

**INTERNATIONAL
HANDBOOK
OF URBAN
SYSTEMS**

**STUDIES OF URBANIZATION
AND MIGRATION
IN ADVANCED AND
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

Edited by
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U. K. 2002

Chapter 9

Counter-urbanization in Italy

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INTRODUCTION

As has already been documented, in the last three decades counter-urbanization has become a dominant force shaping the settlement patterns in a number of countries on both sides of the Atlantic (Berry, 1976; Illeris, 1979; Fielding, 1982; Vining, 1989; Ceresa et al., 1983; and Champion, 1989). This process is characterised by decreasing urban size, falling population densities, and decreasing heterogeneity of urban forms and activity distribution within urban regions.

This phenomenon has mainly affected the 'mature' urban systems of North America and Western Europe, while over the last twenty years the urban systems of other Less Developed Countries of Southern Europe have experienced changes that, in some respects, seem likely to lead to similar outcomes in the future. The aim of this chapter is to examine the process of urban deconcentration in Italy during the period 1951-2001.

Our main hypothesis is that the Italian urban system is highly heterogeneous, and the processes of urban diffusion are for this reason very different in the various regions. A number of studies oversimplified the case of the Mediterranean countries, including Italy, by attributing to them the early stages of maturity of their urban systems.

We will try to answer a series of simple questions:

- Are the processes of counter-urbanization affecting the entire territory of the peninsula, or are there areas where the phenomenon is more intense?
- What is the temporality of this process?
- What is the relationship between the deconcentration models of Berry (1976), Fielding (1982) and the city life model (van den Berg et al., 1982) and the empirical evidence?

THE ANALYSIS OF POPULATION DECONCENTRATION IN ITALY.

A number of international comparative studies considered the Italian settlement system (van den Berg et al. 1982; Fielding, 1986; and Ceresa et al. 1983;).

The diachronic analysis of urban networks (Ceresa et al. 1983) has established a typology. This extremely simple typology reunites the countries of Europe in four distinctive groups, and is based on the degree of de-concentration of the urban networks in question:

- Countries like Great Britain, Holland and France where the tendency of urban de-concentration, already in place during the 1970s, has continued throughout the 1980s.
- Countries like Italy, Austria and Germany where counter-urbanization only appeared during the 1980s.
- Countries like Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and the Southern Italian macro-region where the tendency towards urban concentration continued during the 1980s, and which, according to the 1981 censuses, present strong sub-urbanization tendencies in the largest agglomerations.
- Finally, the socialist countries where the tendency towards urban concentration continued despite the anti-urban policies put in place by their governments.

From these groupings it is clear that the diversity of processes of urban de-concentration do not depend mainly on the size of the country or of the region. At the same time we can observe that counter-urbanization generally manifests itself in the economically mature regions.

The analysis of Fielding (1989) of the European countries situated to the west of a line drawn from the Adriatic to the Baltic showed that:

- In the 1950s urbanization was the dominant characteristic of the models of population distribution for all of the countries examined.
- In the 1970s urbanization only affected one country (Spain). In six countries (Austria, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland) the processes of population concentration had ceased, and in the remaining seven countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Sweden, Holland and the United Kingdom) counter-urbanization was dominant.
- In the 1980s Italy and Germany were affected by strong counter-urbanization processes. At the same time the process of counter-urbanization had diminished in Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Sweden and Switzerland. For the six remaining countries the author did not have the most recent data at his disposition.

- France passed from urbanization to counter-urbanization at the end of the 1960s.

A number of important analyses have been made in Italy of the migration phenomena of the city system, the historical evolution of the urban network (Gambi, 1973), the functional structuration of the urban network (Bottai and Costa, 1981; Scaramellini, 1991; and Dematteis and Petsimeris, 1989), and the position of the Italian cities within the European urban network (Conti and Spriano, 1990; Camagni and Pio, 1988). Most studies of Italian cities have focused on urbanization processes and urban networks (Cori, 1984 and 1986; Dematteis 1992; and Martinotti, 1993). A certain number of studies focused on individual regions or cities and studied deconcentration processes among other things (Mainardi, 1969; Muscarà, 1978; Dalmaso, 1971 and 1984; Seronde-Babonau, 1983; Emanuel (1989), Petsimeris (1989) Coro et al., 1987; Cristaldi, 1994). Finally, a number of scholars insist on the selectivity of urbanization and counter-urbanization processes in terms of functional structures (Celant, 1988; Scaramellini 1991), and the increasing levels of social segregation in cities (Petsimeris 1989 and 1998). In this chapter we will concentrate mainly on the population change in relation to settlement size and regional differentiation, and try to understand which stage of urban deconcentration the different regions and metropolitan areas of Italy have reached at the end of the 20th century.

THE AREA AND THE DATA

In our analysis we used ISTAT decennial census data (1951, 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991 – the most recent). The data for the 2001 census are not yet available, so we used the Public Records Office data. This data set is published every year, and indicates the natural and migratory movements and the resident population on the 31st December.

Italy is subdivided into 20 regions which are aggregated into four macro-regions: The North West (Piedmont, Liguria, Vale d'Aosta and Lombardy); the North East (Trentino Alto Adige, Venetia, Friuli-Venetia-Julia, Emilia Romagna); the Centre (Tuscany, Umbria, Latium and Marche); and the South, also known as the *Mezzogiorno* (Abruzzi, Molise, Calabria, Basilicata, Apulia, Campania, Sicily and Sardinia).

The intermediate administrative level is the province: 107 units that include a main city (*capoluogo*) and the administrative hinterland. In terms of toponymy the capital city also gives the name of the Province. For instance the city of Milano is the *capoluogo* of the province of Milano and so forth.

Finally the basic administrative unit is the *comune*. Italy is subdivided into 8000 *comuni*. The largest is Rome and the smallest has a population of less than 100 inhabitants. It is important to emphasise the huge differences in terms of distribution of the *comuni* in three of the macro-regions. Two

regions of the North, Piedmont and Lombardy, contain 2755 *comuni* and the seven regions of *Mezzogiorno* contain 2199 *comuni*. In terms of population Piedmont and Lombardy have 13.3 million in 1998 and the *Mezzogiorno* 20.8 million (i.e. the *Mezzogiorno* has 556 *comuni* less but 7.5 million inhabitants more than Lombardy and Piedmont).

