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TENDENCIAS RECIENTES DE LA POBLACIÓN

Evolución, dinámica, estructura y perpectiva de género

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THE RECENT DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS OF ITALIAN METROPOLITAN CITIES: COMPARISON BETWEEN ITALIAN AND FOREIGN POPULATIONS

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyse the demographic dynamics that occurred in the largest Italian urban areas (14 metropolitan cities) in the last ten years, paying particular attention to the emerging geographical patterns. The study adopts a multiple comparative perspective: between centre and peripheries, between Northern and Southern contexts and between native and foreign populations. Weuse official data from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) for 2011-2020. This data allows us to analyse how the different components of population growth (natural increase and net migration) have affected the dynamics of the 14 metropolitan cities. The results show that the distribution patterns of foreigners in the metropolitan contexts present configurations that do not reflect those of Italians, and, likewise, the demographic dynamics affecting them differ strongly from those of the Italian population by counterbalancing the differentiation between growing and declining contexts.

Keywords: demographic dynamics, metropolitan cities, centres and peripheries, native and foreign population, Italy

LA DINÁMICA DEMOGRÁFICA RECIENTE DE LAS CIUDADES METROPOLITANAS ITALIANAS: COMPARACIÓN ENTRE POBLACIONES ITALIANAS Y EXTRANJERAS

Resumen: El objetivo del presente estudio es analizar la evolución reciente de las dinámicas demográficas en las mayores áreas urbanas italianas (14 ciudades metropolitanas) con especial hincapié en los patrones geográficos que se han formado en la última década. El estudio adopta una perspectiva comparativa múltiple: entre centro y periferias, entre contextos del Norte y del Sur y entre la población nativa y extranjera. Se utilizan los datos publicados por el Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Italia (Istat) desde 2011 hasta 2020. Esta fuente nos permite analizar cómo los diferentes componentes que contribuyen al crecimiento de la población (crecimiento natural y saldo neto migratorio) han afectado la dinámica intrínseca de los centros y las periferias en las 14 ciudades metropolitanas de Italia. Los patrones de distribución de los extranjeros en los contextos metropolitanos presentan configuraciones que no reflejan las de los italianos, y del mismo modo las dinámicas demográficas que les afectan difieren fuertemente de las de la población italiana al compensar la diferenciación entre contextos en crecimiento y en declive.

Palabras clave: dinámicas demográficas, ciudades metropolitanas, centros y periferias, población nativa y extranjera, Italia

INTRODUCTION

Exploring the demographic dynamics in a geographical context is a fundamental step towards unfolding and understanding social and ecological interactions (Henderson and Loreau, 2019). Indeed, as social processes are spatially rooted, population changes and demographic behaviours are significant drivers of ecosystem transformation (Cohen, 2003) and should play an important role in unveiling individuals' spatial and temporal distribution (Bocquier and Costa, 2015). At the same time, investigating the variations of spatial demographic patterns is also essential, given that "where people live" can be a relevant factor in helping to explain demographic behaviours (Champion and Hugo, 2004).

Nevertheless, while there is growing interest and research on the sustainability of the spaces often related to the debate on the "misdeeds" and the "virtues" of urban paradigm and sprawl (Johnson, 2001) and in the governance of their pathways (Bulkeley and Newell, 2010), the subject of the interactions between demographic dynamics and space seems to have received lower attention. The persistent disparities in the distribution of the population along the geographical space reveal a heterogeneity of demographic dynamics and behaviours that, investigated both in a diachronic or synchronic perspective, refer to a specific context in which multiple factors can shape these dynamics. In this respect, Southern Europe represents an emblematic example of the spatial heterogeneity resulting from the simultaneous coexistence of territories that experience demographic growth or the ones that appear in decline (Bayona-I-Carrasco, 2014; Gil-Alonso et al., 2016; Carlucci et al., 2017; Burillo et al., 2020; Benassi et al.,2023a).

In this framework, it becomes decisive to assess the geographical distribution patterns of the population in order to understand the different local contexts and their current challenges (in terms of depopulation and overpopulation, for example). To this purpose, this study investigates the demographic dynamics that occurred in the largest Italian urban areas (14 metropolitan cities: MCs hereafter) in the last ten years. The study adopts multiple comparative perspectives: between centre and peripheries of each MC, between Northern and Southern MCs and between native and foreign populations.

