

Depopulation and ageing population: an unsustainable relationship?

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Since the Second World War, Italy has experienced major demographic changes – increasing survival, decreasing fertility and the arrival of immigration; these have silently and slowly led to important shifts in the structure of the population and the different territorial distribution of the population. Ageing population and depopulation have thus become, as in many European countries, the most relevant demographic phenomena. As we showed in Reynaud & Miccoli (2018), these phenomena are strongly connected. In this paper we studied the relationship between depopulation and the ageing in the Italian territories in the period 1951–2011 by using the census data of the Italian municipalities. We show that a strong depopulation contributed to subsequent levels of population ageing, but recent population ageing has also contributed to ongoing depopulation, creating a vicious circle.

For this study we want to update our analysis until 2019, using the new census data. We hypothesize that this relationship has become stronger and stronger and that in many areas the demographic conditions are unsustainable. In these areas the ageing levels are so high that the population trend will be determined almost exclusively by the deaths of the elderly. Since Italy is the most ageing country in Europe and is undergoing an intense depopulation process, Italian studies can help to analyse and understand the future of depopulation and ageing in many other countries.