science's internal and external borders seems to cover similar issues to those already discussed at the time of the first trans-Atlantic consolidation of the discipline. On the other hand, the complexity of the crises witnessed during the first two decades of this century has clearly increased the fragmented nature of academics' views on the discipline's nature and mission (Real-Dato & Verzichelli, 2022). Thus, European political scientists seem much more polarized in their views today, and despite the undeniable institutionalization of political science in Europe, concern over the possible decline or even annihilation of the discipline is fairly widespread.

The emergence of the pandemic during the course of 2020 certainly complicated matters, producing an unprecedented level of uncertainty among academic communities. Scholars were obliged to change their professional approach due to the direct factors of change (the lockdown rules and other legal restrictions on business travel and meetings), and even due to a number of indirect effects on their personal and psychological sphere. As a result, several aspects of daily academic life were transformed, including teaching techniques, administrative organization within departments and research centres, international mobility and the organization of conferences and workshops.

Some studies have already assessed this substantial process of change entailing short-term adjustments to, and even the permanent transformation of, the profession. The studies in question have focused on the changes in the lives of higher education institutions on the whole, particularly with regard to the effect of online/mixed teaching and to the desperate effort to assure the continuity of universities' fundamental mission (European Universities Association, 2020; International Association of Universities, 2020). Notwithstanding the considerable increase in political science research relating to the pandemic, there has yet to be any comprehensive assessment of its impact on the attitudes of our specific academic community. In fact, most studies of COVID-19's impact on the academic profession have focused on specific effects such as career postponement, the difficulties experienced by young scholars and the growing inequalities among generations and groups. For example, there is clear empirical evidence of a gender effect since female academics have been affected more negatively than their male counterparts (Gorska et al., 2021; Minello et al., 2020; Staniscuaski et al., 2020), particularly those female academics with children (Myers et al., 2020). We also know that several research groups have decided to change their research topics and designs due to the global impact of COVID-19 on politics and on policy-making processes. Everything seems to have been affected. It is not surprising, therefore, that calls for papers on the comprehensive effects of the pandemic have been met by such a massive response from European researchers (Maggetti, 2022).

In the meantime, from a more general perspective, the discussion about the cost of research and the involution of teaching seems replete with contradictions, with both those observers pointing to a process of disruption, and those supporting the "learning process", having a good case to make. Our task here is not to assess political scientists' capacity to

transform a crisis into an opportunity. Following a more pragmatic approach, we wish to understand to what extent the transformation of the attitudes and everyday work of European political scientists described in this chapter has been impacted by the pandemic. We believe that change is not necessarily a critical point, and that in any case all of the learning processes we witness should be assessed from a long-term perspective. The remaining part of this section will therefore analyse the available information on the impact that COVID-19 has had on European political scientists. Obviously, when we designed the structure of the Proseps Project, we could hardly have imagined the extent of the impending shock. Nevertheless, we managed to conduct a flash survey (in the autumn of 2020) specifically devoted to the reactions of European political scientists to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three key concepts we use to answer our question are those of resilience, awareness and adaptation. The Proseps flash survey regarding the COVID-19 pandemic offers an initial picture of resilience (Table 3.5): more than two European scholars out of ten see COVID-19 as having a dramatically negative impact on their profession. This group is mainly composed of scholars from the first countries to be hit by the virus (Italy,

Table 3.5 Post COVID-19 changes in the professional lives of European political scientists

	All respondents	Female Scholars	Post-Doc researchers	EU academics
My professional life has not changed very much.	19.9%	15.4%	18.6%	19.2
Working online and alone has been difficult, but I have been able to fulfil most of my duties and achieve most of my plans.	56.7%	55.9%	58.0%	56.7
My professional life has been seriously affected by the lockdown.	18.9%	23.3%	19.5%	18.9
It has been virtually impossible to achieve an ordinary standard of professional life.	4.5%	5.4%	4.0%	4.5
Total (N)	*1400*	*519*	*528*	*220*

Source: Proseps COVID-19 Flash Survey 2020

Note: the table reports the distribution of the answers to the question: *To what extent has your professional life changed during the pandemic?*

Belgium, but also Poland and other countries where the pandemic has had a serious impact on their national health systems), together with the three control groups included in the table: female scholars, untenured academics and junior professionals.

The awareness of such change also varies considerably from one community to another, and even between generations. However, only the implementation of a clearly defined system of distant teaching and learning can be considered a key aspect of such awareness (Fig. 3.8).

Therefore, we can argue that political scientists' burden, in terms of their research work, has been psychologically easier to bear than the changes in their everyday teaching tasks and methods. All the other aspects of an academic's life, including the transformation of faculty meetings and
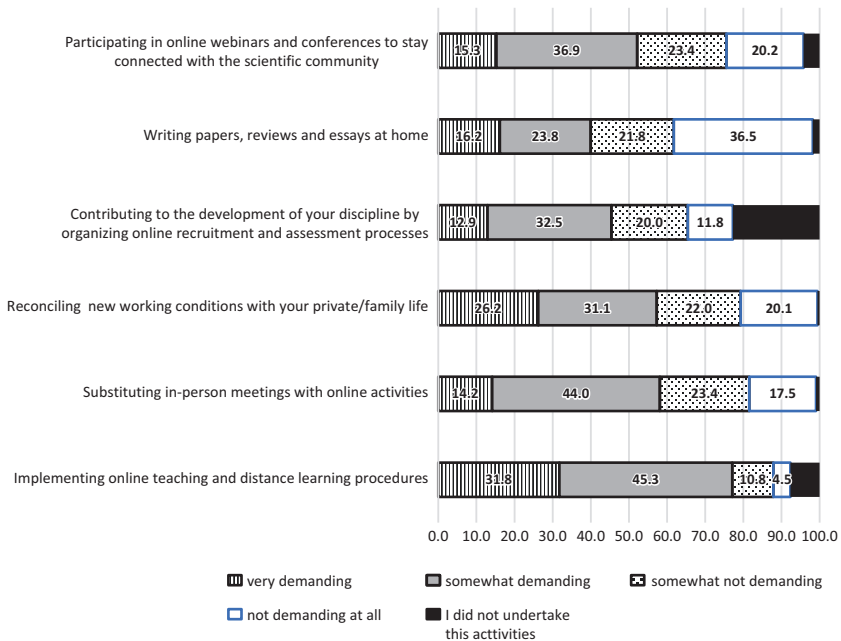

Fig. 3.8 Costs of professional adaptation in times of COVID-19. (Note: the chart summarizes the reactions to six assertions following the question: *To what extent has your professional life changed during the pandemic?* Source: Proseps Flash Survey 2020)

new modes of administration, seem rather simple compared to the problem of online and mixed teaching methods.

The third measure we consider is that of adaptation. Our 2020 Proseps flash survey gave a first hint of adaptation, when colleagues were asked whether they had reshaped their research and publication agenda in order to accommodate the analysis of Covid-related issues. Table 3.6 offers a breakdown of the distribution of the answers to that question.

The table shows that besides the obvious adaptation to mixed modes of teaching, to webinars and to online meetings, half of the population of European Political scientists do not perceive any substantial long-term impact of the pandemic on their research work. On the other hand, most of those who argue that an adaptation of the research agenda is necessary account for this in terms of the renewed (albeit partial) modification of research interests. There are no major signs of variance across our control groups, although expectations of a more radical modification of the research agenda come more from male, tenured and EU scholars, while female political scientists—perhaps due to their overall less autonomous position in European academia—do not seem particularly reactive in this regard.

A study we conducted using the same flash survey (Capano et al., 2023), based on data reduction and multivariate analyses, confirmed that the predisposition to adaptation of European political scientists has been remarkable, although extremely variegated as well. Three latent factors

Table 3.6 The short-term post-Covid adaptation of European political scientists

	All respondents	Female Scholars	Tenure academics	EU Academics
I did not reshape my agenda	46.5	46.8	44.6	46.1
I partially reshaped my agenda since I was interested in knowing more about COVID-19	42.6	43.7	43.7	43.5
I reshaped my agenda since my institution decided to cover COVID-19-related issues	6.1	6.0	6.0	6.9
I drastically reshaped my agenda to cover COVID-19-related issues	4.9	3.5	5.7	5.2

Source: Proseps Flash Survey 2020

Note: the table reports the distributions of the answers to the question: *Did you reshape your research and dissemination agenda to investigate COVID-19-related issues?*

identified by this study correspond to three different attitudes that we have labelled passive, proactive and innovative adaptation. Basically, the first corresponds to the simple implementation of the changes needed to preserve a method and a mission considered non-negotiable. Proactive adaptation involves a new "spirit" concerning, for example, multidisciplinary work, a greater role as policy advisor and a diverse use of the media. Finally, adaptation becomes innovative when the acceleration in the process entails an ambitious plan: for instance, changing one's research agenda, learning new teaching methods and means, sharing new research methods and employing artificial intelligence.