We use official data provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) for the period 2011-2020. Applying a decomposition method, this source allows us to analyse how the different components of population growth (natural increase and net migration) have shaped the intrinsic dynamics of metropolitan cities. In comparing these components for nationals and foreigners, three specific objectives are addressed: (i) to verify whether settlement patterns of Italians and foreigners in MCs have displayed similarities or differences over the last years; (ii) to analyse the population change in the central municipalities assessing the contribution of the demographic rates; and (iii) to prove whether the demographic dynamics have manifested separately for Italians and foreigners a North-South gradient in Italy over time or different spatial behaviours along the urban contexts analysed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Thestudy of the residential dynamics in urban contexts and the related spatial patterns of settlement cannot ignore the demographic processes that configure them (Voss, 2007). The relationship between demographic behaviours, life opportunities and the environment in which people live can shape the profile of cities in multiple ways (Imeraj et al., 2021). Consequently, an analytical study of the geographical units that compose them requires grasping the demographic dynamics to explain better their development and, in general, the process of urban transition (Salvati, 2021). This assumption can be considered even more valid in the territorial contexts where physical and social spaces are characterised by a marked heterogeneity, like in Southern European countries (Barbieri et al., 2019) and, especially in their urban areas (Salvati and Zambon, 2019).In recent years, an increasing body of research has concerned population dynamics in southern European urban areas (Ciommi et al., 2018; Benassi and Salvati, 2020; Salvati, 2020). Questions concerning how the urban demographic growth cycle takes place and to what extent it can generate suburbanisation and/or metropolitan expansion have recently become of growing interest in the burgeoning field of studies (Carlucci et al., 2017; Morelli et al., 2018). Many of them have investigated the demographic determinants that have affected the composition and the growth of the cities over time, ranging from the analysis of internal and international migratory flows (Bayona-i-Carrasco et al., 2014) to the demographic behaviour of the resident population, both native and foreign (Del Rey and Cebrián-Villar, 2010; Strozza et al., 2016).

Several studies have analysed the process of urban growth by periodising its phases and focusing on the effects of the economic crisis (Pujadas and Bayona-i-Carrasco,2017). Other authors have tried to evaluate there residential migration

of natives and foreigners in the major Italian urban local labour market areas between core and suburbs, underlying the different impacts and age structure effects (Benassi et al., 2019). Other scholars have focused on the impact of skilled migration in the metropolis of Spain (López-Gay et al., 2020). Many other contributions have stressed the attention to the different use of space by ethnic minorities in comparison with natives, including the issues of residential segregation and spatial inequalities (Benassi and Iglesias-Pascual,2023b; Martori and Madriaga, 2023). Results have underlined a multifaced reality characterised by a high level of heterogeneity that only partially follows generalisable patterns. With specific reference to Italy, the last study on this topic made by Buonomo et al. (2024) reveals that, considering the total population no longer identifies a clear distinction between the Northern and Southern parts of Italy, neither between centre and suburbs.

Contrary to what happened in the past, nowadays in Italy, it seems that the local dimension plays a major role in defining the contexts in which the population grows and other contexts in which the population declines. To the best of our knowledge, the studies that have examined the components of the population growth at the local scale, paying particular attention to the major metropolitan areas in Italy, are relatively few (Strozza et al., 2016). Our study complements a recent work (Buonomo et al., 2024) on this topic by exploring the differences between Italians and foreigners.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT, DATA AND METHODS

