CHANGES IN CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IN ITALY

A STUDY
ON THE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION DECREASE BETWEEN
1970-2000

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INTRODUCTION

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1. THE PROBLEM

It is well-known that different cultures have different attitudes towards alcoholic beverages and psychoactive substances. An example of this exists between southern and northern Europe. The former region is considered to be a "wet" culture (with Italy being one of its main representatives), and the latter a "dry" culture (Room, 1992; Prina, 1993). In the former region, the thousand year old "wet" culture tradition has been passed down through generations where, starting from childhood, a bottle of wine was set at the dining table accompanying meals. This made it a pleasure to drink in moderate quantity and was common in the family. The effects drink may have had on people's behaviour were not very evident, and alcoholic beverages were not a big concern of the institutions controlling public health, so there were no specific restrictions and control programs.

In the "dry" culture, the psychoactive value attributed to alcohol, and the limited integration of its consumption in daily life, created a situation of alcoholic beverages being drunk away from meals. This resulted in social disinhibitions and the highlighting of individuality, versus the conformity and rigidity imposed by society. In the dry region an equivalent amount of alcohol consumed over a given period of time, calculated as a daily average, had a greater effect than in a "wet" culture region. Alcohol was not consumed daily at a moderate rate, but only at weekends and in relatively high quantities.

Southern Europe’s attitude towards alcoholic beverages seems well expressed by the following excerpt in THE ODYSSEY, written by the great Mediterranean poet, Homer:

“It is a good thing to hear a bard with such divine voice…there is nothing better or more delightful than when a whole people make merry together…sitting orderly to listen, while the table is loaded with bread and meats, and the cup-bearer draws wine and fills his cup for every man” (Homer, The Odyssey IX, translated by Samuel Butler).

Significant differences may also be observed in government policies about alcohol. While in northern countries there is a noticeable formal control on consumption; in Italy and other "wet-culture" countries, informal control prevails, as laws regarding alcohol consumption are very few and, generally speaking, not often enforced.
Over the past few decades, however, a transformation has been taking place in southern European societies, and in particular in Italy. Firstly, there has been a large decrease in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Over the past 30 years, Italy has experienced the biggest drop in alcohol consumption compared to other European countries: from 15.9 litres of pure alcohol per capita in 1970 to 7.4 litres in 2003. This tendency is due above all to a heavy fall in wine consumption (more than halved, as the consumption dropped from 113.7 litres per capita per year in 1970 to only 50.5 litres in 2003), which has not been compensated for by beer consumption, even if this has increased from 11.3 litres in 1970 to 30.1 litres in 2003. These figures have been confirmed by several national and international sources, even if data was not always collected in a homogeneous way, and did not always cover the entire period under consideration (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 2001; Productshap Voor Gedistilleerde Dranken, 2004).

Simultaneous to this reduction has been a slow transformation in the way in which alcohol is consumed. The question often asked is therefore whether, and if so to which extent, this tendency is aligning itself to the northern European model of alcohol consumption, in particular for the younger generation. As nutritional and alimentary values are reduced, several clues indicate that the practice of drinking alcohol for social and psychotropic purposes may be increasing. In this particular situation, where objective data indicates a remarkable reduction in alcohol consumption, it is essential to clarify the matter further. It is interesting to understand which phenomena has caused this significant change in our country regarding the relationship between individuals and alcoholic beverages, in particular with regard to wine consumption.

This reduction cannot reasonably be attributed to the impact of prevention or control policies, or to widely implemented health education programs. In fact, drinking has always been part of daily and social activities, and so, as mentioned earlier, political measures have been at their best minimal.

Excluding drug information programs, which had sometimes included alcohol, and targeted students since the early 1980s, the first sign of political concern regarding the risks linked to alcohol consumption occurred in 1988. A ministerial law was passed to set alcoholic levels that could be allowed for drivers, at 0.8 grams of alcohol per litre. This occurred well after alcohol consumption started falling during the 1970s. Other national and regional laws subsequently followed, such as the decree issued by the Health Minister in 1993 regarding guidelines for the prevention and treatment of alcoholism, and the National Framework Law of March 2001 (Linee di indirizzo per la prevenzione, la cura, il reinserimento sociale e il rilevamento epidemiologico in materia di alcool-dipendenza, 1993; Legge Quadro in Materia di Alcol e di Problemi Alcol-correlati, 2001).

Self-help and mutual-help groups and alcohol centres started spreading only in the mid 1980s. The very few preventative measures, supported then (as now) in our country by WHO, appeared
during the 1990s and were, and still are, only limited to certain areas (Allamani A., Basetti Sani I., Morettini A., 2004).

Rather than being the cause of alcohol consumption reduction, preventive measures and alcohologica policies seem to be part of a developing social awareness of difficulties and risks related to its excessive use. In practice, such awareness seems to be part of general cultural changes over short, medium and long term periods.

But another important element has led to the interest in researching what has happened in Italy in greater detail. During this current period at the European Union level, discussions are being made of the opportunity of making each country's policies in several fields more homogeneous. This also includes the subject of "alcohol", taking into account both its economic aspects and concern over health matters and public order.

In this context, the situation that has occurred in Italy, with the significant drop in consumption without any formal or institutional policies, seems interesting but has not been fully investigated. Some authors describe it as an obvious paradox: how can there have been a drop in alcohol consumption in Italy (as well as in other Mediterranean regions of Europe) despite the lack of any effective preventative and control measures, while alcohol consumption has – during the same time period – increased in the "prohibitionist" northern European countries, where there were many such well enforced measures (Allamani, 2001; Leifman, 2001; Simpura, 1999)?

Some authors (Simpura and Karlsson, 2001) suggested that "self-regulating" mechanisms in the southern European drinking culture have enabled there to be a spontaneous relationship between alcoholic beverages and new requirements imposed by social changes. As a result of these considerations, there has been great interest in attempting to understand what has determined such a heavy drop in alcohol consumption (especially wine) in Italy during the last thirty years, despite the absence of any preventative and restrictive policies.

