

PAOLO MALANIMA

Italian Cities 1300-1800.  
A quantitative approach \*

1. *Problems*

The publication in the Eighties by Jan De Vries<sup>1</sup> and Paul Bairoch<sup>2</sup> of two ample databases on the population of European cities marked an important step forward in the study of urbanization in the continent before the Industrial Revolution. Not only in this field of study, however! The two reconstructions of urban history are a source of many indisputable suggestions for the research on European pre-industrial economy.

In regard to the criteria, De Vries' database includes 379 cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, while the one by Bairoch encompasses 2,206 centres with at least 5,000. The geographical area is in part different since Bairoch comprises the continent within the contemporary borders, while De Vries' work embraces «that portion of Europe that might best be described as Latin Christendom. Russia and Orthodox Europe are excluded».<sup>3</sup> Some differences in chronology exist too. Bairoch's data concern the centuries between 1300 and 1850, while De Vries limits himself to the early modern period: from 1500 to 1800.

The results also confront the researcher with two different perspectives.<sup>4</sup> The urban percentage in particular, that is the main statistical result in this type of research, suggests two different readings of European urbanization (table 1).

This different course may be explained in part by the rise

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TAB. 1. *Urban percentage of total European population 1500-1800 (according to De Vries and Bairoch)*

	De Vries (> 10,000)	De Vries (> 5000)	Bairoch (> 5000)
1500	5.6	9.7	10.3
1600	7.6	10.8	11.7
1700	9.2	11.9	11.4
1800	10.0	13.0	11.9

Sources: J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit., pp. 30, 39, 348; P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit., p. 258.

of big cities in early modern Europe, and by the slower advance of the small centres under 10,000 inhabitants. Urbanization in the continent was deeply influenced by the strong increase of a few big cities, often capitals, in Northern Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward. Even on the common ground of cities with at least 5,000 inhabitants, however, a divergence exists. While Bairoch's data suggest a slow increase or a basic stability, De Vries' series propose a more mobile perspective. In Bairoch's case the impression we get is that of a stagnating, or hardly growing, economy, while in De Vries' we are induced to suppose the presence of major economic changes, particularly when we look at cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants; not only at those, however. The almost doubling of the European urban percentage in De Vries' series induces to infer the presence of important advances in agriculture, in productivity, and of changes in the economic structure, even if only in some Northern regions of the continent.

Italian urban development is certainly not the least known. The role and weight of cities in Italian history has been the object of debates and discussions for a long time. Yet little has been done to support these discussions with quantitative elements. The knowledge of the size of the cities cannot be considered as a secondary aspect of the picture both when we examine the economy, and the politics, society and culture. In this field, as in many others, historical research may profit much more by a modest collection of data than by everlasting discussions on methods and terminology.

The purpose of the following pages is to prepare this first quantitative collection of data on a central theme of the Italian history and to stress some preliminary lines of the urban

evolution during the five centuries from 1300 to 1800. A wider discussion of the Italian urbanization is beyond the limits of this preliminary presentation.

## 2. *Criteria*

Obviously the first criterium to define is that of the urban threshold, that is of the boundaries that distinguish urban settlements from the others.<sup>5</sup> On this «quantitative» definition of city and on the choice of an urban threshold for pre-industrial Europe some convergence of opinions actually does exist. Thresholds of 7-800 inhabitants,<sup>6</sup> of 2-3,000, of 5,000 and of 10,000 have been suggested and sometimes adopted in urban demographic research. Some agreement, however, prevails that in early modern Europe «a serviceable definition of urban population (...) is the inhabitants of densely housed settlements of at least 2,000 or 3,000 population».<sup>7</sup> Only seldom, for example in the case of relatively small European regions as The Netherlands and Belgium, has the threshold of 2-3,000 inhabitants been adopted. Usually higher thresholds have been chosen: 5,000 or 10,000 inhabitants. The only reason is the opportunity for data collection: settlements of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants may often escape the database. The choice of an urban level of 5,000 inhabitants, in the following collection of data on Italy as well, is nothing but a simple practical device. We will try to determine and widen this *quantitative* definition of city with the introduction of some *functional* features later.

Even with the exclusion of the centres under this threshold of 5,000 the Italian database here presented includes 407 entries: every entry concerning a city that at least once overcame the level of 5,000 inhabitants during the five centuries between 1300 and 1800. Naturally nothing guarantees, in particular for the earlier centuries, that all the centres with more than 5000 population are actually included. For Southern Italy in particular our quantitative knowledge of the urban populations is often uncertain; especially for the late Middle Ages. We must once again stress the preliminary character of any database on such a wide area as Italy. Every figure, even for the bigger and better known cities, presents margins of uncertainty. The high number of entries may assure, however, the statistical meaning of such an attempt to quantify the urban picture.

Connected with this choice, and different from the one adopted by other researchers,<sup>8</sup> is the decision to exclude from our calculations the figures relating to centres, included in the database, when they do not reach the quantitative threshold of 5,000. Since, assuming this level to define what is urban, we include among cities only the centres exceeding 5,000 people, we must exclude as non-urban the same centres when they, in some periods, are below that number.<sup>9</sup> Otherwise why not also include, besides a centre which dropped from 5 to say 4,000 inhabitants, other settlements of this same size? The difference among the data assembled according to the two criteria is sometimes not entirely negligible.

Other practical, but important, choices are those concerning: 1) the geographical area to encompass; 2) the divisions to introduce within it to assemble and to make the figures we get readable.

As to the geographical area, we confront several possibilities as a consequence of the changeable political boundaries of the Italian peninsula plus the islands over the centuries of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. Discussions on what Italy actually was in the diverse ages have naturally influenced the decisions on this matter. For the most part the practical choice adopted by historians has been that of assuming an extent comprised between a minimum of a little less than 300,000 sq. km. and a maximum of 315,000, according to the inclusion or exclusion of borderline territories such as Nizza, Savoy, the island of Corsica, and Istria. In the following database the area under consideration is Italy within the present borders plus Nizza and Corsica: on the whole 310,000 sq. km.

The second problem naturally presents, in the case of Italy, with its manifold political divisions over time, many more difficulties than the first. Since «macro»-demographic research is always dependent on «political» and «administrative» data, often taking their origins from censuses and tax registers, so demographic space has also always been subdivided according to the political and administrative picture. In some cases, in relation with the problems under examination, the political network may support the economic and demographic network fairly well; sometimes not at all. In particular in demographic studies a division of Italy into North, South, and Islands has been often adopted. In this case, however, the problem arises as to where to locate the

State of the Church which, in the early modern age, encompassed an area between the Po Valley and the Kingdom of Naples, so including a part of the North, a part of the Centre, and a part of the South. To hold this State united means putting together three different geographic, economic and historical realities. The demographic outline emerging from this kind of choice may be misleading in many cases. Since, even if laborious, a division of the State of the Church is not at all impossible,<sup>10</sup> in this study the demographic Italian profile – and not only the urban database – has been articulated in two main realities: the Centre-North, or simply the North, from Umbria and Marche – in the present regional borders – included, to the Alps; and the South-Islands, or simply the South, from Latium to the end of the peninsula including Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. Whenever possible a further subdivision has been introduced in:

*North*: Piedmont (with Nizza), Lombardy, Venetia, Liguria, Emilia Romagna;

*Centre*: Tuscany, Umbria, Marche;

*South*: Latium, Abruzzi, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria;

*Islands*: Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and minor islands.

Other criteria assumed in the following database have been: 1) the choice of collecting data only once in a century, since in most cases data for minor cities are scarce and even for the main ones it is often impossible to attain more reliable figures within a same century; 2) the choice of calculating the lacking data, or data far from the beginning of the century, through the figures relating to near and better documented cities.