THE 14 MCS. AN OVERVIEW

In the last decades, like almost all European countries, Italy has adopted diverse initiatives to delineate large cities' spatial morphologies better and define their functional and organisational role in the broader context of contemporary urban processes. In this respect, the Italian parliament approved a national law (Law 142/90) and a reform in 2014 (the so-called Delrio Reform: Law 56/2014) that established the institutionalisation of the metropolitan areas, recognising their government powers within the national system. More precisely, the reform in 2014 created 14 metropolitan authorities – MCs –with specific competencies and governing functions covering diverse policy areas previously entrusted to national, regional or provincial power. The Italian government has devolved greater responsibilities to these new authorities to implement policy actions in the larger urban areas (at the intermunicipal level) (Vinci, 2019). From the perspective of spatial organisation and according to the traditional definition of metropolitan area, MCs identify geographical entities corresponding to a territory that includes a central city, giving the MC its name, and a metropolitan periphery (i.e. suburbs) that encompasses all remaining municipalities (Figure 1).
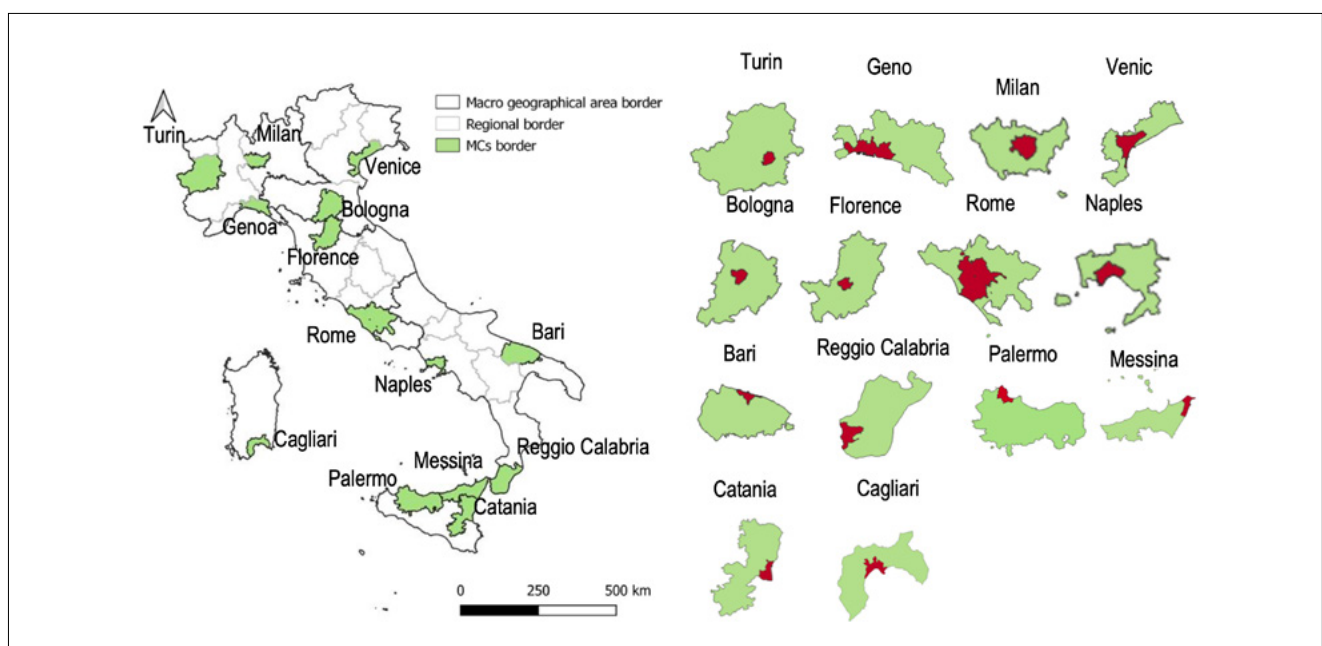
Figure 1. The 14 MCs and their inner structure (centre and suburbs)[a].

At the beginning of 2020, the 14 MCs comprised 1,268 municipalities (16% of Italian municipalities) with different demographic sizes covering 46,637 square kilometres (15,4% of the country's surface area) (Istat, 2023). They totalise more than 21 million inhabitants (just over 35,5% of the population living in Italy), of which 8.8% are foreigners and the remaining are Italians. Turin is the largest metropolitan city in terms of the number of municipalities (312), while Cagliari is the smallest (Figure 2).

With reference to the demographic dimension, we can appreciate a quite high level of heterogeneity in absolute and relative terms. Rome, the capital of Italy, has the biggest population whilst Cagliari has the smallest. Looking at the data in Figure 2, it is quite clear that, at least in terms of stocks, a clear South-North divide emerges. Northern MCs are, albeit with a certain level of heterogeneity, characterised by more numerous populations and a more substantial proportion of foreign population. This implies a greater capacity for attracting immigration flows from abroad and, most probably, from other parts of the country. For all MCs, the total proportion of the foreign population equals 8.8%. The MCs of Southern Italy record lower values for this indicator, with Palermo in the last place (2.2%). On the other hand, the MCs of Central and Northern Italy (with only one exception) record higher values, with Milan ranked in first place (14.1%). If we bear in mind that, between the non-Southern MCs, the lowest value of this indicator is recorded by Genoa (8.7%), which is quite higher than the highest value recorded by a Southern MC (Reggio Calabria, 5.8%), the divide is clear.

Obviously, what we observe in terms of stocks can vary significantly from what we can observe in terms of flows and, therefore, in relation to the demographic dynamics.

