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## Preface

The celebration of the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy was accompanied by several initiatives of great interest for the scientific community.

The socio-economic changes which have taken place since 1861 have provided an opportunity to reflect in a qualified and very broad cultural context on how Italy has gone through these years of great changes, even considering the most important developments in other European countries.

The information collected by public institutions such as Istat and Bank of Italy has increased over time in terms of quantity, availability and, above all, reliability. The analysis of these data allows us to understand the dynamics of the real phenomena and consequently gives us tools to better evaluate the right decision-making strategies for the development of the country.

The study of economic and social phenomena evolution must be put in connection to the evolution of the methods and tools used in each historical phase trying to determine the suitability of statistical methods and tools employed for data analysis. The study of the past to understand the present and plan the future is a challenge for the research and necessarily involves also a critical analysis of the interaction among phenomena, methods and tools employed to investigate on them using an appropriate statistical approach.

Considering this background, the Italian Statistical Society in collaboration with Istat and Bank of Italy organized the Biennial Conference of Statistics dedicated to the analysis of economic phenomena, demographic and social changes that have affected our country since its Unification. Past and current developments of methodological issues and their applications have been dealt in an historical comparative analysis to investigate on future prospects.

This volume contains a selection of peer-reviewed papers, whose preliminary version was presented at this meeting.

The meeting was an opportunity that brought together experts, from Italy and other European countries, with more than 250 participants. It was an important opportunity to discuss crucial methodological issues and its critical applications, not only from an historical perspective but also considering future developments.

This volume is divided into the following six parts:

- Methodological issues in an historical perspective
- Historical issues in economic and socio-demographic studies
- New developments in survey methodology for official statistics
- New methodological developments in economic studies

- New methodological developments in educational studies
- New methodological developments in social and demographic studies

Each part includes a number of papers ranging from 5 to 7 selected after a meticulous process of review which involved a larger number of papers. We wish to thank especially all the authors and the reviewers implicated in this demanding task. Besides we would like to thank Dr. A. Blank from Springer-Verlag for the excellent cooperation provided in the whole process of publication of this volume.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize once again the relevance of the debate that we had on the wide range of different issues covered in this volume, each of which will be crucial for improving the methods to analyze changes and to support the development of the country in the coming years.

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