A further warning is that concentrating the attention on a particular region may result in a richer collection of data; so a comparison with other realities may cause an overestimation of the area we are studying. This effect is naturally stronger for the late Middle Ages because of the incompleteness of quantitative information at an aggregate level for several regions of the continent.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. A Synthetic View

Gloomy tones have often prevailed in the reconstructions of pre-industrial Italian economy – and not only of the pre-industrial one. The cities have been involved in the darkness

dominating these investigations. After an age of splendour during the first Renaissance, cities entered a period of decline while industrial and commercial activities weakened. The economy underwent a structural change: a process of «ruralization» took place while the agriculture strengthened its position in the economy. Several studies have contributed in these last three decades to modify this view in regard to the secondary and tertiary sectors. A quantitative approach may help put the cities, and perhaps not only the cities, in a different light. Let us start with the absolute values of the Italian urban population and with some comparisons on a European scale. Absolute values may introduce, better than relative ones, a first outline on the importance of the urban network for a particular area.

If we take the centres with at least 5,000 people into account, Italy was by far the European country with the biggest urban population around 1800: 4,812,000 inhabitants lived in these centres in Italy (table 2). France held the second position. Despite its wider extent and larger population, the difference with Italy was of 1,200,000 urban inhabitants less. The United Kingdom was third with about 1,500,000 inhabitants less. In 1800 Italy still held its urban primacy, as in 1300 and as before.

This urban primacy did not exist only in regard to the small cities. In the case of big cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, Italian superiority was even stronger (table 3): at least 3,318,000 inhabitants against the 2,382,000 in France and the 1,870,000 in England and Wales. The primacy in the big cities was no longer, in 1800, as strong as in 1500, when Italian urban population was 3 times that of France and 23 times that of England and Wales. The superiority, however, still persisted.

If we accept the estimate of 4,000 centres in the world with a population of more than 5,000 inhabitants in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>12</sup> the Italian percentage was 5-6. Already in 1300 there was in Italy one centre with more than 5,000 inhabitants every 50 km. and in 1800 every 35. In this case, too, Italian superiority was stronger in the biggest cities (table 4).

The Italian urban percentage between 1300 and 1800 was perhaps lower only than the one of countries such as Belgium, in some periods, The Netherlands, from 1600, and, in the late Middle Ages, Spain.<sup>13</sup> If we accept the old estimate of 11,000,000 inhabitants in 1300,<sup>14</sup> for the Italian population, the urban index reaches the high level of 23.4 percent.

TAB. 2. *Urban population of some European countries; cities with at least 5,000 inhabitants in 1300 and 1800 ('000s)*

	1300	1800
Italy	2,571	4,812
Spain	1,720	2,540
France	1,280	3,650
Germany	830	2,020
Belgium	280	650
United Kingdom	220	3,370
The Netherlands	110	730

*Sources:* for Italy Appendix 1; for the other countries P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit., p. 259.

TAB. 3. *Urban population of some European countries; cities with at least 10,000 inhabitants in 1500 and 1800 ('000s)*

	1500	1800
Italy	1,339	3,318
France	688	2,382
Spain	414	1,165
Germany	385	1,353
Belgium	295	548
The Netherlands	150	604
England, Wales	80	1,870

*Sources:* for Italy Appendix 1; for the other countries J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit., p. 30.

TAB. 4. *Number of cities with at least 10,000 inhabitants in 1500 and 1800*

	1500	1800
Italy	51	142
France	32	78
Germany	23	53
Spain	20	34
Belgium	12	12
The Netherlands	11	19
England, Wales	5	44

*Sources:* for Italy Appendix 1; for the other countries J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit., p. 29.

If we take the more recent and preferable estimate of 12,500,000 inhabitants,<sup>15</sup> the urban percentage drops to the still high level of 20.6 percent.

For 1300 the estimates present, in any case, a speculative character, given the uncertainty of the data for that epoch. In 1800, if we accept, only for the moment,<sup>16</sup> the figure of

TAB. 5. *Urban percentage in some European countries in 1300 and 1800 (cities with at least 5,000 inhabitants)*

	1300	1800
Belgium	22.4	21.7
Spain	21.5	19.5
Italy	20.6	26.6
The Netherlands	13.8	34.1
France	8.0	12.9
Germany	7.9	9.4
United Kingdom	4.4	20.8

*Sources:* for Italy Appendix 1; for the other countries P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit., p. 259. The similarity for 1300 between the estimate in Bairoch, Batou, Chèvre, and mine – 20.8 and 20.6 respectively – derives from the lower figure for the Italian population assumed in P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit.

TAB. 6. *Urban percentage in Italy from 1300 and 1800 in cities with at least 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants*

	> 5,000	> 10,000
1300	20.6	14.7
1400	13.9	8.7
1500	21.9	14.9
1600	23.6	16.8
1700	22.3	14.7
1800	26.6	18.3

*Source:* Appendix 1.

4,812,000 people living in centres with more than 5,000 inhabitants, the Italian position had progressed to more than 26 percent, compared to 1300 (table 5).<sup>17</sup>

Leaving aside, for the moment, a more careful examination of the trend, the long-term movement of the urban percentage already reveals a high level in the late Middle Ages and a slow, but continuous progress during the following centuries (table 6).<sup>18</sup>

Two periods of regression both as a consequence of the plague are, however, discernible. The first took place between 1300 and 1400, in the age, that is, of the Black Death; the second during the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of two heavy plagues, in 1629-30 in the North and Centre and in 1656-57 in the South: 20 percent of the Italian population disappeared as a consequence of the two epidemics.<sup>19</sup> The weak decline or apparent relative stability of both the absolute values and the urban index in the 17<sup>th</sup> century de-



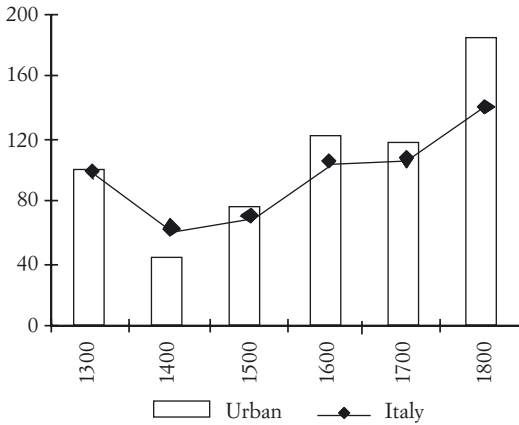


FIG. 1. Italian population and urban population (1300 = 100).

rives from the recovery in the last decades, able to compensate for the losses between 1629 and 1657. After this last date, with the disappearance of the plague in Italy as well as in the rest of Europe, urban population and urban percentage progress again.

The decline of urbanization in the late Middle Ages and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century marks a difference between this series and the one proposed by Bairoch, Batou and Chèvre. The latter reveals a progress from 20.8 to 24.1 between 1300 and 1400 and a stability on 22.6 between 1600 and 1700. The data here proposed shed new light on late medieval urbanization. There is no doubt that in Italy the consequences of the plagues were always heavier for the urban than for the rural populations (figure 1).

What a comparison of the series concerning the urban and the whole population of Italy reveals is the increasing weight of the cities when the entire population progresses and the decreasing weight when it declines (table 7). Both the rates of increase and decrease are stronger in the cities.

The manifold presence of numerous and big urban knots is correlated in Italy, as elsewhere, with a high demographic density. The increase of population always involves a higher concentration. For a comparison let us remember that in all of Europe (without Russia) the demographic density was 14 inhabitants per sq. km. in 1300, 17.8 in 1600 and 29.2 in 1800 and that, at these same dates, the average urban index was 9.5, 11.7 and 11.9.<sup>20</sup> In the leading economic region,

TAB. 7. *Italian population ('000s), Italian demographic density (per sq. km.) and urban population (> 5,000) from 1300 and 1800*

	Italy	Density	Cities
1300	12,500	40.3	2,571
1400	8,000	25.8	1,115
1500	9,000	29.0	1,972
1600	13,273	42.8	3,134
1700	13,481	43.4	3,012
1800	18,092	58.3	4,812

Sources: Appendix 1, my estimates for density; and, for the Italian population, L. Del Panta, M. Livi Bacci, G. Pinto, E. Sonnino, *La popolazione italiana*, cit. (with some marginal changes).

then, both the density and the urban percentage were, almost always, twofold.

In this long-run perspective it would be interesting to place these five centuries in relation to the earlier and later evolution of the urban population. While it is relatively easy to prolong the series up to industrialization, it is possible only to advance some speculative indications on the previous trend (figure 2).