Name	Number of municipalities	Region	Macrogeographical area	Resident Population (AV.)		Foreigners over tot. population (%)
				Italians	Foreigners	
Turin	312	Piedmont	North-west	2,019,973	210,973	9.5
Genoa	67	Liguria	North-west	754,684	71,510	8.7
Milan	133	Lombardy	North-west	2,806,196	459,131	14.2
Venice	44	Veneto	North-east	762,614	86,215	10.2
Bologna	55	Emilia-Romagna	North-east	902,121	119,380	11.7
Florence	41	Tuscany	Centre	872,051	123,466	12.4
Rome	121	Lazio	Centre	3,744,257	509,057	12.0
Naples	92	Campania	South	2,906,607	127,803	4.2
Bari	41	Apulia	South	1,189,090	41,115	3.3
Reggio Calabria	97	Calabria	South	500,065	30,902	5.8
Palermo	82	Sicily	Islands	1,188,845	34,143	2.8
Messina	108	Sicily	Islands	585,900	27,987	4.6
Catania	58	Sicily	Islands	1,037,759	34,875	3.3
Cagliari	17	Sardinia	Islands	406,889	15,951	3.8
Total	1,268			19,677,051	1,892,508	8.8

Figure 2. PThe 14MCs. Some geo-demographic characteristics (2020).

Fuente: Our elaboration on Istat data. (a) Geographical units refer to 2019.
In Figure 1 red polygons identify the centre of each MC.

Every MC has its own structure both in terms of territory and economy. Concerning the degree of urbanization (European classification criteria) of the 14 metropolitan cities, the municipalities with the highest urbanization density classified as "densely populated cities or areas" are only the capital municipalities (9,1%); the municipalities with an intermediate level of density represent 44.6% of the total municipalities of MCs while the remaining 46.2% of the municipalities are classified as rural or sparsely populated areas (Istat, 2023). Naples records the highest percentage of municipalities with high urbanization density (54.3%); Bari is the metropolitan city in which the incidence of municipalities with intermediate density (87.8%) is the most significant, while Reggio Calabria predominates for the highest incidence of rural areas (74.2%).Regarding the economic dynamics, the values of the employment rate reveal the traditional differences between the North and South of Italy, showing the persistent disadvantage of the labour market of the southern cities and the stronger economic dynamism of the northern ones, At the beginning of 2020, the highest employment rates for population aged between 25 and 64 concern the MCs of the North and Centre where Bologna predominates (77%) followed by Milan (76%) and Florence (76%). On the contrary, the employment rates in the southern MCs are lower than in the rest of Italy: Palermo dominates negatively with an employment rate of 49% followed by Catania and Naples that present values equal to approximately 50% of the population (Istat, 2023).Moreover, it should be highlighted that the labour market of the core cities (urban centres) is more attractive and absorbs a greater share of the available workforce compared to that of the neighbouring municipalities. Thus, in the capital municipalities just over 66% of the population is employed, while this value is reduced in the municipalities further away from the city centre (Istat, 2023).

DATA AND METHODS

In this study, we use demographic stock and flow data from the inter-censual population reconstruction and the official population balance for 2019 and 2020 released by Istat to assess population dynamics (births, deaths, in-migration and out-migration) at the municipal level. These data have been disaggregated by country of citizenship, allowing us to explore the distribution of the population of Italians and foreigners in the central (centres) and in the peripheral municipalities (suburbs) of the MCs, as well as to analyse the flows of the natural and migratory component of their growth within these two types of geographical units.

To better understand the demographic dynamics in the municipalities, we measure the distinct contribution of their two components to population growth. In this way, the decomposition of the population growth can display how the change in the population size of two groups, Italian and foreign, for both units of the metropolitan area (core-city and suburbs) can be broken down into natural change and migration, each having two subcomponents: births and deaths; arrivals and departures. In this study, these last ones were further divided into intraregional and international components. In this way, we replicate the method used by Buonomo et al.(2024) and based on Preston et al. (2001). More specifically, the average annual growth rate (r) is decomposed into the natural increase (ni) and the net migration, both internal (nmi) and international (nma—where 'a' stands for abroad), according to the specification below:

$$r = \frac{\ln \frac{N(t)}{N(0)}}{t} = \frac{(N(t) - N(0))}{\frac{t(N(t)-M(0))}{\ln\left(\frac{N(t)}{N(0)}\right)}} = \frac{{}_{\Delta t}NI + {}_{\Delta t}NMI + {}_{\Delta t}NMA}{\frac{t(N(t)-M(0))}{\ln\left(\frac{N(t)}{N(0)}\right)}} = ni + nmi + nma.$$

Total population growth rate (r) was calculated as the ratio of population change in the time interval considered (N(t) − N(0)) to the number of person years lived by the population in that interval (t*(N(t) − N(0)) / ln(N(t)/N(0)). Similarly, the rate of natural increase (ni) and those of net migration (nmi+ nma) are calculated by placing person years at the denominator of the equation. Equality between the overall rate of increase and the sum of the natural and migration rates is thus ensured (see note 1 at the end of the paper). In the following section, we present the results of this exercise in central municipalities for both Italian and foreign populations. The rates are per thousand people.