Another important factor that makes the study of urbanization in Italy more difficult is the differentiation of the *comuni* in terms of area, and the fact that the *comuni* which are large in terms of population are not equally large in terms of area. This difference is very important in terms of economic, social and spatial heterogeneity of the core and of the ring and makes the interpretation of the processes of suburbanisation more difficult. Rome has the largest area: 2000 sq. km, i.e. more than the area of Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence and Bologna.

During the period 1951-1999 Italy's population grew from 47.5 million to 56.7 million. In 1951 there were 24 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, 15 of which were located in the North, 3 in the Centre and 6 in the South. During the same period the settlements with a population of more than 100,000 represented 20 per cent of the total Italian population. In 1991 the number of cities doubled (46) and represent 25.5 per cent of the Italian population. In terms of distribution 50 per cent of the cities were located in the North, 17.4 per cent in the Centre and 32.6 per cent in the south. But the changes concern also the other segments of the urban hierarchy and the suburban and peri-urban areas of the country. These changes were not isolated, continuous or forecastable in an easy and linear historical process. During the second half of the twentieth century Italy experienced significant growth and became one of the most important industrialised nations.

In the same period Italy was also transformed from a country of out-migration into a country of in-migration. Furthermore the massive interregional and interurban migration from the poor southern areas to the North, mainly Milan and Turin, ceased. During the period more than 6 million people left the marginal areas of the south, and the rural and peripheral areas of the north to concentrate in the metropolitan areas of the North and Rome. All these transformations had important consequences in terms of land use, infrastructure, housing production and suburbanization. We obviously will not analyse all of this, but it is important to take into account when analysing the processes of urban deconcentration.

THE REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

Milan, Turin and Genoa form the industrial triangle of Italy. In this area the Industrial Revolution started at the end of the nineteenth century and, it was here that Fordist development was manifest until the early 1970s. This area was also the main concentration of economic resources, and it became the central destination of biblical flows of population originating from the

countryside, the areas of low economic development of the North East and the most remote areas of the *Mezzogiorno*. Inter urban, core-hinterland and intra-urban mobility have greatly affected the economic and social geography of the three metropolitan areas. These changes have an immediate consequence, not only on the urban form of the core areas, but also on the regional landscape. The urban form of the Italian cities shows strong uniformity in the periphery (high rise housing), formal, functional and social heterogeneity in the peri-central quarters with a mix of building types, and heterogeneity in the rings with the coexistence of *palazzoni*, single family housing, industrial buildings and the remains of farm buildings (Pizzorno, 1972; Gambi, 1973; Cardia et al., 1978; Crosta, 1978; Carozzi and Rozzi, 1984; and Cori, 1984).

In stark contrast with the wealthy, industrial North is the *Mezzogiorno*, i.e. the south of Italy, that in terms of resources, and social, political and economic organisation constitutes the less developed part of Italy. In the early seventies, Gambi (1973) used the term 'pre-industrial' to designate a model of urbanization and a type of economic organisation for this area. This macro-region's development was also dominated and controlled by the criminal organisations of the mafia. Geographers and sociologists concerned with the area have used a variety of terms to describe its character. For example, Conti (1983) used the term 'a territory without geography'; Leone (1988) employed the term 'Italia non metropolitana'; and Trigilia (1992) defined its development as 'development without autonomy' in order to underline the huge transfer of public resources that are still insufficient to stimulate autonomous growth. One can also find in the literature a distinction between 'northern' *Mezzogiorno* (the more developed regions of Campania and Apulia) and southern *Mezzogiorno* (the less developed areas).

Bagnasco in the late seventies used the suggestive term of 'third Italy' (*terza Italia*) in order to indicate that the dichotomic interpretation of the Italian territory (north-south) was not the most appropriate in order to understand the complexity of the Italian space (Bagnasco, 1977). In fact between the industrial north (mainly north-west) and the under-developed south there were other areas that were characterised by an increase in the development of small and medium firms, and by diffused development. This development was taking place in the central and north-eastern parts of Italy (the third Italy). The main characteristic of this area was that it had never experienced Fordist development based on big industry and on large metropolises. This territory is characterised by the presence of a dense urban network formed by medium sized cities i.e. former medieval *comuni* with strong traditions in terms of autonomy and handcraft skills. In this area there was a new economic, social and territorial organisation based on a flexible work force that associates work in family firms, and a strong specialisation in the sectors of textiles, fashion, furniture, shoes, ceramics, and mechanics.

Our main hypothesis is that this variety of economic and social organisations corresponds to different models of production of urban space and of urbanization processes in terms of concentration and deconcentration, and also in terms of centralisation and decentralisation.

DEFINITIONS AND MEASURES OF COUNTER-URBANIZATION AND DE-URBANIZATION

The process of urban de-concentration is increasingly termed counter-urbanization, a strong but suggestive term which owes its popularity to Berry (1976) who used it in order to open up the way to a new type of regional studies. The process of counter-urbanization has as its fundamental characteristic a decrease in size, density and heterogeneity. A more operational definition of counter-urbanization is given by Fielding (1982). According to this author, counter-urbanization is the inverse negative correlation between the size and the net migration of the settlements of one region or of one nation. In other words the larger the city, the larger the urban decline due to negative net migration. We should underline that the concept of urbanization is to be understood in its widest sense (concentration of population and a positive correlation between size and net migration). But we must not forget that the concept of urbanization is rich in significance, in that it encompasses spatial, historical, demographic, economic, social and behavioural aspects.

Both the abovementioned definitions of counter-urbanization concern the urban system of a nation or a region. At the metropolitan level, van den Berg et al. (1982) proposed the city cycle model in order to analyse the evolution of a single functional urban region in time. The urban area is called the Functional Urban Region (FUR) and is composed of a core (city centre) and a periphery (ring) defined according to a threshold of commuting between the core and the ring). According to this model there are four main stages in the life of a city: urbanization, sub-urbanization, de-urbanization and re-urbanization.

