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**Kinship, Family and Social Network:  
The anthropological embedment  
of fertility change in Southern Europe**

**Giuseppe A. Micheli**

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[Note 1]

**Giuseppe A. Micheli**<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

There is considerable overlap between Le Play's mid-eighteenth-century household model map and the regional TFR map of central-southern Europe in the 1980s. The author examines the overall structure of relationships involved in Le Play's typology and observes that both the stem-family and the unstable family area in the Southern Europe are marked by a small, close-knit network of strong ties, with kinship predominance. Vice versa, the social support hinges upon a network of kin in the stem-family area, upon an alliance among different kindred units in the unstable Mediterranean area. All this leads to formulating a hypothesis of a tri-partite model for Western European relationship models. How can we explain the relationship between family predominance as anthropological embedding and family collapse as demographic reaction? The author reconsiders this question in the light of Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory and Elder's 'principle of accentuation': different, regionally rooted, family and kinship patterns "react" in contact with an appropriate reagent, such as the macro-process of modernisation, generating different patterns of today's demographic behaviour.

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## **1. A methodological premise**

One of the final waves of cholera to hit London in 1854 led John Snow to take the plunge and find out why. His explanation lays on the different qualities of water provided by different companies in various parts of London [Lilienfeld and Lilienfeld 1980]. Snow's experimental plan to discover which water company carried the infection is part of the history of epidemiology as an induction-based science. However, there was no basically coherent etiological model corresponding to this tenaciously followed intuition that water was the place to look for the cause of the disease and not the equally considered alternative place, the miasmatic air. Snow inferred the existence of a 'cholera poison' transmitted to the population via the water from the mouth of the Thames. Another quarter of a century was to pass before microscope techniques developed sufficiently to permit scientists to isolate the 'cholera vibrio' and thus to work out the cause of the contagion. All the same, Snow's use of 'romantic' epidemiological interpretative categories does not detract from the importance of his insight. It is actually because of this that epidemiologists started reflecting on the channels of contagion – even without a clear or systematic theoretical basis.

The year after the 1854 cholera epidemic, Frederic Le Play published in Paris the first edition of "Les ouvriers européens" [Le Play 1855]. From then on, till the 1871 'summa' [Le Play 1871], Frederic Le Play started systematically mapping European regions, using a typology of the organisational models of the household based on two modern variants of the patriarchal ideal type. In the stem-family, continuity is ensured by blood-ties, with one child being singled out as heir general to the home [Note 2]. The unstable (or nuclear) family arises from the union of two autonomous people, and survives just as long as they survive, exerting over the children both a shorter period of care and looser control [Note 3]. Le Play's analysis was much esteemed during his lifetime but quickly lost credence after his death. Emile Durkheim was soon to start a course of lectures, criticising him on two grounds: "firstly that it is impossible to generalise from the case studies which tell us much about the individual family, but little about the society in which it is placed; and secondly that this 'sociographie microscopique' involved the collection of a mass of uninteresting detail" [Brooke 1998].

Current population studies have their own puzzles, too. The stagnation of fertility in Southern Europe is undoubtedly one of them. Nevertheless, just as John Snow faced his epidemiological puzzle by analysing hydrological data and pointing to water pollution, we could explore similar empirical evidence: there is considerable overlap between Le Play's mid-eighteenth-century household model map and the regional TFR map of central-southern Europe in the 1980s. The under-valuation of Le Play's work comes from scorning a non theory-laden 'sociographie microscopique' which, furthermore, is used as propaganda for a Vendéean philosophy of life [Note 4]. Yet, like Snow, although unable to give an acceptable explanation,

Le Play probably hit upon a fundamental disparity in social and demographic behaviour in Europe.

Of course, in the absence of an interpretative model, the persistent disparities in Le Play could be dismissed as mere statistical coincidences. In this article I want to tread another path in two different stages. In paragraphs 3–6 I propose to examine closely the overall structure of relationships involved in Le Play's typology, going beyond the household category and trying to include the networks of both kinship and extra-kinship strong ties. This will lead to formulating a hypothesis of a tri-partite model for Western European relationship models. The concluding paragraphs 7 and 8 provide some rough contributions to an etiological model in which the current diversity in regional fertility behaviour is explained by basic persistent anthropological structures. But in order to understand this logical connection we need further premises.

## 2. Demographic practices are spatially embedded 'lore'

We feel it essential to formulate a more comprehensive theoretical framework of recent fertility changes in Europe; but why on earth is it necessary to expand our analysis beyond the circle of household relationships to include the larger circles of both kinship and non-kinship strong ties? We can justify this argumentation by reflecting that in recent decades the scenario of uniform evolution of demographic patterns, gradually spreading from North to South throughout Europe, seems more and more to conflict with the evidence of a bipolar Europe.

No doubt both in Northern Europe and the Mediterranean countries present demographic transformations are the result of the same general process of modernisation. Lesthaeghe [Lesthaeghe 1991] defined a second demographic transition as "a further, much more public, manifestation of individual autonomy (...), more pervasive as it is directed against all expressions of external institutional authority". The family is a major agency of social reproduction, and it is being affected and undermined by this wave of modernisation. All the same, the charge against the institutional authority of the family has acquired different forms in different situations.

If we examine [Micheli 1996] the total fertility rates in continental Europe for the years 1983 and 1993 at the regional level [Note 5], we realise that Europe is roughly split up in three different areas by two boundary lines running along the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> parallels of latitude North. While Northern Europe shows a renewal of fertility rates and the Mediterranean countries (Spain, Greece, Southern Italy) a sharp fall, a critical belt between the two parallels (with TFR steadily below 1.5) includes Northern Spain and Italy, some Pyrenean and Mediterranean French regions, some German *Länder*, and looks as if it infringes on Slovenia (however not measured by Eurostat data) through the Austrian and Friuli corridor. Cleavages in European demographic behaviour do not respect national boundaries, but rather pass through and into the countries.

Analysis of the total fertility rate on the regional level splits the map of Europe into three rather than two developmental patterns. Even though the plot thickens, the theoretical issue remains unchanged, and it would be easier to begin by facing it in its dichotomous version: if a single macro-process of modernisation is profoundly transforming Western societies, whatever their development path, why do the changing mechanisms of intergenerational relations cause a pattern of family break-up in the North and a drying-up of the family in the South? How can the same agency produce quite different demographic patterns?

In order to contextualize these historical variants, it might be useful to rediscover a neglected sociological rule of Durkheim's [1895]: if several equally determining (equi-final) processes produce the same result, really the results are similar but not identical, as they have behind them different epigeneses [Note 6]. Consider the example given by Durkheim himself: "In the common sense view, fever designates a single pathological entity; however science classifies more specifically different fevers, with respect to different effects". On the basis of these arguments Durkheim confutes Mill's and Weber's equi-finalistic rule (which leads to "vaguely assigning a badly defined consequence to a hazy and undefined group of antecedents") and formulates the following statement: "A single cause always corresponds to the same effect. If, for instance, a suicide is determined by a number of causes, that happens because we find ourselves faced with different kinds of suicide" [ibidem].

Let us cross-tabulate the country-level proportion of extramarital births (as a proxy for the spread of the marriage bond) with the total fertility rate (as a proxy for the spread of a full motherhood experience). It is a well known fact that, behind a common process of convergence to a standard pattern of demographic rates, European countries follow two distinct demographic 'development paths', hinging upon two distinct mainstays [table 1]: the marriage contract without children and numerous offspring without marriage.

**Table 1:**

Sixteen European countries by 1990 proportion of extramarital births and total fertility rate [Note 7].

TFR	% extramarital births		
	< 10%	10% - 30%	30% - 50%
1.25 – 1.50	Greece, Italy, Spain	Austria, (West) Germany	
1.50 – 1.75	Belgium, Switzerland	Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland	Denmark
Over 1.75		England, Finland, France	Norway, Sweden

Paraphrasing Durkheim we can say therefore that, if the path called a "second demographic transition" is affected by more than one intervening process, that means there are a number of different "second demographic transitions". Actually, with a few broad strokes we can trace a main boundary line in Europe. In Northern Europe, demographic transformations took the form of 'charge against institutionalised marriage', i.e. against the horizontal one of the two bonds

which the family hinges upon. By contrast Southern Europe seems to be characterised by the crisis and break-up of the intergenerational kinship agreements and of the vertical parenthood bond. Motherhood loses its appeal not as the experience of only one child (easily compatible with a full working career) but as an irreversible life choice. Two different and in many ways opposite processes (saving the marital bond at the expense of the ancestral and vice versa) have produced the same result for decades: a decline in Europe's fertility. This has led the researchers to a uniform reading of the processes, throwing them off guard when the trends started to bifurcate [Note 8].