RESULTS

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN AND FOREIGN POPULATION IN MCS

The analysis of the spatial distribution of natives and foreigners within the MCs reveals interesting heterogeneity (Figure 3). If we refer to the MCs as a whole, we notice that Italians are more concentrated in the suburbs (57.6%), while foreigners, on the contrary, are more concentrated in the centres (56.6%). The analysis for individual MCs highlights some distinguishing elements compared to this general pattern. For example, Italians are more concentrated in the city centres of Genoa (67.8%), Rome (65.7%), and Palermo (52.4%). Likewise, foreigners diverge in many cases from the general pattern that sees them more concentrated in the centres; indeed, in Venice, Bologna, Florence, Naples, Bari, Reggio Calabria, Messina and Catania, they are more concentrated in the suburbs, albeit with varying intensities. In general, it seems that if we refer to each MC, the settlement patterns of Italians and foreigners tend to converge in the sense that where the proportion of Italians residing in the centre is higher, it is also so for foreigners, and *vice versa*, albeit with different intensities, as evident from Figure 3. This aspect is verified in 11 out of 14 cases; Only the MCs of Cagliari, Milan, and Turin deviate from this empirical evidence, showing a common residential pattern: Italians are less concentrated in the centre compared to foreigners. In Cagliari, the share of nationals residing in the centre is 35.0%, while the share of foreigners is 55.1%; the values for Turin are 36.3% and 58.6%, respectively, while for Milan they are 41.0% and 55.9%. In conclusion, when considering at an aggregate level, i.e. referring to the MCs as a whole, there emerges a clear element of differentiation between the settlement geographies of Italians and foreigners which, however, is greatly attenuated in relation to each MC.

It seems, therefore, that the element of greater diversity pertains more to the levels (the intensities) of the different distributions than to the patterns.

The spatial distribution of the population is correlated with the pattern of where people live for decisions or preferences that may be related to multiple factors (Bitonti et al. 2023).The data described so far show that foreigners tend to prefer the central part of the metropolitan area in Rome and in some Northern MCs like Turin, Genoa and Milan where the dynamism of production processes and the variety of economic sectors provide greater employment opportunities. In contrast, peripheral contexts are more attractive in the South and in some MCs of the Islands (Messina and Catania) most probably because foreigners are employed in specific sectors that often replace the local population (Benassi et al. 2020).
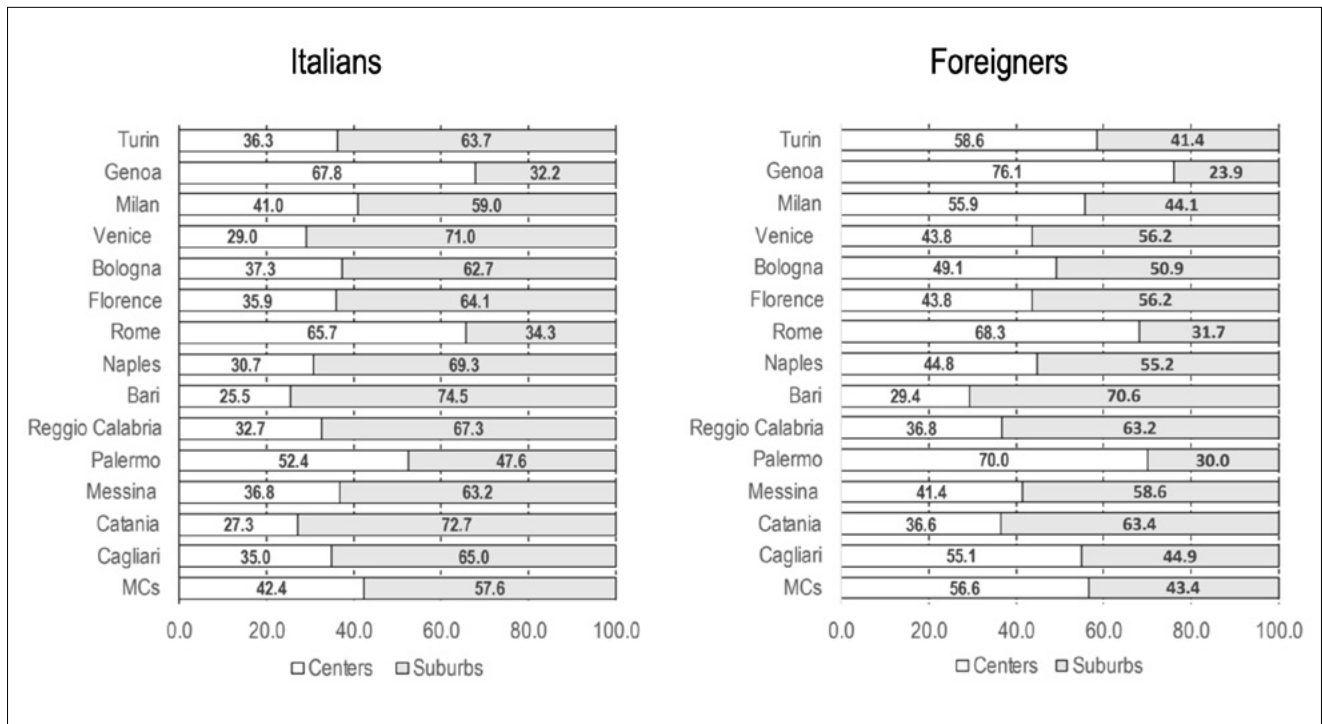

