

# EDITORIAL

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Costantino Cipolla and Antonio Maturo\*

The tenth anniversary of *Salute e Società* comes at a very special time for the whole country and for academics in particular. Weakened by an economic crisis as deep-reaching as it has been long, Italy debating how to start again and what methods to use to assess the merits and abilities of people who occupy, or would like to occupy, positions of responsibility. Within the University, this has led to an intensive search for ways to assess the productivity, dedication and expertise of its scholars. Much of the scientific community's efforts have focused on assessing the quality of research and, therefore, the criteria that guarantee the quality of scientific journals. The debate is very heated and there are many scholars who have spent a lot of time researching the various aspects of publication – such as bibliometric indexes, editorial requirements, the organization of the content of publications, just to name a few – which, until recently, were little examined by Italian scholars.

From the beginning, *Salute e Società* was dedicated to conceiving of and implementing new ways of improving on the divulgation of popular science. From the first issue we had an editorial board that included dozens of foreign sociologists and an internal editorial staff made up of motivated young scholars. We followed rigorous editorial standards and established a well-defined internal organization of the journal in specific sections. For example, in every issue beginning in 2002, we featured a foreign contribution which was commented on by other scholars. In those years, “just yesterday, but so long ago”, few universities offered a subscription to on-line foreign journals and thus, our ability to ensure the publication of high level foreign articles represented an exception to the norm in Italy. And soon after we established our peer review, at first made through qualitative reviews, then, beginning in 2006, carried out following a very detailed set of criteria. The internationalist aspect of

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*Salute e Società* is also emphasized by its strong links with the *European Society for Health and Medical Sociology* and by its more and more frequent Anglo-Italian editorial team. The volume that we introduce here is an example of the high scientific level guaranteed by the journal as well as its ability to question itself, given that the two prominent editors, Guido Giarelli and Roberto Vignera, have addressed some of the world's most prominent sociologists with the precise goal of reflecting critically on the epistemological identity of the Sociology of health.

*Salute e Società*, also available online, has been published in Italian and English since 2010, but even earlier, beginning in 2004 (*The Sociology of Health in Italy*) we have published numerous bilingual numbers. This was not without great effort. The editorial work was laborious and involved dozens of colleagues, graduated students and enthusiasts. At the beginning, since we were little versed in the standards to followed in order increase the quality of a journal, we used British and American publications as our benchmark. Over time, the journal has evolved: it has added features, has enhanced its website, has adopted an ethical code (regarding the history of *Salute e Società* you can see the article signed by Maturò/Lombi/Canestrini/Manca/Moscatelli in this volume).

In a recent public discussion about the scientific quality of the journal we made some proposals that derive from our daily experiences working for *Salute e Società*. Therefore, below we list a series of internal indicators and assessments that can be used, by colleagues, not so much to give "report cards" to the journals in circulation, but to take advantage of the work we have done by using methods which have already been validated and applied with positive and internationally attested results.

## The process of evaluating the quality of a journal

### Pre-conditions (structural criteria):

- *Type of production of the journal*: paper and/or on-line;
- *Language of edition*: Italian, English and Italian, English, other languages;
- *Sociological Focus (Manifesto)/sociological Management* (interdisciplinary orientation as an advantage).

### Criteria for Accreditation (indicators):

- Evaluation of articles based on a double-blind *peer review* system (*with a standard form and the presence of two referees – maximum time 3 weeks*);
- Listing in the main platforms of bibliographical research (Ebsco Discovery Service, Google scholar, ProQuest Summon/Sociological Abstracts, Casalini Digital Library, Scopus);

- Historicity (the journal can be assessed only after a certain number of years: three to five?) and regularity in the release (tolerance 1-3 months depending on frequency);
- Monographic character (call for papers: the greater burden inherent in this type of review);
- Presence of a defined editorial structure;
- Presence of national and international steering committee;
- Method of distribution (printed, online, national, international);
- Internal structure which is methodologically well-framed (space reserved for essays, research, panel discussions, comparisons, reviews, etc.);
- List of released issues and programming of future years (at least two years);
- Indication of temporality through the distinction between volume and issue and annual frequency;
- Minimum guaranteed number of pages for each issue;
- Website with information for authors, editors, booksellers, readers (Italian and English);
- Title, abstract, key words in Italian and English;
- News and e-mails of all authors;
- Contribution of foreign authors in each issue;
- Foreign editor and/or co-editor in the issues;
- Possibility of downloading articles;
- Presence of an ethical code;
- The High Patronage of the University of Bologna;
- Inclusion of the name of the person responsible for editing for each issue in front matter;
- Liaison with scientific societies.

**Evaluation of quality in the strict sense:**

- Bibliometric index (eg, Publish or Perish, the software that produces bibliometric indices like the h-index, or the impact factor released by the Web of Science – former ISI);
- Informed peer review;
- *Both have systems have problems. An integrated system with a weighed average score must be created.*