Matching two indexes of the perception of a scholar's attitude to adaptation, the study explores the various aspects of the potential adaptation of Europe's political scientists. It identifies certain factors associated with passive adaptation—such as tenure and professorial status—and others potentially associated with proactive adaptation—such as a belief in a future of applied and experimental political science, and a vision of a more competitive, policy-related distribution of research resources. However, the study concludes that given the relatively limited scope of passive and proactive adaptation, it will be interesting to conduct an in-depth analysis of the motivation of the bulk of respondents who can be classified as those offering *reactive adaptation*. In other words, a relative majority of European political scientists argue that adaptation, while necessary, is certainly not an easy task and should not necessarily be considered as revolutionizing the profession. This is basically in keeping with the message spelt out in the previous chapter of this volume: a changing attitude towards problem-solving and politically relevant issues is necessary for those who want to follow the route of Aeneas, that is, for those who continue in their willingness to impact the public sphere by means of their propensity to achieve political science's collective goals. Changes are therefore necessary also in the research agenda, if and when they reflect the perceptions of the future challenges for political scientists.

If future studies confirm the existence of these distinctive approaches to change and adaptation, then a new interpretation will have to be offered regarding a more courageous and innovative transformation of the discipline. In this respect, some of the recommendations made by our interviewees—emeritus scholars, seniors and young lions—may help us provide a concrete description of the effective scenario of adaptation we can expect in the years to come. We will come back to these recommendations in the next chapter.

5.2   *New Attitudes: Fresher Energies*

Thus, we are not proposing any conclusive analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on European political science. However, this preliminary discussion helps show the pragmatism displayed by political scientists in these trying circumstances. They have probably not been very proactive (at least not compared to hard scientists). They consider "pure research" less endangered than teaching and the publication of their research. However, they clearly perceive one painful aspect of the lockdown (and of the danger of further pandemics): the lost opportunities for conferences and research activities abroad. We call this kind of reaction "Tocqueville's syndrome".

Moreover, political scientists reveal rather rational attitudes, offering coherent and "scientific" points of view and a reasonable degree of trust in (hard) science. However, the data reveal their self-criticism with regard to the visibility of political science, its lack of eclecticism and the limited inter-disciplinary propensities of the political science community. Moreover, several signs of malaise and fragility emerge from the open-ended responses given, as shown below. A longer period of confinement may constitute a stress-test for the resilience of European political scientists.

Probably the changes seen have not been so remarkable. However, such changes require new energies, and these energies have to be found by political scientists by bridging the sub-disciplinary, geographical and inter-generational divides described in this chapter. One clear conclusion at least can be drawn here. The future of post-pandemic political science in Europe will only be bright if the discipline remains compact and well managed at both domestic and supranational levels. The war that Russia began with the Ukraine in February 2022, from this point of view, casts a substantial shadow over the possibility of any solid recovery of the discipline in the short term.

The Future of European Political Science

1 The Near Future and the Post-Pandemic Scenario: The Risk of Missing the Boat

1.1 *Doing Political Science in Turbulent Times*

The data briefly presented at the end of the previous chapter summarize the different reactions of the European community of political scientists to the impact of the pandemic in terms of patterns of adaptation. As already shown, a significant minority believe that this crisis should be considered an opportunity to improve the social relevance of the discipline and to produce better research. Additionally, a good number of political scientists think that the near future will be crucial to focusing their research agendas more closely on what is relevant for the socio-political context.

From this point of view, the COVID-19 pandemic can be considered to have added another driver to the turbulent situation of the discipline. In fact, what characterizes the external world also applies to the academic world: we live in turbulent times such as those "in which the interaction of events and demands is experienced as highly variable, inconsistent, unexpected, and/or unpredictable" (Ansell et al., 2017, p. 8).

Overall, the pandemic has not only increased the challenges to be dealt with by the discipline, but has also shed further light on its limitations. These challenges are highly relevant and persistent, and as such they deserve our focused attention if we are to understand the future of political science.

It is important that we start this analysis from what our early and mid-career interviewees (and not the seniors) have said about this strategic topic. For example, a young researcher clearly pointed out the connection between structural challenges on the one hand, and those challenges emerging from the pandemic, as follows:

> Political science is more challenged today than it used to be in the past. On the one hand, there are developments around 'post-truth', disinformation campaigns, anti-gender movements, and the rise of right-wing populism—to name just a few buzzwords of those worrying phenomena. This particularly concerns and challenges political science as a 'science for democracy'. … The main risk is excessive fragmentation in too vague and irrelevant research questions of course. … In the autumn of 2020, as I think about the state of political science ten years from now, the global pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 certainly needs to be taken into account. On the one hand, this concerns COVID-19, policy responses and political consequences as a phenomenon—political science is essential to understand those. We will certainly see the continued publication of articles, special issues and books, but it will also be important to address lines of research concerning COVID-19 that have not received very much attention so far, such as at the connection between political science and public health.

Political science is therefore seen as a discipline that is not sufficiently capable of offering analytical responses to most key political and policy problems. This is expressed, perhaps even more strongly, by a mid-career scholar who pointed out how:

> Political scientists need to be more inclusive of topics. And you know, when you look at the recent event in the US on Wednesday, I don't hear a lot of political scientists because that would require us to talk about race, to talk about gender, to talk about identity politics, and political science doesn't like all these kinds of thing. If we look at COVID, we would need specialists in health policy, (and) political science doesn't do health, it doesn't do housing policies, all that kind of stuff. So I think now this year with COVID, with what's happening in the US, we can see that political science—actually, we are just shooting ourselves in the foot because we do not cover the full spectrum of politics, of political problems out there. … And then there's this problem with data that when we have to answer funding calls that are problem oriented, then half of the discipline cannot apply, because that's not what we do. … And then we have part of the discipline that jumped and started to do tons of studies about migration, about Brexit, and I'm pretty

sure (soon) it's going to be about COVID, so we're going to have funding for COVID and publications about COVID and we will forget all the other problems out there. So, I think we are missing the boat once again; we are all obsessed with pandemics, but we do not really make a very clear contribution, a mark, where we can say, "this is political science's contribution to understanding the crisis, the politics of the crisis, implications, and so on and so forth". We are a bit lost. When you look at, for instance, the COVID advisory bodies across Europe, there is not a single political scientist there. There are economists, sociologists, and what have you, but there is not a single political scientist, or at least not in the countries where I follow politics, like Italy, Switzerland, France, the UK and Germany. I don't see any political scientists. So, I think we are missing that boat.

This "missing the boat" image is very powerful and represents in a dynamic way the persistence of the never-ending, double-sided problem of political science. This is equally true with regard to the European arena, which we examined in the first chapter of this book when introducing the characteristics of the discipline. This is the same double-sided problem that has accompanied the reader throughout all the previous chapters, together with the difficult process of institutionalizing European political science and the various capacities of country-level political science to make a relevant impact to some degree.

One could say that there is nothing new under the sun, and that the pandemic is just one of many crises that political science has had to deal with during the course of the discipline's historical development; and that nothing can be done to change its structural weaknesses.

However, what our younger interviewees pointed out should not be underestimated. They believe that the pandemic has come at a time when other socioeconomic and political drivers are leading towards the possible decline of democracy, towards increasing social inequality (not only between different parts of the world but also within each country), towards faster processes of innovation and also to new and unexpected social problems. All of these drivers may have a snowball effect which could render the social legitimation of political science extremely critical. Why should society and taxpayers be concerned with a discipline that looks disinterested in the most relevant and pressing social problems of our time? Why should citizens be interested in a discipline that displays little interest in society itself?

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a sort of litmus test for this tendency of political science to be insufficiently engaged with its social environment. In these turbulent and critical times, there are signs of the emergence of a potential vanguard: a kind of modern "Aeneas" represented by the future heroes of European Political Science—scholars who are conscious of the adversities of history, and the consequent weaknesses of the discipline, such as fragmentation and low socio-political salience and legitimation. They know that the foundation of a new, stronger Political Science goes beyond their individual aspirations. They also know that a plurality of objectives and fields of study have to be pursued in order to defend the role of political science. Several of the interviews we organized confirm this sense of awareness also among the most recent generation of scholars.

However, the majority of political scientists still seem to resemble the other two heroes we have used to picture our ideal types: like a sort of modern Odysseus, some of them tend to focus exclusively on the collective goal of political science, while underestimating their potential impact on the public sphere; others, like Achilles, are exclusively concerned with their individual impact on society but fail to strive for the achievement of the scientific community's mission. Moreover, the passivity and negative feelings of some interviewees occasionally seem to evoke the syndrome of Sisyphus, that is, a group of scholars going endlessly round in circles.

The lines of reasoning of the new "Aeneas type" include the arguments of the necessary recognition, for example, of the challenges and opportunities that have been generated by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of its indicating relevant topics and research perspectives. This is clearly captured by one mid-career scholar:

> I do think that the role of the State in public service delivery has come back with a vengeance—the distinctiveness of the public sector and its role in the pandemic … without the government we would have all died, I think. So, I think that is an important consequence. And then there are new issues that are related to political leadership and volunteerism, effective policy instruments, the organization of health care and care for the elderly. … Just think of (all the labour involved in) to the promotion, the organization of vaccination programs. … You know, this is paired with citizens' trust, there's the next series of subjects and studies following the pandemic. And then also there is room for political scientists who study inequalities; I think the COVID-19 crisis has been utterly divisive in its worsening of inequalities and segmenting citizens. And something I haven't addressed but I noted

down here: I think, with this background, there could be more fertile ground on which to study micro phenomena together with meso and macro variables.