Research able to provide answers to such questions in Italy is, to date, non-existent, and Italian alcohological studies seem, in general, to be few. One important problem derives from the influence of culturally dominating countries with regard to alcohol-related problems. These opinions are expressed in current medical and sociological literature by Scandinavian, English and American authors. They have conducted thorough studies of the effects that alcohol and other substances - such as narcotics and psychotropic drugs - have had on the population, and have produced a vast number of statistical analyses and critical conclusions. As such, when providing its recommendations, WHO (which represents the dominating scientific opinion) in practice, expresses concepts found in the northern countries, when referring to European situations related to alcohol.
2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was based on a series of considerations made in certain studies in past years (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l’Alcol, 1994; Allamani, Cipriani, Cottino, Forni, Sorbini and Morettini, 1995; Gual and Colom, 1997), which identified a certain number of factors influencing consumer drinking habits.

The drop in consumption, and in particular the strong reduction in wine consumption, appear to be correlated to significant changes in lifestyle conditions that started taking place in the 1970s. These complex socio-demographic changes included people moving from the countryside to live in cities, changes in working conditions, in the timing and organization of work itself, globalization of tastes and consumption styles, agricultural policies and marketing strategies, the evolution of alcoholic beverage prices and their competition with non-alcoholic beverages and with other food products, higher-level education leading to more awareness of health risks in general and, in particular, of the consequences of excessive alcohol consumption.

With these facts in mind, the purpose of the present study is to analyse the relationship between alcohol consumption and the demographic, social, cultural and economic processes that have had an impact on the changes of lifestyles, consumptions and tastes of Italians. We start with the hypothesis that changes in work organization may have influenced alcohol consumption. This hypothesis seems to be especially due to the transformation of Italy from a mainly agricultural socio-productive reality that was characteristic of the post-war years, to an economic system that was heavily conditioned by industrial production and, thereafter, the growth of the service sector. New working conditions and changes in working hours modified production rates, lifestyles and consumption styles, and required more efficiency and productivity. Within an industrial and service industry working culture, both tied to these productivity requirements, there was less room for the role of wine in everyday life, and its importance was therefore reduced. Furthermore, changes in wine consumption occurred with the transition of a society in which satisfying one’s primary needs was significant, to one in which satisfying those non-essential needs began gaining importance.

These transformations brought about a more complex and rich consumption era compared to the previous period, due to the increase in cultural levels as well as the diffusion of television and a more important role of hedonism (with greater attention to products that provided pleasure and entertainment), appearance, aesthetics and fashion.

We also observe that important changes occurred in leisure time activities. The types of entertainment and places where these took place changed, as did their timing and objectives. We can assume these changes had an effect on the consumption of alcoholic beverages, introducing
newcomers to consumption, such as women and young people, and giving alcoholic beverages new significance and values.

A greater awareness for health and the caring of one's body gradually took place. This was demonstrated by the increase in the number of people going to the gym or dieting, wanting to know more about their bodies, well-being, and sexuality. In addition, there was an increase in the use of pharmaceutical products and homeopathic medicine (Ginsborg, 1998). This indicated novel levels of interest and behaviour where foods, and therefore also alcoholic beverages, were judged more carefully than before. Their positive and negative effects were assessed more carefully, together with their effects on the individual’s psycho-physical well-being, and development potential.

Starting with all these considerations, our study was further stimulated by the awareness of its difficulty and the need to fill in the gaps. No detailed study had thus far concentrated on the relationships between these elements of change and the reduction in alcohol consumption.

In brief, our hypothesis is that the reduction in alcoholic beverage consumption, and of wine in particular, which started in the early 1970s, could be attributed to the significant changes that took place both in Italian socio-economic and working conditions, and in the new lifestyles that developed during the seventies. Such changes seem to be still evolving. Thus, according to this hypothesis, the drop in alcohol consumption is related to a self-regulating process that society has been experiencing for over thirty years.

Considering the above, the objectives of this study are the following:

1. to describe the actual changes in alcohol consumption that have occurred in Italy from 1970 to the present, using and re-processing all data sources available;

2. to collect data and indicators that describe the main changes of the population data and the characteristics of Italian consumption habits and lifestyles over the same period, and to compare these to the changes in alcohol consumption with the aim of identifying which factors may most plausibly have had a significant effect on the observed decrease;

3. to explore the changes that individuals have undergone during the period studied, observing their personal experiences and eating habits, with the aim of identifying the mechanisms that regulate the relationship between lifestyle changes and the decrease in alcohol consumption.

The methodologies followed will be described in the introductions to each section. The entire study is the result of research that can be divided into two different parts. The first part is quantitative, and its aim is to reconstruct alcohol consumption patterns in Italy, starting from the years after the war to the present. Data from different sources are compared, and disaggregated as far as possible according to socio-demographic and territorial variables and to the type of alcoholic beverage concerned (wine, beer, spirits, other alcoholic beverages). The main sources used in this
part of the study are statistical figures from ISTAT about alcoholic beverage consumption. In particular, data used includes that annually gathered on the consumption habits of Italian families and their lifestyles. Further, occasional surveys carried out on the use of health services, market research studies, and Eurostat surveys, as well as data that can be derived from *ad hoc* national or local studies were consulted. Similarly, a collection of quantitative data was obtained regarding a series of lifestyle change indicators that were subsequently measured against the evolution of alcohol consumption, in order to seek the determinants for change in this area.

The second part of this study presents the results obtained from 120 semi-structured interviews on a sample of people who lived through these changes. This was carried out in the four Italian macro-areas (north-west, north-east, centre and south). Their biographical trends and attitudes towards alcohol enabled us to explore in depth the changes that have taken place in their relationships with alcohol, and how the importance given to these changes has altered. By selecting individuals of various age groups, we looked for the so-called *generational mechanisms* of the alcohol consumption reduction, and their relationship with changing lifestyles.