At this point we must ask another question: what justifies the development in Europe of different epigenetic processes leading to fertility decline? Both current theoretical frameworks (focusing the former social and economic conditions, the latter cultural models) are one-sided and incomplete. Only by connecting one with the other can we find a less partial explanation: the linking thread might be the set of relationships translating social action into social practice and norm. My aim is to reconstruct – both by analytical arguments and by reference to various sources of empirical data – the framework of practices stratified in time which make up the anthropological embeddedness [Note 9] of current fertility dynamics.

Practices (and norms too) refer to one or more reference actors or groups, and generally (even in the era of globalisation) groups tend to be rooted in a territorial niche and in a subculture or 'folk-lore'. Groups – Carl Schmitt [1963] would say – are 'telluric' actors. Of course, many processes may concur in this geographical rooting, stratified along the latitude, but I am interested in studying a particular sort of social feedback we observe today: while historically different social practices gradually crystallised in the shape of different inertial anthropological structures (norms and values), these in turn embed the current social transformations (whatever economic, political or technical factors cause them) into different new patterns of social practices.

How can we identify these "folkways and customs" [Sumner 1906] that act as incubators for divergent paths of development? In my opinion, we will never understand the dynamics of the family if we confine ourselves to monitoring only the restricted household circle without exploring the fundamental interplay between the household and two other circles round it: kinship and the network of friends, neighbours and all other strong ties. My hypothesis is that the overall regional patterns of these three circles could influence local differences in social and demographic reproduction strategies.

### 3. Household patterns in historic Europe and the present demographic choices

As I said, Le Play does not confine himself to an abstract typology of household patterns: he locates them minutely on the regional map of Europe. In the geography of Le Play (recently recovered and systematised by Todd [1983] the stem-family area includes the Northern and Pyrenean regions of Spain [Note 10], Pyrenean [Note 11] and Mediterranean [Note 12] regions of France and Central-Northern Regions of Italy [Note 13]. It is surprising to note how closely, in the three most populous countries of South-continental Europe (France, Spain and Italy), Le Play's stem-family map and the map of current fertility stagnation overlap. Let us classify these regions (Eurostat data, NUTS level 2) in compliance with the rank order of the total fertility rates 1983-1993 within each country: in tabs. 2-4 we found that all Le Play's stem-family regions are located above the line of the median national value.

**Table 2:**

First and second quartile of regional TFR and area of Le Play's stem-family – Spain (18 Comunidades autonomas; I.N. = index numbers within the country)

	Le Play area	TFR '83	TFR '88	TFR '93	83-93 average	I.n.	quartile
		<i>1.794</i>	<i>1.430</i>	<i>1.246</i>	<i>1.490</i>		
Asturias	Yes	1.474	1.018	0.848	1.113	74.7	I
Pais Vasco	Yes	1.456	1.101	0.958	1.172	78.6	I
Castilla-Leon	Yes	1.622	1.163	1.000	1.261	84.7	I
Aragon	Yes	1.532	1.231	1.080	1.281	86.0	I
Galicia	Yes	1.634	1.213	1.049	1.299	87.2	I/II
Catalonia	Yes	1.390	1.335	1.226	1.317	88.4	II
Navarra	Yes	1.578	1.278	1.144	1.333	89.5	II
Cantabria	Yes	1.805	1.231	0.998	1.345	90.3	II
Rioja	Yes	1.806	1.234	1.065	1.369	91.9	II

**Table 3:**

First and second quartile of regional TFR and area of Le Play's stem-family – France  
(22 Régions; I.N. = index numbers within the country)

	Le Play area	TFR '83	TFR '88	TFR '93	83-93 average	I.n.	quartile
		1.785	1.806	1.655	1.749		
Limousin	Yes	1.495	1.469	1.347	1.437	82.2	I
Midi-Pyrénées	Yes	1.529	1.552	1.470	1.517	86.8	I
Auvergne	Yes	1.631	1.565	1.389	1.528	87.4	I
Aquitaine	Yes	1.588	1.595	1.445	1.543	88.2	I
Poitou-Char.	Yes	1.704	1.655	1.488	1.616	92.4	I
Languedoc	Yes	1.680	1.699	1.579	1.653	94.5	I/II
Burgundy	No	1.764	1.756	1.582	1.700	97.2	II
Centre	No	1.754	1.775	1.593	1.707	97.6	II
Alsace	No	1.699	1.759	1.651	1.703	97.4	II
Corsica	No	1.872	1.716	1.526	1.705	97.5	II
Provence-Alpes	Yes	1.716	1.790	1.639	1.715	98.1	II

Extending the analysis to neighbouring countries – where Le Play's exploration could be less analytical - does not radically change the framework. This is particularly true for the Swiss *Cantons* and for Austria, where the Southern-Eastern regions [Note 14], together with Friuli in Italy, form a bridge to Slovenia, exactly as in Le Play. The result is a sort of Southern European orographic ridge: it unfolds from West to East along the cordillera, the Pyrenees, the Cevennes, the Alps and the Apennines. It is the breeding ground both of stem-family culture and of the drastic current changes in reproductive behaviour.

It is more difficult to use the stem-family area map which La Play drew up for Germany. According to Le Play [Note 15], the Southern European orographic ridge actually extends over the whole of the Danube basin (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria) and from there it follows a South-North line running through the Rhineland and reaching Denmark via Hannover, Lüneburg and Schleswig-Holstein. The stem-family area therefore seems to cover a large part of western Germany: other factors can explain internal distinctions [Note 16]. As a proof, the change in the capitalist spirit, described as a reduction in the time horizon of the family home [Note 17], is found by Schumpeter [1943] at the core of the region where social and political scientists nowadays sometimes locate the German (or Rhenish) “variants on the conservative welfare model”.

However, this East-West demarcation line does not significantly find a match in the rank-ordering of the 40 *Regierungsbezirke* according to the TFR. This could be because its effects are largely swamped by the consequences of the GDR's political breakdown. The collapse of the TFRs of the *Regierungsbezirke* of Eastern Germany could be hiding the previous tradition of lower fertility in the Rhine and Danube areas, compared with the Elbe region.

**Table 4:**

First and second quartile of regional TFR and area of Le Play's stem-family – Italy  
(20 Regioni; I.N. = index numbers within the country)

	Le Play area	TFR '83	TFR '88	TFR '93	83-93 average	I.n.	quartile
		1.508	1.362	1.255	1.375		
Liguria	Yes	1.055	1.,006	0.972	1.011	73.5	I
Emilia-Rom.	Yes	1.078	0.976	0.979	1.011	73.5	I
Friuli V.G.	Yes	1.121	1.047	0.968	1.046	76.0	I
Tuscany	Yes	1.186	1.106	1.029	1.107	80.5	I
Piedmont	Yes	1.201	1.102	1.058	1.120	81.5	I
Aosta Valley	Yes	1.303	1.232	1.012	1.182	86.0	II
Lombardy	No	1.288	1.161	1.111	1.118	86.3	II
Veneto	No	1.307	1.184	1.111	1.201	87.3	II
Marche	Yes	1.386	1.231	1.145	1.254	91.2	II
Umbria	Yes	1.441	1.255	1.316	1.276	92.8	II

#### 4. The co-ordinates of Le Play's household typology

Curiously, since the hypothesis of more distinct household patterns in Europe again attracted the attention of social scientists, Le Play's contribution was rediscovered but also underestimated or misunderstood [Note 18]. In 1990 Hollinger and Haller [1990], confuting the hypothesis of the nuclear family type as the dominant type in all advanced industrialised countries, said: "modern historical family research has disproved convincingly the earlier assumption of the predominance of the extended 'stem' family [Le Play [Note 19]] in pre-industrial Europe". But such an assumption is hardly attributable to Le Play. In fact the authors go on describing analytically three 'European cultural areas' with different family structures in pre-industrial times: and two of these three areas are similar to the Le Play's unstable and stem family. Describing a Europe split into two social and demographic models of reproduction, hinging upon 'weak' and 'strong' families, Reher [1998] writes:

"The geography of strong and weak family systems does not appear to follow the classic division of Europe into stem-family and nuclear-family regions. The dividing line, in some ways, is actually much simpler, with the Centre and North of Europe together with North American society characterised by relatively weak family links, and the Mediterranean regions by strong family ties".