Figure 3. Resident population (%) In the centres and in the peripheries of each MC. Italians and foreigners.
Fuente: Our elaboration on Istat data.

ITALIAN AND FOREIGN POPULATION CHANGE IN MCS

A dual dynamic clearly emerges from Figure 4 related to the population change of the MCs for the period 2011-2020. Indeed, considering all the MCs, the Italian population declines, while the opposite happens for the foreign population. However, we find some exceptions in this scheme. As for the Italian population, in Northern Italy, 2 MCs recorded a positive change in the resident population (Milan and Bologna) and in Rome in Central Italy. All other MCs record negative average annual variations in the Italian population whether they are located in the North (where the case of Genoa is emblematic), the South (with Reggio Calabria that records the highest negative variation) or the Islands (where Messina is the MC with the highest decline of the population). As said, if we consider the foreign population, we have a completely different situation with all the MCs that record positive variation, although with various intensities.

The analysis of the demographic dynamics between the geographic units composing a metropolitan area, centres and suburbs, cannot ignore the geographic differences among the metropolitan cities. The demographic importance of a centre in relation to the periphery also depends on its surface area and the number of municipalities it includes. However, when comparing Italians and foreigners, it should be noted that the variation in the foreign population growth is positive in all MCs and concerns indistinctly both centres and suburbs, even if it shows, on average, higher values in the former rather than in the peripheral municipalities. In some central municipalities of the metropolitan southern cities, the foreign population nearly doubled from 2011 to 2020 (as in Naples and Cagliari) or at least grew by more than 50% (Bari and Catania).
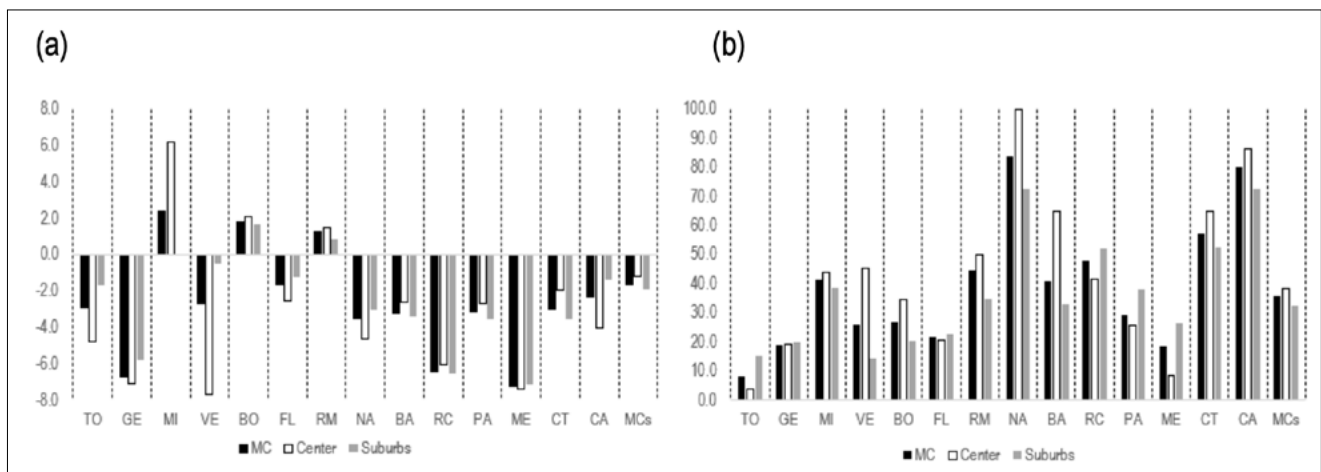
Figure 4. Population change (%) in MCs. Italians (a) and foreigners (b) (2011-2020).
Fuente: Our elaboration on Istat data.

