CARTOGRAFIE SOCIALI
Rivista di sociologia e scienze umane
Anno VI, n. 12, novembre 2021

Direzione scientifica
Lucio d'Alessandro e Antonello Petrillo

Direttore responsabile
Arturo Lando

Redazione
Elena Cennini, Anna D'Ascenzio, Fabrizio Greco

Staff di supporto alla Redazione
Giuseppina Della Sala, Federica Graziano, Luca Manunza, Andrea Postiglione

Staff di supporto alla Redazione per le attività di internazionalizzazione
Lucio Castracani, Laura Giovinazzi

Coordinamento redazionale
Stefania Ferraro (Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa - Napoli)

Comitato di redazione
Manuel Anselmi (Unitelma Sapienza), Marco Armiero (KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm),Tugba Basaran (Kent University), Davide Caselli (Università Milano-Bicocca), Valentina Castellini (Università di Toronto), Alberto De Nicola (Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna),Nick Dines (Robert Schuman Centre - European University Institute), Stefania Ferraro (Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa - Napoli), Marcello Maneri (Università di Milano Bicocca), Alessandro Mazzola (University of Liège),Domenico Perrotta (Università di Bergamo),Valeria Piro (Università degli Studi di Milano), Ciro Pizzo (Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa - Napoli), Pietro Saitta (Università di Messina), Anna Simone (Università Roma Tre)

Comitato scientifico
Maurizio Bergamaschi (Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna), Emiliano Bevilacqua (Università del Salento), Fabienne Brion (Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve), Sandro Busso (Università degli Studi di Torino), Alessandro Dal Lago (già professore presso Università di Genova),Davide De Sanctis (Università degli Studi Federico II - Napoli), Vincent Dubois (Université de Strasbourg), Didier Fassin (Institute for Advanced Study School of Social Science, Princeton), Domenico Fruncillo (Università degli Studi di Salerno), Fernando Gil Villa (Universidad de Salamanca), Akhil Gupta (University of California), Michalis Lianos (Université de Rouen), Marco Martiniello (University of Liège), Giulio Moini (Sapienza Università di Roma), Carlotta Mozzana (Università Milano-Bicocca), Laurent Mucchielli (CNRS - Centre national de la recherche scientifique), Fabio Quassoli (Università di Milano Bicocca), Salvatore Palidda (già professore presso Università di Genova), Michel Peraldi (CADIS - Centre d'analyse et d'intervention sociologiques), Andrea Rea (Université libre de Bruxelles), Giuseppe Ricotta (Sapienza Università di Roma), Francesca Vianello (Università degli Studi di Padova)

"Cartografie sociali" is a peer reviewed journal

UN RACCONTO SUL LAVORO FORMALE

Mercato, cultura e governamentalità ieri, oggi e domani

A cura di Anna D'Ascenzio e Fabrizio Greco

MIMESIS

SUOR ORSOLA
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Pubblicazione semestrale: abbonamento annuale (due numeri): € 45,00

Per gli ordini e gli abbonamenti rivolgersi a:
ordini@mimesisedizioni.it
L'acquisto avviene per bonifico intestato a:
MIM Edizioni Srl, Via Monfalcone 17/19
20099 – Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
Unicredit Banca – Milano
IBAN: IT 59 B 02008 01634 000101289368
BIC/SWIFT: UNCRITM1234

Cartografie sociali è una rivista promossa da URiT, Unità di Ricerca sulle Topografie sociali.

Direzione e Redazione della rivista hanno sede
presso l'Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa
Via Suor Orsola 10 – 80132 Napoli (Italy)
www.unisob.na.it
cartografiesociali@unisob.na.it
cartografiesociali.rivista@gmail.com

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
SUOR ORSOLA
BENINCASA
FACOLTÀ DI
SCIENZE
DELLA FORMAZIONE



MIMESIS EDIZIONI (Milano – Udine)
www.mimesisedizioni.it
mimesis@mimesisedizioni.it

Isbn: 9788857589053
Issn: 2499-7641

© 2021 – MIM EDIZIONI SRL
Via Monfalcone, 17/19 – 20099
Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
Phone: +39 02 24861657 / 24416383

Registrazione Tribunale di Napoli n. 37 del 5 luglio 2012

INDICE

Editoriale: l'osservazione del lavoro formale.
Gestione, pratiche e procedure
di Anna D'Ascenzio, Fabrizio Greco 9

MAPPE

Pratiche di sfruttamento nel lavoro cognitivo e ridefinizione della memoria collettiva come strategia per la costruzione della soggettività neoliberista
di Fabio de Nardis 21

sussunzione del lavoro e della vita nel capitalismo delle piattaforme
di Andrea Fumagalli 49

Workfare. Cartografia delle idee sulla trasformazione delle politiche attive del lavoro nello stato sociale neoliberale
di Roberto Ciccarelli 67

ROTTE

Il lavoro nella *platform society*: algoritmi, sorveglianza e la sfida dell'università
di Domenico Napolitano 91

La crisi della figura tradizionale del burocrate e la precarietà ai confini della pubblica amministrazione: i casi di Anpal Servizi e Sogesid
di Lorenzo Coccoli e Biagio Quattrocchi 115

Towards and agency-centred approach to the study of managerial governance in italian universities
di Laura Giovinazzi 145

L'industria della moda in Italia: tra miti e durevoli continuità
di Tania Toffanin 163

Produzione post-industriale. Quale costo rispetto alle identità segmentate dei lavoratori?
di Monica Buonanno 181