At least two arguments explain the recurrent misunderstanding of Le Play. The first one, as already stated, is the disaggregation level the authors use for their territorial analysis: passing from country to regional level is enough to trace clearly the cleavage between the area of the stem-family and fertility stagnation and the world of unstable families and fertility recovery

[Note 20]. A second argument concerns the lack of clarity in the definition of the stem-family and more generally of Le Play's family typology.

It is common opinion [Todd 1983] that the stem-family category is founded upon two coordinates: a) the degree of neolocalism (liberal model) or patrilocalism (authoritarian model) in the residence at marriage, and b) the rules of inheritance. Nevertheless Caroline Brettell [1991] has confuted the prevalent hypothesis among historians and anthropologists, arguing (at least with respect to the Italian case) that "inheritance practices are not determinative" in discriminating the family models. Behind a lifestyle, Brettell suggests, we should glimpse both an economic calculus and a 'philosophy of life' [Note 21]. Behind a social practice producing social norms, we can see either a system of costs and benefits or a system of values (a meaning-giving system) sedimented in time. As Reher [1998] says, "historically the strength of familial ties appears to have conditioned the way in which succession was carried out in stem-family regions" [Note 22].

In Le Play's typology, then, the rule of inheritance is perhaps subordinate to the rule of the placement of the residence after marriage. As a consequence, the basic cleavage among family models divides patri-local (patriarchal or stem) and neo-local (unstable) families [Note 23]. Cross-tabulating this variable with the frequency of complex (extended and multiple) households, Laslett [1983] proposed a typology of forms of organisation of the home in traditional Europe [table 5] that overlaps Le Play's map, and where the crucial cleavage distinguishes a north-western area, characterised by predominant neo-local residence, from a large and compound stem-family area, where the neo-local residence is less widespread or a minority, even though present, practice [Note 24].

**Table 5:**  
Typology of family patterns in Europe [Note 25].

% complex families	Neo-local residence	Area	Countries
Nearly zero	Predominant pattern	Western Europe	England, Netherlands, Northern France
Low	Widespread Pattern	Central-Western Europe	Southern France, partially Germany
Medium	Minority Pattern	Mediterranean Europe	Spain, Italy, partially Portugal, Balkans
High	Almost unknown	Eastern Europe	Russia

Moving from a country-level analysis to a regional (NUTS 2) one, Laslett's typology can also become inaccurate and the demarcation lines already mentioned in §3 appear again. For instance,

Rowland [1983] shows how placing the whole of Spain in the Mediterranean area could conceal the peculiar stem-family culture of the Cantabric-Pyrenean area. As for Italy, Barbagli [1991] has constructed a more analytical typology [table 6] where Southern Italy is – coherently with Le Play – placed into the unstable and neo-local family area, whereas a further cleavage between North-western and North-eastern Italy is not found in Le Play.

**Table 6:**

Typology of family patterns in Italy [Note 26].

Residence at marriage	Age at marriage		
	Early	Delayed	
Neo-local	Southern Italy	Cities and towns of Central and Northern Italy and Sardinia	
Patri-local		Rural Central and Northern Italy	
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Western Italy (stem-family, small-scale peasant land ownership)</td> <td>Central &amp; East Northern Italy (multiple households – horizontal as well as vertical)</td> </tr> </table>	Western Italy (stem-family, small-scale peasant land ownership)
Western Italy (stem-family, small-scale peasant land ownership)	Central & East Northern Italy (multiple households – horizontal as well as vertical)		

To sum up, we are a long way from understanding clearly what the stem-family really marks, but it is geographically unquestionable that the stem-family has its own specific identity. The satisfactory overlap between the maps of traditional household patterns and of current fertility decline confirms the nexus between current changes in demographic behaviour and the persistence of some anthropological structures and practices concerning the formation of the family. A similar result is found by Holdsworth [1998], who traced the Spanish regional map for the age of transition to adulthood.

But the influence of anthropological embedment goes beyond strictly demographic behaviour. The modern relevance of the Le Play cleavages (either within the European map or simply within the boundaries of only one country, like Italy) can be extended to other facets of social reproduction. E.g. the compound geography of the regional neo-local and patri-local family model, described in Barbagli’s typology, is perfectly reflected in the map of the architectural forms of farmhouses in Italy [Note 27].

Moreover, the Central-Northern regions of Italy marked by the traditional predominance of the stem-family also experienced in the Eighties the upsurge of a new kind of capitalism, the Marshall ‘industrial districts’ [Piore und Sabel 1984], hinging upon a network of ‘family- firms’ managed by a group of sibs, exactly as in Le Play’s sketch of the stem family: “(the other children leaving the household) can in turn both become totally independent of each other or embark together on some enterprises..”. Italian studies into the ‘informal economy’ have

underlined some crucial qualities of the family-firm: its ability to cope, using non-standard strategies, with all the tensions emerging in a changing society, its autonomy of organisation that makes it a perfect mechanism of crisis management, its resources of flexibility. All this extra-skill of functional adaptation, not only to changes in the social system but also to transformations of the productive system, seems to be a distinctive feature of the stem-family, or – as anthropologists [Linton 1936] have already noticed – of the consanguineous family.

Finally, it would be useful to reflect on the fact that the orographic backbone of the stem-family (from the Basque country and Catalonia to the central-European areas of Bavaria, Carinthia and Slovenia) contains the core of Europe's family-based, highly ethnocentric 'little homelands' [Note 28]. These are the very regions in which XXth century history sometimes has seen civil wars, i.e. break-up of a social order based on blood ties [Micheli 1999].

## **5. Kinship & strong ties: concentric circles round the family**

All these connections between the Le Play cleavages and other social, economical and political processes make one suspect that household cannot be taken as the only framework for current social changes. Let us try and enlarge the analysis to other dimensions of social relationships. Forty years ago Elizabeth Bott [1957] underlined a chief difference between 'small-scale (primitive) societies' and 'urban industrialised societies':

“In England and other Western European industrialised societies work groups are seldom recruited on the basis of kinship, individuals may earn a living without depending on relatives for their means of livelihood, productive resources may be owned by individuals who are not related to one another (...). This reduced importance of kinship in economic affairs is associated with a narrower range of kin recognition, with absence of corporate groups of kin (...), with less frequent and intense contact among relatives”.

No doubt the model featuring a large range of kin recognition, the importance of kinship and corporate groups of kin in economic affairs is dominant in many non-Western societies [Note 29]. But it is also very close to the Mediterranean model of the family-firm and stem-family. Elizabeth Bott's intensive study [Bott 1957] into a small number of London families and their social networks clears our mind of the “commonplace of sociology and anthropology, that kinship does not play a very important part in industrialised societies”. Litwak and Szelenyi [1969] stressed later that the growing thinning out, in Western societies, of face-to-face contacts does not mean a loss of importance of the primary groups.

The co-resident household must therefore be analysed as the core of an integrated system, surrounded by at least two circles which are analytically distinct. The first one includes that part

of the kinship that is operationally or symbolically close to the household. The second circle, which develops round household and kinship and can extend beyond them, consists of the network of subjects connected with members of the household by strong ties, i.e. 'frequent ties, giving emotional or instrumental support' [Note 30]. If some processes of anthropological embedding, concerning family models, are connected with the current differentiation of demographic behaviour, something similar is also true of kinship and network patterns [Note 31]. Some sort of systemic connection links together the forms and sizes of the three relationship circles.

The first seminal rule of linkage between the family pattern and the connectedness of family networks [Note 32] was formulated by Bott [1957], who distinguished two kinds of families (segregated conjugal [Note 33] versus joint conjugal role relationship [Note 34]) and two kinds of social networks around a family (a 'close-knit' network, with many relationships among the component units, versus a 'loose-knit' one, with few such relationships). Bott concluded: "the degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family's social network". In other words, the asymmetrical family appears to have a more dense strong-ties network, i.e. a social network where there are more kinship ties than strong ties with non-relatives (to the extent that the proportion of kin in the network can be taken as a good proxy for its density):

"Kin are of special importance in any type of network. First, kin are especially likely to know one another, so that the kinship region of the network is likely to be more close-knit than other sectors. Second, relationships with and among close kin are relatively permanent" [Bott 1971].

An intriguing result emerges from European sociological research: as for both Le Play's household patterns and Bott's 'family and kinship' patterns, the size and form of the strong-ties networks are not homogeneous throughout Europe. Hollinger and Haller [1990], emphasising from the 1986 survey of the International Social Survey Program [Note 35] significant differences between the north-western and central culture areas of Europe and the Southern ones, show that the closer the family structure and higher than elsewhere the frequency of face-to-face contacts with kin [Note 36], the fewer are the strong ties with non-relatives. To sum up, "the importance of friends in people's social support networks is inversely proportional to the importance of extended kin".

