TITLE
Reforming Italian university: debates on international models of higher learning in Twentieth-century Italy

STATE OF THE ART
In the last few years, the study of the history of Italian universities has significantly developed according to a stronger awareness of its international dimension. The essays collected in the special issue of the journal Memoria e ricerca published in 2015 represent an excellent summary of the latest results in the field. Francesco Marin's, Mauro Moretti's and Andrea Mariuzzo's essays especially highlighted how both in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth centuries the "semi-peripheral" position of Italy in the world of higher learning and academic knowledge brought about a continuous attention for the most successful and influential international models, and how the re-elaboration of foreign experience was a crucial issue for the promotion of deep reform of the university system in public debate. However, while the opposition between the state-centered French example which influenced the elaboration of major laws on post-unification Italian education and higher education and the "liberal" and highly competitive German system is now well-known (see the path-breaking La Penna 1993), and only needed some minor clarifications (see also Marin 2010), the situation after World War I and especially World War II is still less clear. The emergence and the global success of the American model of corporate research, "quasi-market" competition among institutions and strong differentiation in level and quality of the offer of academic services (for a very first introduction, see Thelin 2004, Lucas 2006, Smith-Bender 2008, and Cohen-Kisker 2010) certainly characterized the last century and deeply influenced Italian higher education policy as well; however, unlike for such countries ad Britain (Simpson 1983) a reflection concerning the ways the American example came to Italy and its actual role in policy-making is still lacking.

MOTIVATIONS
My research will insert the debate on American university in Italy into the broader context of the most significant proposals for a reform of local university system, and will cover the heart of the Twentieth century, between the end of World War I and the general reforming law of 1980. It will be an important attempt to understand how the Italian university policy has been influenced by international and transnational trend during a period which is usually uncovered by Italian higher education history, and according methods emerged from the study of international policy transfers (see Rugge 2013) which are usually neglected in intellectual history. I will entangle the study of legislation and legislative debate with the opinions of the most authoritative Italian intellectuals whose reflections were concerning university, and with their receptions of foreign experiences through the knowledge of specialist literature and the participation in mobility programs.

After a first analysis of the available sources, I can elaborate the following research hypotheses:
- The reference to foreign models is consistently re-elaborated according to the enduring problems of Italian university, its resistance to reform, and the proposals for change. From this point of view, there is a strong continuity between the role of the German and American example. Both the "germanophile" Giorgio Pasquali in 1923 and the "americanophile" Luigi Einaudi in 1956 detected those successful foreign models as an alternative to statedominated...
"Napoleonic" Italian system based on the promotion of academic freedom, competition among institution, free offer of study programs and according to social demands, and individual initiative.

- For this reason, in the Italian context international influences mostly supported and justified the attitude which has been defined as "conservative reform" (Lagemann 1989). Such kind of policies was aimed at assuring a wider basis of participation and consent to a higher education system focused on the defense of quality for elites and the complete integration of university within advanced capitalism, rather than such values ad universal access to all levels of knowledge and radical discussion of the current social system.

- From the point of view of legislative results, the "conservative" attitude of internationally-influenced reformers explains the enduring reference to the spirit of Giovanni Gentile's legislation of 1923 for the establishment of a more effective and even "modern" higher education. A significant clue is the introduction into Italy of "dottorato di ricerca" inspired by the international standard of Ph.D. programs, but largely modeled on "corsi di perfezionamento" proposed by Giovanni Gentile in the early 1920's.

AIMS

I am currently establishing a multi-year research project whose final result will be a monograph concerning the history of the introduction of postgraduate education programs in Italy between 1923 and 1980. In 2017, I will explore a first set of related sources which are available in Italy, I will prepare new activities in the United States for next year, and I will present the very first results of these research actions. More specifically, I will prepare at least two presentations for international conferences (Society, Education and Elites which will be made at the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain in May, and the meeting on Universities and the Constituent Assembly organized by the Inter-University Center for the History of Italian University in Padua in November). Moreover, I will submit an article for publication to Annali di Storia delle Università Italiane: it will be centered on the ideas for higher education policy among the leftliberal intellectuals between 1945 and the end of centrismo. Finally, by the end the year I will organize a seminar focused on the history of Twentieth-century Euro-American cultural and academic exchanges. I will invite to Scuola Normale some of the most authoritative Italian and European scholars in the field, in view of a discussion which will set up a solid anaytical framework for further developments.

ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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