- Urbanization is characterised by a rapid expansion of urban zones. This is the phase of industrial urbanization. During this phase the main population concentration processes take place in the core. The origin of this population is the hinterland or the rest of the region or other regions.
- Sub-urbanization is characterised by a strong process of de-concentration of both population and economic activities from the centre towards the hinterland that puts into effect a process of urban diffusion; in parallel we can witness an increase in interactions between the urban zones in terms of mobility, migrations and innovations.
- De-urbanization is characterised by a decrease in population and employment, which affects the whole agglomeration (FUR). During this phase, the little centres of peri-urban space register an increase in

economic activities and population.

- Re-urbanization is characterised by the regeneration of the centre. In this phase, we witness a return to growth in the core, due to rehabilitation or renewal of the historic centres.

On the bases of the above definitions we will measure the processes of deconcentration in Italy.

THE ANALYSIS OF URBAN DECONCENTRATION AT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

To study processes of counter-urbanization in Italy's urban system according to Berry's definition (population deconcentration) one can make use of Hoover's index, which gives a measure of the degree of population concentration in certain areas in relation to the total population of the country. For this purpose, three kinds of spatial disaggregations of the country can be used. The first one corresponds to the twenty administrative regions; the second consists of the 107 provinces; and the third represents the elementary administrative level: the *comune*.

Hoover's index of population concentration (H_c) at a specific point in time for a given subdivision of a territorial unit is as follows:

$$H_c = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n [P_i - a_i] 100$$

where:

n = the number of sub-areas into which the territorial unit (nation, region or metropolitan area) is subdivided;

P_i = the ratio of the population of the sub-area i to the total population (nation, region or metropolitan area); and

a_i = the ratio of the surface of sub-area i to the total surface of all sub-areas.

H_c ranges from 0 to 100. When $H_c=0$ the population distribution in the country examined is uniform, which may be considered an 'ideal' state of population diffusion. The opposite end of the range of the value $H_c=100$ is obtained when there is one single sub-area in which the whole population of the country is concentrated.

From Table 9.1 we can observe that at the regional and provincial levels the concentration process increased throughout the period examined, even if after 1981 the rate of increase slowed considerably. At the *comune* level we can observe that the concentration increased continuously until 1971 (4 points per decade). During the period 1971-1981 the growth was very weak, after which it stabilises. These remarks are relevant because they hide important differences concerning the process of deconcentration for the

various regions.

Table 9.1 Concentration indices of Italy at the regional, provincial and commune level, 1951-1999 (Number of areas in brackets).

Area	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1999
Region (20)	17.4	18.5	19.6	20.1	20.6	20.9
Province (107)	25.2	27.2	29.9	30.4	30.5	30.7
Commune (8000)	41.2	45.3	50.0	50.9	50.7	50.8

Source: Own calculations

The analysis of the population concentration at the commune level for the twenty Italian regions can be summarised as follows. In 1951 two regions had structural concentration values above to 50 (Liguria and Campania). Seven other regions have intermediate values between 40 and 50 (Valle d'Aosta, Latium, Lombardy, Friuli V. G., Piedmont, Emilia Romagna and Tuscany). All the other regions recorded low values, the weakest of which were Basilicata (17.95) and Molise (18.03). During the period 1951-1999 all regions increased their concentrations from 2.8 (Liguria) to 16.6 (Marche). The higher increases were recorded by Marche, Molise, Abruzzi, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Tuscany and Basilicata. If we subdivide the last half-century into two sub-periods (1951-1971 and 1971-1999) we can have a clearer picture of the trends.

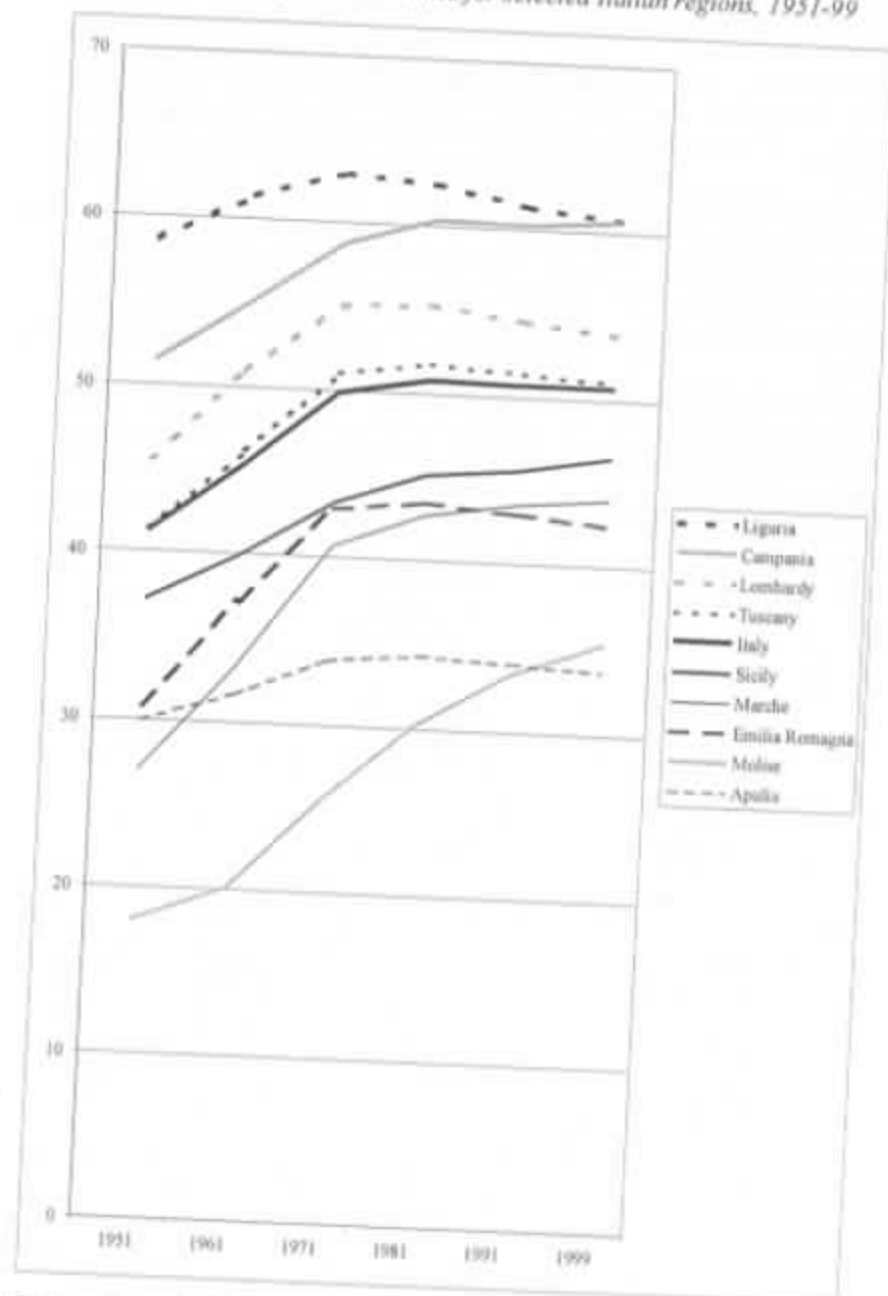
During the first period seven regions increased their concentration: Marche, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Latium, Tuscany, Lombardy and Abruzzi. With one exception all of the regions are in the Northern and Central Italy, and three of them contain the three main Italian metropolises.