In Italy, as in other European countries during the last two centuries, while population rapidly rises, the urban percentage rises much more. Urban weight strengthens. While the urban percentage had mostly remained around 20-25 percent between 1300 and 1800, in 1900 it attains 40 percent, and in 1990 a little less than 70.<sup>21</sup>

In regard to the previous centuries any attempt at a quantification of the urban population cannot be anything but a simple conjecture. We could suppose that, say, around 1000, when Italian population is estimated at around 5-5.5 million people, the urban index had to be lower than in 1400, when it was 13.9 percent of the entire Italian population of about 8 million. By means of a regression we reach the value of 11.5 for 1000. Around 1000 many of the 199 cities that in 1300 had overcome the urban threshold of 5,000 inhabitants must have stayed beneath. This figure of about 10 percent,<sup>22</sup> and an absolute value of half million people, does not seem impossible and fits the scanty quantitative evidence we get on the Italian cities for that period. Italy has been supposed to have had then 9-10 cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants.<sup>23</sup>

Around 1000 the urban distribution of the main cities in

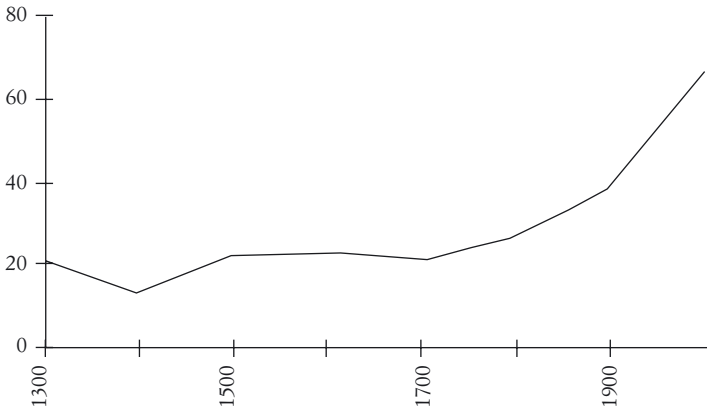


FIG. 2. Urban percentage in Italy (1300-1995).

the Italian space was different from the one in 1300. While in 1300 the big cities in the Centre and in the North dominated the Italian urban scene, in 1000 the urban balance was displaced towards the South, the most flourishing part of Italy, then under Arab and Byzantine domain. The biggest cities were Napoli, Amalfi, Roma, Bari, Palermo, which has been estimated to have had as many as 350,000 people.<sup>24</sup> In the North, Genoa, Pisa, Ravenna, Ancona and above all Venice, the only cities keeping up strong relations with the developed world, in the Southern Mediterranean, were the most populated. In the interior large cities such as Pavia, Lucca, Milano, Verona were only a few in the backward world North of Rome. The balance between «developed» and «backward» regions was then just the opposite of the one prevailing in the following centuries.

An urban percentage of 10 around 1000 was however a level the other European regions were very far from. The doubling of the urban percentage from 1000 and 1300 is consequence of the economic expansion that Italy – and particularly the Northern part – experienced in the late Middle Ages. The Italian economic leadership revealed itself in an urban rise stronger than the one North of the Alps. On the other hand this relatively high level of urbanization was nothing but a kind of continuation of the urban leadership already held by Italy in Roman times; at least in relation to Northern European levels.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. *A functional definition*

A quantitative outline as the one just presented risks to be misleading and even unacceptable: an example of a «blind» quantification. It may be useful only as a first approach to modify afterwards. Even if till now we have preferred to use the term *centre* for the small settlements, reserving the term of *city* only for the main ones, a city cannot be defined only in quantitative terms. Such a distinction between a city and other kinds of settlement may even become deceptive. We now need to integrate the former definition with the *functional* characters that distinguish a true urban centre. A city is, in fact, not only a relatively wide settlement, but also, and more importantly, a settlement whose inhabitants are mostly involved in activities different from those the peasants of the countryside are involved in. A city, to be a city indeed, cannot be a large village with a population of peasants. It must be a settlement inhabited by craftsmen, merchants, shopkeepers, political officials, sometimes the court, soldiers, and always the clergy. The percentage of peasants, more or less always present in the cities, is relatively small. This is the case with most European cities. When a settlement exceeds 2,000 inhabitants or a little more, it normally, but not always, assumes the aspect of a city and the typically urban groups tend to prevail.

Only in the Centre and in the North the Italian model of city reveals its functional character, that is the inner occupational structure peculiar of a true city system. In the Centre and in the North, as far as we know from the occupations prevailing in many centres, about 15-30 percent of the population was involved both in providing foodstuffs and in the primary sector.<sup>26</sup> Of this percentage only less than 5 percent was formed, however, by agricultural workers – often gardeners – the others being shopkeepers, conveyers and so on.<sup>27</sup> In the South, and especially in Sicily, it was different. Here big agricultural centres of thousands of peasants were relatively common already in the late Middle Ages. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century this agrarian character of many large settlements deepened. These agro-towns began to grow up – it has been said for Sicily – as mushrooms.<sup>28</sup> The process intensified in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>29</sup> The result was the formation of many big agricultural centres with more than 5,000 and sometimes more than 10,000 people.

In Sicily we know that during the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centu-

ries a wide process of colonization took place in the Western part and gave origin to about a hundred new centres, sometimes big centres, after the impulse of the local greatest landowners, often feudal lords. In 1800, on the whole Italian figure of 368 centres with at least 5,000 inhabitants, 104, 28 percent, were in Sicily; 70 percent were in the Southern part of the peninsula and the islands. In 1881 only 12 percent of the Sicilian population lived scattered in the countryside or in small villages; another 88 percent inhabited big towns of more than 500 inhabitants.<sup>30</sup> If we consider these Sicilian agro-towns as true cities, the island could boast, in 1800, the highest urban percentage in Europe, higher than the ones of countries such as The Netherlands and England: more than 50 percent.

North of Latium, on the contrary, the agricultural population lived mostly scattered in the countryside and the cities were inhabited by true urban populations. The spread peasant habitat is peculiar, with only a few exceptions, of this part of the peninsula. It is not easy to «purify» our urban percentages from the crowd of Southern peasants living within the walls. What is certain is that we must distinguish two Italian urban networks: the first in the Centre and in the North; the other in the South and in the Islands. To keep all our data together, as we have done till now, risks giving a deceptive impression of the Italian network of cities.<sup>31</sup>

## 5. *North and South*

Among the several regional differences worth examining in the Italian model of urbanization, three seem to be of particular interest:

1. the level;
2. the movement;
3. the structure.

We will only try to sketch some general lines.

### 5.1. *The level*

As to the level of urbanization, in 1300 it appears to be particularly high in the Centre and in the North. Even if we lack quantitative evidence for the previous period, as we have already seen, during the 2-3 centuries before 1300 the biggest Italian cities were located for the most part in the South and

TAB. 8. *Population ('000s) and urban percentage (> 5,000 and > 10,000 inhabitants) in the Centre and North*

	Population	> 5,000	% > 5,000	> 10,000	% > 10,000
1300	7,750	1,668	21.5	1,394	18.0
1400	4,720	835	17.7	583	12.4
1500	5,310	1,147	21.6	871	16.4
1600	7,828	1,484	19.0	1,155	14.8
1700	8,051	1,411	17.5	1,073	13.3
1800	10,212	1,884	18.4	1,533	15.0

Source: Appendix 1.

in Sicily. In the Centre and in the North only some maritime cities and very few in the interior had attained a prominent position. In 1300 the picture is completely different. The biggest cities are now in the Centre and in the North and not only along the coasts, but also inland.<sup>32</sup> We are before a *multipolar structure* characterized by many big centres not far from each other. There are Venice and Genoa, but also Milan, Florence, Bologna, Siena, Brescia, Cremona, Padova, Verona, Pisa... The urban index reaches values of more than 21 percent for the cities with at least 5,000 inhabitants, and 18 percent if we consider the bigger centres (table 8).<sup>33</sup>

Taking the possibilities of underregistration into account, it would not seem far from reality to infer, for this part of the peninsula, an urban percentage, for cities with at least 5,000 people, between 20 and 25. Perhaps only in Flanders, Brabant and Holland the level of medieval urbanization is comparable to the Northern-Italian one. All the other regions of Europe are far from this level. They usually stay below 10. The European average calculated by Bairoch is, in 1300, 9.5 percent.