However, as shown in our flash survey of the effects of COVID-19 on European political scientists, many scholars were not affected by the pandemic and its consequences but simply adhered to their research agenda and interests.

Consequently, the near future and the post-pandemic scenario may be characterized by the fossilization of historical trends and a pattern of division from current events. Overall, the greater, more challenging divide is that between a minority who are interested in the social relevance of the discipline and in changing its perspective so as to be more involved in external world facts and dynamics, and those who, legitimately, are more interested in following their own research agenda and are thus completely absorbed by internal academic dynamics and research into what the discipline itself considers mainly relevant (Stoker, 2010). This, as we will see, is a divide that has always characterized the development of political science. Furthermore, we think that if this divide is not bridged, then there could be a real risk of "missing the boat".

1.2   Lessons Learned from COVID-19, and the Need to Take the Structural Turbulence of Our Times Seriously

Turbulent times, punctuated by structural crises (such as the financial turmoil of 2008, COVID-19, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the waves of uncontrolled migration, the recurrent droughts and the other natural disasters due to global warming), have two significant effects on European political science. These are very often underestimated by political scientists themselves, with the exception of a promising minority, as shown by our survey on the impact of COVID-19.

The first of these effects takes the form of an analytical and theoretical challenge: the fact that the reiteration of crises and turbulence occurs much more often in the recent past implies an increasing need to better understand changes, unintended consequences and connections between different political and policy processes.

The second is a risk, connected to the increasing demand made of academic disciplines by society and, more generally, by the outside world: the lack of preparedness in providing advice, engagement and research focused on socially relevant problems.

The Theoretical Challenge

Regarding the theoretical challenge, COVID-19 has shown how an unexpected external event can be a bearer of multiple political and societal effects whose duration may be short but could also result in significant changes (Capano et al., 2022a). However, COVID-19 is only one, and probably the most relevant, of the several factors contributing to the structural turbulence that characterizes the contemporary world and that affects practical political and policy processes. Thus, if turbulent times mean a context in which unexpected and/or unpredictable events are more probable, this implies a need for a theoretical approach capable of conceptualizing the implications of these events in terms of their impact on the characteristics of political and policy dynamics. Such studies would be more effective in shedding light on whether, and how, such events can be foreseen, what sequential chains they may trigger and how to prepare political institutions and political systems to deal with them.

From this point of view, mutatis mutandis, political science is in the same situation described by David Easton in his APSA Presidential Address in 1967 when, analysing the situation of American political science and the rise of the "post-behavioural revolution", he pointed out that "the search for an answer as to how we as political scientists have proved so disappointingly ineffectual in anticipating the world of the 1960s has contributed significantly to the birth of the post-behavioural revolution" (Easton, 1969, p. 1053). Easton noticed how, faced with developments in American politics and society, the risk of nuclear war and the ongoing Vietnam War, political science had nothing to say. This view led Easton to conclude that political science, "as an enterprise, has failed to anticipate the crises that are upon us" (p. 1057). This harsh judgement shows that what we can learn from COVID-19 and from the turbulent times we live in is something that political science has already encountered. Overall, there is the persistent issue of failing to take the complexity of the world seriously, to anticipate political and policy dynamics, or to consistently reflect on disciplinary identity.

All in all, this challenge requires political scientists to devote more attention to analysing the complexity of political phenomena and to focusing on more general research questions, while the interconnections between political, societal and policy variables clearly call for investigation. This means rediscovering political science as a discipline that focuses on how to build a more robust democracy. Substantially, the theoretical and analytical challenge from COVID-19, as an emblematic example of what

it means to live in turbulent times, is to redefine the object of study in terms of the politics of turbulence. Instead of assuming that the usual sequence of stability-change-stability holds, a new approach ought to be adopted in which turbulence (unexpected events) is also perceived as characterizing so-called stable situations. Thus, the first lesson learnt from the COVID-19 crisis is the need to move beyond the immediacy of the pandemic itself: this crisis is not an opportunity to test theories or frameworks on specific causes or drivers of relevance when dealing with the pandemic, but a starting point from which to improve political scientists' theoretical, conceptual and methodological capacity and readiness to analyse and anticipate the continuing critical moments that are going to drive much of twenty-first-century politics. It is very interesting that most of the scholars we interviewed share this view, which can be summarized by the words of one senior scholar specialized in international relations:

> You know, medicine needs a vaccine, but we need also a vaccine in political science, that's to say, to adapt ourselves to new challenges. I think that events are able to stimulate and trigger reflection. We started this discussion, this talk, with the '68 movement and I said that the '68 movement socialized me and determined my academic career. I think that the present pandemic is able to reshape our vision, for instance, to give priority to global security over national security. … You know, IR is constituted through the concept of national security.

Lack of Preparedness to Deal with What Is Urgent for Society
The other main lesson emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic is that political science should have something to say about the question of crisis and turbulence. This is the other side of the aforesaid challenge: if political science as a discipline is not ready to focus on the complexity of political phenomena, and if its research agenda does not significantly focus on real social and political problems, then there is a risk that it will become irrelevant with regard to the very issues that are urgent for the world at large.

From this point of view, political science can be said to have a considerable amount to say about crises and turbulent times. Crises are a relevant topic in many subfields of the discipline, and we can find classical works on this idea/event. International and foreign politics and policy scholars (Allison, 1971; George, 1991; Jervis, 1976; Lebow, 1981) have paid particular attention to the role of élites, bureaucrats and leaders in political development/democratization studies, whereas a crisis usually refers to

the moments of disorder in national democratization (Almond et al., 1973; Linz & Stepan, 1978; Zimmermann, 1983). Public policy has long studied crises and policy failure (Bovens & 't Hart, 1996; McConnell, 2010a, 2010b; Hudson et al., 2019), while comparative politics has recently been attracted towards the question of the critical development of democracy in the most advanced countries (Diamond & Plattner, 2015; Przeworski, 2019). However, the problem is not that political science needs to have its say in regard to the role of crisis as a unique event or process, but that political science ought to show that in critical times, it can contribute towards anticipating future turbulence, managing actual crises and proposing solutions that will avoid the onset of future crises.

From this point of view, the lessons emerging from COVID-19 are that political science is always a step behind what society considers relevant. Overall, the experience of COVID-19 has shown that other disciplines have been considered more relevant in terms of the provision of advice or crisis management—not only hard sciences, but also certain other social sciences such as economics, statistics, management and psychology. What can we, as political scientists, truly offer in turbulent times if we do not foresee crises and critical junctures when society needs us to help find solutions? If political science cannot respond to these challenges, then it is going to remain in a permanent state of ill health.

The risk clearly emerging from the ongoing pandemic, as has been the case in other moments of crisis, is that political science does not have much to offer as things stand. To be clear on this, there is a subfield of the discipline that could provide something (namely public policy), and yet its contributions have been rather limited (due to the internal dynamics of this subfield, which are mainly oriented towards explaining policy processes rather than policy outcomes and impacts). Public policy can help design policy processes to be better prepared to manage crises or unexpected policy effects (Bali et al., 2019; Capano & Toth, 2022), but right now it appears reluctant to propose direct, clear solutions to policy problems. On the other hand, mainstream political science is focused on its explanatory mission. Political scientists search for explanations to account for how things are the way they are. It is not surprising that most of the political science literature regarding COVID-19 has focused on explaining what happened and why, by identifying different independent variables accounting for the nature of policy restrictions and the measures offering support to citizens. Thus, we have seen interesting comparative studies focusing on the role played by various factors (the political composition of

governments, the type of political system, the nature of the healthcare system, the levels of systemic decentralization and trust), as drivers of the responses to the pandemic (Capano et al., 2020; Boin et al., 2020; George et al., 2020; Kettl, 2020; Van Dooren & Noordegraaf, 2020; Weible et al., 2020; Yang, 2020; Toshkov et al., 2022; Weiss & Thurbon, 2021).

Thus, we have had an outpouring of well-produced, methodologically sophisticated research that has shown political scientists' capacity to focus partially on a "hot" issue, but at the same time, the inability of such research to make any significant contribution to solving questions regarding the nature of the crisis. Overall, while there has been interest shown by political scientists in the COVID-19 pandemic, as a topic of research (as there has also been in other social science disciplines), we have not found any significant evidence of a specific involvement of political science at any key stage of the response process. For example, if we check the list of Sage experts in the UK,[1] we find medical and hard scientists, psychologists, anthropologists, criminologists and sociologists, but no political scientists. Or, looking at the members of the Italian national scientific committee or of the similar committees established by the Italian regions, there is not one single political scientist (while other disciplines, such as law or management, are represented at regional level) (Capano et al., 2022b).

Furthermore, we have discovered that there are many topics which we have not yet investigated sufficiently as a community of scholars. For example, political scientists in the various different subfields of the discipline have not paid enough attention to the following topics: communication in times of crisis (while there is a substantial amount of research on different dimensions of political communication); the micro-dynamics of politics and policy-making in the field of health policy (while there is a substantial amount of research on the macro- and meso-politics of health policy); the politics of crisis management (which political scientists have left mostly to scholars in the fields of public administration and disaster management); the governance of uncertainty (which also has strong political dimensions and not just policy-psychological-anthropological dimensions); and the role of big data in governing political and policy processes (there has been more attention on big data as a source for sophisticated empirical research).