This evidence clearly shows that the negative percentage variation of the population living in the decreasing MCs is exclusively attributable to a loss in the Italian population for the period observed. More specifically, in the Northern metropolitan contexts experiencing this shrinkage, the Italian population decreases more rapidly in the centres than in the suburbs, whilst in the southern ones, the most intense loss of population alternatively affects centres such as suburbs. Milan, Bologna, and Rome are the only three metropolitan cities that have experienced a positive variation in the total population due to the growth of both the Italian and foreign components. On the contrary, Florence, which is also concerned by a population increase, shows discordant signs with respect to the percentage variation since the foreign population has grown, and the Italian population has decreased over the period observed both in the centres and in the suburbs.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE OF ITALIANS AND FOREIGNERS IN THE CENTRE OF MCS

To characterise the demographic dynamics in the MCs, this section presents the relative contribution of demographic rates (natural increase and net migration) to the variations in population growth. Due to limited space, in this first

contribution, we present the results of the decomposition approach only for the MCs' central municipalities, separately for foreigners and Italians. The results (Figure 5) appear to be crispy, and they are summarised below. Firstly, while Italians' natural growth rates are negative in all metropolitan centres, exceeding -5 per thousand in some northern cities (Turin, Genoa, Venice, Bologna, Firenze), on the contrary, those concerning foreigners are all positive and exhibit very high values. These data confirm the widespread drop in fertility in Italy, which substantially concerns native couples and appears to interest the whole territory, as widely documented in the literature (Mencarini and Vignoli, 2018). At the same time, this result indicates that the foreign population residing in the MCs' central municipalities does not seem to experience, at least in the period considered here, difficulty in having children. So, it appears that urban contexts play a different role in shaping the fertility behaviour of the Italian and foreign populations (Benassi and Carella, 2023c). Secondly, the rates of net international migration, which refer to the foreign population, are always positive in all the centres of the MCs, while they are always negative for the Italian population, albeit with low values.
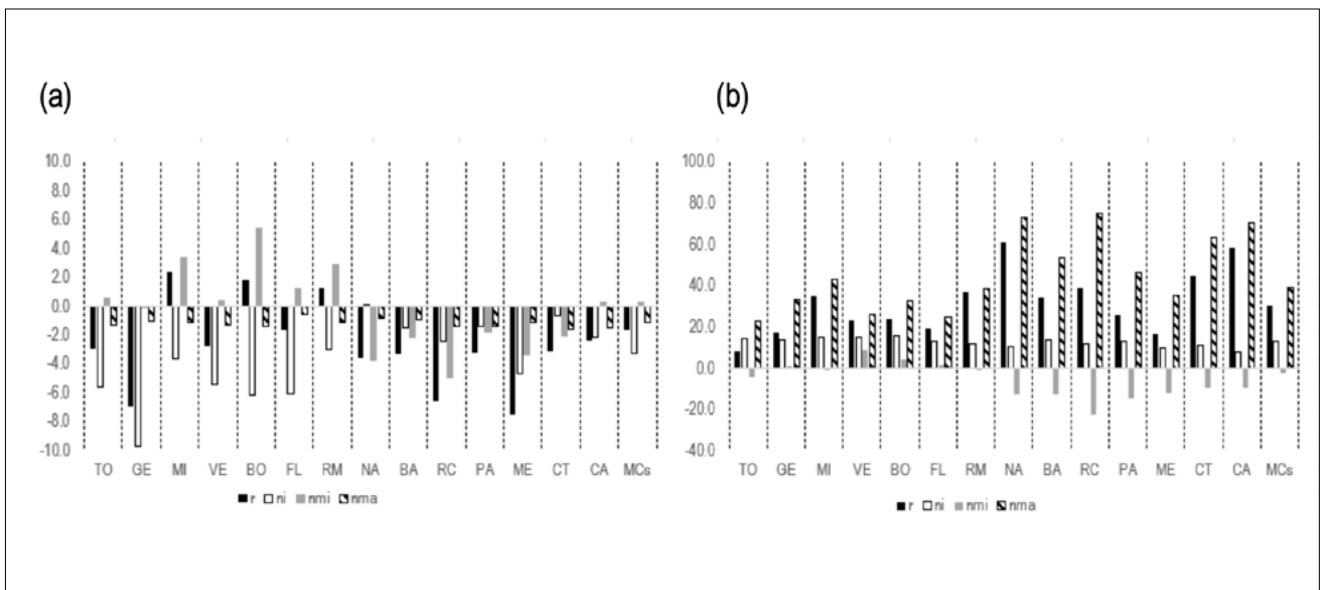
Figure 5. Population growth rate(r), natural rate(ni) and net migration rate (nmi and nma) in MCs. Italian(a) and foreign (b) population (2011-2020). The rates are per thousand people.