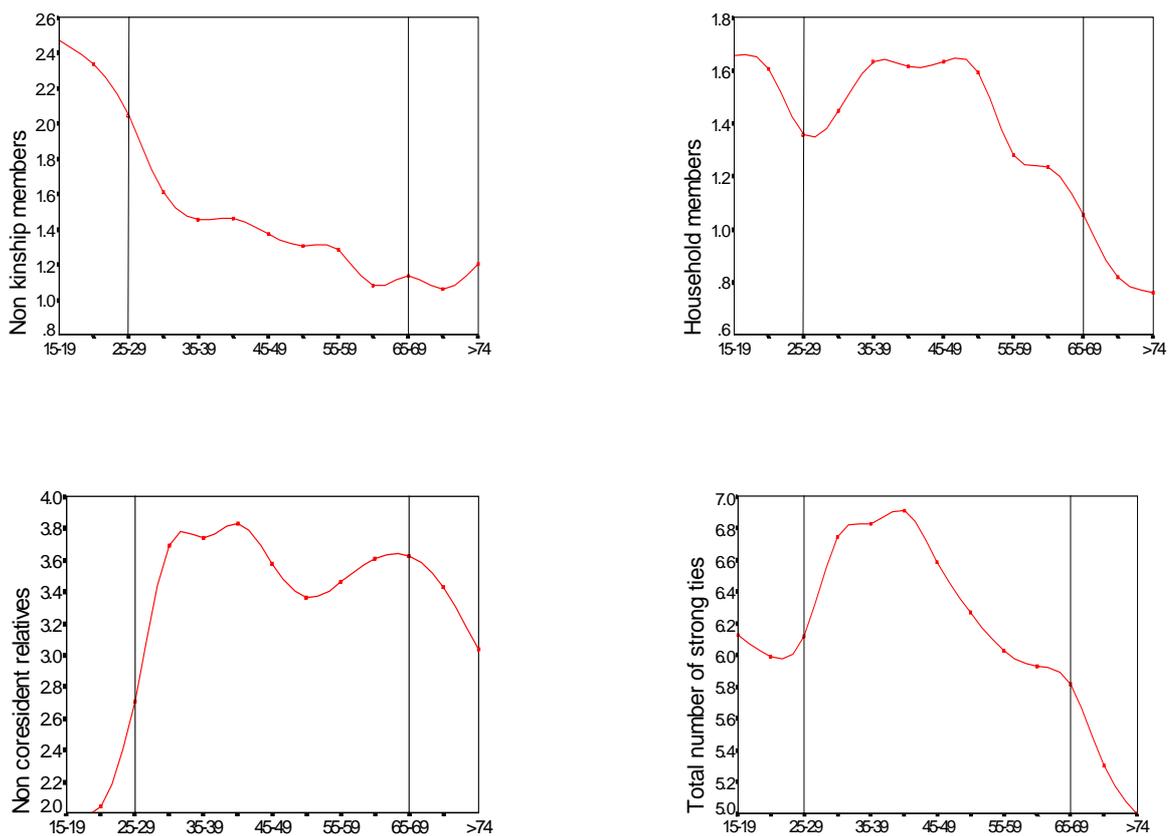
Truly, keeping the current habit of identifying Bott's asymmetrical family with Le Play's stem-family, in the Hollinger & Haller contribution, there is evidence of a sort of paradox [Note 37]: contrary to the inverse relationship between social support networks and the importance of extended kin, which was found in the other six countries surveyed, Italy (the only Mediterranean country in the International Social Survey) is characterised both by a strong presence of kin and

a large circle of non relatives strong ties. Nevertheless, if the Italian family is evolving toward a nuclear form but retains marked role asymmetry [Palomba and Sabbadini 1993], we should expect (in keeping with Bott's and Hollinger & Haller's more general rule) a smaller network of non kinship strong ties.

Recently some social surveys in the Netherlands [Gierveld, Tilburg and Lecchini, 1995] and in a few regions of Central-Northern Italy [Note 38] have made it possible to compare the size and form of the network of 'emotionally and/or instrumentally significant' ties among older people (over 65 years old) in the two countries. The networks came out as very different, both in size (14.5 members in the Dutch network, only 5 in the Italian one) and composition [Note 39]. But the small size of the strong tie circle is not peculiar only to older people.

**Figure 1:**

Strong ties by age classes in Italy: total number, household members, non co-resident relatives, non kinship members [Note 44].



In a recent Italian survey, called the 'Social Barometer' [note 40], the age-specific curve of network size [Micheli and Billari 1998] has a parabolic shape, with the smallest sizes at the

extreme ages, both among young people (where the network belongs mostly to the outer, non-kinship circle) and among older ones (where the strong ties begin concentrating into kinship) [fig. 1]. However the peak of network size in full adulthood remains clearly inferior to the average Dutch levels. And such a restricted network is also an intrinsically kinship network [Note 41]. All this is fully coherent with Bott's typology, confuting the old stereotype of an Italian family surrounded by a circle of countless friends and relatives.

The general rule is then confirmed again, even though its rationale escapes us. Why is Europe split up into two patterns of social interaction, with different proportions and roles among co-resident relatives, non co-resident kinship and non-kinship ties? Socio-cultural interpretations stress the role played by the cleavage between private-oriented and public-oriented [Note 42] societies, and the statistical linkage between public orientation and basic education spread can support the "Second Demographic Transition" hypothesis, i.e. an underlying process of 'modernisation' from North to South of Europe. Actually, the clear preference expressed by young people for non kinship strong ties and therefore the overweighting of the outer circle in their network, as results from Social Barometer data, could also be an effect of the spread of high-school education.

Nevertheless, the difference between network size and density in Italy and the Netherlands is so great that it is difficult to support a simple hypothesis of uniform change in Europe. Moreover the diffusionist approach, unless it unrealistically assumes the absence of a Southern European family model, simply refers to some previous process of historical formation of the cleavage [Note 43]. And however it is interpreted, it cannot itself be based upon family models alone.

## **6. Familism and asabiyyah. Towards a tripartite typology of family models**

Can we assign a specific identity to the Mediterranean social interaction model, which is located by Le Play in the unstable or neo-localist family model (close to Northern-European countries), but unlike them is marked by asymmetrical roles in the partnership and dense and kinship dominant social network?

The geography of family structures and practices sometimes intertwines with the geography of social practices and cultures, producing new problems. The economic debate about industrial districts has opened yet another classic issue of political science: the civic culture too (the ethos of the community good taking priority over family affairs) has its own geography. Apart from Tocqueville's America, the civic culture is predominant in Northern-Western Europe, but Robert Putnam [1993] found it in Italy also, just in the stem-family regions.

Familism is the opposite of civic culture: the ethos where the good of the family takes priority over community needs. Familism also has its own geography; Banfield [1958] described

it as the prevailing ethos in Southern Italy. Dalla Zuanna [1995] summarised the nature of familism in the following three points: 1) most people arrange their own life based on the family, both as household and as kinship; 2) the individual utility function is overwhelmed by the utility function of one's own family; 3) society is organised in such a way that strategies based on individual utility are less successful than strategies based on family utility. The first point clears up the link between the familist culture and the underlying anthropological structures of stem-family and close-knit network. The two latter points, tracing the functioning strategy of familistic home, clarify a possible link between anthropological embedding and the current bent for strong demographic restraint:

“In a familistic society engaged (..) in processes of upward social mobility, an (additional) child is a very heavy burden. In a long period horizon (..) familistic parents want their children to have a social status higher than or at least equal to their own status. Therefore the familial investment is very strong (..) To sum up, a well-off familistic society generates few children because it invests too much in those children” .

Dalla Zuanna's interpretation of fertility decline in Italy is intriguing, because it supports the hypothesis of familism as a normative framework. However it appears to depend upon the hypothesis that familistic culture is uniformly spread throughout Italy: “the recent fertility decline can be interpreted if we assume familism as the background noise of the whole of Italian society..”. How can we reconcile this hypothesis of overall uniformity in family strategies both with Le Play's different family models and with the different family cultures generally attributed to the South and to the Centre-North of Italy?

Actually, the division of the social network of Italian families into its three main components (household, non co-resident relatives and non kinship strong ties), measured by the Social Barometer, gives some evidence of a slightly different geography than Le Play's maps [tables 7-10]. The frequency of household components among the strong ties is higher in the regions of Central-Southern Italy, as a consequence of current delayed demographic transition. The frequency of non co-resident kinship in the network (proxy for the close-knit network of Bott's model) is systematically higher, in 40-year-olds and over, in Central-Northern Italy (core of the stem-family area). On the other hand, the frequency of non-kinship strong ties is high throughout the life course only in north-eastern Italy, i.e. principally in Veneto, the only probable location of the unstable, loose-knit network family.