Il lavoro attivato. Il significato dell'occupazione nelle nuove politiche del lavoro
di Guido Cavalca 195

RILIEVI

Corpi e oggetti digitali nel lavoro automatizzato delle piattaforme
di Edoardo Biscossi 217

Metamorfosi del sociale come campo economico
di Ciro Pizzo 235

Fare impresa oggi. I contratti di rete come configurazione debole delle relazioni industriali
di Anna D'Ascenzio 247

Come raccontare la classe operaia senza fare gli operai tristi
di Alberto Prunetti 265

WUNDERKAMMER

La marcia della fame, una e tante storie
di Fulvio Ianiro 277

Dove sono gli operai? Il racconto di un'esperienza di lotta e ricerca
di Michele De Palma 301

Prepariamoci a un futuro confuso. Complessità, Warm data e istruzione
di Nora Bateson, traduzione di Anna Cotone 311

TRAVELOGUES

Uno sguardo collettivo sul lavoro. Metamorfosi e possibili scenari
recensione di Federica Graziano 329

Lavorare in fabbrica oggi. Inchiesta sulle condizioni di lavoro in FCA/CNH
recensione di Andrea Postiglione 333

Laura Giovinazzi

TOWARDS AND AGENCY-CENTRED APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF MANAGERIAL GOVERNANCE IN ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Abstract:

This article analyses the complex relationship between evaluation and managerial power in Italian universities. Specifically, it addresses the rise of managerial figures following the passing of the first evaluation law in 1993, law n.537. This period symbolises a key managerial turn for scholarly literature, yet vice-chancellors' actions are often deduced as adaptive rather than being analysed in detail, due to the assumption that they were subsumed under the pressure of New Public Management policies. At a closer look, however, the committee of vice-chancellors of Italian universities (CRUI) keenly advanced its own approach to university evaluation and practically influenced its development. In contrast to legislators' generic approach to evaluation, the CRUI constructed indicators and advanced guidelines to their implementation. As I suggest, this provides new important insights for discussing how university governance has was first rearticulated through evaluation, giving a bottom-up perspective on the rise of the new public management in the sector.

Keywords:

Evaluation, University Governance, Committee of Rectors of Italian Universities, Managerialism.

1. *Introduction*

When law n. 240 was passed in 2010, the university sector was undressed of many of its self-governance powers. By defining the race to quality benchmarks as the new principle guiding how universities ought to run and finance their teaching and research activities, legislators explicated evaluation's disciplining force. The state presented itself ready to turn evaluation into its own governing power, waiving meritocracy as its regulatory dogma.

The law also officialised new and far-reaching powers of a newly-born national evaluation agency for the Italian university sector, ANVUR[1]. Filled with many responsibilities and resources, the agency soon became the most debated public body in the Italian university sector (see Rebora 2012). Though not new to a national evaluation body, Italian academics were shocked at the dirigisme with which the Berlusconi government reformed the sectors through law 240/2010 (Turri 2014). ANVUR was commissioned to define minimum quality and efficiency benchmarks for universities' research and teaching funds, monitor the quality of universities' internal organization, and oversee recruitment policies, amongst other things. Unlike in the national evaluation exercise (VTR) of 2003, the academic body was now obliged to submit research for assessment, with the additional threat of punitive repercussions if it failed to adhere. With the passing of this law, in other words, it became evident to academics that the grand majority of universities' decisional and governance powers would escape the university walls to enter state ones, albeit with one exception: the managerial powers of vice-chancellors (VCs from now on).

In fact, whilst for academics and researchers' evaluation presented more limits and less powers than before (Capano *et al.*, 2014), for vice-chancellors it was the grounds of a managerial pedestal. These now had «[…] responsibility for the obtainment of the university's goals according to quality criteria and in the pursuit of efficacy, efficiency and transparency» (law 537/1993, Art.2, comma b). VCs' leadership was also strengthened by prescriptions on their role in the board of directors, a restricted team of 11 which could be also be presided by the VC himself (law 537/1993, Art.2, comma i). VC powers were thus legally legitimated as executive powers, encouraged to work with technical experts and with increasing autonomy from the academic senate (Capano et al., 2014) when taking strategic decisions oriented at the pursuit of quality. In many respects, legislators articulated evaluation as a limited expertise restricted to few, shaping decisional powers in a new governance triad: the state, ANVUR, and vice-chancellors.

Scholarly debate starkly criticises this triad's power, focusing importantly on the aggravating effects of ANVUR's evaluation criteria on the already existing precarity of academic labour. These include barriers to access to the academic career (Pavolini *et al*. 2016; ADI 2020), the birth of citation bubbles (Baccini *et al*. 2019) and the deepening of territorial north-south discrepancies (Viesti 2016), amongst others. This ongoing de-

1 ANVUR was in fact established in 2006 through law number 286 (see art. 2, commas 138 to 140). At the end of 2010, law n. 240 further explicated its powers.

bate is key, for it questions the very basis of the existing evaluation framework, namely its ability to concretely ameliorate the sector's teaching and research. At the same time, this debate could importantly benefit from a historical perspective on the CRUI's role in evaluation. This is because the centralization of evaluation powers outside universities (Rebora 2012) – within ANVUR and the state – runs parallelly to a verticalization of powers within them (Capano *et al*. 2014), where evaluation is that instrument empowering managerial expertise. For this reason, emphasizing ANVUR's closeness to state interests to problematize managerial governance through evaluation can only depict one part of the complex picture. Indeed, an ongoing phenomenon in scholarly debates is the tendency to treat the third component of the governance triad, the Conference of the Vice-chancellors of Italian Universities (CRUI from now on), as a mere executor of state/ANVUR policies (Turri 2014; Rebora e Turri 2008; Pinto 2012).