After 1971 there was an important change. The regions that were characterised in the previous decades by processes of concentration are now experiencing important deconcentration processes: Latium, Liguria, Lombardy, and to a lesser degree Piedmont and Emilia Romagna.

The majority of the Southern regions increased their population concentrations at a lower but a continuous pace: Molise, Basilicata, Abruzzi, Calabria, Sardinia and Sicily. The same phenomenon can be observed for Marche and Umbria in Central Italy.

Figure 9.1 represents the trends of Hoover values for selected Italian regions, while Table 9.2 represents a typology that takes into account five

Figure 9.1 Trends of Hoover values for selected Italian regions, 1951-99



Source: Own calculations

Table 9.2 Typology of Italian regions according to their structural concentration and their deconcentration trends.

	North West	North East	Centre	South and Islands
Type 1: High structural concentration, with concentration until 1971 followed by de-concentration	Liguria Piedmont Lombardy		Latium	
Type 2: High structural concentration, with concentration until 1971 followed by stability after 1981	V. d'Aosta			Campania
Type 3: Medium structural concentration, with concentration until 1971 followed by stability		Emilia Romagna Friuli V. J. Trentino A-A.	Tuscany	
Type 4: Low structural concentration, with de-concentration after 1981		Venetia		Apulia
Type 5: Low structural concentration, with concentration throughout the period weakening after 1991			Umbria Marche	Basilicata Molise Calabria Sardinia Abruzzi Sicily

main types of regions by using the criteria of structural concentration (the degree of concentration at the beginning of the observation), and the evolution of the concentration or deconcentration process in time. From this classification we can observe that the first type concerns mainly four out of five metropolitan regions, three of which are in the industrial triangle and one

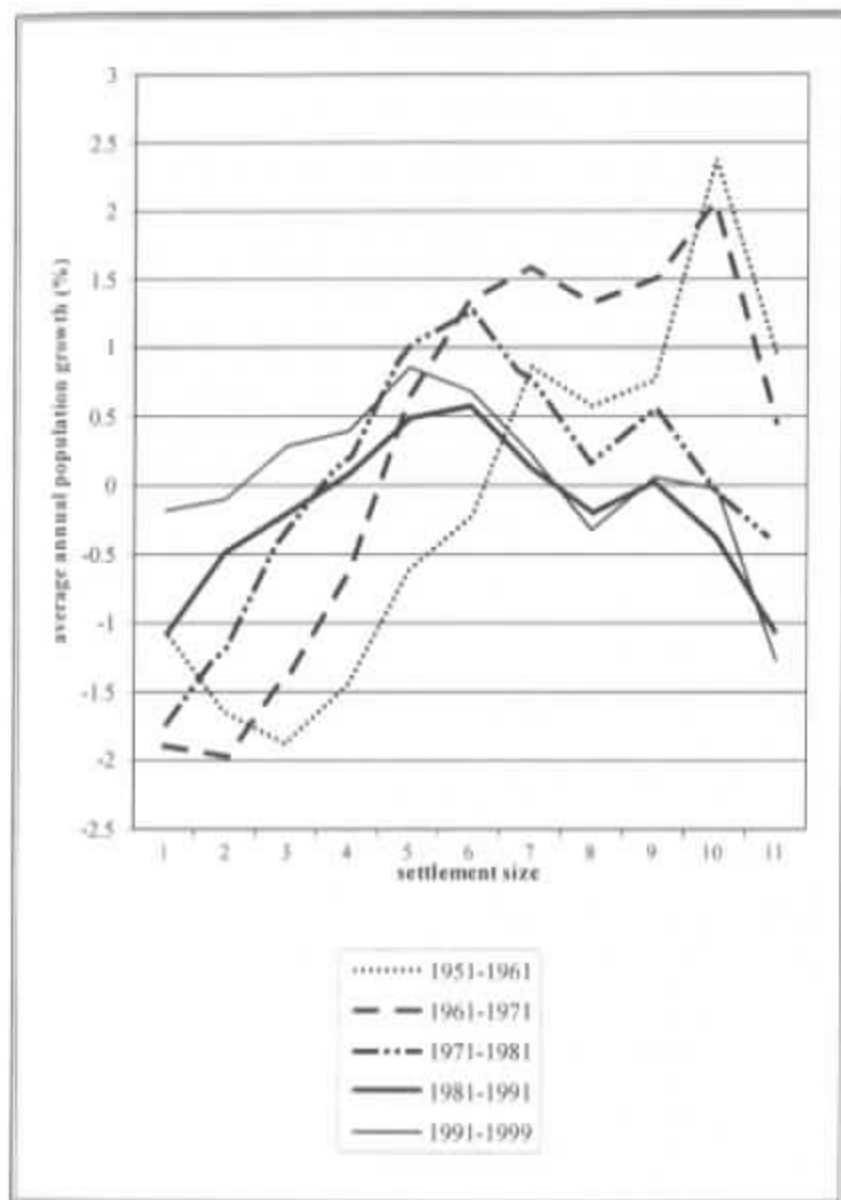
in the Centre, the region of the capital (Latium). The second type concerns one region of the North and one region of the South. The third type groups mainly the regions of the centre of the North East (known as the 'third Italy'). The fourth type concerns the booming region of Venetia in the North East which belongs also to the 'third Italy' and one of the most dynamic regions of the South: Apulia. Finally, the fifth type groups the majority of the Southern regions and two regions of the centre: Umbria and Marche.