Finally, two *focus groups* were established and interviews were conducted with expert witnesses in this field who helped us obtain a better understanding of the data collected in the first part of the study, as well as the conclusions drawn from the individual interviews. The chosen method for uniting the secondary analysis of quantitative data and the qualitative approach enabled us to "tidy up" the huge amount of data at our disposal. It also allowed us to more effectively analyse the complex relationship between individuals and alcohol according to an *understandable* description logic, which takes the processes and motivations more into account than causal relationships.
FIRST PART

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND EXPLANATIONS FOR ITS REDUCTION

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1. THE TREND OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION IN ITALY

The purpose of this first section is to describe the trend of alcohol consumption (and of wine in particular) in Italy over the last 50 years (from 1951 to 2001). In order to achieve this, all available data sources have been taken into consideration, giving our study a "unique" flavour. To the best of our knowledge, this is indeed the first attempt to combine all sources dealing with alcohol consumption into one study, while simultaneously examining the changes that have occurred in the meantime. In such a way, we can form a complete and accurate picture of the phenomena as possible. Therefore, this first section will become the reference basis in suggesting interpretative hypotheses.

1.1 NATIONAL STATISTICAL SOURCES FOR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION: DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The sources available for data collection on the characteristics and consumption of alcoholic beverages were essentially:

- national budget statistics
- national sampling surveys
- *ad hoc* national surveys
- *ad hoc* local surveys
- local or multi-centre surveys performed for various purposes
- market research surveys

1.1.1 Statistics from National Alimentary Budget Analysis

National Alimentary Budget Statistics ("Bilancio alimentare nazionale - BAN") are issued annually by ISTAT and represent the inventory of foodstuffs possessed by citizens. It is therefore constructed according to the "availability" method. In general, the availability of a food item to be consumed by a person (D) during a certain period (Dt) is given by the algebraic sum of the following quantities: \( DDt = P + (I - E) - U + (G1 - G2) \), where \( P \) = home production, \( I \) = imports, \( E \) = exports, \( U \) = quantity used for purposes other than human consumption, \( G1 \) = stock present at the start of the period being considered (solar year), \( G2 \) = stock present at the end of the period being considered and \( G1 - G2 \) = stock. This index is divided by the resident population. Thus, the average *per capita* consumption can be obtained for each year taken into account.

The advantage of this survey method is that it is periodical and can be used for long time series analyses. It is also true that it has several limitations: consumption by immigrants and tourists is attributed to the resident population, the values of each of the equation's parameters are
estimates that may in turn be derived from surveys using different sources and methods. The *per capita* consumption values referring to the entire population include citizens below 14 and over 75 years of age (who are not normally considered to be consumers of alcoholic beverages), and it is impossible to stratify the data by sex, age or geographical area.

Several international organisations use this method for comparing countries. Amongst these include "Productschap voor Gedestilleerde Dranken" (now "Commission for Distilled Spirits") which has annually published wine, beer and spirit consumption in 58 countries (including Italy), from 1961 to the present (while ISTAT provides the same data starting from 1861).

### 1.1.2 Statistics from national sampling surveys

There are four national sampling surveys:

- family consumption surveys (ISTAT)
- population health surveys and the use of health services (ISTAT)
- surveys of the population's habits and lifestyles (ISTAT)
- surveys performed by the "Istituto Nazionale della Nutrizione" ("INN", now "INRAN").

**Family Consumption Survey**

This is an annual survey conducted by ISTAT on representative samples of Italian families (about 30,000 per year) in which expenditures by goods and services are recorded, and among these are included about 15 food products. The survey started in 1968 but data about consumption of home food products has only been published from 1973 to 1996 inclusive.

Data from the sample families is collected by registering consumption, and filling in questionnaires, combined with direct questions from interviewers. Consumption outside the home (cafeterias, restaurants, bars, and so on) is excluded. Before 1982 no home-produced data was collected, yet this could be significant for certain food items (wine, eggs, poultry, rabbits, vegetables, and so on), in particular for families living in rural areas.

The methodology changed significantly starting from 1982, creating some limitations in interpreting the time series. From 1997 onwards, ISTAT ceased to record the quantities of food items, and continued recording only data concerning purchases. An analysis of the quantities of drinks and food items consumed *per capita* with a regional geographical breakdown is therefore only possible for the 1973-1996 period. Since the data is recorded by family, and not individual, the *per capita* consumption’s estimate is reached by dividing the total consumption by the number of family members.

Although ISTAT records data for many food items, it only publishes data for 15 of them, broken up by macro-area, size of the municipal district, professional status of the head of the
family, and number of family members. The data cannot be accessed electronically. The methodology is similar to that of "Household Budget Surveys" used in other countries, and so the data can be used for international comparisons. As far as wine is concerned, it is possible to analyse the series from 1973 to 1996, for beer and strong spirits from 1987 to 1996 (unpublished ISTAT data, but nonetheless at our disposal).

Sample surveys of the “National Institute of Nutrition – (Istituto Nazionale della Nutrizione (INN, now called INRAN)

These surveys are the only ones that report national food consumption levels in terms of weight from 1996 onwards, after ISTAT changed their recording methodology of family consumption levels. The surveys carried out on sample families use more precise and reliable methods, but are still not carried out or published regularly.

The first national survey was carried out over the period 1980-1984, and about 10,000 families from 9 regions were involved. The methodology used included the keeping of diaries, interviews, inventory and weights of the portions consumed in one week, including consumption outside the home. As in the case of the ISTAT family consumption survey, data is recorded by family and not by person, and so while it is possible to estimate per capita consumption, it is impossible to obtain any breakdowns as far as individual socio-demographic variables are concerned. Instead, it is useful for cross-regional comparisons.

The second survey (1994-1996) recorded (independently from the season) food consumption behaviour of about 2,000 individuals from more than 1,100 families representing the four Italian geographical areas (north-east, north-west, centre, and south). This survey, with the help of dieticians, consisted in individually completed weekly diaries, household item inventories, recipe and household scrap details. It is therefore possible to analyse data by socio-demographic and geographical factors. Up to the present day, INRAN has only published the main aggregate data, without detailed analysis of the factors affecting consumption behaviour.

• Population Health Survey and the use of health services

This survey was first carried out in 1980, and then repeated in 1983, 1986-1987, 1990-1991, 1994 and 1999-2000. Unfortunately, data regarding the daily consumption of wine, beer and spirits was only collected in the 1983 survey. This survey was carried out on 31,000 families (75,397 individuals) by means of a questionnaire which, according to pre-coded categories, recorded the consumption of wine (non-drinker, less than \( \frac{1}{4} \) litre, from \( \frac{1}{4} \) to less than \( \frac{1}{2} \) litre, from \( \frac{1}{2} \) litre to less than 1 litre, more than 1 litre, not indicated), of spirits (non-drinker, 1 liqueur glass, 2 or more, not indicated) and of beer (using non-quantitative data: non-drinker, drinker, summer-only drinker, not indicated). The data was broken down by sex, age, region, and the main socio-demographic
variables (education qualifications and profession). For wine it was also possible to estimate the grams consumed using the central values of the pre-coded categories.