This is surprising and problematic when considering that the CRUI's engagement in university evaluation precedes that of ANVUR. The committee has been actively engaged in the construction and diffusion of evaluation criteria in Italian universities since the early 1990s, thus prior to establishment of key evaluation agencies such as the CIVR and ANVUR itself. By the mid-1990s, further, the CRUI's framing of evaluation as an instrument of internal governance was at odds with the state's articulation of an «adequate management of public resources» (law 537, art.5). As I argue here, the conceptualisation of the CRUI as a marginal actor in universities' managerial turn stems from an agency gap in new public management literature[2], which sees this turn as a linear reform process in

2 An important point must be made here in relation to what is meant by NPM literature. This literature does not share a single disciplinary field of reference (Hood, 1991). Whilst the key contributions have been made by public administration scholars, who set off the debate and the coining of the term at the turn of the 1990s, (Hood and Jackson 1991) the governance paradigm has since been studied through a multiplicity of disciplinary frameworks. This phenomenon is even more accentuated in studies on NPM in universities, where academics have taken on the analysis of the phenomenon also as agents directly living the transformation. For these reasons, it is difficult to generalise NPM studies on higher education as coming from a single disciplinary field, as contributions include studies from management, international political economy, organizational studies, sociology, accounting, political science, economics, higher education research. Given that scholars studying NPM have defined it as «[…] an empty canvas, you can paint on it whatever you like» (Ferlie *et al*. 1996, p. 23), it is thus more appropriate to consider NPM literature as interdisciplinary. This can still allow to trace shared methodological and normative assumptions between scholars coming from diverse disciplinary points of departure.

which state power sets off institutional change in the sector. In so doing, however, critical standpoints of how evaluation and managerialism were (and are) legitimated from the bottom up are side-lined. Whilst critically assessing the CRUI's role in gathering consensus on evaluation (Pinto 2019) scholars seem to agree on the fact that the verticalization of university powers set off following the introduction of evaluation is imbued with inevitability given the ideological strength of the NPM paradigm.

This article proposes that taking a historical perspective on the question by studying and acknowledging the role of the CRUI in evaluation helps to understand whether, and if so how, the managerial turn in universities may have been explicitly wanted and pushed also from the bottom-up, from within universities. The risk of failing to do so is of de-politicising the very managerial powers that scholars aim to analyse, in this way turning the critique of evaluation into a reinforcement of the agents controlling it (Dahler-Larsen 2019; Borrelli, Giannone 2019). As I argue, a return to the context-specific prosses leading to the emergence of university evaluation criteria is a first step towards a re-politicisation of the debate on the relationship between the rise of evaluation and managerial powers in universities. By balancing top-down accounts with a bottom-up analysis of how evaluation was used by university agents, scholarly debates can remedy a neutralization of VCs' roles which structuralist accounts – perhaps inadvertently – fuel, and better grasp which specific discursive and practical actions VCs have mobilized to create the space and powers of the managerial pedestal which they currently stand on.

The rest of this article is structured in 4 sections. Section 2 briefly discusses scholarly literature which treats the rise of managerial powers in universities in structuralist terms as a function of evaluation. It presents an agency-centred approach as a more valid way for unfolding how university agents articulated and acted on their changing context. Section 3 briefly outlines the content of the notorious evaluation law passed in 1993. This is key for Section 4, which presents historical insights on vice-chancellors' turn to evaluation to make two key arguments. Firstly, that the CRUI's articulation of evaluation at the turn of the 1990s was more elaborate than the State's. As I suggest, further, the committee's faming of evaluation in governance terms demonstrates an active attempt to create new powers around evaluation for VCs. Secondly, it is argued that the introduction of evaluation was not a fully state-led process. Section 5 draws out preliminary conclusions for future research on the topic.

2. *The rise of Evaluation in Italian universities: a case of forced adaptation?*

According to mainstream accounts (Paradeise *et al*. 2009), the rise of managerial powers in university sectors is a direct consequence of NPM policies which introduced evaluation following the 1980s. In Italy, these were the notorious autonomistic policies (Capano 2008) – law n.168 of 1989 (part of the «Ruberti reforms») and law n. 537 of 1993 – which granted universities the ability to self-manage resources and self-organize teaching and research activities. Interestingly, it is argued that following these policies university agents actually faced new obstacles rather than new freedoms (Capano 2008). The state, arguably, tricked universities into a new model of public governance based on "steering at a distance" (Capano, Turri 2017) by personifying the NPM principles and thus introducing evaluation to make devolved governance accountable (Hood 1995). Autonomy was therefore instrumentalised in order to achieve a new form of political control over the sector based on the use of evaluation.