This analysis shows the complexity of deconcentration processes in the various Italian regions. These are the result not only of the inherited urban network but also of the huge impact of industrial Fordism and the rural exodus towards the main Italian cities. However, this index is synthetic and does not allow us to understand the contribution of the different size of settlements to the actual structure of the regions.

In order to study the relation between population growth and settlement growth we constructed a series of graphs that represent Italy and three regions of the North, Centre and South of Italy: Piedmont, Tuscany and Calabria. We considered 1991 as the date of reference and we subdivided the settlement of each region into 11 groups or less. These groups are: less than 500 inhabitants; 2: 500-1,000; 3: 1,000-2,000; 4: 2,000-5,000; 5: 5,000-10,000; 6: 10,000-25,000; 7: 25,000-50,000; 8: 50,000-100,000; 9: 100,000-250,000; 10: 250,000-500,000; 11: 500,000 and over. We successively calculated the population for each group for the five other decades (1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991).

Figure 9.2 indicates the relationship between size of settlement and population growth for Italy between 1951 and 1999. During the 1950s the six groups of settlements with a population less than 25,000 inhabitants recorded a decline. The group of cities that recorded the highest population growth were those between 250,000 and 500,000 inhabitants (23.9 per cent). The same group also recorded the highest growth in the 1960s (20.5 per cent). During the first two decades only the settlements less than 5,000 lost population, while all of the other groups of settlements increased their population. The group of 5,000-10,000 grew by 6.5 per cent, and the groups between 10,000 and 250,000 recorded increases that varied between 13 per cent and 16 per cent. In the 1980s the decline of the cities above 500,000 became more dramatic (-10.8 per cent). We also observed the decline of the group 50,000-100,000 (-2.1 per cent) and the decline of the most dynamic group of the previous decades (250,000-500,000) which lost -3.8 per cent, while the cities between 100,000 and 250,000 were in stagnation (+0.3 per cent). During this period the settlements of less than 2,000 continued to lose population. Finally during the 1990s the biggest settlements continued their decline, the medium large cities were declining or stagnating and only the settlements between 1,000 and 50,000 recorded an increase. If this is the general situation in Italy the different regions present a less uniform image.

Figure 9.2 The relationship between settlement size and population growth, Italy, 1951-99



Source: Own calculations

Figure 9.3 indicates the relationship between population growth and settlement size in Piedmont during the 1950s. This shows a positive correlation between population growth and settlement size. The cities were growing proportionally according to their size. The largest degree of growth was recorded by Turin. The settlements with a population of less than 5,000 were in decline. During the 1960s we can observe that it was mainly the medium sized cities that were increasing. Turin continued its growth but the rhythms slowed down. The smaller settlements continued their decline.

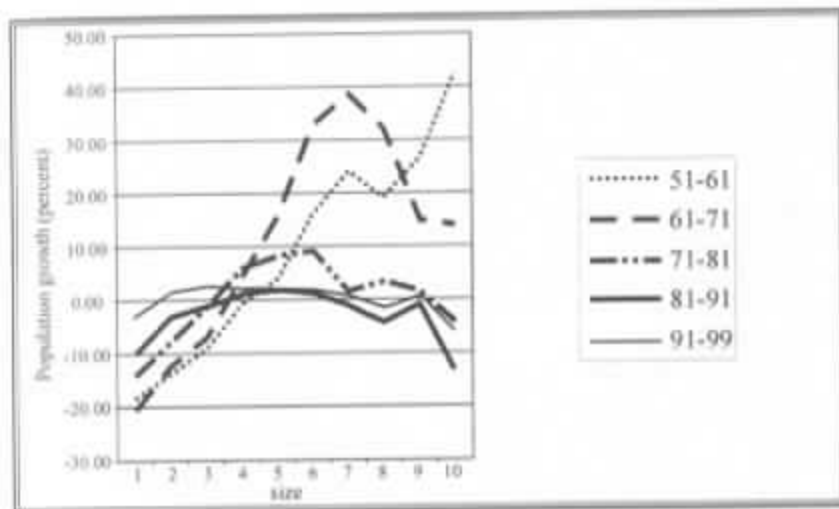
In the 1970s the larger cities experienced a decline, while the medium sized cities grew and the smaller settlements continued their decline. In the nineties we can see that we are far from the correlation of the seventies: The large cities continued in their decline but this tendency slowed down. Similar trends were found for the small settlements, and the medium cities recorded a weak increase.

In Tuscany (Figure 9.4) the cities with a population over 10,000 were growing during the period 1951 to 81. The highest rate of growth was recorded by the group of cities with a population of between 100,000 and 250,000. During the period 1961-1971 the cities with a population of between 25,000 and 250,000 recorded growth of between 15 per cent and 20 per cent but during the following decade the growth of these cities decreased and ranged from 2 per cent to 7 per cent. The largest city, Florence, after a growth of 16 per cent during the 1950s, reduced its growth to 5 per cent and 2 per cent during the next two decades. During the 1980s Florence entered a phase of decline (-10 per cent) that persisted in the 1990s (-7 per cent). After the 1980s, in addition to the decline of Florence, we can observe the stagnation or the decline of the group of cities with over 50,000 inhabitants. The settlements of less than 10,000 were losing population during the 1950s and 1960s. During the 1970s the decline affected the settlements less than 5,000 and during the 1990s the settlements of less than 2,000.

In Calabria (Figure 9.5) we can observe that the groups of settlements with a population of more than 10,000 have recorded growth since 1951. The highest rates of growth concerned the cities between 25,000 and 50,000. The largest City (Reggio di Calabria) recorded population increases throughout the period, even if after 1981 their rhythm slowed down. The settlements with a population below 10,000 lost population throughout all the period examined. The only exception was the group 5,000-10,000, which increased weakly after the 1970s and stagnated during the 1990s.