Even if it is impossible to distinguish several subregions within this area for the late medieval period, the Centre in particular appears to have held the urban primacy then. For this area an urban index of 26 percent in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was calculated by Russell.<sup>34</sup> If we look at the urban population in centres with more than 5,000 inhabitants, only in Tuscany, with a whole population of 1,100,000-1,200,000 inhabitants<sup>35</sup> and with 335,000 people living in the cities, we reach the percentage of 30.4-27.9. The urban percentage was high in the Venetia too, even if lower than in Tuscany; it was, however superior to that of the Western Po Valley and Piedmont.

TAB. 9. *Population ('000s) and urban percentage (> 5,000 and > 10,000 inhabitants) in the South and Islands*

	Population	> 5,000	% > 5,000	> 10,000	% > 10,000
1300	4,750	903	19.0	446	9.4
1400	3,280	280	8.5	109	3.3
1500	3,690	825	22.4	468	12.7
1600	5,445	1,650	30.3	1,075	19.7
1700	5,430	1,601	29.5	913	16.8
1800	7,880	2,928	37.2	1,785	22.7

*Source:* Appendix 1.

Urban data for the South and the Islands are relatively weaker than for the Centre and for the North. It is hard, moreover, to exclude from the figures we get what is non-urban. Since we do not know the importance of the peasant population in the many diverse realities, there is no correct criterium to quantify what is really urban in this Southern reality. The only possible choice is that of excluding, at least after 1500, the smallest centres: those, that is, between 5 and the 10,000 inhabitants, where the peasant presence was higher. In so doing, however, we do not solve the problem completely, since even in centres with more than 10,000 inhabitants the peasant presence was often not so negligible, and, on the contrary, many settlements with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants display an urban character. The choice of the 10,000 inhabitants threshold may be, therefore, the only – but far from perfect – choice to appreciate what is really urban in the South in particular after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century but not only then.<sup>36</sup> (table 9).

The impression we get from the series concerning the South is that the level of urbanization was also relatively high in this part of Italy during the late Middle Ages; higher than the one of many European regions of the same epoch. It was, however, lower than North of Rome. In particular for the big cities the urban index was half the one of the Centre and the North. If this impression is correct then it is possible to imagine that, in the late Middle Ages, while the cities were increasing in importance and in number in the North, they were losing, on the other hand, their relative importance in the South and in the Islands. The increased quantitative importance from the 16<sup>th</sup> century cannot authorise us to speak of a true urban rush, but only of the rise of big settlements or big «urban villages» in regions of concentrated habitat.

## 5.2. *The movement*

Even if a comparison between the Northern and Southern urban movements during the centuries cannot be but cautious, the impression we get is that of a scissor movement. In the long-run, urbanization is losing ground in the Centre and in the North, and is, on the contrary, growing in the South and in the Islands. In the Northern part of Italy the loss during the five centuries we are examining may be quantified in 3 percent, both if we look at the big cities and if we include the smallest as well.<sup>37</sup> In the Southern part the urban index, on the contrary, probably doubles in the long-run. Let us consider, however, that a great part of this increase can be explained by the growing importance of Naples. Between 1600 and 1800 Naples alone, the capital of the Kingdom, accounts for some 25 percent of the whole growth.

The explanation of the relative decrease of urbanization in the Centre and in the North in part certainly depends on the decline of the industrial and commercial urban activities after the 16<sup>th</sup> century. While it is not easy to quantify the trend of the commercial activities, in regard to the industrial ones we know that a change and not a true decline took place during the 17<sup>th</sup> century: from the woollen sector to silk, and from the cities to the countryside. While in the late Middle Ages, however, the secondary sector was concentrated mostly in the cities, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, on the contrary, many activities of the silk sector were located outside the urban centres.<sup>38</sup> In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the aggregate product of the industry was, in value, more or less the same as at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup>

As with the urban percentage, even the whole demographic rise was stronger in the South than in the North (ta-

TABLE 10. *Demographic density in all of Italy, in the Centre-North and in the South-Islands 1500-1800 (inhabitants per sq. km.)*

	Italy	Centre-North	South-Islands	South and Sicilia*
1500	29.0	33	25	28
1600	42.8	48	36	44
1700	43.4	50	36	44
1800	58.3	63	53	65

\* Without Sardinia and Corsica.



ble 10). While in Northern Italy the growth between 1700 and 1800 was 27.3 percent, and in the Centre 29.8, in the Kingdom of Naples it was 46.9 and in Sicily and Sardinia 46.7.<sup>40</sup> This time too, as almost always, the demographic increase engendered a more than proportional concentration of people in the cities.

### 5.3. *The structure*

The structure of the two sections of Italy also reveals strong differences. We saw that the urban network North of Rome was based on big cities, as the high urban index for cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants reveals. In the Centre and in the North we can speak, for the late Middle Ages, of a true urban «polycentrism», that is of an urban structure based on some big cities of more or less comparable size and in competition to reach both the economic and the military and political leadership. The urban medieval «outburst» gave place to many centres well adapted to a geographically fragmented environment and able to exploit many different sources of wealth. The strength of these cities brought about the formation of larger political entities: 5-6 relatively big regional states surrounded by others of small dimensions.

This political and economic fragmentation was never overcome in the early modern period. Still at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Northern Italian network of cities was based on several relatively big cities. Yet none exceeded 150,000 inhabitants. In some regions north of the Alps an *urban hierarchy* was in progress, based on big capitals, on some intermediate centres and many small cities and towns. A spatial specialization was taking place within the more complex political and economic organisms. In Northern Italy nothing of the kind took place.

Some similarity with the North European developments appears, in this case as in others, in Southern Italy. Here a structure began to strengthen from the 16<sup>th</sup> century based on a big capital, Naples, quickly increasing to reach the dimension of some Northern European capitals and even more; on some relatively big centres such as Palermo, Messina, Rome; and on a lot of small towns.

The log-normal distribution clearly reveals the stability of a multipolar spatial structure in the North from 1300 to

1800 and the formation of an urban hierarchy in the South (Appendixes 2, 3, 4, 5).<sup>41</sup>

Since the formation of urban hierarchies has sometimes been shown as an example of «maturity», while the absence of hierarchy has been considered as proof of «immaturity» or backwardness, we ought to conclude that at the beginning of modern development there was in Italy an «immature» urban system, in the North, and a «mature» one, in the South. The following growth, anyway, seems not to have been influenced at all by the degree of maturity of these urban structures.

### 6. *An outline*

The first provisional conclusion we can draw is that putting together North and South means to assemble two dishomogeneous realities both by looking at the occupational composition, at the movement, and at the urban network. Every attempt at the construction of a unique series means to consider as unitary a dualistic structure. Only because at times, to carry out inter-European comparisons, a unique se-

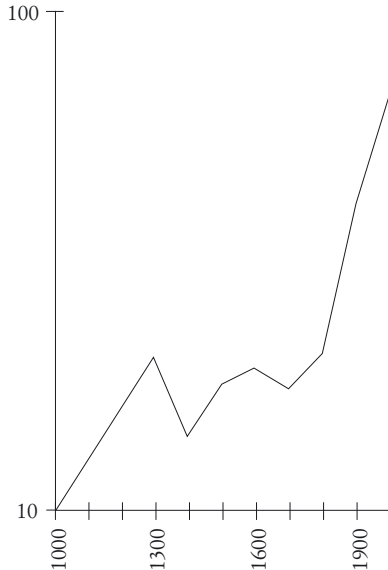


FIG. 3. Urban percentage in Italy 1000-1995 (log. ordinate).

TAB. 11. *Urban percentage in Italy 1000-1990 (cities with at least 5,000 inhabitants, and, for the South and the Islands, from 1500, with more than 10,000)*

1000	[10]
1300	20.6
1400	13.9
1500	17.9
1600	19.3
1700	17.2
1800	20.3
1900	40
1990	67

*Note:* The value in brackets for the year 1000 is nothing but the result of a linear regression. The precise result is 11.5. With the same function ( $u = 1.014P + 6.2122$ , where  $u$  is the urban index and  $P$  the total population) we reach an urban index of 12.8 in 1100 and of 14.8 in 1200.