All but a concession of unprecedented freedoms, NPM autonomistic policies are treated as evidence of the state's determining role in the introduction of evaluation, which then set off the rise of managerial figures using feedback systems such as internal and external evaluation (Capano 2008). The emphasis on state power as the transformative force fuelling managerial change is evident in how scholars have used Clark's categories (1983)[3] to explain different states' manipulation of autonomy for obtaining universities' adherence to NPM principles:

3 Clark's comparative "model of coordination" (1983) was devised in order to relate governance at the external and institutional levels and describe how it is influenced by different countries' state-higher education relationships. Clark's model quickly gained popularity due to its ability to categorise countries' higher education sectors depending on the dominant type of authority exerted on them. These are: state authority, market authority and academic-oligarchic authority. Broadly, the "continental model" is where state power is highly centralized, and universities have no internal autonomy in decision-making. This model is closely tied to what has been defined as "oligarchic-bureaucratic" internal governance, where agents mostly reproduce the formal roles set out by the legislator. Italy has been identified as belonging to this model because in the mid-1980s it was fully funded and managed by the State. The American and British models, instead, reflect two models in which the presence of a strong market authority – variable in the two countries – leaves wide margins for internal governance initiatives. Collegial governance, typical of the British "Oxbridge tradition", enjoys positive state presence through the receipt of public funds, freely distributed internally according to universities' own decisions, which may also tend towards the market. Thus,

> faced with a common problem (increasing universities' responsiveness), governments intervened with different strategies: in continental systems, significant autonomy margins were introduced, whilst in Anglo-Saxon systems there was a recourse to increasing state regulations and legislations (Capano 2008, p.122).

From this perspective, institutional change in universities can be accounted for by tracing the linear process through which policy transmitted state interests in evaluation to the sector. Influenced by the new institutionalist category of *isomorphism* (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), this approach deduces institutional agents' agency starting from the assumption that it was shaped by new NPM constraints, rather than studying it in context-specific terms. Driven by the necessity to conform in order to survive as well as safeguard their newly acquired autonomy, universities could do no more but conform to state reforms (Capano 2008; Moscati 2008).

As I argue, this is a de-politicisation of agents' actions, framed as adaptive *re*-actions. Methodologically, there is no space for considering whether – and if so, how – agents may reject or re-define their changing context. Their actions are theorised from pre-defined categories and not from historical insights, as «[the] analyst takes as given some constitutive features of the hypothesized individual or actor» (Padgett and Powell 2012, p.2). Given their subjection state legislation, institutional agents are conceived as inevitably moulded by it.

This emerges in how Italian vice-chancellors' managerial shift is framed. When faced with autonomistic policies, they were «[…] forced to exert a role much superior to their statutory one» (Capano 2008, p. 123), asked to turn from mediators of disciplinary interests (Rebora, Turri 2008) to managers ensuring the efficient running of university activities. VCs' new managerial roles thus become the result of the scholarly assumption that autonomistic policies reflected a new strong constraint which left no alternative behaviours. Paradoxically, this marginalises a concrete, context-specific study of how policies were conceptualised and possibly exploited by institutional agents, who are locked into scholars' categories. The lack of a concrete historical reconstruction of developments occurring within uni-

---

State authority is shared with the market's, leaving it to universities to define their degree of involvement with third parties. The American model, differently to it, is at the market authority end of the triangle, for both in terms of financing and decision-making it is defined as strongly entrepreneurial, with business or industrial lay members importantly shaping internal decisions for the university. Clark's framework thus considers how universities' autonomy can be said to vary depending on their relationship with the state.

versity walls through a study of the agents' actions thus perpetuates a reading whereby state constraints inevitably succeed in reshaping institutional behaviours. As such, the rise of managerial powers is read as a natural outcome of the NPM paradigm. University agents' role is thus de-politicised both because it is scarcely historicised and because it is conceptualised as inevitably adaptive, as the outcome of policy. Their actions and powers within the institutions which they inhabit seem to make no difference to the broader understanding of the rise of managerial governance in universities. The result is that universities' turn to management and evaluation is analysed without studying the actions of university agents themselves.

As I argue, this perspective reflects a structuralist study of agency (Knafo 2010; Knafo, Teschke 2017). Indeed, a historical analysis of agency is marginalised to the point of becoming «[…] a supplementary ingredient that can always be later added […] to produce a 'more complete picture', *if needed*» (*Ivi*, p. 7, original emphasis). To remedy it, this article analyses the rise of managerial powers in Italian universities by historicizing the radical changes of the 1990s through a study of vice-chancellors' engagement in university evaluation as it emerges from the CRUI's reports and research of the early and mid-1990s (Allulli 1995; CRUI 1995).

I seek to debunk abovementioned structuralist accounts on the relationship between the rise of evaluation and managerial power in universities through a political Marxist, *agency-centred* approach (Knafo 2010; Knafo, Teschke 2017). This means discussing innovations brought about by the autonomistic policies (especially by law n.537/1993) *in relation to* those advanced by the CRUI itself.

In the Marxist tradition, the agency-centred approach recognizes that society is moulded by unequal power relationships in which dominant agents tend to succeed. However, it does not study agents' power as a result of the structures which they inhabit, but as an open-ended process of interaction subjected to constant re-definition depending on the diverse challenges posed by yet other agents (Knafo 2010), within or outside such structures. A key insight of this methodology – amongst others – is the acknowledgment that "structural constraints" reflect an exercise of power, and should thus be studied in relational terms as a struggle between agents, rather than in abstract terms as the given successful outcome of powerful agency (*Ibidem*). The method is guided by historical investigations of how agents relate to and act in their contexts before, during, and after a constraint is said to occur. This allows to concretely politicise social change, unveiling the actions mobilized by different groups of agents to modify their surrounding context and ameliorate their position when faced with new constraints.

Thus, capitalist development is studied in social terms, where «it is the creativity of these actors, both powerful and weaker, which is the key to the story» (Knafo and Teschke 2017, p. 21).

