

Peer Review

Review of: "The Mediterranean Islands: Demographic Convergences and Divergences, 1995–2021"

Charalampos Dantis¹

1. Dimocritus University of Thrace, Greece

This article is of particular interest because it studies the demographic situation of the islands and island complexes of the Mediterranean. Clearly, the task was difficult—not so much in the analysis of the situation (which used well-known regional and national data from Eurostat)—but in the presentation and interpretation of the findings. The demographic statuses of the islands differ significantly, even among those belonging to the same state. For example, the demographic situation of the islands in the North and South Aegean, or between Sardinia and Sicily, varies greatly. However, the author successfully presents both the differences and similarities among them by referencing local and national demographic specificities, which inevitably affect the islands belonging to each respective state.

Furthermore, the selection of demographic indicators was a challenge, but this is partly due to limitations in the Eurostat database: the demographic indicators available at the regional level are specific and limited. Nevertheless, the indicators concerning fertility and mortality allow us to understand how the Rate of Natural Increase is shaped. Notably absent are indicators related to migration—crucial for interpreting demographic changes, particularly in the North Aegean. However, to the best of my knowledge, such indicators are not provided by Eurostat at the regional level.

What I would add to this article is the use of literature that explains the causes of the demographic peculiarities of the Mediterranean islands in comparison to the mainland territories of the corresponding Mediterranean states. Of course, in the chapter “Discussion and Conclusions,” the author states: “This fact probably refers to environmental issues, like air pollution, lifestyle factors (perhaps a stress-free life and other influences), dietary reasons, etc.” Articles could therefore be added that provide interpretive frameworks for the differentiated fertility and mortality of the Mediterranean islands. For example, there are studies exploring the relationship between the Mediterranean Diet and its effect on mortality

(Eleftheriou et al., 2018), or between ambient temperature and mortality on Mediterranean islands (Tsekeri et al., 2020). Similarly, some articles interpret the distinct fertility patterns of the Mediterranean islands compared to their respective mainlands—for instance, the socioeconomic factors explaining the high fertility of Crete (Polykretis and Alexakis, 2021), or the causes of depopulation in Sardinia and Sicily (Benassi et al., 2020). Finally, recent demographic developments—such as the convergence in mortality rates—could be examined in light of climate change, which has negatively affected one of the world’s most favorable climates, that of the Mediterranean (Linares et al., 2020).

In conclusion, I believe the article is excellent. The only suggestion I would make is to include a more detailed interpretation of the demographic peculiarities of the Mediterranean islands.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.