**Survey of the population's habits and lifestyles**

The "Multi-Aim Family Survey – Aspects of Everyday Life" refers to this type of survey. From 1993, ISTAT started carrying out an annual sample survey throughout the country, where fundamental aspects of the population's everyday life and citizen satisfaction levels of services were recorded. The survey is based on about 20,000 families (about 55,000 individuals). In the section regarding nutrition, feeding patterns and consumption frequency of some of the main types of food items and drinks (about 20) are surveyed, but the actual quantities consumed are not. Between 1993 and 1995, the consumption of wine and beer was recorded by means of pre-defined consumption brackets ("does not drink", "only seasonal consumption", "more rarely", "1-2 drinks a day", "from ½ a litre to 1 litre a day"). It is easy to understand that these answer categories were not sufficiently detailed in order to estimate the actual number of grams consumed.

In 1996, an attempt was made to change the part of the questionnaire regarding consumption, by inserting types of answers that were closer to the methodology required for correctly recording it. The questionnaire dealt with consumption frequency ("Do you drink wine?" "Yes, every day, several times a day"; "Yes, every day, once a day"; "Yes, 4/6 times a week"; "Yes, 1-3 times a week"; "Yes, more rarely, on certain occasions"; "No, I don't drink wine"), the quantity consumed ("On the days you drink wine, how much do you drink on average?" "Over one litre"; "From half a litre to one litre"; "2-3 glasses but less than half a litre"; "About one glass or less"), and the occasions on which one drinks ("Do you normally drink wine?" "Only with meals"; "Only outside meals"; "Both with meals and outside meals"). These questions were furthermore repeated for each type of beverage: wine, beer and spirits. However, ISTAT has never published the results because the information contained was not considered reliable enough, and in the following years ISTAT returned to its old questionnaire format.

Therefore, from 1997 onwards the questionnaire used prior to 1995 was re-utilized, and from 1998 onwards the consumption of other types of alcoholic beverages started to be surveyed. These were alcoholic aperitifs, amaro and strong spirits (or liqueurs), and the pre-defined consumption categories were used ("does not drink", "exceptionally", "more rarely", "a few liqueur glasses a week", "1-2 liqueur glasses a day", "more than 2 liqueur glasses a day").

The data was broken down by age group, sex, region, and the main socio-demographic variables, and with the possibility to calculate the exact percentage of abstainers. On the other hand, as in the case of the surveys carried out up to 1996, it was impossible to estimate how many grams were consumed, due to the fact that some of the answers were not complete.
1.1.3 "Ad hoc" national surveys

The Doxa surveys carried out for the Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l’Alcool (Osservatorio Giovani e Alcool, 1994, 1998, 2001) can be classified under “Ad Hoc National Surveys”. Since 1990, the Doxa Institute has been periodically carrying out face-to-face surveys on a representative sample of at least 2,000 people who represent the Italian population aged over 15 years. In 1990, about 2,000 interviews were conducted on a sample of young people between 15 and 24 years of age; in 1993 about 2,600 people of 15 years and over were interviewed with the younger age group (15-17 year-olds) being over-represented; in 1997, 2,000 people were interviewed with 2 age groups being over-represented (15-24 year-olds and 45-54 year-olds). Finally, in 2000, the survey was carried out on 2 different samples: the first one consisted of about 2,000 people aged 15 years and over; the second consisted of about 6,200 people from the same age group, with some regions being over-represented. In these cases, only some of the questions concerning alcohol consumption were asked.

This type of survey enabled relevant data comparisons to be made over the various survey years as far as the consumption behaviour of 5 types of alcoholic beverages were concerned (beer, wine, aperitifs, digestive liqueurs, spirits and distilled spirits), and also of some of the behaviour risking abuse. It also recorded opinions and attitudes towards alcoholic beverages; the activities, values and interests of drinkers; and the socio-demographic characteristics of alcohol consumers and those who abstained from drinking it.

1.1.4 Statistical figures deriving from local "ad hoc" surveys

Local ad hoc surveys were specifically planned with the intention of identifying the quantity of alcohol consumed in certain areas and the way in which it was consumed. Examples were surveys carried out on students from various types of schools, employees in certain working sectors or people in institutions.

Many of these surveys were carried out, however, on select groups that were not representative of the general population, and in which homogeneous methodologies were not used. The first survey using the most correct methodology was carried out in 1977 in Florence (AA.VV. 1982). Furthermore, an Epidemiological Group (its code is G.E S.I.A.) was established within the Italian Alcohological Society (Società Italiana di Alcologia), and researchers and technicians collaborated within this group with the intention of exchanging information with other Italian alcohological groups and of fine-tuning a common methodology for field-researching epidemiology. This group researched general population consumption levels within several Italian areas, and provided alcohol consumption level estimates on a national level, and health consequences on a regional one (Cipriani et al 1993).
1.1.5  **Statistical figures deriving from local multi-centre surveys set up for other purposes**

These surveys have been carried out for other purposes, generally on populations in small areas, and in which alcohol consumption levels were recorded as well. Examples included clinical case studies for identifying factors correlated to various pathologies using population checks, transversal studies for exploring the risk factors of cardio-vascular or chronic-degenerative illnesses, and studies for determining the health levels of specific areas. There were several methods and materials used in these surveys, and the alcohol consumption levels thus recorded could be used for comparative purposes or, where no other sources are available, as first level estimates.

1.1.6  **Market Research surveys**

Finally, there were some market research surveys based on opinion poll models, carried out by specialised companies on population samples. These results were available at very high prices, according to the degree of breakdown required.

1.2  **RISE AND FALL IN WINE CONSUMPTION IN ITALY**

As the last section illustrated, in order to describe alcohol consumption in Italy we needed to refer to a number of different sources. Furthermore, it was possible to deduce alcohol consumption rates with a good degree of breakdown for the main socio-population variables, with regional detail and using individual records, and only from the 1990s onwards, using the Doxa surveys of "Osservatorio Giovani e Alcool" and the ISTAT multi-aim survey “Aspects of Everyday Life.”