So, if we want to understand the rationale behind the geography of family patterns in Italy – and maybe elsewhere – we need two rules that can strengthen our method of analysis. First, we must give up any interpretation of the social and demographic European dynamic at the purely country aggregation-level, but also, perhaps, at the regional (NUTS 2) level. E.g., the two Le Play regimes in Southern Italy intertwine and alternate, depending on the local features of urbanisation and productive organisation. Delille [1988] emphasises how the patri-local stem-

family tradition prevails in hilly areas divided into farms and among the urban high classes, whilst the neo-local nuclear family tradition is dominant in the large landed estates and among the urban lower classes.

Above all we need to replace the dichotomous typology with a tripartite one to grasp the difference not only between stem family and unstable family, but also between a Northern-European unstable family regime and a Mediterranean one. A similar aim is pursued by Reher [1998] who, in exploring historical premises, before differentiating between family models in Europe, arrives at an analogous tripartite division. He began from two distinct (even though conjugable) readings, both taking into account the structural conditions that make a 'rational choice' out of some everyday practice [Note 45] and clarifying the cultural roots of the Mediterranean model, which stems from the peculiar local reply to structural stresses:

**Table 7:**

Strong ties by age classes in Italy: total number.

Geographical region	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	> 74
North-West	6.44	6.34	6.83	6.36	5.64	5.06	4.95
North-East	5.63	6.99	6.89	6.59	6.14	6.21	5.00
North-Centre	5.94	6.28	6.92	6.49	6.30	5.68	4.89
Centre & Sardinia	6.15	6.87	6.79	6.31	6.35	6.29	6.00
South & Sicily	5.76	6.25	6.92	6.53	6.07	5.64	5.07

**Table 8:**

Strong ties by age classes in Italy: household members.

Geographical region	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	> 74
North-West	1.61	1.37	1.64	1.48	1.13	0.81	0.67
North-East	1.49	1.45	1.67	1.65	1.26	1.00	<b>1.00</b>
North-Centre	1.65	1.32	1.68	1.55	1.26	0.91	<b>0.95</b>
Centre & Sardinia	1.52	1.44	1.47	<b>1.82</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.00</b>
South & Sicily	1.68	1.46	1.58	<b>1.80</b>	<b>1.48</b>	1.09	0.57

**Table 9:**

Strong ties by age classes in Italy: non co-resident relatives.

Geographical region	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	> 74
North-West	2.23	3.15	3.80	3.43	3.32	3.21	3.09
North-East	2.09	<b>3.59</b>	3.78	3.50	3.49	3.58	2.33
North-Centre	1.83	3.08	3.62	<b>3.65</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>3.87</b>	2.89
Centre & Sardinia	2.13	<b>3.45</b>	3.91	3.26	<b>3.82</b>	3.61	<b>4.50</b>
South & Sicily	1.97	3.13	3.88	3.53	3.41	3.71	3.07

**Table 10:**

Strong ties by age classes in Italy: non kinship members.

Geographical region	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	> 74
North-West	2.60	1.83	1.39	<b>1.45</b>	1.18	1.04	1.19
North-East	2.05	<b>1.95</b>	1.44	<b>1.44</b>	<b>1.39</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>1.67</b>
North-Centre	2.46	1.88	<b>1.62</b>	1.29	1.19	0.89	1.05
Centre & Sardinia	2.50	<b>1.99</b>	1.40	1.24	1.11	<b>1.47</b>	0.50
South & Sicily	2.11	1.67	1.46	1.20	1.18	0.84	<b>1.43</b>

“In the Northern part of the continent Christianised forms of familial organisation ended up by meshing gradually with existing Germanic legal and social traditions based on the importance of the tribe, the individual and the visible social position of women. In southern–Europe the influence of the Germanic tribes was much more superficial and short-lived. Besides, from the early eighth century on, a series of Muslim incursions occurred, strongest in Spain and Portugal and in the Balkan peninsula but also present in Southern Italy, which tended to bring back oriental family structures, so central to Islamic societies, that are based on the overriding importance of kin ties”.

Reher suggests a process of hybridisation of the stem-family by a different model, which is prevalently based on “kin ties” and “extended family loyalties”. If we wish to explore this model, a capital text is at our disposal: in the *Mouqaddima* [Note 46], Ibn Khaldun’s theory of collective action hinges upon the concept of ‘Asabiyyah, i.e. ‘esprit de corps’, group solidarity. ‘Asabiyyah [Gabrieli 1930] is the abstract from the noun ‘asabah’, i.e. male sibs of a common lineage. ‘Asabiyyah is based upon blood bonds, reciprocal aid - the Polanyi reciprocity - produced both by the ‘nasab’ (genealogy) and indirectly by some non blood ties, such as alliance (hulf) or patronage (wala) [Note 47].

If we attribute to the concept of ‘Asabiyyah’ the extended meaning of ‘alliance among kin’ [Note 48], we can easily realise how exactly it looks like the concept of a close-knit network of the Mediterranean area. In describing “small-scale (primitive) societies” Bott [1957] in fact stressed that the elementary (stem-) family

“is encapsulated not only within a local group but also, particularly in the sphere of domestic affairs, within a corporate kin group (...). When there are corporate local groups and kin groups, segregation of conjugal roles is likely to become even more marked than that described above for urban families with close-knit networks. Marriage becomes a linking of kin groups rather than preponderantly a union between individuals acting on their own initiative”.

**Table 11:**

A tripartite outline of the family models in Western Europe.

	<b>Le Play's neo / patrilocalism</b>	<b>Bott's internal role set</b>	<b>Size &amp; density of social network</b>	<b>Predominance among strong ties</b>
<b>Atlantic pattern</b>	Unstable family	Symmetrical family	Large, loose-knit network of strong ties	Many neighbours & friends (bridge towards weak ties)
<b>Latin pattern</b>	Stem-family	Asymmetrical family	Small, close knit network of strong ties	Kinship predominance (family-firm)
<b>Mediterranean pattern</b>	Unstable family	Asymmetrical family	Small, close Knit network of strong ties	Encapsulated in kinship (families alliance, 'Asabiyyah')

The Italian Social Barometer data show that the ideal type of family encapsulated in its kinship is present both in the Centre-North and in the South of Italy. In both these regions the web of affiliations is mostly circumscribed with blood-bond ties, and with few non-kinship ties. Nevertheless, while in Central-Northern Italy kinship acts as a bridge towards the land of weak ties, in the Mediterranean unstable family the kinship circles of different families are inclined to intertwine with each other.

On the other hand [table 11] the Mediterranean unstable family and the North-European one are somehow similar, as both are integrated in a larger land of ties. However in the North this is the land of weak ties, whilst in the South – where the extra-kinship network is traditionally shorter [Trumbach 1978] – a different, but equally effective, network is woven by the intertwining of different kinship systems, that is by an alliance among families. The key of family-centred social reproduction is here, therefore, a policy of kinship: it acts by means of collateral line relationships, which weave different family threads into a single close-knit web of reciprocities.

## 7. Conclusions. In search of symptom-formation factors

Reasoning on the anthropological frame underlying the current demographic transformations in Europe, three main arguments have been developed here. First, the European patterns in fertility decline are regionally embedded 'lore', roughly concentrated in three bands at different latitudes and overlapping Le Play's geography of family models. And this overlap concerns not only demographic dynamics but also both economic and political ones. On the one hand the predisposition of sibs to 'embark on common entrepreneurial initiatives', typical of the stem-family, takes the shape of the 'family-firm' in Central-Northern Italy industrial districts; on the other the importance of blood-ties in stem-family areas is the incubator of the ethnocentric philosophy of 'little homelands'.

Secondly, the anthropological roots of European demographic cleavages cannot be reduced merely to the household; they are also to be found in the concentric circles of strong ties.

Crossing Le Play's family classification, according to external strategy (leaving the family, alliance among sibs), with Bott's family typology, according to segregation in the internal role-set, we find that both the stem-family area and the unstable area in Southern Europe are marked by a small, close-knit network of strong ties, with kinship predominance. The Italian Social Barometer data confute the hypothesis of a large Italian network both of relatives and friends, and confirm Bott's findings. Close-knit network and kinship dominance are also structural characteristics of a 'familistic' society, strategically prone to strong fertility control.