TAB. 12. *The urban Italian population as percentage of the European urban population*

1300	30.5
1400	13.6
1500	17.7
1600	20.4
1700	16.3
1800	15.9

*Sources:* Data on the European urban population have been taken from P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit. For Italy Appendix 1 (centres with more than 5,000 inhabitants).

ries may be necessary, a quantitative outline may present some utility. As we saw, the only but questionable possibility to give some homogeneity to the series is to consider as urban centres in the South and Islands, from 1500, only the ones with more than 10,000 inhabitants (table 11 and figure 3).

Three main periods are discernible in this long-term view:

1. the urban rise of the late Middle Ages, characterized by a strong increase in an already partially urbanized structure;
2. a urban relative stability around 20 percent for 5 centuries, with the exception of the two periods, in 1400 and 1700, following the plagues;
3. a new urban doubling from 1800 to 1900.

The relative stability of the late Middle Ages and the early modern age appears, however, much less certain if we compare the Italian data with those of urbanized Europe in general (table 12). During the 5 centuries between 1300 and 1800, while the entire Italian population compared to the

total European one decreased from 18 to 12 percent, the Italian urban percentage of the total European urban population fell by 50 percent.

In particular if we take the cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, the Italian urban population was in 1500 38.9 percent of the European total.<sup>42</sup> In 1800 it was 27.2: 11 points percent less. While in *absolute* terms Italy was still holding the urban primacy at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in *relative* values it had moved to a more marginal position.

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## Appendix 1

### *Italian cities with at least 5,000 inhabitants 1300-1800 ('000s)*

#### Regions

- 1 Piemonte, Val d'Aosta
- 2 Lombardia
- 3 Veneto, Trentino, Friuli
- 4 Liguria
- 5 Emilia Romagna
- 6 Toscana
- 7 Umbria
- 8 Marche
- 9 Lazio
- 10 Abruzzo, Molise
- 11 Campania
- 12 Puglia
- 13 Calabria, Basilicata
- 14 Sicilia
- 15 Sardegna, Corsica

- North from 1 to 5  
 Centre from 6 to 8  
 South from 9 to 13  
 Islands from 14 to 15

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Alba	1	5	0	0	0	0	7
Alessandria	1	16	10	6	14	12	19
Aosta	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Asti	1	10	5	8	9	12	15
Boves	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Bra	1	0	0	0	0	7	10
Busca	1	0	0	0	5	0	7
Carignano	1	0	0	0	0	0	5

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Carmagnola	1	0	0	0	0	0	10
Casale Monferrato	1	0	0	7	10	10	16
Cherasco	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Chieri	1	9	6	6	11	8	11
Chivasso	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Cuneo	1	5	0	5	7	12	18
Fossano	1	0	0	7	10	11	14
Ivrea	1	0	0	0	0	5	7
Mondovì	1	5	0	10	11	7	18
Nizza	1	0	7	12	16	15	20
Novara	1	6	5	7	8	8	12
Pinerolo	1	6	0	0	8	6	9
Racconigi	1	0	0	0	5	7	12
Saluzzo	1	0	0	0	5	7	11
Savigliano	1	6	6	7	9	11	13
Torino	1	7	0	6	22	44	77
Tortona	1	5	0	5	5	5	8
Valenza	1	0	0	0	5	0	0
Vercelli	1	10	0	7	10	8	13
Villafranca di Piemonte	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Bergamo	2	12	8	15	18	20	36
Brescia	2	45	30	48	40	35	30
Casalmaggiore	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Como	2	12	6	10	12	9	15
Crema	2	9	6	9	11	7	9
Cremona	2	45	30	40	40	22	25
Lodi	2	8	7	8	14	14	16
Mantova	2	30	20	28	31	24	25
Milano	2	150	100	100	120	109	124
Monza	2	9	0	0	9	6	10
Pavia	2	20	10	16	25	23	25
Treviglio	2	0	0	0	6	5	5
Vigevano	2	5	6	10	8	9	12
Voghera	2	5	0	5	5	0	9
Bassano	3	5	0	5	7	7	10
Belluno	3	0	0	0	5	0	7
Bolzano	3	0	0	0	0	0	8
Chioggia	3	10	5	6	9	10	19
Conegliano	3	0	0	0	5	0	0
Gorizia	3	0	0	0	5	7	10
Monselice	3	6	0	0	0	0	5
Padova	3	40	18	27	36	38	32
Pergine	3	0	0	5	0	0	0
Rovereto	3	0	0	0	0	0	8
Rovigo	3	0	0	0	8	5	6
Trento	3	5	0	0	0	0	7
Treviso	3	15	8	10	13	9	11
Trieste	3	6	9	6	5	6	24
Udine	3	6	7	13	14	13	15
Varallo	3	0	0	0	0	5	0
Venezia	3	110	85	102	140	138	135
Verona	3	40	20	37	49	36	42
Vicenza	3	20	19	20	36	26	29
Albenga	4	0	0	5	0	0	0
Chiavari	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
Genova	4	60	50	70	65	64	76

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
San Remo	4	0	0	0	0	0	5
Savona	4	14	7	14	10	7	7
Bagnacavallo	5	0	0	0	5	0	5
Bologna	5	50	35	55	63	63	64
Cento	5	0	0	0	5	0	0
Cesena	5	7	7	5	7	6	7
Comacchio	5	0	0	0	0	5	0
Faenza	5	10	7	10	12	11	15
Ferrara	5	12	20	30	33	27	30
Forlì	5	14	9	7	11	12	16
Imola	5	11	5	5	6	6	8
Lugo	5	0	0	0	7	6	8
Modena	5	19	10	15	18	20	22
Novi	5	0	0	0	0	0	6
Parma	5	25	15	18	23	25	34
Piacenza	5	23	20	25	33	30	28
Ravenna	5	12	7	7	8	8	10
Reggio Emilia	5	13	7	10	11	15	18
Rimini	5	14	9	8	8	8	13
Arezzo	6	18	0	6	8	7	8
Colle Valdelsa	6	6	0	0	0	0	0
Cortona	6	12	0	5	5	0	5
Firenze	6	110	37	50	75	72	81
Grosseto	6	5	0	0	0	0	0
Livorno	6	0	0	0	3	20	50
Lucca	6	25	8	18	24	24	23
Massa Marittima	6	9	0	0	0	0	0
Montalcino	6	5	0	0	0	0	0
Montepulciano	6	6	0	0	0	0	0
Pisa	6	30	7	8	15	13	15
Pistoia	6	12	0	5	8	8	9
Prato	6	13	0	6	6	6	8
San Gimignano	6	8	0	0	0	0	0
San Miniato	6	5	0	0	0	0	0
Siena	6	50	14	20	19	16	18
Volterra	6	11	0	0	6	5	6
Amelia	7	5	0	0	0	0	5
Assisi	7	9	0	0	0	0	5
Camerino	7	13	5	6	5	0	5
Cascia	7	5	0	0	0	0	0
Città di Castello	7	5	0	0	5	5	6
Foligno	7	9	5	5	5	6	7
Gubbio	7	18	7	5	6	5	5
Narni	7	10	5	6	6	6	6
Norcia	7	5	0	0	5	0	0
Orvieto	7	16	7	8	7	6	7
Perugia	7	25	20	13	20	16	16
Spoletto	7	17	6	10	8	0	6
Terni	7	5	0	0	5	5	7
Todi	7	10	5	5	0	0	0
Ancona	8	25	10	15	10	9	15
Ascoli Piceno	8	25	10	5	7	8	12
Cingoli	8	5	0	0	5	7	9
Corridonia	8	5	0	0	0	0	0
Fabriano	8	13	5	8	10	7	8
Fano	8	20	6	5	6	0	7