In describing alcohol consumption in Italy, we thus decided to use every source at our disposal, depending on the level of information it could provide us. To construct the general population's consumption trend from the last century to the present, and in order to compare this to trends in other countries, we used national budget statistics for the 1961-2002 period. To describe the regional consumption trends, we used the ISTAT "Family Consumption Survey." Here, we made use of data that was not published in its entirety by the Statistical Institute, but to which we had access. It was therefore possible to compare data between regions and the geographical macro-areas from 1973 to 1996. Only for the final years of the period under consideration, i.e. for the 1990s, were the results of our analyses carried out on individual records by the ISTAT research "Multi-aim ISTAT Survey - Aspects of Everyday Life."

Considerable levels of alcohol have always been consumed in Italy, particularly as far as wine is concerned. As will be further discussed in the section dedicated to nutrition, up until the end of the Second World War, eating habits of Italians were typical of those of rural populations.
Consequently, bread and wheat were typical food items of rich families, while sweet corn, bread and polenta were emblematic of poor families. Fresh meat was rarely eaten; cheese and milk were consumed only in modest quantities. The consumption of wine or of watered-down wine was an important part of everyday meals.

From Table 1.1 we can observe that wine consumption and that of alcohol in general, constantly grew from the mid-1800s up to 1930, rising from 83.9 litres per capita per year in the 1860-1870 decade to 112.7 litres during the 1921-1931 ten year period. Wine consumption suffered a complete reversal during the last decade of the Fascist regime. During this period economic and agricultural policies, in the name of economic and agricultural self-sufficiency, together with the general international crisis, worsened living conditions of the poorer classes, both in towns and in the countryside.

After World War II, a steady increase in wine consumption took place in correspondence with Italy’s economic boom. It reached its maximum historical level in 1970 (113.7 litres per capita per year), thus returning to the consumption levels found at the start of the century. Together with this development, there was also an increase in beer consumption, which had remained on average within 2 litres per capita per year, and which from 1960 onwards started rising almost exponentially.

The general increase in beverage consumption caused the total alcohol consumption to touch its highest point ever towards the end of the 1960s, when it reached the value of 15.9 litres of pure alcohol consumed per capita per year. Starting with the 1970s, wine consumption in Italy started to drastically fall—by about 20 litres in the 1970-80 decade and, even more visibly, by 30 litres between 1980-90. Generally speaking, from 1970 to 2003, consumption dropped by more than half, from a value of 113.7 litres in 1970 to 50.5 in 2003. Despite this, wine still accounted for about 70% of alcohol consumption of the average Italian, followed by beer (about 20%) and spirits (10%). Beer consumption followed a reverse trend between 1961 and 2003, increasing from an average value of 6 litres in 1961 to 30.1 litres in 2003. The consumption of spirits, instead, remained stable up to the beginning of the 1990s, with a consumption of about one litre of pure alcohol. It then started falling, reaching the value of half a litre per capita by 2003.

1.3 ITALY COMPARED TO WORLD FIGURES

Using national budget statistics, it was possible to perform a comprehensive comparison among the world's countries, both for total alcohol consumption (see Table 1.2) and of individual alcoholic beverages.

Alcohol consumption throughout the world during the last 50 years could be broadly summarised as follows: From World War II to the beginning of the 1970s, there was a considerable
increase in the total amount of alcohol consumed by wine-growing countries (Italy, France and Mediterranean countries in general), followed by a sharp decline. At the same time, there was a general increase in beer consumption, especially noticeable in developing countries that had started off with very low consumption rates. Furthermore, consumption had followed a strong and constant tendency towards uniformity and internationalisation, favoured by a more rapid and intense circulation of goods around the world. In other words, the economic globalization process also led to a globalization of consumption. In countries which were traditional producers and consumers of a type of alcoholic beverage (for example, wine in Italy) the consumption of such a beverage diminished, while the preferences for culturally "foreign" beverages increased (in our case, beer). Obviously the primary beverage remained the "typical" one, but new ones were added to (or substituted) it.

In general, total alcohol consumption varied according to geographical area. Despite this, even in countries that were homogeneous to one another from an historical/cultural point of view, large differences could be observed. In Italy, France and Portugal, total alcohol consumption noticeably fell from 1961 to 2002 (-39.8%, -41.8% and -20.5% respectively) because the increase in beer and spirits consumption did not compensate for the drop in wine consumption. Furthermore, beer seemed to be the beverage which accounted for the globalization consumption process. Its consumption during the period 1961-2002 remained stable, or even increased, in the countries where it had always been drunk (Germany +19.6%, Austria +41.4%, Czech Republic +47.6%, and Ireland +153.3%). Its consumption rose in all the other countries, from Latin America (Argentina +193.1%, Paraguay +1114.3%) and Africa (South Africa +957.7%) to Asia\textsuperscript{1}.

Despite the globalization consumption process, countries could still be classified according to the typical beverage normally consumed (Cipriani, in Allamani \textit{et al.}, 2004) as follows:

- wine-preferring countries. These included countries of the Mediterranean area (Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece), those of Latin America that were strongly linked to Mediterranean countries (Argentina, Uruguay), and other European countries with a more recent wine-producing tradition (Luxembourg, Switzerland, Hungary);
- beer-preferring countries. These countries could be further broken down according to their consumption patterns: typical northern countries where beer was accompanied by spirits especially during weekends (Norway, Finland, USA, Canada and New Zealand) or even during the week (Czech Republic and Slovakia); Anglo-Saxon countries, where along with beer, other beverages (including wine) were strongly favoured (Germany, England, Sweden); and finally central European countries where wine was consumed a lot as well as beer (Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Romania);

\textsuperscript{1} The data is not shown because trend information is lacking.
• countries preferring spirits. These were eastern European countries where distilled spirits and beer (Russia, Ukraine, Poland) were preferred.