Third, the kinship dominance area is not homogeneous within itself: different patterns of social network organisation are to be found in it. In the stem-family area, social support hinges upon a network of kin (consanguineous), whilst in the unstable Mediterranean area social support hinges upon an alliance primarily among different kindred units, then upon a network with many relatives-in-law.

A clear claim for future research emerges from these results: we can no longer avoid investigating the inertial anthropological localisms where today's demographic dynamics are embedded. From this point of view to pose the alternative between converging or diverging European demographic dynamics is only a misleading question. Reher [1998] emphasises it, basing his statement upon the valuable category of 'path dependency' [Note 49]. Weber [1904/1905] was working on a similar issue when he wrote: "development paths too can be constructed as ideal types".

But a good sociology is not enough. We must also try to understand the interlocking of structural conditions, rational choice, practices and norms. An open question remains: why, in the present historical circumstances, do we see a drastic drop in fertility behaviour precisely in the regions where the importance of the family agency (in the shape of the stem-family or of familistic kinship alliance) is embedded in the anthropological rules of social reproduction [Note 50]? How can we explain the relationship between family predominance as anthropological embedding and family collapse as demographic reaction?

It may be useful to reconsider these questions in the light of the cognitive dissonance theory. Festinger's theory [Elder and Caspi 1988] can be summarised by saying that whenever a person holds two or more 'cognitions' (including beliefs and norms, preferences or emotions) that are inconsistent with one another, and the tension produces psychic discomfort and physiological painful arousal, an unconscious pressure is set up to adjust one or more of the elements in the set, by changing or blocking some of the dissonant cognitions, so as to reduce the tension and restore consonance.

There is no doubt that, over the last decade, not only one part but the whole of Europe has come to the zenith of a long period process of homogenisation in the name of modernism and secularisation [Lesthaeghe 1991]. However, we know that this long process has brought to light strong contrasts between economic conditions and expectations about the way of life [note 51]. It is equally evident that, in the last two decades of the century, the final outcome of this process is as far off as behavioural standardisation. As we have seen before, Northern Europe favours self-

fulfilment by procreational choice outside marriage, whereas Central and Mediterranean Europe preserves the marital bond at the expense of the maternal blood bond – two opposing strategies which, however, for several years, have both contributed to the same declining trend in fertility.

Faced with such tension between resources and expectations, various parts of the continent have used diverse adaptive strategies. So what ‘law-like statement’ can help explain why? Analysing the similar problem of changes in philosophy of life among ‘the children of the Great Depression’, Elder and Caspi [1988] resort to a social mechanism that they defined as “principle of accentuation”.

“Social change creates a disparity between claims and resources, goals and accomplishments and the corresponding loss of control prompts efforts to regain control. (..) Adaptive responses are shaped by the requirements of the new situation, but they also depend on the social and psychological resources people bring to the newly changed situation. Individual and relational attributes, such as coping styles and the marital bond, affect adaptation to new circumstances. The accentuation principle refers to the increase in emphasis or salience of these already prominent characteristics during social transitions in the life course.”

Tesser and Achee [1994] pose the same problem of indeterminacy among different mechanisms to get out of a dissonance situation. They suggest a solution going beyond state variables and introducing “path dependence or hysteresis” [Note 52]. According to them [note 53], a not very frequent pattern of behaviour, under strong opposite social pressure, tends to further dissipate with time, just as a frequent pattern of behaviour tends to further increase: their thesis is similar to the principle of accentuation.

Also the bifurcation of demographic patterns in Europe may be attributable to the same mechanism. The persistent prestige of the marital bond, in Mediterranean countries, leads not only to protecting it but also to highlighting its importance at the cost of mother-child links. The traditional weakness and instability of conjugal ties in Atlantic countries becomes accentuated by complete dissociation from procreation. The various European regions adapt their own demographic behaviour to mitigate the effects of dissonance by barricading themselves into the fortress of their respective strong cultural specificities.

As a by-product of this thesis, Elder and Tesser & Achee help us identify some contextual characteristics that can explain the diversification mechanism. What “symptom-formation factors”, to use Brown and Harris’ terminology [Brown and Harris 1978] [Note 54], justify the appearance of one ‘symptom’ rather than another when there is a crisis in a ‘body’? Although many processes can concur in these geographical cleavages, stratified according to latitude [note 55], both Elder and Tesser & Achee focus their analysis on the role of practices and norms, i.e. the stratified relational systems, as ‘factor-formation’ systems.

As a matter of fact we observe today the following sort of social feedback. While historically different social practices gradually crystallised in the shape of different inertial anthropological structures (norms and values), these in turn embed the current social transformations (whatever economic, political or technological factors cause them) into different new patterns of social practice.

## **8. Post Scriptum. Flowing back into the river-bed of the stem-family**

Applying the accentuation principle, we can assume that different, regionally rooted, family and kinship patterns “react” in contact with an appropriate reagent, such as the macro-process of modernisation, generating different patterns of today’s demographic behaviour. In such a way the economic and structural changes in the Eighties and Nineties (with an imbalance between aspirations and resources producing a need for greater control) should have provoked a sort of ebb into the bed of anthropological practices and structures prevailing in the Southern and Mediterranean regions [Note 56].

A reflux, by the way, that very often takes the shape of the effect of a rational choice. We know, for instance, that in twentieth-century cities both the size and form of urban apartments prevented the eldest child from keeping the patri-local residence at marriage. Nevertheless, the growing wellbeing of the Southern Countries of Europe during recent decades has produced a marked increase in the average size of homes. In this more comfortable dwelling system, an only child can again continue living in the family home, even after his marriage, and this is convenient, both for the child and for his parents. So, far from being swept by the Northern European family pattern, the stem-family and the kinship-alliance family patterns in Southern Europe would seem paradoxically to have been revitalised by contact with the wave of modernisation.

## Notes

1. A previous version of this contribution was presented to the Workshop on “Social Interactions and Demographic Behaviour”, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, in October 1999.
2. (In the stem-family) “un des enfants, marié près des parents, vit en communauté avec eux et perpétue, avec leur concours, la tradition des ancêtres. Les autres enfants s’établissent au dehors quand ils ne préfèrent pas garder le célibat au foyer paternel. Ces émigrants peuvent à leur gré rester indépendants l’un de l’autre ou tenter en commun des entreprises, rester fidèles à la tradition ou se placer dans des situations nouvelles créés par leur propre initiative” [Le Play 1855].
3. (In the unstable/nuclear family) personne ne s’attache à un foyer, les enfants quittent séparément la maison paternelle dès qu’ils peuvent se suffire à eux-mêmes, les parents restent isolés pendant leur vieillesse et meurent dans l’abandon. Le père, qui s’est créé une existence en dehors de la tradition de ses aïeux, n’inculque guère sa pratique à ses enfants: il sait d’ailleurs que ses efforts ne sauraient aboutir à un résultat durable. Les jeunes gens s’inspirent surtout de l’esprit d’indépendance. Dans le choix de leur carrière, ils cèdent à leur inclination et aux impulsions fortuites du milieu social qui les entoure” [Le Play 1855].
4. Emmanuel Todd [Sumner 1906], who in the 80s rediscovered the importance of Le Play’s contribution to family anthropology, describes him as “aussi heureux dans ses recherches empiriques que pathétique dans ses propositions politiques”.
5. Total fertility rates are not published by Eurostat on a regional level (NUTS 2). Therefore we have disaggregated the national TFR, beginning from two sets of available regional data (annual births and distribution of women classed by age), using a method suggested by Gini in 1932 and then recovered by Calot [Brettell 1991]. Comparing the Italian official TFR with the estimates obtained we note the robustness of the method, with a 1% average error (2% for the smaller regions).
6. Durkheim [1895] maintains that Stuart Mill’s axiom of a plurality of causes (a consequence does not always flow from the same antecedent; on the contrary it can result now from one cause, now from another one) is the denial itself of the causality principle. No doubt, “if we agree with Mill that cause and effect are absolutely heterogeneous and without any logic link between them”, there is no contradiction in the assumption of plurality of causes. Nevertheless if the cause-effect relation acts intensionally and not only extensionally or – Durkheim would say - if it consists of a “natural” relation, “the same effect can have such a relation just with only one cause”.
7. Sources: author’s calculations based on Eurostat data.