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Fermo	8	19	7	7	8	8	11
Fossombrone	8	5	0	0	0	5	5
Jesi	8	6	0	0	0	5	5
Macerata	8	7	5	6	6	10	12
Matelica	8	5	0	5	5	5	5
Osimo	8	8	0	0	6	7	10
Pesaro	8	6	6	6	7	7	10
Recanati	8	17	7	7	7	7	7
San Elpidio	8	5	0	0	0	5	6
San Severino (Marche)	8	13	6	5	0	0	0
Tolentino	8	5	0	0	0	5	6
Treia	8	5	0	0	0	0	0
Urbino	8	10	6	5	0	5	6
Alatri	9	5	0	0	7	8	8
Anagni	9	7	0	0	0	0	6
Arpino	9	0	0	0	0	0	10
Civitavecchia	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Cori	9	5	0	0	0	5	5
Corneto	9	10	5	7	0	0	0
Ferentino	9	5	0	0	0	0	7
Frosinone	9	0	0	0	0	0	6
Gaeta	9	7	5	5	10	10	13
Leonessa	9	0	0	0	0	0	5
Montefiascone	9	0	0	0	0	0	5
Orte	9	5	0	0	0	0	0
Pontecorvo	9	0	0	0	5	0	6
Priverno	9	5	0	0	0	0	0
Rieti	9	7	5	6	6	7	9
Roma	9	30	30	55	98	135	163
Sezze	9	5	0	5	0	5	7
Sora	9	0	0	0	0	0	7
Subiaco	9	0	0	0	0	0	5
Tivoli	9	7	5	5	0	5	6
Tuscania	9	5	0	0	0	0	0
Velletri	9	7	0	6	5	10	11
Veroli	9	0	0	0	0	7	9
Viterbo	9	19	6	12	10	12	13
Agnone	10	0	0	0	0	0	7
Atessa	10	0	0	0	0	0	6
Atri	10	5	0	0	5	5	5
Campobasso	10	0	0	0	0	0	6
Chieti	10	8	0	6	10	9	13
Civitanova	10	5	0	0	0	0	0
Isernia	10	5	0	0	0	0	6
Lanciano	10	10	5	6	8	5	12
L'Aquila	10	20	7	6	9	8	13
Ortona	10	8	0	0	0	0	0
Penne	10	5	0	0	0	5	8
Sulmona	10	10	5	0	5	0	5
Teramo	10	6	0	0	0	0	5
Vasto	10	0	0	0	0	0	5
Acerra	11	0	0	0	0	0	6
Afragola	11	0	0	0	0	0	12
Amalfi	11	6	0	0	0	0	0
Angri	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Ariano	11	0	0	5	8	0	10

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Avella	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Avellino	11	0	0	0	0	8	11
Aversa	11	10	6	12	6	8	14
Benevento	11	0	0	0	7	8	14
Caivano	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Campagna	11	0	0	0	0	0	7
Capua	11	9	8	15	6	6	7
Caserta	11	0	0	0	6	5	5
Castellammare di Stabia	11	0	0	0	0	0	6
Cava dei Tirreni	11	0	0	6	13	15	20
Cerreto Sannita	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Cervinara	11	0	0	0	0	0	6
Fondi	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Giuliano in Campania	11	0	0	0	0	0	8
Gragnano	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Itri	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Maddaloni	11	0	0	0	0	0	10
Marigliano	11	0	0	0	5	0	6
Mirabella Eclano	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Mola (Formia)	11	0	0	0	0	0	8
Montesarchio	11	0	0	0	0	0	6
Morcone	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Mormanno	11	0	0	0	0	0	6
Napoli	11	33	30	150	280	220	320
Nocera	11	0	0	0	0	0	7
Nola	11	0	0	0	0	0	8
Pagani	11	0	0	0	0	0	9
Palma Campania	11	0	0	0	0	0	7
Pomigliano d'Arco	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Portici	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
Pozzuoli	11	0	0	0	5	5	9
Procida	11	0	0	0	0	8	12
Ravello	11	6	0	0	0	0	0
Salerno	11	13	0	6	11	8	9
San Bartolomeo	11	0	0	0	0	0	5
San Severino	11	0	0	6	13	10	18
Santa Maria Capua Vetere	11	0	0	0	0	0	8
Sarno	11	0	0	0	0	0	11
Serino	11	0	0	0	0	0	7
Sessa Aurunca	11	6	7	6	7	0	0
Solofra	11	0	0	0	0	0	6
Somma	11	0	0	0	6	6	7
Sorrento	11	6	0	0	5	5	5
Torre Annunziata	11	0	0	0	0	10	14
Torre del Greco	11	0	0	0	0	10	16
Acquaviva	12	0	0	0	5	7	8
Altamura	12	0	0	6	12	12	18
Andria	12	7	0	5	14	7	14
Bari	12	13	6	6	15	14	18
Barletta	12	17	5	6	14	9	16
Bisceglie	12	7	0	0	10	10	11
Bitonto	12	12	0	6	12	10	15
Brindisi	12	13	0	0	9	8	6
Conversano	12	0	5	0	0	0	8
Corato	12	0	0	0	7	0	10
Fasano	12	0	0	0	0	0	8



Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Foggia	12	7	0	0	5	8	17
Francavilla	12	0	0	0	0	0	11
Gallipoli	12	0	0	5	6	7	13
Gioia del colle	12	0	0	0	0	0	9
Giovinazzo	12	5	0	9	9	5	5
Gravina	12	7	5	9	12	10	8
Lecce	12	7	6	15	36	20	20
Lucera	12	17	0	0	7	6	9
Manfredonia	12	5	0	0	0	0	5
Martina Franca	12	0	0	5	9	8	14
Massafra	12	0	0	0	0	0	9
Molfetta	12	7	0	0	5	8	12
Monopoli	12	11	0	5	12	10	17
Monte Sant'Angelo	12	0	0	0	0	0	9
Nardò	12	5	0	5	7	7	8
Ostuni	12	0	0	0	9	7	8
Putignano	12	0	0	0	7	7	9
Ruvo	12	0	0	0	6	7	6
San Giovanni Rotondo	12	6	0	0	0	0	0
San Marco in Lamis	12	0	0	0	0	0	9
San Severo	12	0	0	0	0	0	18
Taranto	12	10	6	10	15	12	17
Terlizzi	12	0	0	0	0	5	10
Trani	12	15	0	0	5	0	14
Vico del Gargano	12	0	0	0	0	0	7
Vieste	12	9	0	0	0	0	5
Avigliano	13	0	0	0	0	0	9
Bagnara Calabria	13	0	0	0	0	0	6
Belcastro	13	6	0	0	0	0	0
Bella	13	0	0	0	0	0	6
Bisignano	13	5	0	5	6	0	0
Calvello	13	0	0	0	0	0	6
Catanzaro	13	5	0	5	10	10	12
Cetraro	13	0	0	0	0	0	5
Cosenza	13	0	0	5	10	8	9
Crotone	13	8	0	0	0	0	5
Irsina (Montepeloso)	13	5	0	0	0	0	5
Laurenzana	13	0	0	0	0	0	7
Lauria	13	0	0	0	5	0	8
Mammola	13	0	0	0	0	0	5
Marsico Nuovo	13	0	0	0	0	0	7
Matera	13	9	0	8	15	10	12
Melfi	13	15	0	8	10	9	8
Monteleone (Vibo V.)	13	7	0	0	5	11	8
Montescaglioso	13	0	0	0	0	0	5
Morano Calabro	13	0	0	0	0	0	8
Palmi	13	0	0	0	0	0	6
Pisticci	13	0	0	0	5	5	6
Pizzo	13	0	0	0	0	0	5
Potenza	13	6	0	0	6	5	7
Reggio Calabria	13	0	0	6	7	7	9
Rionero in Vulture	13	0	0	0	0	0	8
Rossano	13	5	0	5	8	7	7
San Fele	13	0	0	0	0	0	6
Strongoli	13	5	0	0	0	0	0
Tropea	13	0	0	10	16	8	8