Without sufficient expertise on these topics, among others, political science has been caught unprepared for the pandemic. Yet, this was not

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[1] https://www.independentsage.org/who-are-independent-sage/

unexpected. The characteristics of political science as a scientific discipline have remained the same as those pointed out by David Easton sixty years ago. Thus, by being unable to anticipate a crisis and to offer solutions within crises, political science risks being progressively marginalized.

Importantly, we are not arguing that political scientists should become futurologists. One of the mid-career scholars we interviewed clearly pointed out the pitfalls of such an idea as follows:

> [W]hen they become 'futurologists', they usually fail and it is not good for the legitimacy or the credibility of the discipline to say: 'this is going to happen', and then it doesn't happen.

However, political scientists possess sufficient theoretical background, methodological expertise and empirical knowledge to do more than they have done thus far for their societies. We know that they can act as public intellectuals, as policy and political advisors, and as bearers of evidence-based policy. However, we also know that very often these functions can be constrained and limited not only by individual characteristics and by the features of an academic career and job, but also more significantly by the epistemological mission that the majority of political scientists believe in.

Thus, the lessons of COVID-19 bring us back once again to the characteristics of the discipline. We can deal with them by accepting our inherited path. However, if we believe that we are truly living in turbulent times and that this requires societies to continuously deal with uncertainty and "unexpected" problems, then we need to consider what this could mean for the future of political science.

From this point of view, the metaphor of "missing the boat" should be taken into serious consideration. Clearly, the metaphor dramatizes the problems of political science. However, the signal coming from a changing world (and the higher educational environment), together with the speed of change, deserves closer attention as regards the possible consequences they may have for the future of political science.

2   Changing the Historical Path and Making Political Science Socially Relevant

2.1   The Problem of Values, the Emphasis on Methods and the Forgotten Practical Dimension of Political Science

Our discussion of the lessons to be taken from COVID-19 leads to the never-ending, unsolved problem of the relevance of political science. This debate has been ongoing since the discipline's foundation. The problem of relevance is not simply related to the visibility and impact of the discipline in its socioeconomic and political context but also regards its identity and mission as a discipline.

In Chap. 1, we examined the divided nature of political science and its intrinsic weakness as a discipline, while in Chap. 2 we offered some empirically based thoughts on the institutionalization of European political science. Chapter 3 gave an interpretation of the fragmentation of political science's research mission, while also identifying a significant number of European political scientists who are socially engaged (especially in the UK and Northern Europe). In one way or another, political science, in its several European guises, maintains the original traits of the discipline. It is extremely pluralistic, divided into "tribes", and boasts a limited degree of internal communication. These tribes are significantly influenced by their national context (the political system and the characteristics of the higher education system in which they operate). With regard to this contextual diversity, the issues of disciplinary identity and mission and of social relevance should be treated with great care: the various different national historical, institutional and cultural trajectories may significantly impact our conceptions of professional values.

That said, the basic concern remains the same everywhere, and regards the relationship between political science and the outside world. As an academic discipline, political science has its own internal logic based on the freedom of its scholars to choose what to study, and on its internal processes of reproduction. However, since its early days as an independent discipline, political science has had to ask itself the question of how it is to interact with the external world, while its objects of study are acted upon by many other actors (politicians, citizens, bureaucrats, interest groups etc.). In one way or another, political scientists have always been aware that they do not have a monopoly on their object of study. Obviously, political scientists rely on more theoretical and methodological

instruments to understand and explain what politics is, and above all how it works; but very often what they do is not interesting or understandable to the other actors involved in politics. Apparently, these problematic lines of communication between science and politics are the norm, another of the never-ending problems of our times (Weiss, 1979; Cairney, 2016; Parkhurst, 2017; Capano & Malandrino, 2022). It should be considered normal for political science as an academic discipline to want to be independent of the dynamics of the real world in order to pursue its own mission and goals, as other disciplines do.

This intrinsic need of every academic discipline can be considered one of the main drivers of the evolution of political science, with its solid emphasis on its explanatory mission and the increasing stress of having to acquire methodological sophistication (as we can see not only in the increasing "quantification" of the discipline, but also in the significant attempts of the supporters of qualitative methods to make them more objective and reliable). In this process, most people have a mistaken idea of the neutrality and objectivity of social sciences, and thus of political science. It appears that the "methodification" of political science is seen as a way of guaranteeing the ideological neutrality of researchers, allowing them to perform a neutral analysis of the different dimensions of politics on the basis of their own interests as scientists (Green & Shapiro, 1994). According to this perspective, the choice of research subject depends only on the individual perception of how the project connects to the goals of the discipline, that are now refocused on finding or confirming generalizable laws of political behaviour. Hence, what truly matters is the reliability of the adopted method more than the analysed topic.

However, this way of thinking is based on a misinterpretation of the Weberian call for the neutrality of the researcher, since Weber himself was fully aware of the meaninglessness of this neutrality. As he explained, "There is no absolutely objective scientific analysis of (…) 'social phenomena' independent of special and 'one-sided' viewpoints according to which expressly or tacitly, consciously or unconsciously they are selected, analysed and organized for expository purposes" (Weber, 1904 (1949, p. 72)). And thus, "all knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge from particular points of view" (Weber, 1904 (1949, p. 81)). Weber argues that what makes science objective is the method we adopt, but that values are important in selecting the object of study. Weber clearly suggested that the selection of the object of research should be based on the personal values of the researchers because "only a small portion of

existing concrete reality is coloured by our value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to use due to their connection with our values" (Weber, 1904 (1949, p. 76)). Weber called for the objectification of social science research and the explanation of important processes and facts. He clearly called for researchers to avoid any of the goals pursued in society, but argued instead that there should be analysis of whether and how those goals have been or could be reached. Weber wanted the normative dimension to be excluded from the scientific perspective. However, he expected that the research focus would be chosen according to a subjective perception of social relevance. This self-awareness is very often lacking in political scientists, due to a solid "scientist" perspective that is perceived to make the discipline more reliable and "scientific".

There is more to be considered if one looks at the history of political science. In fact, there can be no doubt that the discipline has always been characterized by a normative afflatus deriving from its foundation. Originally, political science was deeply concerned with trying to understand how democracy works in practice and how it can survive over the course of time (Verba, 1960). Lasswell constantly argued that political science should focus on problem-solving in order to improve the quality of citizens' lives (Lasswell, 1963). David Easton clearly indicated that political science ought to focus on immediate major problems (1969). These are clear normative indications coming from the American masters of political science, and they remind us what the discipline shares with other social sciences, that is their intrinsic relevance, based on their production of practical knowledge. Following John Dewey's famous quote ("Any problem of scientific inquiry that does not grow out of actual (or 'practical') social conditions is factitious", 1938, p. 499), Gerring and Yesnowitz (2006) argue strongly that "Art for art's sake has some plausibility, and science for science's sake might also be argued in a serious vein. But no serious person would adopt as her thesis social science for social science's sake. Social science is science for society's sake. These disciplines seek to provide answers to questions of pressing concern, or questions that we think should be of pressing concern, to the general public. We look to pursue issues that bear upon our obligations as citizens in a community— issues related, perhaps, to democracy, equality, justice, life-satisfaction, peace, prosperity, violence, or virtue, but in any case, issues that call forth a sense of duty, responsibility, and action" (p. 112).

Political science should be a science for society's sake, should produce useful applicable knowledge (Sartori, 2004), should help citizens (Ostrom, 1998; Putnam, 2003; Trent, 2011) and should focus on how to pursue "a more decent politics and society under dangerous and difficult conditions" (Katznelson, 2007, p. 4).

Therefore, political science should focus on real things, and try to produce knowledge that may help improve politics and society. While this assumption dramatically problematizes the vast bulk of literature produced for the sake of political science theories, it does not solve the normative question, which remains that of addressing what good politics and good society actually are.

Let us adopt a clear, analytical approach to this matter. We have indicated that political science needs to improve its theoretical and analytical capacities in order to produce knowledge capable of helping society in turbulent times, when crises are recurrent and uncertainty is structurally high. This calls for a greater focus on real political and policy problems and not just studies that confirm existing general laws or discover new ones (activities that are always welcome in scientific discourse). The goal should be to offer reliable, or potentially workable, solutions to relevant social and political problems. However, this shift does not resolve the normative problem related to the evaluation of what is good for society and why this is so.

Thus, it is clear enough that we cannot impose one single, specific normative anchor. However, one goal remains predominant. For decades, political science has been a discipline focusing on the defence of liberal democracy. At the same time, political scientists have shown that advanced democracy has significant pitfalls and shortcomings, by producing research that shows, for example: the ignorance of voters regarding many important details of politics and policy; that élites manipulate people; that interest and business groups strongly influence political and policy processes; and that democratic procedures may defend a status quo characterized by social inequality. There is a significant amount of research in the field of political science showing that democracy does not work as expected, and this represents a profound, sometimes radical, criticism of liberal democracy. These findings are often methodologically reliable and convincing from the substantive point of view, but their constant repetition, without any proposed solution being put forward (how to correct the system, or if necessary to change it), may contribute to undermining the democratic system itself, or may further a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Is political

science useful when it is not based on a clear normative statement declaring why the topic of research has been chosen, and what the implications of the research findings are (in terms of policy prescriptions)?