8. Elster [1999], discussing the mechanisms underlying human actions (i.e. “frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences”) distinguishes type A mechanisms (“which arise when the indeterminacy concerns which – if any – of several causes will be triggered”) and type B mechanisms (which “arise when we can predict the triggering of two causal chains that affect an independent variable in opposite directions, leaving the net effect indeterminate”). The demographic decline from the seventies to the nineties could be classified as specific contamination between both types. The triggering of two, logically self-contradictory, causal chains sets off similar effects.
9. Here and below I use the terms embeddedness and embedding in the sense that Polanyi [1944] attributed to them, to refer to the relation between society and the economy (embedded or not embedded in it).
10. From west to east: Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Northern part of Castilla y León, País Vasco, Aragon, Navarra and La Rioja, Catalonia. Holdsworth [1998] circumscribes a similar area (the only significant absence is that of Catalonia.) characterised by a late timing of leaving home for young men, and refers to the Le Play’s classification.
11. Midi, Auvergne and Aquitaine, Poitou and Limousin.
12. Languedoc and Provence.
13. Except a great part of the plain of the River Po, including Lombardy and Veneto.
14. Salzburg, Tirol, Vorarlberg and Kärnten.
15. In “L’organisation de la famille” [Le Play 1871] Le Play often lists the regions of continental Europe where the patriarchal and stem-family models prevail. “La famille patriarcale (..) domine sur certaines montagnes (..) notamment sur les hautes prairies des Alpes, du Vivarais, de l’Auvergne, du Jura et des Vosges. Elle se conserve également dans les grandes métairies du plateau central de la France” (§ 7, p.27). “La famille souche offre ce caractère dans les États scandinaves, le Holstein, le Hanovre, la Westphalie, la Bavière méridionale, le Salzbourg, la Carinthie, le Tyrol, les petits cantons suisses, le nord de l’Italie et de l’Espagne. Elle est encore représentée en France (..) dans les Pyrénées françaises et espagnoles” (§ 8, p.31). “Les populations slaves et hongroises se groupaient pour la plupart en familles patriarcales sous le régime d’engagements forcés qui a régné parmi elles jusqu’aux réformes commencées en 1848. Elles se rattachent peu à peu à la famille-souche (..). Toutes les races de propriétaires scandinaves offrent dans leurs famille-souches d’admirables modèles. En Norvège, en Suède, en Danemark (..). Les familles-souches qui parlent la langue allemande sont mêlées en beaucoup de lieux, près du Rhin surtout, à la famille instable (..). En tête des meilleurs types se placent les paysans du Lunebourg hanovrien (..). Après le Hanovre on peut citer les duchés du Nord-Est, la Westphalie, le midi du grand-duché de Bade, du Wurtemberg

et de la Bavière, la Carynthie, le Salzbourg, le Tyrol, le Vorarlberg et les petits cantons catholiques de la Suisse. Les paysans à famille-souche se conservent avec d'excellentes qualités dans les deux péninsules du Midi. En Italie ils se rencontrent surtout dans le Lucquois, le Nord de l'Apennin et les hautes vallées des Alpes. En Portugal ils résistent encore dans les montagnes du Nord-Est (..). En Espagne ils luttent (..) dans la Galice, le Léon, les Asturies, la Navarre, l'Aragon et la Catalogne. Enfin dans les provinces basques..” (§ 12, p.94 ff).

16. Federkeil [1997] found “a polarisation between a growing ‘non-family’ sector on the one hand, which internally is quite heterogeneous or ‘pluralized’, and a shrinking family sector on the other hand, in which the traditional breadwinner-homemaker is still dominant, although under some attack”.
17. “The family and the family home used to be the mainspring of the typically bourgeois kind of profit motive. Economists have not always given due weight to this fact. When we look more closely at their idea of the self-interest of entrepreneurs and capitalists we cannot fail to discover that the results it was supposed to produce are really not at all what one would expect from the rational self-interest of the detached individual or the childless couple who no longer look at the world through the windows of a family home. Consciously or unconsciously they analysed the behaviour of the man whose views and motives are shaped by such a home and who means to work and to save primarily for wife and children. As soon as these fade out from the moral vision of the businessman, we have a different kind of Homo Oeconomicus before us who cares for different things and acts in different ways. For him and from the standpoint of his individualistic utilitarianism, the behaviour of that old type would in fact be completely irrational. He loses the only sort of romance and heroism that is left in the unromantic and unheroic civilisation of capitalism – the heroism of *navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse* (seafaring is necessary, living is not necessary, inscription on an old house in Bremen). And he loses the capitalist ethics that enjoys working for the future irrespective of whether or not one is going to harvest the crop oneself” [Schumpeter 1943].
18. To tell the truth, Le Play was not the only one, in the mid-1800s, to draft a sociography of the family. There are surprising similarities in Riehl’s work: “In 1855, the year in which ‘Les ouvriers européens’ appeared, the third volume of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl’s ‘The Natural History of the German People’ was published, a work that considers the particularities of family structures in Germany. Le Play and his German alter ego reach broadly similar conclusions. For both of them, the German family model, the idea type of ‘stock family’ (Stamm-familie) that could also be found in other Nordic regions and elsewhere in enclaves in Europe, stood in marked contrast to the type of family that predominated for instance in Northern France – that is the ‘unstable’ or nuclear family” [Schultheis 1999].

19. By a curious *lapsus calami* the authors replace the name of Frédéric Le Play with that of Gustave Le Bon, author in the same years of a “Psychology of the Crowd”, another landmark in studies on the mechanisms of social reproduction, which nevertheless has nothing to do with stem-family geography.
20. “The specific boundaries of different family systems are often not crystal clear, and subregional differences abound. For example (..) Northern and Southern France often appear to walk divergent paths, and the Southern fringes of Spain, Italy or Portugal often show characteristics distinct from the Northern parts of those same countries” [Reher 1998]. Exactly as in Le Play.
21. “One does not have a three-generation stem family because property is transmitted impartibly; one has such a family because parents want at least one child to remain at home, work on the farm, and assist them as they get older. In other words, within the broad context of the law, mechanisms for transferring property are strategies pursued to solve some of the problems faced by families of the past and the present, of Italy, Greece and Portugal – how to secure support in old age, how to contract a marriage for a child, how to provide for all one’s children, how to maintain the social status of all members of the family. Transferring wealth is a form of economic behaviour, but as with most economic behaviour patterns studied by anthropologists, it has a social dimension as well. Through the transmission of property people make powerful statements about the meanings of parenthood and childhood, of maleness and femaleness and of kinship and alliance” [Brettell 1991].
22. “Succession itself within stem-family systems appears to have been conditioned by the strength of familial loyalties and solidarity holding in any given region of Europe (..) Each of these family systems has ended up by generating justifications that are coherent with its own premises [Reher 1998].
23. Of course, there are other possible readings of the heterogeneity among national household models. In the nineties, some analyses are based on the category of individualistic disposition. E.g. Strather [1992] describes the individuality of people as ‘the first fact of English kinship’, emphasising that people are treated as unique persons rather than occupants of positions in a kinship universe”. Influential is the work of Mac Farlane [1978], who traces back the present English model of kinship to a thirteenth century cultural syndrome he names ‘individualism’ (independence of children from their parents, kinship ties relatively weak and not linked to a common economy, contractual nature of inheritance). This is a transcultural approach, a sort of collective psychology, which is entirely legitimate but one which I do not use at all in this article.
24. Le Play’s typology, reduced to the single dimension of localism, tends to converge with the criterion suggested by Hajnal [1983], which as a rule contrasts the central European type, compatible with neolocalism, with the non-compatible type.

25. Source: Laslett [1983].
26. Source: Barbagli [1991].
27. Italian geographers have pointed out that the stem-family area is marked by one-family multi-storey building, the western plain of the river Po by courtyard houses, whilst in Southern Italy detached houses prevail, as small one-family one-storey buildings or farmhouses.
28. An example of the close connection between family models and cultural ethnocentrism is the 'pairalist' culture of Catalonia: "There is an ideology of the Catalan family based on 'pairalismo' (the rural house, at once the source of family and tradition) and associated with cultural nationalism. That means that national differences can be expressed in terms of family customs, because the family is related to a particular cultural tradition. In the same way as nation can be expressed as 'casa nostra', the institution of casa is an element of cultural identity and of differentiation with other cultures" [Bestard Camps and Contreras Hernandez 1999].
29. See for instance the 'pazar' North-African economy, discussed in Boserup [1970].
30. In spite of a twenty-year debate – opened by Granovetter's [1973] suggestions – about the different social weight of strong ties and weak ties, we agree today to identify the latter with acquaintances, but we do not know what should be included in the former. Litwak and Szelenyi [1969] still considered without distinction kin, friends and neighbours as the three main primary-groups. In my opinion a correct taxonomy of strong ties would have to include, besides kinship ties, at least five kinds of ties (not all taken into account by sociological literature): a) ties arising out of the space (neighbours) or time (friendships within a peer group) of every day life; b) alliances of reciprocal solidarity made, in Mediterranean cultures, on the occasion of key life passages (e.g. marriage witnesses and godparents); c) step-relatives acquired by chains of marriages; d) the alliances of reciprocity drawn up among people who have all gone through similar critical life emergencies; e) any other strong tie people can develop in their public life from the universe of weak ties (acquaintances, work colleagues).
31. We cannot go on studying changes and divergences in family models totally detached from changes and divergences in kinship & networks. Over-optimistically Bott [1971] quoted a passage from Harris [1969]: "perhaps the really lasting significance of Bott's study is that she has made impossible the proliferation of studies of the internal structure of the family which take no account of its social environment". Unfortunately still today both demographers and sociologists hardly respect this elementary rule.
32. Bott uses the term 'network' in what has come to be called the 'egocentric' sense, "conceptually anchored on a particular individual or conjugal pair", and the term

‘connectedness’ as synonymous with ‘density’, to describe the extent to which the people known by a family know and meet one another independently of the focal family.

