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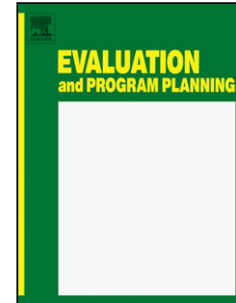
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## **From local development policies to strategic planning - Assessing continuity in institutional coalitions**

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### **Highlights**

- In the current literature on EU Cohesion Policy little attention has been paid to analyze the institutionalization of local partnerships.
- We address this void through assessing the continuity of institutional coalitions at the local development program level.
- We focus, in particular, on Strategic Plans promoted in the south of Italy in the transition phase between the 2000-2006 and the 2007-2013 periods.

### **Abstract**

In the last two decades, EU policies have had a fundamental role in orienting regional/local development. The objective of this work is set in this context as it intends to analyze the local development programs activated in Sicily in the last three programming periods. The main aim is to explore how local institutional actors reacted to the pressure played by the EU partnership principle, assessing the continuity of local institutional coalition in managing different local development programs within the regional development policy system. We focus, in particular, on Strategic Plans (SP) promoted in Sicily in the transition phase between the 2000-2006 and the 2007-2013 periods.

**Keywords:** local development; partnerships; cohesion policy; strategic planning

### **Introduction**

Local development policies (LDP) have become progressively dominant in the last 20 years, as many governments have sought to address growth, development and social problems, by supporting locally-based or bottom-up approaches and programs (Coffey and Polèse, 1985; Viesti, 2002; Accetturo and de Blasio, 2012). Several international organizations involved in developing programs, in both developing and developed countries, have started to react to growth and development challenges with ‘new’ approaches grounded on spatially-blind or place-based approaches (Barca *et al.*, 2012; Partridge *et al.*, 2013; Bentley and Pugalis, 2014; Huggins and Thompson, 2014; Celata and Coletti, 2014). The idea behind LDP is more than a range of small-scale initiatives activated locally. It is more an approach for integrating different programs and policies at a local level in order to liberate synergies and stimulate co-ordination, thus improving local governance through involving stakeholders in the definition and delivery of policy (Dente, 2014).

The cooperative, partnering and pluralist nature, which the EU has greatly promoted through the Cohesion Policy (CP), is based on the belief that issues related to the growth strategies of a territory, on the responsible and shared management of common goods and the protection and enhancement of local resources, cannot be ‘imposed’ exogenously by public power. This orientation is also supported by the numerous experiences relating to the severity of the

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