3. *The 1993 evaluation law: the rise of an Evaluative state?*

A brief analysis of the first university evaluation law allows to capture how the rise of an "Evaluative state"[4] does not necessarily imply a fully-fledged state control over the use of evaluation criteria (Neave 1988). As mentioned, the key innovation of law 537 of 1993 was indeed the demand that universities set up evaluation, and, specifically, internal evaluation units[5] (IEUs from now on). Their establishment in universities would verify, «[…] through comparative cost-benefit analysis, the adequate management of public resources, and the productivity of research and teaching» thus guaranteeing «[…] the impartiality and well-functioning of administrative activities» in universities (law 537/1993, art.5 commas 22 and 23).

A second key prescription was that IEUs write up reports and send them to three key bodies: the ministry, the university council and the CRUI[6]. Legislators referred to the use of evaluation by proposing cost-benefit analysis for analysing the transparency of university activities, yet did not elaborate on the minimum quality benchmarks that universities were expected to achieve in order to be considered in line with the law's demands (Rizzi, Silvestri 2002).

---

4 The term "evaluative state" was first coined by Guy Neave (1988) to describe the British state's emerging interest in the establishment of a national evaluation framework in higher education. Although scholars use these terms to indicate that states are turning into evaluators (Dill 1998; Bleiklie 1998; Turri 2014), Neave used it to indicate a new balance of powers in the sector. Indeed, for Neave the state's turn to evaluation was creating a new type of state-higher education relationship in the UK. This new context was defined as a "broad operating frame" in which evaluation functions were being «[…] split up and assigned to different levels of decision-making within the higher education system, rather than being concentrated within the central Ministry» (Neave 1998, p. 227). Key to the term was thus the notion of a new dynamic of negotiation being set off between universities, the state and evaluation agencies, all engaged in attempting to define and control evaluation.

5 In Italian "nuclei di valutazione interna".

6 The law also mentioned that nucleuses' reports be sent to the Osservatorio, a body which the state meant to establish in order to develop conditional funding and monitor evaluation. The birth of this body will not be discussed here, however suffice it to say that though mentioned in 1993, the Osservatorio was not formally established until 1996, with the Ministerial Decree of 22 February.

Passed following the notorious autonomy law n.168 of 1989, the 537 law echoed the principles of devolved governance and accountability, yet presented a highly ambiguous articulation of university quality. This point was quickly picked up by the CRUI, which, I argue, made an innovative use of such ambiguity to affirm itself as a central body, using evaluation as both a discursive and practical means to do so. As the next section discusses, the CRUI interpreted the establishment of IEUs within a context of new university autonomies as an opportunity to speak up.

4. *The CRUI's specific articulation of Internal Evaluation*

The CRUI added many elements to university evaluation compared to the law's prescriptions, proposing a more elaborated and far-reaching interpretation of evaluation than what was being asked by legislators. Its articulation of evaluation argued for new powers for itself within the Italian university sector of the mid-1990s. This emerges in two key ways from how the committee's reports (Allulli 1995; CRUI 1996) discussed the functioning of IEUS.

Firstly, the committee suggested that IEUs work in tight collaboration with universities' governing bodies and with the CRUI itself. Starting from a critique of the law's ambiguous definition of what the correct management of resources meant, «[….] because the enunciation leads itself to extremely diversified interpretations» (Allulli 1995, p. 13), the committee advanced its own. Evaluation was defined as an inherent feature of universities' new autonomies, such that two were treated as «two sides of the same coin» (*Ivi*, p. 3). From this perspective, the committee took it upon itself to safeguard university autonomy by setting up a «process of permanent evaluation and self-evaluation» (*Ibidem*). This process, in turn, was seen as resting crucially on the roles and work of IEUs, which the CRUI elaborated in detail.

As «technical and objective bodies» (*Ibidem*) IEUs' primary goal was to gather and elaborate data on university activities to ensure that institutions concretely achieved the productivity goals that they set themselves (such as a given yearly graduation rate). Peculiarly, although IEUs were defined as impartial, the CRUI envisioned them working in close contact with universities' governing bodies. Specifically, it proposed that IEUs evaluate pre-set objectives rather than broad ones, suggesting that it was up to governing bodies – the «subjective powers» – to set such objectives (*Ibidem*). Interestingly, in this way the CRUI recast part of the responsi-

bilities for evaluation also onto governing powers. Whilst it did not rule the option that IEUs seek criteria and terms of reference autonomously, the CRUI encouraged future IEUs to assess governing bodies' specific articulation of goals.

The evaluation of transparent administrative activities which the law indicated for IEUs was in this way re-articulated as the internal evaluation of governing bodies' goals, a step which diluted the law's administrative approach to evaluation into a more malleable meaning. By stressing that IEUs assess the achievement of internally devised objectives, the committee framed the evaluation exercise as one highly dependent on the exercise of objective-setting. In turn, this allowed to define the powers of evaluation as comprising both technical evaluators and objective-setters, the governing bodies, bringing individual vice-chancellors the legitimacy to claim a new role within universities.