A similar example may be taken from the upsurge in political science literature that has been recently devoted to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many articles have emphasized how, during the first wave of the pandemic, some Asian countries were more effective in responding to the health crisis, and how authoritarian regimes reacted faster, than consolidated democratic systems. This emphasis echoes a similar focus on the part of the mass media. Such observations could result in the delegitimizing of the existing arrangements and operations of advanced democracies, without there being any clear normative assumptions offered as to whether a democratic system is better than an authoritarian one, or whether the relationship between the individual and society in Asia is better than that witnessed in the Western world. Ultimately, these studies do not offer a coherent solution as to how to better prepare for the next pandemic.

2.2   What Kind of Knowledge Is Required to Make Political Science More Relevant?

What we have tried to do in the previous section is to show that political science should not only focus on more socially relevant topics, but also have normative foundations. What this means is that we should be concerned about the outcome of the political process. Outcomes such as better democracy, greater social equality, more sustainable forms of development and a more peaceful world are examples of our dependent variable. To choose such variables would continue to imply analysing what political scientists actually study (political actors and institutions, political regimes, policies, international relations); but by assuming a normative stance, the scholars in question would prioritize questions that are of relevance to society. This would mean as analysing, for example: whether and in what way strong party systems are drivers of better democratic quality and policy performance; whether and how institutional political arrangements convey more democratic processes and whether and in what ways policies drive greater social equality.

As Gerring and Yesnovitz (2006, p. 130) have pointed out, "This sort of endeavour directly addresses what lay citizens and policymakers wish to know, for it addresses the consequential question: what shall we do? What

sort of institutions, and what sort of policies, shall we adopt? Which will advance justice and human welfare, and which will not?"

One way or another, to be socially relevant means to offer solutions to society clearly based on methodologically rigorous analysis. To focus on solutions means not only making certain normative decisions as to what is good and what is bad (for the researchers in their contextualized world), but also partly questioning the scientific mission of political science. To query the philosophical basis of the profession does not mean that political science should forget about offering explanations and retreat into the realm of political theory. To question its explanatory mandate means that when reflecting on what to study, and why, political scientists should be aware that addressing simply the workings of politics could radically reduce the weight of the discipline in the eyes of policy-makers and the general public. The consequence of a good explanation is very often a question about "what should be done" to make the actual state of things (political institutions, performance, policy outcomes, party dynamics etc.) better for the perceived interests of society. Thus, robust explanations may not often be useful or socially relevant. For example, cultural explanations of the difference in the institutional performances of different countries or diverse areas of the same country, such as those proposed by Wildavsky (1975) on budgeting, or by Putnam (1993) on the democratic performance of Italian regions, are highly fascinating and convincing from a pure scientific perspective. However, can they offer a response to the question "what should be done?" The answer may be that in order to change cultures and civic attitudes, several complex measures would need to be implemented. The vast body of literature on public policy failure is another example. Important studies have been produced regarding how policy failure is the result of variables such as interests (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962; Coleman, 1990; Niskanen, 1971; Gans-Morse et al., 2014), lock-in effects and path dependence (Pierson, 1993, 2000; Torfing, 2009), ideological decisions (Feldman, 2018; Hoppe, 2018; Taylor, 2021), cognitive biases (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Thaler, 2015) and clientelism and corruption (Dahlström et al., 2013; Brancati, 2014; Manor, 2013). However, the explanations such studies offer, which very often are highly convincing in virtue of a sophisticated research design, do not offer an answer to the question of what can be done to achieve the desired levels of policy performance.

Obviously, we know that there are political science subfields that can generate usable knowledge for improving public policy (Cairney, 2015,

2016), as well as the institutional arrangements of political systems (Sartori, 1994). However, such cases tend to be the exception rather than the rule. This of course lessens the social relevance of the discipline.

So, what can be done, besides adopting a more normative-driven position on research topics? There are no simple answers to this question, but what Stoker (2013) has proposed looks promising, and is likely to be within the capacity of political scientists. Stoker asks researchers to adopt a solution-seeking approach when carrying out political science research, which means addressing the question of a design perspective in politics. This perspective, inspired by Herbert Simon, is based on the following three steps:

1. A reliable state of the art on the chosen topic of research, thanks to which it is possible to assess what seems to work and how;
2. A "normative" assessment of the state of the art, and of the configuration of research pursuits;
3. Proceeding on the basis of a rule of thumb, by assuming that the chosen theoretical line is valid and ignoring any alternative lines.

This perspective could be adopted in many of political science's subfields, also by capitalizing on the methodological tools offered by behavioural political science.

Overall, what is suggested here is not that the explanatory mission of political science be abandoned, but rather a reconsideration of that mission as the necessary basis for a more solution-oriented research approach.

3   ENGAGEMENT AS A PROBLEM OF RECOGNIZABILITY: TOWARDS A NEW POLITICS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE RELEVANCE

Political science needs to be less timid in its normative selection of research topics, and more active in seeking solutions for relevant problems. In fact, while these changes, if pursued, would increase the objective relevance of political science, they cannot guarantee public acknowledgement of the discipline's relevance. It is a well-known fact that the existence of a large amount of empirical evidence regarding different policies does not mean that policy-makers are guaranteed to take that evidence into serious consideration. Clearly,   one   fundamental   prerequisite   for   bringing

evidence-based knowledge to the table is the capability and opportunities that scholars have to dialogue with policy-makers and to gain social relevance. However, this alone would not in itself be enough. Political science needs to be more proactive in, and more engaged with, the real world.

In several countries, there is structural pressure on all social sciences to be more engaged with society, as shown by the rise of the so-called third mission (after teaching and research) in the higher education system, and through the specific policy instruments (assessment of research and targeted funding) that governments have introduced to encourage social scientists to be more engaged with socially relevant problems and with the impact that their work has (Benneworth, 2007; Pinheiro et al., 2012; Papadimitroum & Boboc, 2021). The advent of the third mission/public engagement era has offered political scientists the opportunity to reflect on who they really are, what they can do and to what extent their discipline is relevant for society. A flourishing literature on this topic has revamped the discussion characterizing all major historical developments in political science (see, e.g., Lasswell, 1971, Lindblom, 1997, and Shapiro, 2005).

Political science is not completely unfit to meet this challenge, since it has accumulated a substantial quantity of knowledge which may be considered a sound basis for the development of a strategy of public engagement, and of contributing more effectively to designated socially relevant goals. Again, there are recurrent themes that have been analysed and discussed in the recent literature (Flinders, 2013; Flinders & John, 2013; Stoker et al., 2015; Flinders, 2018; Flinders & Pal, 2020).

So to sum up, the major challenges facing political science at present are: the problem of relevance; the form of its engagement; and the public's perception of the discipline's capacity to handle external challenges.

Matthew Flinders has argued that political science is not irrelevant, but that political scientists have not been sufficiently capable of promoting and communicating the social value and benefit of the discipline in an accessible manner. We believe that this claim is partly true, in the sense that political scientists' poor communicative capacities are evident, and it is arguable whether political science produces only socially relevant knowledge, as mentioned in the previous section. The crucial point, namely that political science has failed to convey its mission to the public, however, needs to be examined more closely. In fact, the problem of communication not only regards political scientists' incapacity or lack of desire to be effectively engaged, but should also be considered one aspect of the

absence of public recognition of what political science actually is. This point is of crucial importance: due to the complex process of institutionalization, and to the sizable numbers of academically oriented political scientists, there are few countries where political science is socially recognizable in a clear way. Not only do ordinary citizens struggle to recognize what political science is, but very often the media also have a limited understanding of the specificity of the discipline. This creates a vicious cycle that can structurally hinder political science's public visibility, and can consequently diminish the chance of scholars being recognized as political scientists when conveying their knowledge to the public.

There is still disagreement over whether political scientists should be directly involved in defending certain political values (such as democracy), or whether they should only offer reliable, objective knowledge in public arenas (Flinders & Pal, 2020). In this regard, we believe that a division among political scientists on this question is unsustainable, as we have argued in the previous section: a professional ethic should be normatively based on what is relevant for the discipline. By standing "on the shoulders of giants", we think that what matters for the engagement of political science is its capacity to develop imagination (according to Merton) or creativity (according to Lasswell) with regard to its reasoning in fundamental terms about present and future social and political problems.

As far as the third point is concerned, that of how to improve the discipline's capacity to gain a more relevant social role (in terms of its recognizability and impact), there have been many proposed solutions, going back to Harold Lasswell and David Easton half a century ago, and much more recently by Matthew Flinders.

What is needed is a new politics of political science that is to be pursued by the political science community, both nationally and internationally, and by individual political scientists. This new politics should be based on selected pillars regarding both the internal dynamics and the external dimension of the discipline. These pillars concern what political scientists can themselves do, although we are perfectly aware that there are certain aspects of the profession that are beyond their control (such as the rules and practices of recruitment and career development within the university system).