1.4 GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES IN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN ITALY

The ISTAT data contained in the family consumption survey enabled us to closely monitor wine consumption in Italy by area and over time, as well as with some socio-demographic details: from 1973 to 1996 we could provide reasonably accurate estimates of wine consumption (grams of alcohol per day) by region. Consumption levels of beer and spirits, and consequently total alcohol consumption rates, could be estimated from 1985 to 1996. As mentioned earlier, using the family consumption survey, we had breakdown by sex or age group. We recalled that the values were estimates that included those who were abstemious and an entire population over 6 years of age.

Table 1.3 provided wine consumption rates by region and geographical area with data transformed from decilitres per month to the equivalent amount of grams of anhydrous alcohol by day per person. There was a clear north-centre-south decreasing gradient, which confirmed the general consumption drop in Italy, here estimated at around -55% over the period 1973-1996. The regions that decreased the most over the period studied were Abruzzi, Piedmont and Tuscany, with over a 60% decrease over the twenty years, while the least decreasing regions were the southern ones (Puglia –48%, Calabria –43%).

If we geographically group the regions (north-east would include Trentino, Friuli, Veneto, Emilia Romagna; north-west would include Valle d'Aosta, Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria; centre would include Tuscany, Umbria, Marches, Lazio; south would include all the other regions). And if we considered the average consumption for the entire period studied, we would find that central Italy (see Fig. 1.1) showed the highest value (34.3 grams/day in 1973 and 13 in 1996), followed by north-western Italy (34.3 in 1973 and 12.7 in 1996), north-eastern Italy (28.4 grams/day and 11.2) and finally southern Italy (21.4 and 8.7). A general look at this data showed that wine consumption in Italy tended to become uniform over the 4 geographical areas considered, following a global consumption model that extended from a macro level (between countries) to a micro one (between regions of a country).

As already mentioned, data concerning beer and strong spirits referred to recent years and thus only the last part (and not all) of the years taken into consideration. Over the ten years with available data, the southern regions were the leaders as far as beer consumption was concerned (1.4 grams per day in 1985, 1.2 in 1996). Sardinia, in particular, was the region where this beverage was preferred (over 2 grams per day on average over the entire period considered). Italy’s north-eastern, central and north-western regions followed the south, showing little variation in the amounts consumed over time.
The consumption of spirits showed the least variation both between different regions and between different geographical areas. From 1987 to 1996 there was a decrease in all geographical areas, although these variations were negligible. In this survey, ISTAT also presented wine consumption expressed in terms of different parameters: for example, consumption rates were broken down by family size (from 1 member to 5 or more members), town size and location, and professional status of the person representing the family (head of the family).

Irrespective of the geographical area, and within a framework of strong consumption reductions, during 1973-1996 more wine was drunk in Italian towns that were not chief provincial ones, and in those with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. This demonstrated a decreasing gradient along the countryside-city axis. It was more significant in central Italy with respect to northern Italy, while in the south differences were slighter.

As mentioned previously, the family consumption survey broke down data into geographical sections and the socio-economic status of the person being interviewed. In this respect, higher consumption rates were recorded in agricultural professions with respect to industrial and services sectors. The agriculture-industry gradient was confirmed in all professions considered (manual workers and similar, directors, managers, employees and pensioners, entrepreneurs and free-lance specialists). The highest consumption rates were recorded in the non-professional sector (pensioners above all others), followed by free-lance specialists and entrepreneurs. Directors, managers and manual workers were the categories where less wine was drunk.

Information concerning the geographical consumption distribution could also be derived from the two INRAN surveys carried out during 1980-1984 and 1994-1996. Table 1.6 illustrates how these INRAN surveys also confirmed a heavy reduction in wine and strong spirit consumption in all the areas considered. As such, the north-east area was found to experience the strongest decrease in consumption rates.

1.5 Alcohol Consumption: Differences Between Genders and Preferences According to Age Group

Having illustrated the negative trend of alcoholic beverage consumption over the last 40 years with respect to geographical areas, it was possible to build the “identikit” of the Italian drinker and, in particular, the characteristics of those drinkers who had, more than others, caused this consumption drop.

While food item availability statistical figures and family consumption surveys had enabled us to draw some deductions regarding the quantities consumed by geographical area, using the Multi-Aim Surveys and results from the (national and local) ad hoc surveys, it was possible to better identify those who consumed alcohol according to socio-demographic characteristics.
Having analysed the data provided by the Multi-Aim Survey, we were able to estimate the percentages of non-drinkers and of drinkers-at-risk for each single beverage. As already mentioned, in the section dealing with data sources, we could compare data from 1993 to the present day as far as wine and beer were concerned, but only from 1998 for the other beverages. In order to reduce the variability of the consumer percentage values, average values for three-year periods were determined (1993-1995; 1997-1998; 1999-2001; 1996 data was not published). Unfortunately, it was not possible to even approximately specify the actual quantities consumed, as the pre-coded answer format already described did not allow for appropriate estimates to be calculated. In order to analyse the trends, we compared the 1983 survey (Health conditions and Use of Health Services) to the 1993-2001 Multi-Aim Survey.

This operation proved to be a bit tricky because, as well as comparing two population samples selected using different criteria, in the Multi-Aim Survey we had to lump together the pre-coded answers "1-2 glasses a day", drinks "exceptionally" and drinks only "seasonally" under the category "drinks less than half a litre a day", already present in the 1983 survey (section 1.1). This artifice enabled us to compare consumption between categories over a period of at least 20 years, even though, as we shall see, the trends did not always follow a clear direction. Finally, we must recall that the records analysed here (1993-2001 Multi-Aim Survey) only covered the tail end of the consumption rate curve.

### 1.5.1 Beverage consumption by gender

Between 1983 and 1999-2001, males non-drinking males seemed to have slightly increased their percentage rate (from 26% to 27.2% - see Table 1.7). As far as females were concerned, the percentage of non-drinkers increased from 49.7% in 1983 to 53.8% in 1999-2001, even though it should be noted that this increase seemed to have halted between 1993 and 1995. However, if we were to only analyse the last 10 years, we could observe that non-drinkers in the overall population seemed to have slightly decreased (from 41.4% to 39.8%). This rise in non-drinkers, mainly due to the female sex, was observed in all geographical areas, except in the south.