A second way in which the CRUI innovated the law's articulation of evaluation is its stance on indicators, suggesting that IEUs could quickly become operative by implementing a specific set of over 70 indicators. Interestingly, these were the committee's own work, namely the result of an array of CRUI surveys circulated in 61.5% of the public universities of the time (Allulli 1995). Through this exercise, the committee gathered a wide array of data on universities, including: budgets, estates, staff recruitment, numbers of enrolled students, numbers of research and teaching staff and publications (CRUI 1996), amongst others. Some information was very specific, such as average expenditures per staff and student and average scores per course. The indicators first published were averages calculated at a national level such that, for example, the national average indicator for «number of articles published by each staff member» was 1.71 (*Ivi*, p. 34). Further, more detailed and unprecedented research indicators were constructed for each staff member, such as number of citations and number of monographs published both in Italy and abroad, as well as departments' number of contracts or conventions with public and private bodies (Allulli 1995). These indicators were, in all respects, the first concrete presentation of sector-wide benchmarks on quality and performance. Thus, the committee articulated both the principles of evaluation criteria and its practices. With these indicators at hand, the CRUI in fact made a practical and far-reaching step-in university evaluation. Indeed, whilst IEUs were free to devise their own indicators, the committee suggested that its indicators be taken as «the basis for a starting point» that would allow universities to «compare their position with national averages» (*Ivi*, p. 14). Considering that few universities had IEUs at all in 1993, the

CRUI's step marked a first success for the committee. At first, IEUs did not construct their own methodologies, working instead as data-gathering offices (Rizzi, Silvestri 2002). By 1997, in fact – once many universities established IEUs – 87% of units used the CRUI's indicators (Osservatorio 1997) for internal evaluation.

4.1. *The CRUI's first university performance indicators*

The CRUI's presentation of its own evaluation principles and practices manifested a high degree of familiarity with notions often considered extraneous to the university sector of the time. Whilst it is likely that many academics were new to this set of ideas, historical evidences presented above make it increasingly problematic to affirm the same for VCs. Two further characteristics of the CRUI's indicators show, I argue, that it was actively seeking to develop and diffuse its own approach to evaluation.

Firstly, indicators were constructed according to a precise evaluation model different to the legislator's, reflecting an autonomous search for methods. The CRUI in fact followed the "CIPP" model[7] as a guide for the extrapolation and elaboration of university data gathering through surveys, and presented it as a viable framework for future indicators (Allulli 1995; CRUI 1996). Compared to the cost-benefit indicators proposed by the legislator, the CRUI's were constructed *in and for the Italian university sector*, representing very specific averages based on up-to-date statistics. This crucially marked a key step ahead in the development of data on university activities also compared to national statistics then available. Thus, «context indicators» were devised to signal the environment within which university activities were carried out, whilst «product indicators» reflected how university activities achieved results such as graduate enrolment rates. It is through this frame that the committee began defining university performance, making important steps in quantifying new relationships between activities carried out and their possible results. The superior specificity and detail of the CRUI's indicators reflect the amount of work mobilised to construct a fully-rounded, bottom-up articulation of university evaluation. Further-

7 The CIPP model was first ideated by Daniel Stufflebeam in the mid-1960s as a means to provide U.S. schools with a framework for internal evaluation. Specifically, CIPP stands for the four different types of indicators that schools may develop to orient their resources and activities: there are Context, Input, Process and Product indicators. Each indicator conveys information on a specific aspect of educational activities (see Stufflebeam 1966; 2000).

more, the use of CIPP model suggests that the committee decided not to use of the law's proposals on methods, but rather to actively search a different and more complex framework of evaluation than what was being requested of universities at the time.

In part, the reason for this autonomous search lie in the CRUI's pre-existing interest in university evaluation, set-off in the early 1990s (Rizzi, Silvestri, 2002). By the time law n. 537 was passed many university vice-chancellors were all but extraneous to concepts and methods around evaluation benchmarks. Firstly, this is because by 1992 most VCs had agreed to include their universities in the indicator surveys. Though indicators were published in 1995 and 1996, the data-gathering surveys then used to construct them were carried out during the 1992-93 academic year, (CRUI 1996) with the first set of indicators already being constructed. In turn, the thrust for this exercise was given by the CRUI in July 1991, when «[…] a seminar on evaluation was held […], followed by a general assembly in September 1991». Here, the CRUI stated, «[…] universities agreed on […] the necessity of preparing an organizational model and key methodologies which can allow to set off, within universities, internal evaluation nucleuses that offer assistance both to the rector and to the elected organs who manage the university» (Allulli 1995, p. 3).

Issues concerning future developments in university governance following Ruberti's reform were in fact discussed in a series of academic encounters held between 1989 and 1993 at the monastery of Pontignano, in Siena (Vaira 2011). Academics and vice-chancellors gathered to debate legislators' partial successes and failures – agreeing mostly on the latter – and lay out a series of proposals for improving the law's generic prescriptions on autonomy (*Ibidem*). During these encounters, the engagement of CRUI members was such that these have been defined part of an "advocacy coalition" (*Ibidem*) which pressed for the redefinition of autonomy and the elaboration of efficiency and productivity concepts.

At a closer look, it appears that this push for evaluation and committee's active engagement at Pontignano was also driven by its up-to-date knowledge of international developments in university governance and its attempt to remedy Italy's backward position. Compared to the UK, France and Holland, for example, Italy still lacked a well-articulated national evaluation framework. Though willing to help universities achieve this, Italian VCs felt that they did not have the political influence of their European counterparts for developing evaluation in the sector. In pointing out vice-chancellors' key influence elsewhere, where evaluation bodies such as the Academic Audit Unit in England were «[…]set up by

national rectors' conferences […] or with their active presence at a strategic and methodological level» (Allulli 1995), the committee signalled its keenness to follow their example.

It further tried to build on this and create the grounds for a more active engagement in evaluation – described as «a strategic step of a broader project of optimization of the university system's activities» (*Ivi*, p. 10) – by emphasizing how Italy had failed to timely and actively engage in a European pilot project on higher education evaluation initiated by a Memorandum of the Council of Education Ministers of the European Community, a further aspect which aggravated the sector's backwardness.