From the internal point of view, two key points need to be emphasized here. The first is that political science should be taught more effectively at bachelor's and master's degree levels. It is at university that the discipline is exposed to a substantial number of people. It is important that the

students concerned, who are both citizens and also prospective workers, can understand all of the potentialities of the discipline in terms not only of how policy works, but also of how it could work based on our existing knowledge. Secondly, at PhD level there is a need not only to improve the communication skills of graduates but also to make them aware that political science is a discipline that focuses on solving collective problems, and not only on explaining how politics works. This also implies cultivating their creativity and their capacity to think in unorthodox ways. PhD programmes should not replicate the existing format of the discipline but should prepare for its future (*as specified below*).

Regarding the relationship with the outside world, we would agree with two key points made by Flinders (2018). The first point is that political scientists should stop victimizing themselves, as there is nothing they can do to make their research socially visible and potentially relevant. Professional associations have the crucial responsibility for promoting common activities among their members so as to increase their knowledge of public engagement, and they should also be capable of interacting, at the national level, with potential funders and with key stakeholders in politics and policy, in order to divulge political science-produced knowledge. Secondly, political scientists, helped by their professional associations, need to develop a concrete strategy enabling them to embed themselves in external governmental and nongovernmental bodies offering positions for social scientists (such as national assessment agencies and governmental advisory bodies). In other words, this highly political element probably represents the main task of professional associations. Political scientists can only achieve this through the professional associations' coordinating operations. The latter's responsibility in this regard is undeniable, and should be as important as their other main undertakings (the organization of conferences, scientific meetings and summer schools; the management of certain publications; and the distribution of academic news of importance to their members).

Taking on these various tasks is a highly ambitious project. However, without a strong commitment to developing a political line, the discipline will continue to suffer from the same old problems, namely those of its relevance, engagement and, above all, recognizability, and it is all the more important that they do so now, in these turbulent times.

4   Engaged Eclecticism and Critical Thinking: Two Cornerstones of Political Science's Future?

4.1   The New Aeneas-Type Political Scientist: Is it Time to Act?

Having explored the question of how the recent advent of turbulent times has pointed once again to political science's persistent weaknesses and its key, it is now time to look ahead and propose a way of ensuring that European political scientists play a more relevant social role as a community, and thus avoid "missing the boat". Improvement means developing and consolidating by capitalizing on the positive aspect of the discipline's fragmentation (i.e. its theoretical methodological pluralism), while mitigating the negative aspect (the lack of communication among the different subfields and outlooks). At the same time, there is a need to both work in and for society, and to endeavour to consolidate the discipline in the academic world in both institutional and scientific terms.

It is time that political scientists paid more attention to the patterns of what we have called the new "Aeneas-like" type of political scientist. This would entail a strong commitment to a developmental goal for the discipline, thus avoiding political science's subjection to the Sisyphus syndrome. At the same time, political scientists need to consider the dangers of perceiving old methodological approaches as new disciplinary heroes, including too personal an approach—the model of Achilles—or even an exclusive focus on the collective mission of the community—the model of Odysseus.

The time has come to abandon endless introspection, to stop bewailing never-ending fatigue, and to abandon the fatalism that is a feature of so many political scientists. The worlds of academia and of society as a whole are complex and need proactive intervention. Obviously, political science is characterized by differing levels of institutionalization, depending on national and institutional legacies, but this does not mean that nothing can be done to change its future direction or to improve its current situation. Goals can be met, but first we need to realize that indulgence in a Sisyphean approach characterized by repetitive introspection is bound to replicate those same conditions that make political science much weaker than other academic disciplines when applied to the real world. This pattern of behaviour always lays the blame on other things (other disciplines, contextual factors, the ignorance and lack of interest of society and students) for the perceived limited relevance of political science not only as an

academic discipline, but also as a resource for social well-being and improvement. In the real world, too often we see that this is the model conveyed to new generations.

Those modelling research in the spirit of Odysseus and Achilles remain important examples for the academic development and public visibility of the discipline. However, if such individual behaviour is not included in a comprehensive, collective strategy, then it risks leaving no legacy or even the wrong one. It is widely acknowledged that in academic organizations, what has been built up by an enterprising individual can be quickly undone after he or she leaves the position or stops behaving in that way. Institution builders are important, but their capacity to impact reality cannot last in the medium-to-long term if they are not part of a collective trend. There are several Odysseus-type political scientists who focus on mentoring, on teaching and training excellent PhD students, and on making the reproduction of political science more robust. However, they may suddenly lose their touch (and immediately be impacted by the Sisyphus syndrome) when academic consolidation, disciplinary visibility and personal recognition fail.

Regarding the Achilles-type of scholar, it is undoubtedly important to see that certain political scientists are capable of emerging as highly reputed scholars leading their field, and eventually establishing themselves as public intellectuals impacting public debate. However, very often these are personal success stories that do not really improve the public's perception of political science, for the following reasons: very often this individual success does not institutionalize specific results at the disciplinary level and does not ensure due attention to the reproduction of the discipline (very often Achilles-type scholars are not very effective or interested in mentoring or in the institutional impact of their work); and very often the public does not pay due attention to the disciplinary affiliation of a person, but to what he or she says, without grasping the differences between the various academic disciplines.

University departments around Europe have seen a few political scientists acting in the Odysseus or Achilles role, and their genuine impact on furthering the visibility of political science is clearly important. However, their contributions do not seem sufficient to guarantee the discipline's capacity to deal with the persistently turbulent times in which we live. To be clear, we are not claiming that these patterns of behaviour are not of consequence. It is important to have institutional builders as well as

scholars who pursue greater scientific recognition and eventually significant public visibility. However, such behaviour lacks overall perspective. They tend to be focused on individual needs, whereas an interest in, and understanding of, the future of the discipline is lacking.

For this reason, we suggest that the pattern of behaviour that is pivotal to the transformation of European political scientists is that of the Aeneas type, that is, a pattern of behaviour capable of considering the collective good of the discipline. The Aeneas model does not imply theoretical or methodological neutrality—quite the opposite! The Aeneas type has his or her own research agenda, has made specific theoretical and methodological choices and thus has individual professional interests to pursue. However, he or she has a clear idea of what the discipline's collective interest is and feels an obligation to pursue the common good that is greater, and more important, than mere personal professional interests. Aeneas types are capable of prioritizing what is important for the discipline at any specific moment: he or she is ready to serve the institutional development of political science in his or her department or university when necessary, while understanding when and how to try to be more socially engaged. Aeneas types will fight to prove that their chosen theoretical approach is fruitful, but will also openly recognize its limitations and weaknesses, and acknowledge that other approaches can be just as (or more) promising. They will work to create connections and communication among the different schools of thought in their subfields or among the different branches of the discipline. Overall, the Aeneas-type pattern of behaviour is characterized by a strong commitment and devotion to the collective wealth of the discipline, and is even capable of eclecticism in action and continuous critical thinking.

Thus, to have more Aeneas-type younger political scientists, we need to convey the importance of a common view of what the discipline and the common good to be served are. These political scientists should be taught how to improve their critical thinking capacities and to consider eclecticism as the best approach to political science. Preserving the systemic nature of a soft, semi-fragmented discipline is crucial not only in order to ensure openness and permeability among the discipline's subfields, but also to expand external boundaries. The brief discussion of the post-COVID-19 scenario set out here clearly shows that an adequate level of self-consciousness is necessary if we are to avoid a historical phase of predominance of the STEM disciplines over SSH.

4.2   Eclecticism and Critical Thinking: The Way Forward to Ensure a Solid, Promising Future for Europe's Political Scientists

In this chapter we have been discussing the future of the discipline, and in the previous section we proposed a few "political" guidelines to try and make the discipline more relevant; and we concluded that the pattern of behaviour best suited to ensuring the efficacy of political science, both as an academic discipline and as a constant contributor to societal development, is that of our Aeneas ideal-type. Notably, these suggestions imply a significant reconsideration of who we are, what we do and above all, how we reproduce the discipline. They refer to the way in which we teach political science and how we are to train the new generation of political scientists.

We believe that the way to teach political science to the next generations of political scientists (whether they work in academia or outside of that world) should be based on two methods, which also constitute training goals: critical thinking and eclecticism.

Critical thinking is a mantra of our times, and is often used in a general fashion, albeit rhetorically. The goal of teaching critical thinking in political science has been mainly dealt with at bachelor's and master's degree levels (Olsen & Statham, 2005; Collins et al., 2012; Berdahl et al., 2021). This is probably a consequence of the biased belief that PhD students have already been educated to think critically, such that this aspect of their education is underestimated and substantially forgotten. Generally speaking, when PhD students are trained (for those on a genuinely structured PhD programme) they are required to learn methods and theories, very often by focusing on the specific methods and theories pertaining to their research ideas and the theoretical tradition of the PhD programme. We should not forget those PhD students who are not truly trained as such, because they are part of a specifically funded research programme (as is very common now in Europe). So, critical thinking is not really part of the contemporary training schedule of political science PhD students.