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Venosa	13	7	0	0	5	5	6
Acireale	14	0	0	0	14	12	15
Adernò	14	0	0	0	6	5	7
Agrigento	14	8	5	8	10	11	18
Alcamo	14	0	0	5	8	7	13
Aragona	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Augusta	14	0	0	0	0	7	10
Avola	14	0	0	0	0	6	7
Barrafranca	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Belpasso	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Biancavilla	14	0	0	0	0	0	7
Bisacchino	14	0	0	0	0	0	7
Bivona	14	0	0	6	8	0	0
Bronte	14	0	0	0	7	9	9
Burgio	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Caccamo	14	0	0	5	8	7	6
Calascibetta	14	0	0	0	5	0	5
Calatafimi	14	0	0	0	5	6	10
Caltabellotta	14	5	0	5	5	0	5
Caltagirone	14	6	5	10	12	11	20
Caltanissetta	14	0	0	5	9	13	16
Cammarata	14	0	0	5	8	7	8
Canicattì	14	0	0	0	0	8	16
Carini	14	0	0	0	0	0	7
Castelbuono	14	0	0	0	5	7	8
Castellammare del Golfo	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Casteltermini	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Castelvetro	14	0	0	5	11	10	15
Castrogiovanni (Enna)	14	6	0	8	17	9	11
Castronovo di Sicilia	14	5	0	5	5	0	6
Castroreale	14	0	0	0	10	11	11
Catania	14	10	6	14	25	16	45
Cattolica Eraclea	14	0	0	0	0	5	7
Cefalù	14	7	0	0	5	7	9
Chiaromonte Gulfi	14	0	0	0	5	5	7
Chiusa Sclafani	14	0	0	0	5	5	6
Ciminna	14	0	0	0	6	7	6
Cinisi	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Comiso	14	0	0	0	5	5	11
Corleone	14	18	5	6	7	7	12
Erice	14	6	0	6	0	0	0
Favara	14	0	0	0	0	5	8
Gangi	14	0	0	0	0	6	9
Gela	14	0	0	0	6	5	9
Gibellina	14	0	0	0	0	5	5
Grammichele	14	0	0	0	0	0	8
Lentini	14	0	0	10	7	0	5
Leonforte	14	0	0	0	0	6	10
Lercara	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Licata	14	6	0	6	7	9	11
Licodia Eubea	14	0	0	0	0	5	7
Manduria	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Marsala	14	6	0	0	8	14	21
Martina Franca	14	0	0	5	9	8	14
Mascali	14	0	0	0	0	0	14
Mazzara	14	7	0	5	7	7	8

Cities	<i>Regions</i>	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Mazzerino	14	0	0	0	6	8	11
Messina	14	40	15	28	75	50	55
Milazzo	14	5	0	0	5	6	6
Militello Val Catania	14	0	0	0	6	6	7
Mineo	14	0	0	7	7	5	8
Misilmeri	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Mistretta	14	0	0	0	6	7	11
Modica	14	0	0	0	18	18	20
Monreale	14	0	0	5	7	6	13
Monte di San Giuliano	14	5	0	6	7	7	6
Montemaggiore	14	0	0	0	0	5	6
Mussomeli	14	0	0	0	6	6	9
Naro	14	5	0	5	6	8	11
Nicosia	14	6	5	9	20	11	12
Niscemi	14	0	0	0	0	0	7
Noto	14	5	5	10	8	7	11
Palazzo Adriano	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Palazzolo Acreide	14	0	0	0	6	6	9
Palermo	14	50	20	50	105	110	135
Palma di Montechiaro	14	0	0	0	0	0	7
Partanna	14	0	0	0	5	7	11
Partinico	14	0	0	0	0	0	10
Paternò	14	5	0	0	6	6	10
Patti	14	5	0	5	6	5	7
Petralia Soprana	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Petralia Sottana	14	0	0	0	7	7	6
Piana	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Pietraperzia	14	0	0	0	0	0	8
Piazza Armerina	14	8	6	12	16	8	12
Polizzi	14	10	5	7	7	0	0
Prizzi	14	0	0	0	0	0	7
Racalmuto	14	0	0	0	0	0	8
Raffadali	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Ragusa	14	7	0	7	9	9	17
Randazzo	14	6	5	6	7	0	0
Ravanusa	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Regalbuto	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Salemi	14	5	0	5	7	7	12
Sambuca di Sicilia	14	0	0	0	6	5	9
San Cataldo	14	0	0	0	0	0	8
San Filippo di Mela	14	0	0	8	11	7	6
Santa Caterina	14	0	0	0	0	0	6
Sciacca	14	6	6	10	9	8	11
Scicli	14	0	0	10	10	9	10
Siracusa	14	7	6	10	12	17	16
Sortino	14	0	0	0	7	6	6
Spaccafurto	14	0	0	0	0	8	8
Taormina	14	5	0	0	5	0	0
Termini	14	0	0	0	9	7	14
Terranova (Gela)	14	8	0	0	0	0	0
Trapani	14	15	9	13	17	17	24
Troina	14	0	0	0	5	7	7
Vicari	14	0	0	0	0	0	5
Vittoria	14	0	0	0	0	5	10
Vizzini	14	0	0	6	10	9	9
Ajaccio	15	0	0	0	0	5	6
Alghero	15	5	0	0	0	5	6
Bastia	15	0	0	0	0	5	9

Cities	Regions	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
Bosa	15	5	0	0	0	0	5
Cagliari	15	10	6	6	10	17	20
Iglesias	15	7	0	0	0	5	5
Oristano	15	5	0	0	0	0	5
Sassari	15	15	14	12	14	14	17
		2,571	1,115	1,972	3,134	3,012	4,812

## Appendix 2

*Cities with more than 15,000 inhabitants in 1300 (Centre and North) ('000s) (figure 4)*

Milano	150
Venezia	110
Firenze	110
Genova	60
Bologna	50
Siena	50
Brescia	45
Cremona	45
Padova	40
Verona	40
Pisa	30
Mantova	30
Parma	25
Lucca	25
Perugia	25
Ancona	25
Ascoli Piceno	25
Piacenza	23
Pavia	20
Vicenza	20
Fano	20
Modena	19
Fermo	19
Arezzo	18
Gubbio	18
Recanati	17
Spoletto	17
Alessandria	16
Orvieto	16
Treviso	15

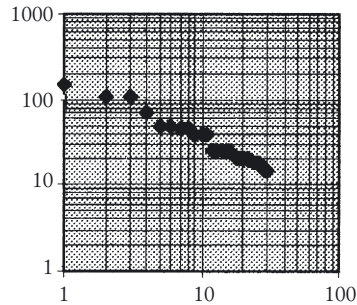


FIG. 4. Rank-size distribution:  
Centre and North 1300

## Appendix 3

*Cities with more than 15,000 inhabitants in 1800 (Centre and North) ('000s) (figure 5)*

Venezia	135
Milano	124
Firenze	81
Torino	77
Genova	76
Bologna	64
Livorno	50
Verona	42
Bergamo	36
Parma	34
Padova	32
Brescia	30
Ferrara	30
Vicenza	29
Piacenza	28
Cremona	25
Mantova	25
Pavia	25
Trieste	24
Lucca	23
Modena	22
Nizza	20
Alessandria	19
Chioggia	19
Cuneo	18
Mondovì	18
Reggio Emilia	18
Siena	18
Casale Monferrato	16
Lodi	16
Forlì	16
Perugia	16
Asti	15
Como	15
Udine	15
Faenza	15
Pisa	15
Ancona	15

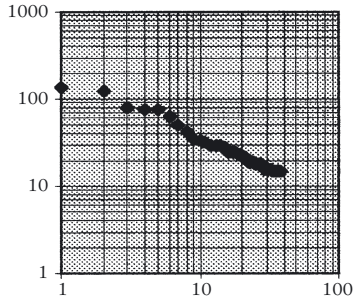


FIG. 5. Rank-size distribution:  
Centre and North 1800

## Appendix 4

*Cities with more than 15,000 inhabitants in 1300 (South and Islands) ('000s) (figure 6)*

Palermo	50
Messina	40
Napoli	33
Roma	30
L'Aquila	20
Viterbo	19
Corleone	18
Barletta	17
Lucera	17
Trani	15
Melfi	15
Trapani	15
Sassari	15