The content of the CRUI's indicators and the periods in which they were devised reveal that VCs' evaluation turn can hardly be defined a case of adaptive subjection to autonomistic policies. On the contrary, the committee's actions discussed here indicate its pre-existing active interest in shaping evaluation. By observing national and international developments in higher education governance, the committee tried to forge new powers and expertise around university evaluation principles and practices. The possibility that evaluation would become more central to future university governance seemed highly likely given other EU countries' experiences. At a national level, the Pontignano discussions showed that for VCs and academics the question was not so much *if*, but *how*, to engage in future evaluation. This was further the case given the shared feeling that the Ruberti autonomy reform had too weakly defined new governance responsibilities, pushing Pontignano participants to draw out their own views (Vaira 2011).

Indeed, Italian VCs constructed indicators before the 1993 law was passed. As early as 1991, further, the CRUI conceptualised evaluation as a new governance exercise in which vice-chancellors took it upon themselves to set internal university goals and devise indicators that could offer assistance to rector and elected organs (Allulli 1995). The committee thus developed evaluation using a managerial framework of university governance, articulating both the construction and the use of indicators for decision-making as an exercise taking place at the top of univeristy hierarchies. The CRUI defined evaluation as dependant on governing bodies' objective setting, making space for VCs' role in internal evaluation, and also influenced IEU's work by encouraging the use of its set of indicators. These actions created a dynamic process which was bringing about significant innovations and redefinitions to existent state policies which had not yet created such a tight nexus between universities' executive powers and evaluation.

5. *Concluding Remarks*

This article has returned to the historical context of the moments of emergence of evaluation criteria in the Italian university sector in the attempt to fill an agency gap in scholarly debates on the rise of managerial university governance. As has been argued, this agency gap stems from methodological failures in conceptualising how agents may attempt to redefine apparent constraints and new demands coming from politics. As scholars identify NPM policies as the key and determining channel through which a managerial view of university evaluation emerged (Turri 2014; Pinto 2012; Capano 2008), they marginalise a due analysis on the innovative character of vice-chancellors' actions, reified as coherent and adaptive to new structural constraints. The result of this top-down approach (Capano 2008; Capano, Turri 2017) is that there is no concrete account of how institutional-level developments in evaluation may have influenced universities' turn to managerial governance, and thus how agents acted to reject, approve or actively construct university evaluation.

This leaves no room for a critical understanding of how and why, as the historical insights presented here show, vice-chancellors articulated universities' turn to evaluation as a viable path for the sector. In seeking to answer this crucial question, this article has presented the CRUI's own first turn to evaluation, re-politicising existing accounts on the rise and establishment of managerial powers in universities. Though at the turn of the 1990s the state broadly introduced concepts of efficiency and results-based funding, it was the CRUI who concretely defined the practices for implementing these within universities. Vice-chancellors did all but adapt to state policies, constructing evaluation criteria earlier than their formal introduction by law. In light of the stark differences between state articulations of quality and VCs' ones, the article has explored how the CRUI had very specific reasons for wanting to actively shape evaluation, identified here as the attempts to be a first-stepper in evaluation and in so doing seek to attain more political leverage in the university sector. These preliminary conclusions crucially rebalance our broader understanding of the rise of evaluation and managerial power in universities as the result of structural constraints passed down by a managerial state. Far from claiming that there is a direct connection between the CRUI's long-existing work in evaluation and the university sector's current national evaluation framework, the critical insights advanced here question the view that state or state agencies such as ANVUR be conceptualised as the only groups using evaluation to managerially govern the sector. This point can stimulate further research

on the construction and use of evaluation as a political process imbued with multiple views of, and possible contestations over, the definition and control of criteria. This compels scholarly literature to focus in more detail on the actions of university agents when analysing how evaluation is fuelling the development of managerial governance in Italian universities.

Laura Giovinazzi
Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"
laura.giovinazzi@hotmail.it

Riferimenti bibliografici

Amaral A., Jones G.A., Karseth B., 2002, *Governing higher education: comparing national perspectives* in A. Amaral (eds.), 2002, *Governing Higher Education: National Perspectives on Institutional Governance*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Allulli G., 1995, *Organizzazione e metodi dei nuclei di valutazione nelle università italiane. Le proposte della Conferenza dei Rettori*, Roma, CRUI.

ADI, 2020, *Indagine ADI sull'assegno di ricerca*, report presented to the Italian senate on friday 16 October 2020, retrieved on 10 November 2020 at https://dottorato.it/content/indagine-adi-2020.

Baccini A., De Nicolao G., Petrovich E., 2016, "Citation gaming induced by bibliometric evaluation: A country-level comparative analysis", in «PLoS ONE», vol. 14, n. 9; https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221212.

Bleiklie I., 1998, "Justifying the evaluative state: New public management ideals in higher education", in «Journal of Public Affairs Education», vol. 4, n. 2, pp. 87-100.

Borrelli D., Giannone D., 2019, "La neovalutazione al governo della società", in «Cartografie sociali. Rivista di sociologia e scienze umane», vol. 2, n. 8, pp. 7-36.

Capano G., 2008, *Il governo degli atenei*, in R. Moscati, M. Vaira (a cura di), *L'università di fronte al cambiamento*, Bologna, il Mulino.

Capano G., Regini M., Rostan M., Turri M., 2014, *Rapporto intermedio della ricerca sull'attuazione della Legge 240/2010: i risultati della prima survey sugli Atenei statali*, UNIRES.