33. Where complementary and independent types of organisation predominate.
34. Where joint organisation is relatively predominant. Young and Willmott [1957] define as “symmetrical” the family Bott defines as a ‘joint conjugal role-relationship’.
35. Including seven countries: Australia, Austria, Britain, West Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the United States.
36. As in Hungary and Italy, where “there is some evidence that socio-cultural factors are outweighing the influence of modernisation. Even in the highly industrialised northern parts of Italy kin relations are much more similar to the overall Italian pattern of close kin contacts than to the loosened kin contacts of people in north-western Europe” [Hollinger and Haller 1990].
37. The overlap between Le Play’s and Bott’s categories produces a second problem. Le Play places the South of Italy (and other Mediterranean regions) in the area of nuclear family, so contradicting the evidence of a Mediterranean strongly role-segregated family. The issue is discussed in the next paragraph.
38. In Northern Tuscany and in the metropolitan area of Milan [Micheli 1999].
39. The Dutch network was larger both in the kinship and in non-kinship components, whilst the Italian network, nearly completely reduced to its kinship components, was further dried up by a below replacement fertility regime going back to the first decades of the century.
40. The Social Barometer was a quarterly survey, carried out by Abacus for two years (1996-1998) over a national sample of about 4000 interviews, stratified by sex, age, education, size of residence town and geographical regions.
41. Among older people the percentage of non-relatives in the social network is nearly 40% in Netherlands whilst it is only 27% in Tuscany, and it varies from 23% to 30% along the life span in the Social Barometer.
42. “If we assume that private-orientation means social networks consisting mainly of primary group relations and public-orientation means social networks with more secondary relations, (..) Historical family research shows that in the South- and East-European culture area primary-group ties are closer than in North-western-Europe and that the Anglo-Saxon nations have gone even further in the dissolution of kin ties” [Hollinger and Haller 1990].
43. As for Trumbach [1978], for example, the European family presents two competing forms of kinship organisation as far back as the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The egalitarian ideology of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries should have spread up over the Northern Europe the popular kin recognition system or folkway, where the individual is surrounded by a single network of relatives,

including both kin and relatives-in-law, and society is cemented by friendship, patronage and neighbourhood ties rather than by kinship ties. Contrarily, the diffusion over Central Europe of some elements of the aristocratic model of patrilineage or kindred, where kinship is less extended but more central, could explain the rise and placement of the stem-family.

44. Source: author's calculations based on Abacus Social Barometer [Micheli and Billari 1998], total number of cases = 3926, spline interpolation.
45. "For the most part, peasant families in Southern Europe with small and medium-sized farms tended to prefer family labour to non-family labour, quite unlike in other parts of the continent. In such areas as the Southern parts of Spain, Portugal or Italy, where farm size made the exclusive use of family labour impractical, there was an abundant supply of day labourers who did not co-reside with the farmer and his family". The Mediterranean large landed estate is therefore a background factor to the predominance of the unstable family.
46. *Mouqaddima* is the methodological introduction to a *World History* (*Kitab el-Ibar*) that Ibn Khaldun, historian of the Islamic declining Empire, wrote between 1375 and 1379.
47. "Il existe évidemment dans la nature de l'espèce humaine une disposition qui porte les hommes à s'attacher les uns aux autres et à former un groupe, même lorsqu'ils ne se rattachent pas à la même lignée (..), et la *asabiyya* qui en est la conséquence engendre seulement une partie des effets auxquels il donne lieu dans ce dernier cas. La plupart des habitants dans une grande ville sont alliée par mariage; ceci entraîne l'intégration des familles les unes dans les autres et l'établissement des liens de parenté entre elles.." [Ibn Khaldoun 1965].
48. The indeterminacy of the concept of 'Asabiyyah is outlined by Baali & Wardi [1981]: "In spite of his great reliance upon the term 'Asabiyyah, Ibn Khaldun never clearly defines it. It seems that the term was quite familiar, or known, in his time; thus he did not feel any need to define it. It may be sufficient for the purpose at hand to define 'Asabiyyah as the tribal loyalty or spirit which make the individual devote himself to his tribe and view the world through its eyes".
49. "No matter how nearly universal the factors of modernisation may be, once they enter into contact with different historical, cultural, geographical or social realities, the end result will necessarily be different in each context" [Reher 1998].
50. Le Bras [1999] poses a similar problem: "By a curious paradox in one part of Europe the family is stifling fertility, while in another the importance attached to the mother-child relationship, or its institutional replacement, endorses fertility and so pushes the total fertility rate up".

51. The most notable and most discussed, but not the only one, is that produced by the increased opportunity cost for women bearing children and by the consequent change in women's role.
52. For a formal approach to the diffusion of fertility control, reflecting the "random and path-dependent spread of information in social networks", see Kohler [1997].
53. "Assume that one's disposition is consonant with engaging in the behavior and that undergoing negative social pressure is dissonant with engaging in the behavior; one's disposition is dissonant with not engaging in the behavior, and the presence of negative social pressure is consonant with not engaging in the behavior. If one starts out high on the behavior in the face of strong social pressure, then as one's disposition decreases, dissonance increases. To reduce the dissonance, one will look for additional cognitions to support the behavior. Hence the behavior will tend to remain high even in the face of a decreasing disposition. On the other hand, starting with strong social pressure and low levels of behavior, increasing one's disposition will increase dissonance. To reduce the dissonance, one will look for additional cognitions to support not engaging in the behavior. Hence the behavior will remain low even though the disposition is increasing" [Tesser and Achee 1994].
54. Coherently with the Durkheim approach (equifinalistic processes produce similar but not identical results) Brown and Harris [1978], studying the aetiology of women's depression, links vulnerability (background) factors and provoking agents (or events) with a third kind of causal factor, which they name "symptom-formation factors", i.e. factors that "influence only the form and the severity of depression". An identical symptom (an identical effect) can be developed in a different underlying process (produced by different symptom-formation factors) and then multiplies itself in a range of symptoms with well-distinguished meaning. To understand present demographic processes also requires gathering empirical evidence and sharpening conceptual tools, in order to spot the symptom formation factors which control the switching over to other possible demographic strategies, as deliberate reactions against situations of cognitive dissonance.
55. The anthropologically embedded practices and norms are the most evident and most widely explored symptom-formation factors for demographic behaviour, though other factors just as promising can be singled out. Exploring several possible outcomes in a situation of cognitive dissonance, Elster [1999] distinguishes autonomous behaviour or mental processes, governed by the reality principle rather than the pleasure principle, and mechanisms that operate at an unconscious level, such as wishful thinking or adaptive preference formation. With regard to the latter, Elster emphasises the absence of a causal model to justify mental strategy going in either direction: "Nothing is known about when dissonance reduction takes the form of wishful thinking and when it appears as adaptive preference formation". Elsewhere [Micheli

1999] I have tried to explore the functioning of drives and dispositions, which can form at various crucial phases of the life-cycle, as factors motivating or deactivating family choices.

56. Exploring some signals that the youngest cohorts in four countries of Centre Europe should be exhibiting ideational trend reversal, Lesthaeghe and Moors [1995] concluded: “We are not sure that prospective developments with respect to these issues would be supportive of the ‘coming back of the old family’. More likely is that various forms of family formation will continue to coexist, and that the rapid growth period of less conventional family patterns may have come to an end. In short, diversity is likely to prevail in the next decade, but the relative shares of each type may not be changing all that much any more. ‘Stability in diversity’ seems to be the more appropriate description for the near future”.

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