

CALL FOR PAPER

**Peer Review and Social Impact Assessment:  
reflecting on methods and instruments**

Evaluation has a prominent role to improve knowledge on activities, performance, and policies in different sectors and contexts. The growing complexity of public policies and the emergence of new and often unexpected social problems challenge both scholars and evaluation professionals toward developing new and innovative investigations on methodologies and instruments for evaluation. Existing techniques shall adapt to new problems, and new methods, knowledge and practices start to be explored, producing results that are not systemized yet.

RIV (*Rassegna Italiana di Valutazione*<sup>1</sup>) invites scholars and professionals to submit research papers (articles) on the following two evaluation areas:

- Peer review
- Social Impact Assessment.

*Peer review* gained a momentum in the last ten years as unavoidable mean to assess several sectors of public policies (especially science and innovation policies) and different objects (policy instruments, institutions, research outputs, outcome and programmes in research development and innovation). In all the cases, the quality standards and trustworthiness of the peer review outcomes, overcoming biases in peers' judgements, are reported as essential components for guaranteeing a reliable result of evaluation. In addition, the implementation of the European Research Area pointed out the importance of having a common base of rules for peer review, which is supposed to be a key element in reinforcing transnational research collaborations between countries in research and development activities. In more recent times the debate around goodness, transparency and robustness of peer review further improved due to the institutionalization at national level of evaluation exercises (with even more deep effects on the organizations and the academic freedom) and to the changes affecting the modes of knowledge production and circulation (open science, open access, open peer review). These changes pose new questions and ask for new solutions with respect to those already provided by traditional tools and methods. Moreover, as far as the role of evaluation is increasing, a tendency toward professionalization of peer review and to the formation of academic élites is visible; this may exert pressures on organizations and groups as well as create barriers to the entry of innovative approaches.

As for *Social Impact Assessment*, it poses unexpected problems of identification of the scope of what is meant by "social impact" (and thus, the assessment basis), how it should be structured, which factors may facilitate or inhibit the production of a change and (then) the evaluation of a positive social impact. In this respect, reflecting on the methods and tools follows in particular the problems associated

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<sup>1</sup> [Http://ojs.francoangeli.it/\\_ojs/index.php/riv/index](http://ojs.francoangeli.it/_ojs/index.php/riv/index).

with the measurement of the effects, whether they are related to the production process, the context in which they are applied, the validity of the measures and the selection of indicators that are able to know and assess the social impact with respect to certain predictive hypotheses. Furthermore, the practical implementation of the evaluation collides with different approaches and sometimes incompatible - especially with reference to the definition of the indicators, on which the debate is still completely open. Reflecting on methods and instruments also involves problems associated with the evaluation of the *merit* of effects. Part of the literature points out that the emphasis on the social impact is the result of a shift in perspective that involves both national and European policies, the Third Sector and the distributive foundations, which are intended as key actors in the transition from the Welfare State based on the principle of redistribution ("doing good by doing well"), to the Welfare Society, based on the principle of subsidiarity ("doing well by doing good", Zamagni, 2016). This context makes the evaluation central to the measurement and recognition of the added value produced by one activity in different application contexts.

The submitted articles will undergo, in accordance to the RIV policy, a "double blind review" and will be selected on the basis of the referee's (indicated by the RIV editorial staff) unquestionable judgement. The articles, in English or in Italian, must:

- Have a total length between 35,000 and 40,000 strokes (including spaces, notes, graphs, tables and bibliography);
- Fully comply, with the here above exception regarding length, with the indications contained in the RIV's *Editorial Guidelines* published on RIV's webpage in *Franco Angeli publisher* website ([www.francoangeli.it](http://www.francoangeli.it): the articles not respecting the editorial norms will not be accepted for reviewing);
- Be submitted exclusively through the OJS RIV platform.

The procedure for accessing the platform for the first time (that is as a new Author) is the following:

1. register as Author (Autore/ice) at <http://ojs.francoangeli.it/ojs/index.php/riv/user/register>;
2. in the dashboard (Cruscotto), click on the link "Nuova proposta" (New proposal);
3. at the procedure step 1 (Fase 1), choose the Section "*Call su Peer Review e Valutazione di Impatto Sociale*" (Peer Review and Social Impact Assessment Call);
4. at procedure step 2 (Fase 2) upload the anonymized proposed article, the metadata at step 3 (Fase 3) and finally, at step 4 (Fase 4) the signed "permission to publish" letter (lettera di liberatoria).

The articles' uploading should be done by the next **20<sup>th</sup> of November 2016**. For any support concerning uploading operations refer to Franco Angeli publishing house (Angelo Ventriglia: [ventriglia@francoangeli.it](mailto:ventriglia@francoangeli.it)) while for clarifications regarding other aspects of the call refer to the RIV Director (Alberto Vergani, [albertovergani4@gmail.com](mailto:albertovergani4@gmail.com)).

The review process will be closed by the end of February 2017 and the accepted articles will be published in a RIV monographic number which is going to be issues in 2017. The articles' publication priority will be in any case established by the Editorial Board in accordance to RIV's annual publishing strategy.

Milan, 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016