More critical thinking needs to be embedded in the training of the political scientist of the future. In proposing this, we consider critical thinking in context, that is, as part of the process of construction of political scientists. Thus, if critical thinking can be defined as the "intentional application of rational, higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, problem recognition and problem solving, inference, and evaluation"

(Angelo, 1995, pp. 6–7), we believe that its application at the highest levels, such as the definitive training of future political scientists, should be characterized as follows:

1. Through the provision of dedicated courses (separate from those already provided at master's degree level) on specific aspects of the discipline—including policy evaluation, political behaviour, social movements, security studies, methods for social data scientists and data journalism, just to name a few relevant subjects—that continue to be neglected in several European higher education systems.

2. By making attendance of courses in the classics of the discipline compulsory. We know that we live in a time of specialization, but it cannot be denied that critical thinking may only be nurtured through a profound knowledge of the classics. Is it really possible to become a critically skilled political scientist without knowing the works of Lasswell, Easton, Sartori, Downs, Arrow, Wildavsky, Lindblom, Rokkan, Duverger, Almond and the other masters of the discipline? "On the shoulders of giants" is a motto that should inspire the first terms of any PhD programme. Thanks to this common training, it is possible to make future generations of political scientists aware that we belong to a lengthy tradition that has allowed the discipline to acquire intellectual and theoretical autonomy. A critical reading of the classics will increase the students' awareness that doing political science is not a neutral activity free of values and self-referential. It will show them that political science is about doing science for society.

3. By developing specific training activities that show students how to make the discipline relevant for society, that is, how to divulge research findings in a way that is understandable to those outside of academia.

4. By developing specific training courses on how to teach political science in a more appealing way. Too often, younger scholars start teaching without any kind of preparation for this, and thus they tend to replicate the ways they themselves were taught. This is not fruitful. Training political scientists means developing not only capable researchers and professionals, but also teachers capable of conveying their knowledge in the most appropriate and effective way for the type of audience.

5. By consolidating specialized tracks for those who are more inter-
   ested in becoming a professional political scientist (in the political-
   administrative system, in the media or in the private sector) than in
   becoming a researcher. This is another aspect that, according to our
   data, is significantly underestimated in several European countries.
   Our data and interviews show that the post-pandemic scenario for
   political scientists cannot be seen as one of adaptation. A set of new
   "portfolios" of skills and prospective professional competencies—
   from data journalism to international cooperation, and from strate-
   gic communication to policy advising—is strongly required
   throughout Europe, particularly in those countries where institu-
   tionalization has been limited.

Eclecticism can be a negative word when applied to social (political)
scientists, as it tends to refer to their never-ending divisions into tribes,
paradigms and schools of thought. However, we firmly believe that the
complex world of political science, and its training of future generations,
must be considered in a different, positive, constructive way.

Teaching eclecticism to students of political science has two main
aims. The first is to teach them that every single theory is simply a spe-
cific perspective with which to order, analyse and explain a political
phenomenon; it is not an unyielding truth. It is simply a way of observ-
ing. This means that if the focus of political science is on understanding
and proposing a solution for the most demanding societal and political
problems, then what matters is to find a highly reliable explanation
and/or a convincing or potentially highly effective solution. On this
point, Hirschman's point should never be forgotten: the paradigm-
focused social sciences focus their analytical attention exclusively on
certain forces (drivers, mechanisms, independent variables) whilst
ignoring others, thus running a high risk of committing "a particularly
high degree of error" (Hischmann, 1970, p. 343). Thus, to be aware
of this means that future political scientists, although they are bound
to specialize in a specific research topic, should be capable of managing
the basics of the most relevant theories. This would allow them, for
example, to better understand whether and how an explanation can be
given for a specific phenomenon by adopting one perspective or
another, or better, by designing a specific theoretical framework

blending a number of different theories. The same analytical eclecticism could be very useful when the focus of research is on finding a tailored solution for highly relevant social problems. Let it be clear here that we are not suggesting that all future political scientists should adopt what has been defined as "analytic eclecticism" (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010), but rather that they should be capable of doing so when this proves necessary or useful.

Furthermore, a direct consequence of this training in eclecticism will be to broaden the minds of young scholars by not only enabling them to know how many ways there are of ordering a given political reality, but also by empowering them to decide their research agenda in a more open-minded, and thus potentially creative and innovative, way.

The second aspect of eclecticism regards the different roles that political scientists can play in academic institutions. Usually, this is something that is learned through individual training (the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee) or on the job (according to the practices of the institution in question). However, we should endeavour to offer our PhD students different possible roles. We should explain to them that Sisyphean defeatism is always just around the corner, and how they may avoid disciplinary solipsism. Similarly, we should discourage them from taking Achilles as a model, even if every young scholar aspires to becoming highly reputed and publicly recognized. We should teach them that institutional roles in academic and research organizations are part of the job, and thus that some institutional experience is useful and is part of the academic profession: while there is a risk of losing some students attracted by the Odyssean path, this does not mean that institutional service should be avoided, but only considered in the proper dose. We should teach them that there is a community of political scientists to serve, together with the future of the discipline, and thus the Aeneas-type path may constitute added value in terms of their personal performance as political scientists.

We should therefore also prepare future political scientists to be professionally eclectic and versatile with regard to the nature of their job. They should be capable of operating as researchers and teachers, but also as advisors and public intellectuals involved in daily debate and engaging with the media.

5   CONCLUSION: A EUROPEAN POLITICAL SCIENCE FOR THE FUTURE

5.1   *Eclectic but Committed: Critical but Engaged*

While we are living in turbulent times, Europe appears to be one of the critical areas of the world where potential economic failure, cultural decline and political uncertainty may feasibly arise. In the last 15 years, Europe has had to deal with the effects of a major financial crisis, a pandemic and now a war. The future looks gloomy, and the social and political achievements of the last century are clearly at risk. The backlash to this chain of events is before our very eyes: increasing levels of populism in many countries, serious difficulties in identifying core values, struggles to guide future generations, deadlocked decision-making and increasing inequality. What we are witnessing is the decline of a system that up until now has proven capable of ensuring democracy, wealth and rights to Europe's citizens. This is a dramatic challenge that the people of Europe are now facing, and European political science cannot remain unaffected by it.

We should be ambitious and courageous enough to overcome our historical limitations and weaknesses. We should work together to help deal with the extraordinary socioeconomic and political challenges that the continent is facing. Thus, we need to question our legacies and try to establish a unified research agenda together with a shared approach to training future generations of political scientists.

As we have been suggesting in this chapter, this agenda should be characterized by a greater focus on socially relevant problems rather than on theoretical problems, and on a solution-seeking rather than an explanatory approach. We need to capitalize on our intellectual pluralism so as to establish an integrated research agenda capable of offering multifaceted analysis and solutions for the same societal challenges. For example, many political scientists have designed and implemented sophisticated research agendas regarding the rise of populism and its drivers and consequences. Why do these agendas not shift towards research designs focused on finding feasible ways of slowing down or changing this phenomenon? Is it challenging? Yes it is. Is it risky? Yes it is. However, as we have tried to show in this book, political science necessarily needs a practical side as well. We may like or dislike it, but without it the practice of political science loses all relevance.

This could be done by encouraging eclecticism and critical thinking not only as praxes for those already working as political scientists, but also, and above all, as part of the training of the new generations of scholars. By increasing eclecticism, we raise the effectiveness of our commitment to problem-solving; reinforcing critical thinking helps political scientists be socially engaged in a highly innovative and creative way.

5.2   *High, but Realistic, Expectations*

In the previous section we mentioned two practices that in our opinion would significantly redefine the role of the political scientist and the potential relevance of the discipline. What we would like to examine, in order to complete our modest normative argument, is the degree of change we can expect from these responses which we hope will save European political science from impending oblivion.

This last matter looks a particularly difficult one. In our attempt to consider the multidimensional nature of the process of professionalization, we have to take randomness and permanent uncertainty into consideration. Our data clearly show that the different dimensions we have analysed—institutionalization, internationalization, visibility, social impact and applicability—display extremely irregular trends across European countries and across the different segments of political science communities (above all, generational cohorts and sub-disciplinary groups). From this point of view, what we have labelled the *internal borders* of political science look even more critical than its external ones. After all, the existing cultural and dimensional subordination to other academic disciplines has not prevented the community of political scientists from playing certain important roles in several European countries to date. On the contrary, a total atomization of this body of scholars would probably determine its marginalization, in a changing context dominated by a galaxy of new *futurologists,* including all kinds of data scientists and STEM experts.

Control over fragmentation cannot be exercised without a strong commitment towards a common definition of political science's disciplinary mission, together with a strong sense of solidarity among political scientists across Europe. By this we do not mean simply financial or economic solidarity: the reduction of cultural divides and the creation of space for a new solid discipline will depend above all on the mutual recognition of the characteristics and needs of other nations' political science communities. Mobility rates will need to go back to pre-pandemic levels; and the

divisions between North and South, West and East, must be bridged. The aforementioned possible strategies aimed at raising levels of critical thinking and eclecticism should be pursued all around Europe, from the major metropolitan universities to the more peripheral ones. From the largest European departments of political science to the single one-scholar units contained within generic social science faculties. The process of cultural modernization aimed not only at the smooth adaptation of traditional (and local) styles of academic life, but also at the transformation of crises into opportunities, should be shared among generations and sub-disciplinary groups. In the end, we can argue that it is time for European political scientists to overcome their national and local legacies and idiosyncrasies, to reason as a continental community, and to act accordingly.