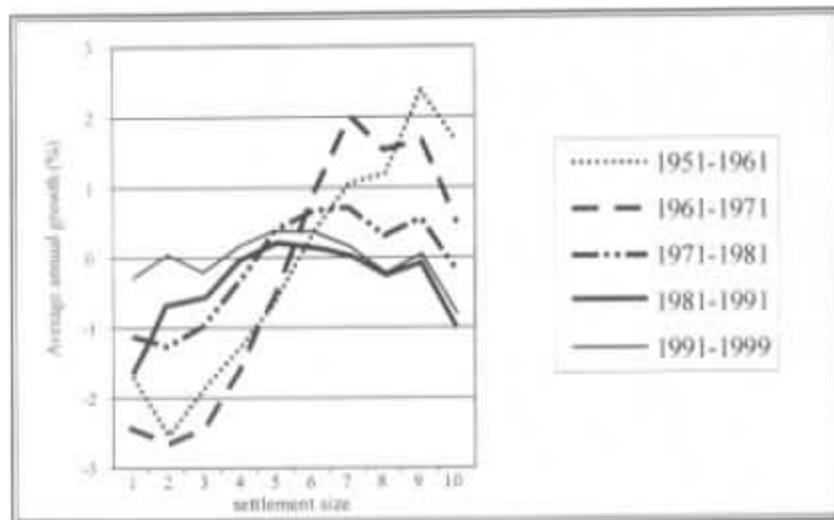
From this analysis it emerges that the correlation between population growth and size of settlement is very different in the three regions that represent the North, the Centre and the South of Italy. In the North the counter-urbanization processes are stronger and they started earlier. In Tuscany we can see that the deconcentration process is not as important as in Piedmont, and in the south we can observe a continuation of the concentration

Figure 9.3 Correlation between settlement size and population growth, Piedmont, 1951-99



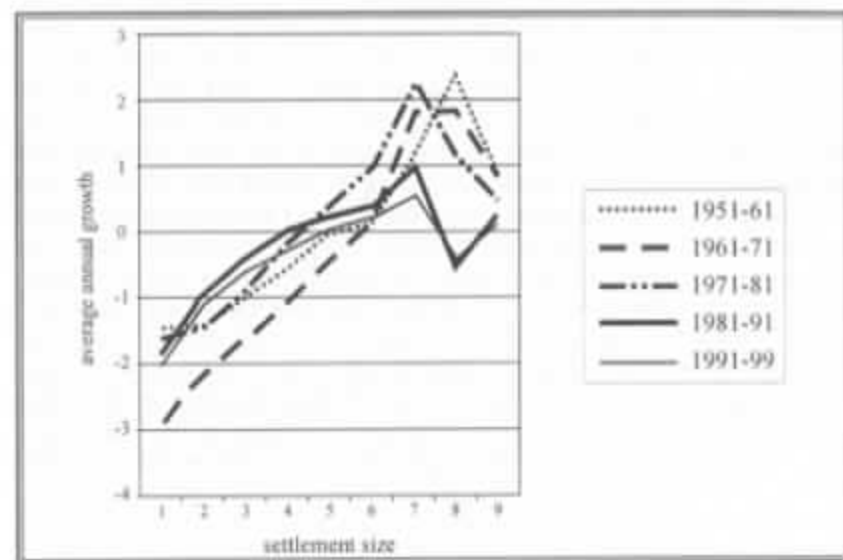
Source: Own calculations

Figure 9.4 Correlation between settlement size and population growth, Tuscany, 1951-99



Source: Own calculations

Figure 9.5 Correlation between settlement size and population growth, Calabria, 1951-99



Source: Own calculations

processes even if their rhythms are not as strong as during the seventies and the eighties. A further analysis (Petsimeris, 2002) showed that the main difference is between the type of growth. The decline in the North is mainly due to the natural balance, while in the South the growth is due to the natural balance. In the large cities in the North net migration cannot compensate for the huge losses in terms of natural balance, while in the South a part of the population growth is due to the positive natural balance.

THE MAIN METROPOLITAN AREAS

For the analysis of the metropolitan areas we took into consideration the five main metropolitan areas as delimited by Sforzi for ISTAT (1997). According to this study the national territory (8,000 *comuni*) is subdivided to 784 Labour Market Areas (*Sistemi Locali del Lavoro*). Each area has a core and a ring which are interdependent in terms of residential and job location. According to this delimitation Rome is composed of 65 sub-areas, Milan 99, Turin 43, Naples 42 and Genoa 36. These aggregations change from census to census according to the intensity of the flows, and the interdependence between the core and the suburban areas. In order to be able to make diachronic comparisons we used the 1991 delimitations calculated on the data for 1951, 1961, 1971, 1991 and 1999 as elaborated by Buran and Meia

(2001) (Figure 9.6).

Between 1951 and 1971 the cores showed strong growth, while from 1971 onwards they have all lost population. During the first period, also known as the period of Fordist growth, the cores of Turin and Milan increased by 450,000 inhabitants each, Genoa by 130,000, Rome by 1.1 million and Naples by 215,000. In the second period the populations increased by 212,000 in Turin, 300,000 in Milan, 120,000 in Genoa, 200,000 in Rome and 200,000 in Naples. In other words the five cities increased their population by 2.4 million inhabitants during the period 1951-1971, and lost one million inhabitants over the next twenty years. This is equivalent to a net increase of 1.4 million inhabitants during the half a century. Even if an increase of this order shared between five large cities for a period of half a century could seem normal, it is an important quantitative and qualitative change which has brought about a dramatic transformation of the urban landscape: in its social, economic, cultural and political components; in terms of mass production of housing; in terms of uniformisation of the urban landscape (*periferie*); and in terms of property speculation. By contrast, the rings showed a continuous pattern of growth. During the period 1951-1999 the ring of Turin increased by 400,000 inhabitants, Milan by 970,000, Rome by 320,000, Naples by 700,000 and Genoa by only 10,000. While there was a decline in the core, the rings were still growing. However, after 1981, the rings were not growing sufficiently to compensate for the losses of the cores. In fact, the decline for the five metropolitan cores was of 684,000 inhabitants and the growth of the rings 374,000. This means that the metropolitan areas of Italy are in the phase of de-urbanization: the difference between the total growth of the ring and the total decline of the core is -310,000 inhabitants.