Capano G., Turri M., 2017, "Same governance template but different agencies", in «Higher Education Policy», vol. 30, n.2, pp. 225-243.

Clark B.R.,1983, *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

CRUI., 1996, *Dati universitari 1992/3*, vol. 1; https://nuva.uniud.it/biblioteca.

Dahler-Larsen P., 2019, "Lost and Found, and Lost Again? Tracing Moral-Political Values in Understandings of the Evaluation Wave", in «Cartografie sociali. Rivista di sociologia e scienze umane», vol. 2, n. 8, pp. 49-69.

Dal Molin M., Turri M., Agasisti T., 2017, "New public management reforms in the Italian universities: managerial tools, accountability mechanisms or simply compliance?", in «International journal of public administration», vol. 40, n. 3, pp. 256-269.

Dill D.D.,1998, "Evaluating the 'Evaluative State': implications for research in higher education", in «European Journal of Education», vol. 33, n. 3, pp. 361-377.

Di Maggio P.J., Powell W.W., 1983, "The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields", in «American sociological review», vol. 48, n. 2, pp. 147-160.

Hood C., 1995, "The "new public management" in the 1980s: Variations on a theme", in «Accounting, organizations and society», vol. 20, n. 2-3, pp. 93-109.

Knafo S., 2010, "Critical approaches and the legacy of the agent/structure debate in international relations", in «Cambridge Review of International Affairs», vol. 23, n. 3, pp. 493-516.

Knafo S., Teschke B., 2017, "The rules of reproduction of capitalism: A historicist critique", in «University of Sussex-CGPE Working Paper Series», vol. 12; https://www.academia.edu/30960054/The_Rules_of_Reproduction_of_Capitalism_A_Historicist_Critique_co_written_with_Benno_Teschke_

Moscati R., Vaira M. (eds.), 2008, *L'università di fronte al cambiamento: realizzazioni, problemi, prospettive*, Bologna, il Mulino.

Neave G., 1988, "On the cultivation of quality, efficiency and enterprise: An overview of recent trends in higher education in Western Europe, 1986-1988", in «European Journal of Education», vol. 23, n. 1-2, pp. 7-23.

Id., 1998, *The evaluative state reconsidered* in «European Journal of Education», vol. 33, n. 3, pp. 265-284.

Padgett J.F., Powell W.W., 2012, *The emergence of organizations and markets*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Paradeise C., Reale E., Bleiklie I., Ferlie E. (Eds.), 2009, *University governance*, Heidelberg, Springer Netherlands.

Pavolini E., Grisorio M.J., Prota, F., 2016, *Un confronto fra l'Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale (ASN) e Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca (VQR)*, in G. Viesti (a cura di), *Università in declino. Un'indagine sugli atenei da Nord a Sud*, Roma, Donzelli Editore.

Pinto, V., 2019, *Valutare e punire: una critica della cultura della valutazione* (seconda edizione) Napoli, Cronopio.

Id., 2012, *Valutare e punire: una critica della cultura della valutazione*, Napoli, Cronopio.

Rebora, G., 2012, "Venti anni dopo: il percorso della valutazione dell'università in Italia e 254 alcune proposte per il futuro", in «LIUC Papers, Serie Economia Aziendale», n. 38, http://www.biblio.liuc.it/liucpap/pdf/257.pdf.

Rebora G., Turri M., 2008, *La governance del sistema universitario in Italia: 1989-2008*, in «LIUC Papers, Serie Economia Aziendale», vol. 32, n. 221, http://www.biblio.liuc.it/liucpap/pdf/221.pdf.

Rizzi D., Silvestri P., 2002, *La valutazione del sistema universitario: una storia recente*, Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia, CAPP.

Stufflebeam D.L., 2000, *The CIPP Model for Evaluation*, in D.L. Stufflebeam, C.F. Madam, T. Kellaghan (Eds.), *Evaluation models*, Boston, Kluwer Acdemic Publishers.

Id., 1966, "A Depth Study of the Evaluation Requirement", in «Theory Into Practice», vol. 5, n.3, pp. 121-133.

Turri M., 2014, "The new Italian agency for the evaluation of the university system (ANVUR): a need for governance or legitimacy?", in «Quality in Higher Education», vol. 20, n. 1, pp. 64-82.

Vaira M., 2011, *La costruzione della riforma universitaria e dell'autonomia didattica: idee, norme, pratiche, attori*, Milano, LED Edizioni Universitarie.

Viesti G. (a cura di), 2016, *Università in declino. Un'indagine sugli atenei da Nord a Sud*, Roma, Donzelli Editore.

Laws and institutional documents

Law of 9 may 1989, n. 168, "Istituzione del Ministero dell'università e della ricerca scientifica e tecnologica".

Law of 24 december 1993, n. 537, "Interventi correttivi di finanza pubblica".

Law of 24 november 2006, n. 286, "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 3 ottobre 2006, n. 262, recante disposizioni urgenti in materia tributaria e finanziaria".

Law of 30 december 2010, n. 240, "Norme in materia di organizzazione delle università, di personale accademico e reclutamento, nonché delega al Governo per incentivare la qualità e l'efficienza del sistema universitario".

Osservatorio per la valutazione del sistema universitario, 1997, *Incontro Nazionale sulla Valutazione del Sistema Universitario. Ruolo, organizzazione e attività dei nuclei di valutazione interna delle università*, doc 5/97, Roma, MURST.