

Policies for strategic territorial development. Inter-municipality association as a form of network governance: the Italian experience

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the problems involving the forms of association between municipalities in North East Italy from the European perspective. These forms of association may be defined as examples of inter-municipality networks: a concept that allows us to shift emphasis from the rigidity in the organizational structure of every local authority to the flexibility and functionality of relations between the actors in terms of the policies that they mean to share and the different network rationales used according to the choice of the governance model enacted. Planning and encouraging the construction of polycentric networks such as the Union of Municipalities means recognizing and sustaining a governance of functional interdependence, which is at the basis of both the associated administration of services in a homogenous area and strategic planning over a 'vast area', via joint action and shared decision-making between the local authorities. This represents a decisive step towards the practice of functional federalism and the construction of new forms of "network" polity.

Key words: network governance, public management, local government, strategic planning, regional studies.

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