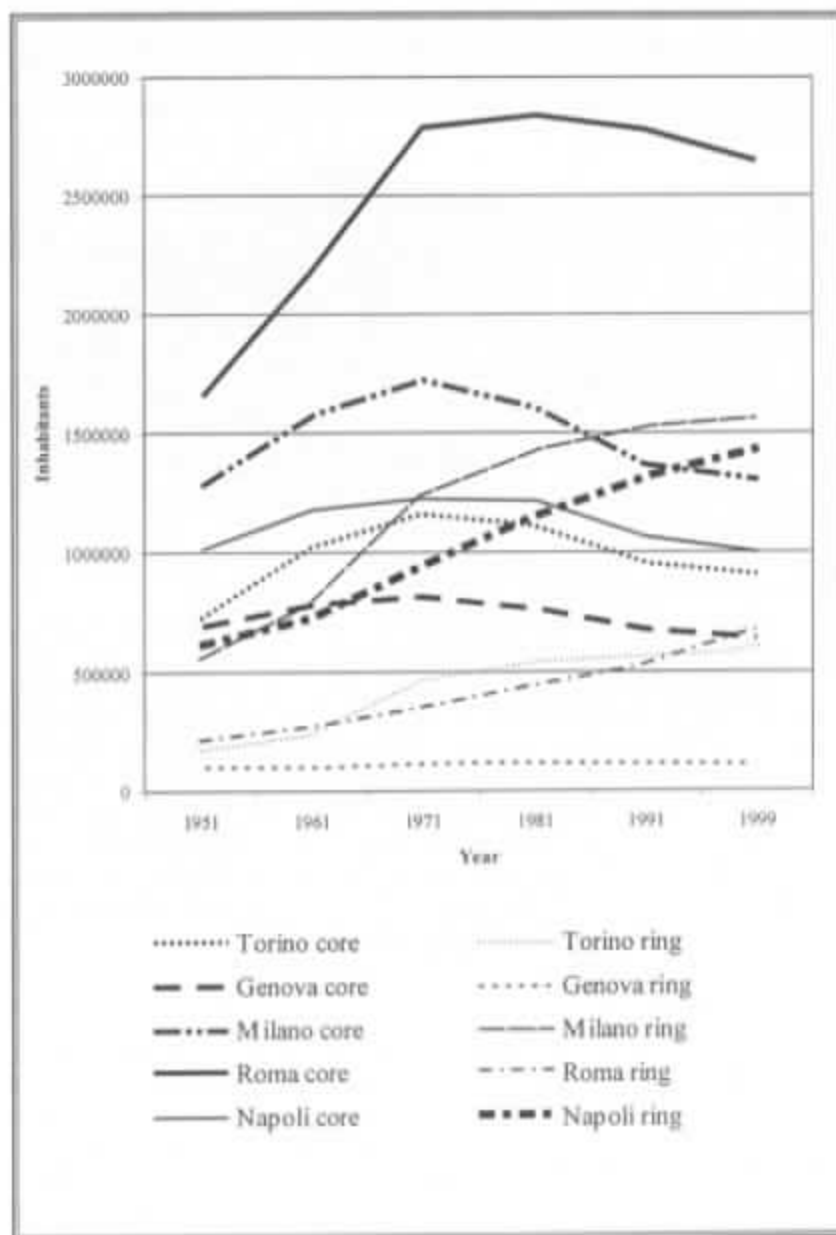
Table 9.3 Population change in the Italian FURs (core+ring), percent.

	1951-1961	1961-1971	1971-1981	1981-1991	1991-1999
Turin	41.2	28.7	1.3	-6.9	-2.4
Genoa	11.6	4.6	-5.1	-9.8	-5.4
Milan	30.1	25.3	1.9	-4.6	-1.0
Rome	31.6	27.4	5.0	0.6	0.4
Naples	18.0	13.3	9.1	0.5	2.5

Source: Own calculations

As we can see from Table 9.3, Genoa entered the phase of deurbanization during the period 1971-81, and Milan and Turin followed in the next decade. Rome and Naples were in the stage of mature suburbanization (decline of the

Figure 9.6 Population change in selected Italian FURs



Source: Own calculations

core, and growth of the ring that compensates for the losses of the core) which slowed down considerably after the 1980s. We can also note that the decline of the northern metropolitan areas slowed down in the 1990s. These patterns show an important differentiation between the northern and the central and southern agglomerations but they do not allow us to forecast a process of re-urbanization in quantitative terms according to the prediction of the city lifecycle model.

THE SPATIALITY OF URBAN DIFFUSION

Figure 9.7 represents Italian *comuni* by period of maximum population. This map helps us to see the morphology and the temporality of urbanization processes in Italy during the 20th century. As we can see, the areas that recorded their highest population level before 1936 were mainly the Alpine areas of the north western and northern parts of the country, the Appenine areas, and the internal parts of the peninsula and islands. These areas were characterised by a weak economic base, and highly dependent on agriculture. During the period 1971-81 we can observe the importance of Turin, Milan, Genoa and the other major industrial cities of the north, the cities of the Gulf of Venice, and the hill areas in the centre of the country. In 1981 Rome recorded its maximum population, in the same period we can also see forms of overspill in the main metropolitan areas (Milan and Turin).