Fuente: Our elaboration on Istat data.

These results confirm a settlement of foreigners, which may also be permanent in some metropolitan cities, and still prove the persistence of Italians moving abroad, even if the negative values of the rates remain contained during the decade observed. Thirdly, the internal net migration rate presents discordant values for the foreign and Italian populations. Concerning foreigners, it exhibits negative values in Turin in the North and in all the central cities of Southern Italy, where it exceeds -10 per thousand in 4 cities (Naples, Bari, Catania, Palermo) and -22 per thousand in Reggio Calabria. It is apparent that, in this macro-area, metropolitan cities still identify contexts of transit or temporary residence for foreigners who often prefer to re-migrate to more attractive urban areas in northern and central Italy. The internal net migration rates calculated for Italians show the traditional division between North and South regarding intraregional and between-region migration: outgoing flows continue to characterise the central cities in Southern Italy, while those in the North confirm their role as destination. Finally, a substantial discrepancy between the related demographic dynamics is evident by observing the growth rates disaggregated for the two populations. Indeed, the growth rate of foreigners is always positive as a result of the natural rate, which is equally positive due to an excess of births over deaths and income flows, as proven by the high net rates of international migration. On the contrary, the growth rate of the Italian population is negative everywhere except in Milan, Bologna, and Rome. In these cities, the increasing growth rate of the Italian population benefits only from the contribution coming from internal migration from other municipalities. Instead, the growth in the total population residing in these municipalities comes mostly from direct immigration from abroad and, to a lesser extent, from internal migration (Buonomo et al.,2024).

Conclusions

This article aimed to provide a preliminary analysis into how the different demographic processes contribute to population change in metropolitan cities of Italy. To better understand the role of these processes, such as natural increase and net migration (internal and international), we used a straight forward methodological approach, already applied in other studies but now focusing on recent data and considering Italian and foreign populations as two different groups. Results show that Italians and foreigners not only present different settlement patterns in the metropolitan cities but also strongly contrasting dynamics, which evidently can produce different impacts on the spatial configurations of the territories. Indeed, unlike Italians, who are more concentrated on average in the suburbs, foreigners prefer to live in the corecities of the metropolitan areas in the North, while they choose the suburbs in the South. Italians are decreasing in all metropolitan contexts, unlike foreigners, who have experienced a significant increase affecting both centres and suburbs. Furthermore, by decomposing the components of the population growth rate, we have found that the natural increase is always positive for foreigners and negative for Italians, which implies that where the population is rising, it is due exclusively to migrations from abroad and, to a lesser extent, to internal ones. The latter are mostly produced by foreigners or Italians residing in the South. Therefore, the demographic decline of the metropolitan cities, as well as that experienced by other urban contexts, seems to be the exclusive prerogative of the Italian population.

Besides this, the results of our study also reveal interesting similarities in the population dynamics between Italians and foreigners. They refer to their internal migration, which appears to follow the same patterns. This evidence is also confirmed by a high correlation between the rates of internal migration (nmi) of Italians and foreigners that measure it (coefficient +0.81). Our analyses show that there are: (i)centres of the MCs that are attractive to both Italians and foreigners. This happens in Northern Italy, where the contexts (with the exception of Turin and Genoa) almost always present positive internal migration rates for both population groups; (ii) centres that reject Italians and foreigners. This occurs in Southern Italy, where the core-city of the MCsloses both Italian and foreign populations in terms of internal migration flows.

To sum up, the demographic dynamics delineated so far do not lead us to glimpse a "real" divide between the North and South of Italy. On the contrary, in line with the results documented by Buonomo et al. 2024, our findings fuel the consolidation of territorial differences, drawing a scenario in which the economic and administrative Italian capitals (Milan and Rome), jointly with afew economically dynamic cities, identify the only increasing pole, while the remaining metropolitan cities seem to assume the configuration of shrinking territories.

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