Francesco Lissoni: "Patent data: Where do they come from? What are they good for?"


Francesco Lissoni is professor of economics at GREThA – Université de Bordeaux and ICRIOS Fellow at Bocconi University in Milan. After his PhD at the University of Manchester, he worked for over 15 years at the University of Brescia and visited several European universities, plus MIT (Cambridge, MA) and, most recently, the University of Melbourne. His research interests cover the economics of science, innovation adoption, intellectual property, university-industry technology transfer, and the geography of knowledge diffusion. He is a member of the scientific committee of EPIP (European Policy for Intellectual Property) and consults for ANVUR (Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research).

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Quantitative studies of technological change have been exploiting patents as indicators of innovation activity since at least Nelson’s (1962) classic Rate and direction of inventive activity. Patent data are easily available (now in digital format), cover many countries, and are rich in technical information, thanks to their fine classification. Over the last decade or so, national and international patent offices have made available an increasing quantity of documentation. This includes patent processing information (divisionals, continuations in parts, oppositions), cited prior art and non-patent literature, the legal status of patents, and relational information on inventors and assignees. A booming community of users contributes with disambiguation (of inventors, assignees and non-patent literature) as well as with data linkage (to archival information on companies and individuals). Patent data analysis now goes well beyond patent and citations counts, and includes, most notably, large network analysis and text analysis for contents reclassification. Applications range from the economics of intellectual property, geography of innovation, and increasingly sophisticated technology intelligence.

Gianluca Tarasconi is Database Architect at ICRIOS, the Center for Research in Innovation, Organization and Strategy of Bocconi University, Milan. His main fields of activity are patent data, bibliographic data and datamining. He gave important contribution to the scientific community in this field by delivering in 2005 a clean version of patstat for EPO data (see the Keins database on academic inventors: methodology and contents F Lissoni, B Sanditov, G Tarasconi, WP cespri 181) and developing an effective algorithm for solving the problem of inventors/authors disambiguation. His technical blog (http://rawpatentdata.blogspot.com/) has become a key reference for users of PatStat, the Worldwide Patent Statistical Database produced by the European Patent Office.

The wealth of PatStat: Document tracking in the Worldwide Patent Statistical Database: The presentation will be centered on how to exploit, understand and reclassify patent information, especially the one available in PATSTAT, the patent statistical database produced by EPO and related products. Also examples of patents life cycles, related documents produced and the relative information will be shown, as well as a technical appendix showing out the structures of available databases.