Index

pag.

List of figures XIII

List of tables XVII

Introduction 1

1.
The basis of knowledge

1.1. Fundamentals and selective review of epistemologies and paradigms 13
1.1.1. Key concepts 13
1.1.2. Two metaphors 17
1.1.3. Two examples 20
1.1.4. All sciences are social and not necessarily value-free 21
1.1.5. Epistemic uncertainty 25
1.2. On some peculiar aspects of the social sciences 27
1.2.1. Explanation versus understanding 27
1.2.2. The hierarchy of sciences and integrated complexity 31
1.2.3. On the issue of causality 37
1.3. Research methods and validity 49
1.3.1. A high-level map of methods and their relationship with causality 49
1.3.2. Randomised experiments 51
1.3.3. Quasi-experimental methods 53
1.3.4. Classical econometrics: controlling for 59
1.3.5. Multivariate statistics 61
1.3.6. Qualitative and mixed methods 64
1.3.7. On the issue of validity 68
1.3.8. A final note on modelling simulations 75

pag.

2.
Statistics and the 'bees'

2.1. From statist to statistics 82
2.2. Measurement, its sources and errors, and values 85
2.2.1. The different aspects of measurement 85
2.2.2. Different sources 87
2.2.3. Possible errors 88
2.2.4. Values 93
2.3. Selective examples 95
2.3.1. Poverty: a contested concept 95
2.3.2. The case of Consumer Price Index 96
2.3.3. Measuring happiness and well-being in the UK 97
2.3.4. Measuring contagion spread in Italy 98
2.4. From umbrella concepts to composite indexes 100
2.5. A new 'agent': the algorithm 105

3.
The behavioural turn

3.1. From Descartes to Spinoza: a brief neuroscientific detour 112
3.2. The Undoing project: the legacy of Kahneman and Tversky 122
3.3. The contribution of behaviouralists: System 1 and System 2 127
3.4. Individual and group-based heuristics and biases applied 140

4.
Rhetorics meet heuristics

4.1. Rhetoric key mechanisms and Hirschman's approach 147
4.2. Naïve realism and other biases exacerbating disputes 151
4.3. The case of politically motivated reasoning 153
4.4. Rhetorical framing 155

5.
Evidence and policy

5.1. What shapes policy-making 163

5.1.1. Public Interest Theory versus Capture Theory and the free market view 163
5.1.2. Social-institutionalist approaches 164
5.1.3. The social psychology of policy makers 167
5.2. Evaluation of policy and different paradigms 169
5.2.1. Why evaluation matters 169
5.2.2. The problem of causal inference: different forms of evaluation 172
5.2.3. Different paradigms in policy evaluation 175
5.3. The latest trend: behavioural policy and its critiques 178
5.3.1. Nudges or the behavioural turn in policy making 181
5.3.2. Theoretical-Conceptual critiques 189
5.3.3. Ethical and political critiques 191
5.4. The critiques to Evidence Based Policy 194
5.4.1. Evidence based policy briefly defined 195
5.4.2. Critiques to EBP 196
5.4.3. For a pluralistic and open Evidenced Informed Policy 204

6.
Case studies

6.1. Globalisation: between rhetorics, myths, and measurement 206
6.1.1. Rhetorics and their swinging moods 207
6.1.2. Globalism and anti-globalism: conceptual, theoretical, and political perspectives 209
6.1.3. Measuring globalisation 213
6.2. The future of work 216
6.2.1. Automation and the workplace 218
6.2.2. The de-standardisation of work 222
6.2.3. The case of online platform workers 226
6.3. Fake news, globalisation, and populism 231
6.3.1. The complex logic of fake news bubbles 232
6.3.2. Digressions on materialism and post-materialism 234
6.3.3. About populism 236
6.4. Covid-19: rhetorics, heuristics, and models for a systemic failure 239
6.4.1. Collective irrationalities and rhetorical framing 239
6.4.2. Epistemic uncertainty, experts, and the models of fear 241
6.4.3. The failure and the collateral damages of lockdown 248

Conclusions 255

pag.

Annex A
Formal demonstration of randomisation 263

Annex B
Heuristics, biases, and nudges 267

Bibliographic References 273