Without doubt, the most interesting fact observed was the big reduction in the number of so-called consumers-at-risk (over ½ a litre a day). In particular, the Italian males who were heavy wine drinkers decreased from 14.4% in 1983 to 11.1% in 1999-2001, while among females, there was an increase from 1% to 1.8%. Referring to the overall population, therefore, the percentage of risky drinkers decreased from 7.4% to 5.9%. This reduction appears to have been primarily influenced by the decrease in heavy drinkers (over a litre a day) which dropped over the 20 years for the entire population, from 1.5% to 0.6%.

Moderate drinkers (less than half a litre a day) represented the category containing the highest percentage for both sexes and for all the years covered by the surveys. The north-western and
central areas (as had already been seen in the analysis of family consumption data) exhibited a higher proportion of wine-drinkers, while the south had the lowest percentage rate of both moderate and heavy drinkers (percentage of population drinking over half a litre).

As far as beer was concerned (see Table 1.8), non-drinkers within the entire population diminished considerably, passing from 65.8% in 1983 to 52% in 1999-2001. The percentage of non-drinkers dropped more for males (-18.1% in 20 years) than for females (-11.2%). As in the case of wine, the consumer base widened progressively while, unlike wine, the excessive consumption category (over half a litre a day) remained unaltered, at a very low percentage rate. As far as comparisons over geographical areas were concerned, we could note that beer was no longer characteristic of the southern areas alone: during the last 10 years for which data was available, beer drinkers increased predominantly in the centre and in the north-west (by +6.6% and +7.2% respectively).

For other types of beverages (spirits, amaro, alcoholic aperitifs) the available data referred to a too brief period for drawing any reasonably reliable conclusions (see Tables 1.9, 1.10, 1.11). We could point out that drinkers (of both sexes) of “amaro” and spirits increased, but even more so did drinkers of aperitifs. Despite these increases, the percentage values of non-drinkers remained high for both sexes. Moreover, most consumers declared that they drank these types of beverages rarely or under exceptional circumstances.

1.5.2 The age factor

Tables 1.12 and 1.13 illustrate wine consumption by age group and gender between 1983 and 2001, while for a detailed discussion of the historical relationship between wine consumption and age group please refer to the section dealing with ad hoc surveys.

In the lowest age bracket (14-29 years of age), the percentage of non-drinkers was more or less stable from 1983 to the years 1993-1995, and then it started falling until 1999-2001 (-3.3% between 1993-1995 and 1999-2001 for males, -5.3% for females). The same age bracket exhibited a rise in the number of moderate drinkers (less than half a litre) and, above all, a decrease in drinkers at risk (over half a litre a day). The latter dropped from 3.6% in 1993-1995 to 2.2% in 1999-2001 for males, and from 0.6% to 0.5% for females. All other male age groups decreased slightly, and the same occurred for females (see Table 1.13). The drop in drinkers at risk was common to all age groups for both sexes.

Tables 1.14 and 1.15 illustrate beer consumption percentage rates by gender and age group. It is not surprising that in the younger age groups beer was always more popular, sometimes even substituting wine.

Male and female non-drinkers significantly decreased in all age groups up to the 60-year-old bracket, illustrating how this beverage was no longer popular only among the younger age groups.
Luckily, this phenomenon did not appear to have produced an increase in the percentage of drinkers at risk, which remained the same, if not significantly lower, for all age groups and both sexes.

### 1.6 Consumption according to other socio-demographic variables

Reliable income information, which provided an indication of the economic potential of individuals and families, was hard to come by in Italy, and so it was difficult to classify the population by social class. A good approximation often utilized for overcoming this problem was to make use of the individual’s education level, which was, in general, a variable that ISTAT recorded in its surveys.

Table 1.16 shows how during the last 20 years the highest number of consumers was found among people holding University degrees, followed by people with High School diplomas. Over this period, it could be noted that the percentage of drinkers increased among high school students, while for other education levels, consumption remained more or less stable. It appeared, however, that those most at risk had lower levels of education (elementary schools), as was confirmed by local ad hoc studies (see next section).

Wine consumption data broken down by the population's marital status is presented in Table 1.17. This shows that married people drank more than those unmarried (there was a probable correlation factor with the age group), even though the latter showed the highest growth rate. As far as excessive drinking was concerned, the proportion of those at risk seemed to have decreased in all groups, by about 1-2% on average.

Summarising all this data, we could conclude that:

- there had been a significant fall in alcohol consumption in Italy over the last 30 years, and subsequently consumption had become more convergent – from a typical Mediterranean consumer model Italy was passing, to a model influenced by international styles where, although wine remained the "typical" beverage drunk the most, other new beverages (beer in particular) were also being drunk, sometimes taking the place of wine;
- this consumption convergence was also observed when comparing different geographical areas: the traditional differences in quantities of wine drunk over the last twenty years between north-centre/south have been decreasing;
- over the last decade more and more people of both sexes seemed to be drinking wine and beer – this phenomenon gave the impression of being particularly true for young people and females;
- finally, it had be noted that alongside a general widening of the consumer base, there was a reduction of drinkers who were considered at risk (over half a litre of wine a day). During
the twenty years from 1980 to 2000, they seemed to have moved to categories of more moderate drinking rates.

1.7 LOCAL AD HOC SURVEYS

We have collected information available on alcohol consumption among the general population in different geographical Italian areas by reviewing current literature (including “grey” literature), and also by acquiring work documents, some of which have never been published.

We have identified ad hoc studies aimed at investigating the quantity of alcohol drunk, as well as the way in which it was drunk and the most significant factors influencing its consumption. We also made use of other studies which had different aims but also contained information concerning alcohol consumption. Table 1.18 gives a list of the areas where surveys recorded alcohol consumptions and patterns, performed up until December 2004.

Ad hoc studies obviously contained the most information concerning several socio-demographic variables, but they were relatively few, fragmented, often small in size, and not representative of the entire country’s reality. Due to the wide variety of recording methods employed, even when they were available, results could rarely be used for geographical comparisons. Furthermore, data of specific studies was often printed in publications that were difficult to find, using non-standard formats, and processed by statistical models that were often inappropriate.

