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**Abstract**

The field of university assessment, including quality assurance, is structured by power and conflict, and shaped by technologies of assessment such as self-study by academic units, numerical performance indicators and whole institution evaluation and ranking. In reconstructing and comparing the recent evolution of assessment practices in Argentina and Australia we detect a common neo-liberal approach to assessment, supported by global agencies such as the World Bank.

Assessment policies and practices are used to advance neo-liberal agendas, often in contradiction with national traditions in higher education. In both countries more externalised and institution-centred forms of assessment have facilitated the reformed government heteronomy vis-à-vis the universities, the rise of business-style management inside them at the expense of participatory governance, the transformation of intellectual autonomy into corporate autonomy, and the reduction of diversity and academic independence. However, some forms of university assessment can be used to facilitate

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internally-controlled reflection within academic units, directed towards educational objectives. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)