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An introduction

In 2015 various initiatives in Italy celebrated, fifty years after his death (March 13, 1965), the scholar Corrado Gini, who, among other things, founded the journal *GENUS* in 1934.

As part of the celebrations, the Italian Statistical Society organized a conference entitled “Statistics and Demography: the Legacy of Corrado Gini”, held in Treviso from September 9 to 11, 2015.

The conference included many contributions from Italian and foreign demographers and statisticians. For this special issue of *Genus*, whose theme, “The legacy of Corrado Gini in population studies”, is taken from the Treviso initiative, we have specifically selected those which are most closely linked to population issues.

This volume contains 12 papers that range over many different research subjects, taking in many of the population questions that, directly or indirectly, absorbed Corrado Gini as demographer and social scientist over several decades. They vary from the analysis of the living conditions and behaviours of the growing foreign population (measurements and methods of analysis, socio-economic conditions and health, ethnic residential segregation, sex-ratio at birth), to studies on the homogamy of couples; from population theories (with reference to the cyclical theory of populations) to the modelling approach to estimating mortality in adult ages or estimating time transfers, by age and sex, related to informal child care and adult care; from historical studies that take up themes dear to Gini (such as the estimates of Italian military deaths in WWI), to the application of Gini’s classical measurements to studying significant phenomena today (transition to adulthood and leaving the parental home, health care, disabled persons and social integration).

The subjects and measurements that appear here are not intended to exhaust the broad spectrum of Gini’s research work in the demographic and social field (nor could they), but they can make up a part of the intersection between his vast legacy and some interesting topics in current research, some of which were not even imaginable in the mid twentieth century.

Speaking about the demographic field and concentrating on Italy alone, the differences between the present situation and that when Gini did his work

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are radical. He died in the period of the baby boom, when Italy was still an important country of emigration as well as intense internal migrations, both from rural to urban areas and from the South towards the Centre-North.

We can certainly claim that all the main phenomena that guide population dynamics changed completely during the twentieth century and mainly in the last fifty years. Survival has reached unimaginable levels, going beyond the rosiest expectations, while fertility has remained below replacement level for more than thirty years, and these trends now seem irreversible. The speed of the population aging has been extraordinarily severe in Italy. Demographic aging and foreign immigration are certainly two of the themes that now attract most attention but whose present forms were hardly foreseeable in Gini's days. Despite the radical nature of the intervening changes, it seems quite extraordinary how his reflections, methods and measurements are still relevant and often compatible with broader methodological structures. The papers offered here bear clear witness to that.

Looking at the many contributions that celebrated Gini in Treviso and thinking about his legacy, it seems possible to identify at least two typologies of approach, to be found in this issue of the journal, too. On the one hand, there are contributions that aim to retrieve and discuss themes, methodologies and measurements dealt with or used by Gini so as to evaluate their present relevance and importance in the current scholarly debate. On the other, there are contributions that deal with topics that are far from Gini's work, as they study very recent phenomena, but actually, among other things, make use of methods and indicators devised by Gini that are now so much part of the common currency of methodology, so they don't require explicit reference to their Author. Perhaps the most recent proof of the relevance of some of Gini's methodological proposals is contained in the acclaimed work by the French economist Thomas Piketty, "*Le Capital au XXI siècle*" (Capital in the XXI Century), published in 2013, which has then been translated into both Italian and English (2014).

Contributions were not selected using a priori criteria, but on the basis of those topics, dealt with at the Treviso conference, that were closest to demography. This means the volume does not have one clear over-riding theme, but a scholar as versatile and many-sided as Gini would have liked the multiplicity of interests and approaches here. Nevertheless, we think we can identify a route in the contents, which starts from works dealing with population theories, move on to Gini's central interests to evaluate their current worth, and continue by bringing his methods to bear on new phenomena. In conclusion, there are articles that, in dealing with specific topics, make partial use of indicators and measurements suggested by Gini.

To take these various contributions in order, the first article is by Manfredi and Micheli, who re-examine Gini's cyclical theory in the light of the toughest criticism it received, but also underline the so-called '*three important*

legacies (...) the “method of models”, which is closely linked to abductive syllogism, the concept of “structural” interdependence as the trigger of population dynamics, and the dual use (...) of the concept of “structure”(...). The article by Ambrosetti, Ortensi, Castagnaro and Attili takes the subject of sex ratio at birth, one dear to Gini, who had shown how male predominance was almost universal. Here the focus is on migrants in Italy, and the authors underline some barked imbalances and try to identify their causes. The article by De Rose and Fraboni shows how the education of girls has increased alongside an increase in homogamous marriages, as well as those in which the bride has a higher level of education, with significant differences for de facto and mixed couples, bringing out the persistent potential of a homogamy index, which seems never to have died out.

Fornasin’s historical contribution compares Gini’s estimates of the number of Italian soldiers who died during WWI, with the information in the Roll of Honour of the fallen prepared by the Ministry of War, which was not completed until 1964.

Blangiardo and Rimoldi’s contribution seeks to verify the relevance of some of the tools and approaches proposed by Gini in the 1930s in relation to the debate on the question of foreigners in Italy. To do this, they use “centres” of population to measure the concentration/dispersion of foreigners in Italian territory on three different dates, distinguished by nationalities and sex; the differentials in marriages between native and foreign populations allows to consider the Gini’s idea that, among men, migrants tend to be more dynamic than the counterparts.

Zagheni’s article discusses estimates of time transfers, by age and sex, related to informal child care and adult care in the United States. Starting from the Gini index as an indicator of structural characteristics of the matrices, the paper seeks to evaluate structural patterns of inequality in time flows by age and sex, and as input for a model of time transfers based on input-output theory. Missov and Németh deal with the sensitivity of model-based human mortality measurements and study the impact of neglecting statistically significant extrinsic mortality or frailty on mortality indexes.

The last five contributions concentrate on current socio-demographic questions and show how some of Gini’s interests and measurements have a relevance that goes beyond scrupulous, repeated references. In this sense Gabrielli and Paterno analyse those socio-economic characteristics that most influence the process of forming and selecting mixed couples; Busetta compares the effects of living conditions (testing several measurements of living conditions) on self-perceived unmet medical needs among foreigners living in Italy; while Busetta, Mazza and Stranges describe the spatial distribution and residential segregation of the most important foreign nationalities residing in Palermo, applying many different segregation measurements; Sironi and Rosina deal with a highly topical theme, the consequences of the economic

crisis on the conditions of housing independence and adulthood transition for the young. Finally, Pirani's paper tries to assess if and to what extent different domains of social integration are associated with the self-rated health of Italian disabled persons.

One final point: we have decided to open the volume with a personal account by Antonio Golini, who succeeded Corrado Gini many years later as editor of *Genus*, and guided the journal for more than fifteen years, from 1993 to 2009. In addition, Antonio Golini has been General Secretary of the Italian Statistical Society, that Gini both inspired and presided over for more than twenty years (1941-45, 1949-65). Golini's note is the recollection of someone who knew the scholar directly, and inherited from him, not only the editorship of the journal Gini had founded, but also some of his research interests and approaches, developing them particularly at the start of his career.