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Abstract:

A series of innovative efforts to modernize Italian spatial planning system has taken place in the last two decades and concluded their experimental phases, allowing a better evaluation of provided benefits, missed opportunities and misleading directions.

Considerable changes have occurred to the original planning system, bringing in the coexistence of the 'urbanist' tradition of planning with performance oriented practices and strategic planning approaches, still with a strong predominance of local level planning features.

The institutionalization of these trends and the federalist reform in process have determined different intensities and speeds of innovation in the 20 Regions. These last are now the main actors of the reform, with significant divergences in terms of regional spatial planning practices and policy innovations and, subsequently, in their competitive capacity in the European context.

The paper focuses on this process of modernization, analyzing issues, targets and trajectories, in order to highlight the strengths and limitations of the current trend toward a reform of the planning system.

Part 2 describes the structural features of the spatial planning system. Four storylines provide a focus on the crucial problems and challenges (Part 3), while in Part 4 examination of the dimensions and the direction of changes of the last twenty years permits identification of the actors involved, the modes and planning tools and their adaptation in various regional planning styles.

In the conclusions, the authors emphasize that the current situation is still characterized by the lack of a coherent reorganization of the entire framework system, paying the consequences of the absence of a structural reform at the national level, although there have been various interesting legislative innovation processes at regional level and a wide range of attempts at operative innovations at local level.