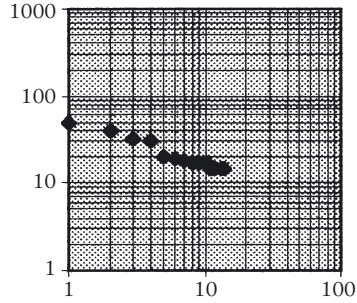


FIG. 6. Rank-size distribution:  
South and Islands 1300

## Appendix 5

*Cities with more than 15,000 inhabitants in 1800 (South and Islands) ('000s) (figure 7)*

Napoli	320
Roma	163
Palermo	135
Messina	55
Catania	45
Trapani	24
Marsala	21
Cava dei Tirreni	20
Lecce	20
Caltagirone	20
Modica	20
Cagliari	20
San Severino	18
Altamura	18
Bari	18
San Severo	18
Agrigento	18
Foggia	17
Monopoli	17
Taranto	17
Ragusa	17
Sassari	17
Torre del Greco	16
Barletta	16
Caltanissetta	16
Canicattì	16
Siracusa	16
Bitonto	15
Acireale	15
Castelvetrano	15

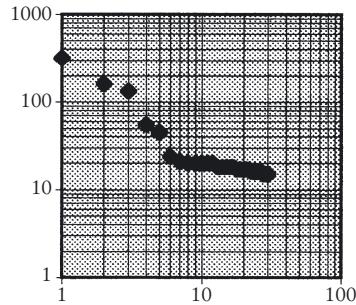


FIG. 7. Rank-size distribution:  
South and Islands 1800

## Appendix 6

*References of the database*

Among the general contributions to prepare a data bank of the late medieval and early modern Italian cities the work by K.J. Belloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1937-61 (it. ed., *Storia della popolazione d'Italia*, Firenze, 1994), on the Italian demography is still extremely useful. On the late Middle Ages the book by M. Ginatempo, L. Sandri, *L'Italia delle città*, cit., collects the information available on Italian medieval cities in the period 1200-1500 for the first time. On the modern age, besides J. De Vries, *European urbanization*, cit. and P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit.; see also L. Del Panta, M. Livi Bacci, G. Pinto, E. Sonnino, *La popolazione italiana*, cit., G. Felloni, *Italy*, in C. Wilson, G. Parker (eds.), *Introduction to the sources of European economic history 1500-1800*, 1, London, 1977, C.M. Belfanti, «Aspetti dell'evoluzione demografica italiana nel secolo XVII», in *Cheiron*, 3, (1984).

I thank Valeria Pinchera, who helped me in the control of the database. I thank particularly Maria Ginatempo for the control of the medieval part of the database.

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- 1 J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, London, 1984.
- 2 P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, Genève, 1988: the data bank, organized by Bairoch, was finished with the cooperation of Batou and Chèvre.
- 3 J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit., p. 19.
- 4 See also P.M. Hohenberg, L.H. Lees, *The making of urban Europe 1000-1950*, Cambridge (Mass.)-London, Harvard, 1985.
- 5 On these methodological problems see J. De Vries, «Problems in the measurement, description, and analysis of historical urbanization», in *Urbanization in history*, ed. by A. Van der Woude, A. Hayami, J. De Vries, Oxford, 1990, pp. 43-60.
- 6 This low urban threshold was proposed by D. Herlihy, Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles*, Paris, 1978, ch. 8.
- 7 J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit., p. 22.
- 8 Both J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit. and P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit., adopt the method of calculating the population of any city even when it does not join the level assumed to characterize an urban centre.
- 9 These centres appear with 0 in the database (Appendix 1).
- 10 On the basis of the data presented by K.J. Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1937-61.
- 11 On the other hand the inclusion, by Bairoch and De Vries, of urban data even when a centre falls under the assumed threshold, results in an overestimate of the urban population in regard to the Italian database.
- 12 Proposed by P. Bairoch, *Storia delle città*, Milano, 1992, p. 46.
- 13 For Belgium see P.M.M. Klep, «Declino urbano in Brabante: il consolidamento della tradizionale organizzazione economica (1374-1806)», in *Cheiron*, VI (1989-90); for The Netherlands J. De Vries, A. Van der Woude, *The first modern economy. Success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500-1815*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 57 ff.; for Spain see the estimate in P. Bairoch, J. Batou, P. Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes de 800 à 1850*, cit., p. 259: the estimate concerning Spain seems anyway too high.
- 14 This estimate had usually been accepted, on the basis of the data by K.J. Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, cit. See A. Bellettini, «La popolazione italiana dall'inizio dell'era volgare ai nostri giorni», in *Storia d'Italia*, R. Romano, C. Vivanti (eds.), Torino, 1972 ff., 5, I, pp. 489-536.
- 15 The new estimate was proposed by L. Del Panta, M. Livi Bacci, G. Pinto, G. Sonnino, *La popolazione italiana dal Medioevo a oggi*, Roma-Bari, 1996.
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- 21 I quote the data on 1900 and 1990 from P. Bairoch, *Storia delle città*, cit., p. 52.
- 22 We assume a round figure, given the uncertainty of the result.
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- 24 The figure of 350,000 inhabitants is naturally too high. Anyway Palermo then had a population of more than 100,000.
- 25 As proposed by P. Bairoch, *De Jéricho à Mexico*, cit., p. 128.
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- 27 We know, however, that sometimes – in Marche, for instance, and in other small Northern Italian centres – the agricultural population within the urban walls overcame the low level of 5 percent.
- 28 M. Aymard, «In Sicilia: sviluppo demografico e sue differenziazioni geografiche 1500-1800», in *Quaderni storici*, 17, (1971), p. 442. See also M. Aymard, H. Bresc, «Problemi di storia dell'insediamento nella Sicilia medievale e moderna, 1100-1800», in *Quaderni storici*, 24, (1973).
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- 31 In this case too, as well as in others, the regional division of Italy we proposed appears fruitful. The borderline dividing the two kinds of agricultural habitats and the two kinds of urban structures we spoke of runs just along the Northern borders of Latium with Umbria, Marche and Tuscany.
- 32 On the medieval Italian cities see in particular M. Ginatempo, L. Sandri, *L'Italia delle città. Il popolamento urbano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento (secoli XIII-XVI)*, Firenze, 1990.
- 33 Since we have no separate population estimates for North-Centre and South-Islands for 1300 and 1400, I divided the total population according to the proportions in 1500 and 1600. This procedure is naturally arbitrary and affects the calculations of the urban indexes in 1300 and 1400.
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- 35 I take the estimate on Tuscan population from G. Pinto, *La Toscana nel tardo Medio Evo*, Firenze, 1982, p. 78.
- 36 In table 9 the population in the centres between 5,000 and 10,000 has not yet been subtracted. It has been excluded, on the contrary, in table 10. It is probable an overestimate of the XVth century decline because of the limited reliability of data concerning Southern cities in the late Middle Ages.
- 37 See also R.P. Corritore, «Il processo di "ruralizzazione" in Italia nei secoli XVII-XVIII. Verso una regionalizzazione», in *Rivista di storia economica*, n.s., 10 (1993), on the cities of the Po Valley.
- 38 Italy is not among the most important proto-industrial European regions. Many activities connected with silk were, however, located in the countryside. See C.M. Belfanti, «Rural manufactures and rural proto-industries in the "Italy of the cities" from the XVIth through the XVIIIth century», in *Continuity and change*, VIII, (1993); Id., «Das proto-industrielle Erbe. Formen ländlicher Proto-industrie in Norditalien im 18. Und 19. Jahrhundert», in *Protoindustrialisierung in Europa*, Hg. M. Cerman, S.C. Ogilvie, Wien, 1994.
- 39 I discuss this problem in my *La fine del primato*, cit.
- 40 A. Belletini, «Aspetti e problemi della ripresa demografica nell'Italia del Settecento», in *Società e storia*, II (1979), p. 822.
- 41 Let us remember that the more the distribution of cities in the logarithmic graph is horizontal the more the urban network is far from any hierarchy. The continuity of a horizontal – non-hierarchical – structure is evident, in the North, while in the South a passage takes place towards a more hierarchical network.

- <sup>42</sup> These calculations are based on J. De Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800*, cit. Let us remember that De Vries does not include Eastern Europe in his data. The result of 38.9 for the Italian urban population in 1500 as part of the European one is, however, an important element to take into account when we examine the Italian economy – and not only the economy – in the early modern period.