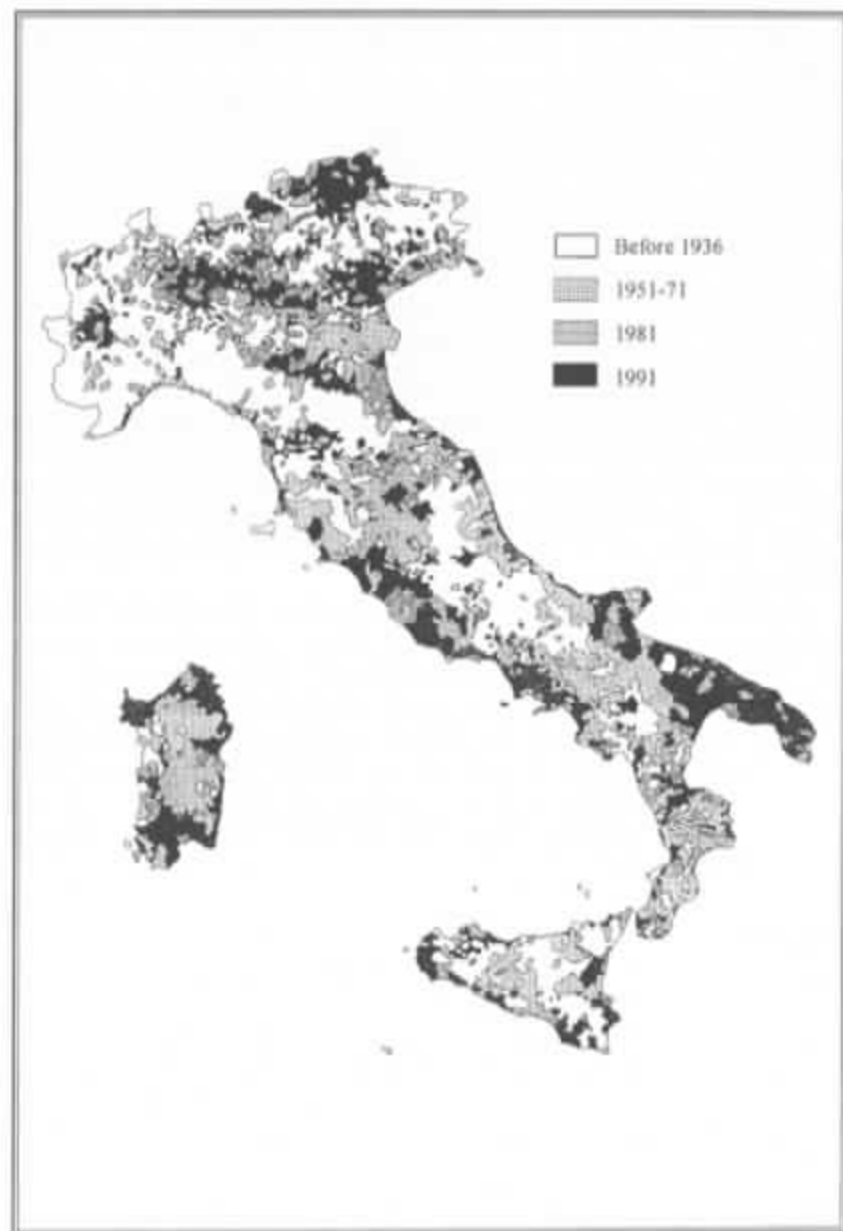
In 1991 the importance of the growth of the metropolitan rings of Milan, Turin, Rome, Naples and Genoa was apparent. Maximum population levels were also recorded in the same period in Via Emilia, Venetia, Bolzano and Tuscany. The importance of urban diffusion along the Adriatic coast (the Marche and Molise littoral strip) was highly marked in this period. We can also see historically high levels of population in the Gargano area in Apulia and the whole area of the Tavoliere della Apulia. A similar pattern was found on the west coast extending from Rome northwards until Grossetto (the south of Tuscany) and southwards to Salerno (south of Naples). On the islands, maximum population was recorded in 1991 in the north and south of Sardinia, and the southern and eastern coasts of Sicily.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the process of concentration has shown us that in Italy the process of counter-urbanization has touched most of the industrial regions of the North, and in turn has affected certain regions of the Centre and the South. In the South the processes of population concentration persist. In the metropolitan areas, we observe an opposition between the urban industrial concentrations of the North, and the other urban areas of the Centre and the South.

In contemporary Italy we can observe a de-urbanization process in the

Figure 9.7 *Comunes* classified by period of maximum population



Source: Istat, 1994

largest metropolitan areas. The decline is also affecting the majority of the cities with a population of more than 100,000. This is due to important quantitative and qualitative changes in the functional and social structure of the upper ranks of the Italian urban hierarchy: tertiarisation and social polarization.

At the same time there is an increase of population in the outer suburban areas, the linear conurbation of Via Emilia, along the eastern and western coast and the regions of flexible economy. This pattern applies to all areas with the exception of the core areas of the main cities (Bologna, Parma, Modena, Reggio nell'Emilia).

However it is important to underline that there are neither processes of reurbanization in terms of growth in the cores of the large metropolitan areas nor has there been a turn-round in terms of an increase in the population of the remote rural areas and the small settlements. A number of case studies have demonstrated that the medium sized cities that experienced most growth during the 1970s and 1980s were mainly those belonging to the metropolitan areas (Petsimeris 1989; Martinotti 1993). The increase of the population in the South must be attributed more to natural growth than migration (Coppola et al., 1992). And the huge losses of the North are attributable to the negative natural balance, which is not compensated for by migration flows (Petsimeris, 2002).

In qualitative terms, we are faced by processes of urban deconcentration which are not processes of decentralisation. What is taking place is a process of selective centralisation of functions (Celant, 1988) in the metropolitan cores accompanied by a process of socially selective in-migration and working class out-migration: an important increase of managers and huge decline of employees and blue collars (de-proletarianisation) (Petsimeris 1998). The forthcoming publication of the results of the Italian census 2001 will provide the opportunity to examine the further development of the trends we identified in this paper.

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Published by
Edward Elgar Publishing Limited
Glensanda House
Montpellier Parade
Cheltenham
Glos GL50 1UA
UK

Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.
136 West Street
Suite 202
Northampton
Massachusetts 01060
USA

A catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

International handbook of urban systems : studies of urbanization and migration
in advanced and developing countries / edited by H.S. Geyer.

p. cm.

Includes index.

1. Urbanization—Cross-cultural studies. 2. Rural-urban migration—Case studies.
Cities and towns—Growth—Cross-cultural studies. I. Geyer, H.S., 1951-

HT151 .I5855 2002
307.76—dc21

2002072190

ISBN 1 84064 900 3

Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

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