Finally, after checking the state of the borders of political science and after analysing the individual characteristics of political scientists, in this volume we have considered the evolution of their attitudes and values. The picture we have obtained is a rather mixed one. While on the one hand we have found plenty of enthusiasm and curiosity about the prospective reconsolidation of the discipline, on the other hand several indicators reveal the persistence of opportunistic behaviour, scarce attention paid to the discipline's collective mission, significant free riding and limited awareness of and interest in civic engagement and social impact as goals to be achieved. In particular, the post-pandemic scenario is not fully appreciated as an opportunity, since many scholars choose a modest degree of adaptation and believe there is little to learn and little need to invest in such an opportunity.

We would argue that a new optimistic, enthusiastic approach to the daily lives of political scientists and to the applicability of their knowledge represents the ultimate test for the coming years. We cannot expect the next generation of scholars to adopt a positive approach if we do not share the aforementioned optimism and vision. Such optimism must of course be measured, as we are fully aware of the limited room for revolutionary change. This will necessarily be a very limited, short-term vision, since the resources available for such investment remain scarce. However, it is going to be important to set a good example by combining realistic, yet high expectations. After all, this is the very reason why we have chosen the figure of Aeneas as the most appropriate mythical hero to propose to the new generations of scholars. The modern Aeneas acts differently from Odysseus—who focuses on the virtue of *Metis* that is, pure cleverness and cunning—by pursuing the general interest without leaving any tangible

legacies or learning processes. Aeneas may also be distinguished from those, like Achilles, who exhibit *Hubris* in their pursuit of individual glory while paying no attention to the collective mission. Conversely, Aeneas' virtue is *Piety*. What this ultimately means is the subordination of any legitimate individual effort to a sense of duty and to the "design of the Gods". For modern political scientists, the "Gods" are the classical scholars with their too often forgotten commitment to social change and democracy; and their purpose is to pay homage to democratic society and to strive to make it increasingly aware and mature. Even when this means travelling a considerable amount, facing difficult tasks and sacrificing part of one's own life to the collective mission.

Appendix 1: Questionnaires

Proseps 2018–2019 Survey

This survey, launched between 2018 and 2018, was intended to detect the social visibility of political scientists in their country, their role as policy advisors and their level of internationalization. Fifty-two questions were included in the survey. A total of 2354 valid cases of respondent are included in the dataset.
The questions used in this volume are

[A2] Overall, how do you evaluate the visibility in public debates/discussions of the research produced by political scientists in your country? Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Not visible at all. No political science research ever makes it into the public debate.

☐ Scarcely visible. Very rarely does some political science research make it into the public debate.

☐ Quite visible. Occasionally, some political science research makes it into the public debate.

☐ Very visible. Very frequently political science research makes it into the public debate.

☐ I can't say.

[A3] Regarding the visibility of political scientists in comparison to other academics or public intellectuals, would you say that in your country: Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Political scientists have no impact at all
☐ Political scientists have a little impact on the general public
☐ Political scientists have a considerable impact on the general public
☐ I can't say

[A4] In your opinion, since the 2009 crisis, and compared with the former situation, has the impact of the work of political scientists on public debate/discussions: Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Increased
☐ Decreased
☐ Remained the same
☐ I can't say

[A15] To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree
Political scientists should engage in public debate since this is part of their role as social scientists				
Political scientists should engage in public debate because this helps them to expand their career options				
Political scientists should engage in media or political advisory activities only after testing their ideas in academic outlets				

[B1] Which categories best describe your area of expertise? Please select the three main categories:

☐ Comparative politics
☐ International relations
☐ Political theory
☐ Public policy
☐ Public administration
☐ Political economy
☐ Social science methods
☐ Electoral behaviour
☐ Political institutions

☐ EU studies
☐ Local government
☐ Security studies
☐ Gender politics
☐ Social movements
☐ Other fields: _____

[B7] Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree
Political scientists should become involved in policy-making				
Political scientists have a professional obligation to engage in public debate				
Political scientists should provide evidence-based knowledge and expertise outside academia, but not be directly involved in policy-making				
Political scientists should refrain from direct engagement with policy actors				

[D1] During the last three years, how much time did you spend working (performing research or teaching duties) in countries other than the one in which you reside? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ I did not spend time working abroad
☐ Less than a month
☐ Between 1 and 5 months
☐ Between 6 and 12 months
☐ More than 12 months

[E.1] Which fields of political science do you believe should receive more scholarly attention in the country where you work? Please choose all that apply:
☐ Comparative politics
☐ International relations
☐ Political theory
☐ Public policy
☐ Public administration
☐ Political economy
☐ Social science methods
☐ Electoral behaviour

☐ Political institutions
☐ EU studies
☐ Local government
☐ Security studies
☐ Gender politics
☐ Social movements
☐ Other fields: _____

[F2] What is the field of specialization of your highest university degree?
Please select at most three answers:
☐ Comparative politics
☐ International relations
☐ Political theory
☐ Public policy
☐ Public administration
☐ Political economy
☐ Social science methods
☐ Electoral behaviour
☐ Political institutions
☐ EU studies
☐ Local government
☐ Security studies
☐ Gender politics
☐ Social movements
☐ Other field: _____

[F4] Have you held political or administrative offices outside academia
before or during your academic appointment? Please choose all that apply:
☐ Legislative offices (member of European, national, regional or local
  representative assembly)
☐ Executive offices (national or regional minister, junior minister,
  member of local government etc.)
☐ Administrative offices (i.e. member of ministerial staff; local, regional
  or national government advisor; offices at agencies, authorities etc.)
☐ Political party organization (member of local, regional or national
  party executive body)
☐ Position in interest group or advocacy organization (i.e. member of
  local or national interest group executive body)
☐ Position in a firm company (including your own)
☐ No, I have not held any position outside of academia

Proseps Flash Survey January 2020

This flash survey was intended to detect the predispositions of European political scientists towards changing scenarios in their profession. Launched in the month of January 2020, the survey collected data from 1444 respondents.

The question used for this volume is

[Q3] How do you see the work of political scientists in ten years from now? Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree
Publish or perish will be even more important than today				
Teaching activities will lose relevance				
Research will be a matter of team task				
Open-access publications will be more impacting than traditional publications				
A researcher's social and media visibility will be a more important requirement for career advancement				
Social impact of research outputs will be a more important requirement for career advancement				

Proseps COVID-19 Flash Survey 2020

This flash survey was intended to detect the changing attitudes of European political scientists during the first phase of pandemic. Launched on 9 October 2020 and closed on 4 December 2020, the project collected data from 1400 respondents.

The questions used in this volume are:

[Q7] *To what extent has your professional life changed during the pandemic? Please select one of the following statements:*
- ☐ My professional life has not changed very much
- ☐ Working online and alone has been difficult, but I have been able to fulfil most of my duties and achieve most of my plans
- ☐ My professional life has been seriously affected by the lockdown

☐ It has been virtually impossible to achieve an ordinary standard of professional life

☐ I do not know

[Q8] *How much demanding has been …*

	Very demanding	Somewhat demanding	Somewhat not demanding	Not demanding at all
Implementing online teaching and distance learning procedures				
Substituting in-person meetings with online activities				
Reconciling new working conditions with your private/ family life				
Contributing to the development of your discipline by organizing online recruitment and assessment processes				
Writing papers, reviews and essays at home				
Participating in online webinars and conferences to stay connected with the scientific community				

[Q9] *Did you reshape your research and dissemination agenda to investigate COVID-19-related issues? Please tick the appropriate response below*

☐ I did not reshape my agenda

☐ I partially reshaped my agenda since I was interested in knowing more about COVID-19

☐ I reshaped my agenda since my institution decided to cover COVID-19-related issues

☐ I drastically reshaped my agenda to cover COVID-19-related issues

☐ I do not know/prefer not to answer

APPENDIX 2: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

 1. Bertrand Badie, IEP Paris
 2. Dirk Berg Schlosser, University of Marburg
 3. Jean Blondel, European University Institute
 4. Sonja Blum, KU Leuven
 5. Marleen Brans, KU Leuven
 6. Keith Dowding, The Australian National University
 7. Vladimíra Dvořáková, Prague University of Economics and Business
 8. Nemanja Džuverović, University of Belgrade
 9. Isabelle Engeli, University of Exeter
10. Giorgio Freddi, University of Bologna
11. Tullia Galanti, University of Milan
12. Olafur Hardarson, University of Iceland
13. Adrienne Héritier, European University Institute
14. Christoph Knill, University of Munich
15. Gabriella Ilonzski, Corvinus University of Budapest
16. Leonardo Morlino, LUISS University
17. José Real Dato, University of Almería
18. Christophe Roux, University of Montpellier
19. Andrea Ruggeri, University of Oxford
20. Claudius Wagemann, University of Frankfurt

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