For the purpose of our analysis, we have excluded the numerous surveys carried out on specific population groups, which, due to their biased outlook were unsuitable for extrapolating results from the entire population. Typical surveys of this kind usually concerned students from all kinds of schools, specific work divisions, institutions (jails, military barracks, hospitals), as well as patients of general medical surgeries, etc. Where possible, we have re-processed some of the published data, transforming it into units of measure that allowed some comparisons to be made. Studies carried out for other reasons (existing cohort, case-control, cross-sectional epidemiological studies,) carried out to assess diet and lifestyles and their relationship with chronic degenerative diseases, provided some information on average alcohol consumption rates per capita, but not on socio-demographic factors affecting consumption.

As shown in Table 1.18, studies carried out after the 1960s showed that wine consumption was declining. The first study, carried out in Tuscany in 1977, was also the one, up to the present day, which went into most detail about the factors determining the use and abuse of alcoholic beverages and their clinical consequences. Particular attention was given to the perceptions and judgments of the interviewees regarding the characteristics of each type of beverage and to the type of consumption model, also with reference to eating habits. Only in this survey were we able to
access the original data (contained on computer punch-cards), and so were able to re-analyse certain
variables. For all the other surveys, we used the information reported in published documents.
Among these were studies conducted in Tuscany, Lazio, Piedmont and Lombardy, which, in
particular, contained enough information to allow comparisons to be made of socio-demographic
factors, distinguished by beverage.

The analysis of all the results published enabled us to create a reliable profile of alcohol
c_consumption, especially that of wine. The following observations are those appearing to be the
most consistent and coherent throughout the different surveys, regardless of the year in which they
were carried out:

- *Ad hoc* surveys exhibited fewer differences between geographical areas' alcohol
  consumption with respect to institutional sources. This was probably due to a better definition of
  moderate consumption, and to more appropriate recording methods;

- Average alcohol consumption rates, expressed as grams *per capita* per day, were almost
double in *ad hoc* surveys with respect to ISTAT studies, and even more than double for southern
  regions (Campania and Puglia);

- For all geographical areas and all the years considered, all surveys reported the fact that
  males drank twice as much as females, and were also more numerous in the non-drinker
  category;

- Published data seemed to indicate that the natural progress of alcohol consumption started
during early life, if not at the infant stage. The average age when drinking began, even if this
was not always recorded correctly, was around 14 years. This age was in accordance with the
traditional pattern of wine consumption within the family. Wine was first tasted, and then drunk
at mealtimes with the family. As adulthood was reached (18-20 years) there was a bigger
demand for more transgressive alcoholic beverages, and it was common to drink beer on
occasion, away from home, with friends and during social activities. Females started drinking
alcohol about two years after males, and were therefore even more tied to the family model of
mainly drinking wine with meals. The average *per capita* consumption of alcohol every day
was, however, still low at this age (18-25 years), under 20 grams for males and 10 grams for
females. This was not consumed on a regular basis, but was concentrated mainly during social
events away from the home, on special days and occasions (birthdays, weekends, holidays). As
adulthood approached, the rate of alcohol consumed started growing linearly with age, thanks
also to the discovery of other alcoholic beverages, such as aperitifs, and dry and sweet liqueurs.
_Amaro_ seemed to be the last type of alcoholic beverage to be discovered. While the younger
generation tended to experiment with alcoholic beverages other than wine outside the family
home, usually at social events, adults tended to select their favourite beverage in terms of
personal taste and preference. During adulthood, therefore, new beverages tended to be added to wine, which was still drunk in modest quantities with meals;

Other beverages, particularly beer, attained their maximum proportional weight of total alcohol consumption per day between the ages of 20 and 35, while wine, however, continued to be the main beverage. As the alcoholic content of beer was often three times less than that of wine, had we measured consumption in terms of volumes of liquid drunk, beer would have occupied the top spot. When a new family nucleus was formed, traditional wine consumption at family meals started to dominate once more, representing by far the main type of alcoholic beverage consumed daily. With this growth in wine consumption, the total amount of alcohol consumed increased with age up to 50-60 years, when values were double those at 20 years of age. The consumption rate was then stable until 65-70 years, after which it started to gradually drop, as did other lifestyle habits (food intake, physical exercise, smoking, etc.) for reasons related to a natural physiological reduction due to age. This generational pattern seemed to be homogeneous for all Italian geographical areas, and even if it gave the impression of being more complex in recent years, it was observed in all surveys carried out after the 1970s. Generally speaking, adults preferred wine, those of younger generations drank more beer, and the middle-aged favoured strong spirits.

Wine represented about 80% of the daily alcohol intake of interviewees, irrespective of geographical area. During recent years, this percentage rate dropped a little but it was always the preferred type of drink, never falling below 70-75%. Beers and spirits came in second place, the outcome also depending on how many different types of alcoholic beverages were considered in the various questionnaires. However, their consumption was always considerably inferior to that of wine.

The typical profile of the heavier drinkers of alcohol was quite homogeneous in all surveys. This was represented by males, of medium-elderly age (40-60 years), married and with large families, living in northern and central Italy, more in the countryside and mountainous regions than in towns, with low social status and levels of education, manual workers or farmers, sometimes self-employed rather than employees or managers/directors. The same socio-demographic profile held also for women who drank the most. Among women, it was not uncommon for upper-class women to drink a lot as well, and so the highest consumption rates occurred at the two extremes of the social ladder. The top alcohol consumer's profile coincided with the top wine drinker's profile, while the heaviest drinkers of dry and sweet liqueurs and of amaro had different, if not opposite, characteristics.
The favourite place for drinking any type of alcoholic beverage, particularly wine, was in one's own home. Indeed, wine was mainly drunk at home with the family, and almost exclusively at mealtimes. Generally speaking, drinking away from home was more frequent when aperitifs or beer were concerned (in bars or pubs), or dry liqueurs (at friends' homes). Beer, aperitifs and amaro were most typically drunk with friends away from home. Dry liqueurs were often drunk at social events with friends at one's or at others' homes. Nevertheless, drinking on one's own, in a bar or at home, during the afternoon or evening, was also common. For all alcoholic beverages, and wine in particular, consumption usually took place in a social context, and usually at a moderate level.

As far as the association with meals was concerned, wine dominated the scene both at lunch and at dinner, while aperitifs, coffee-flavoured amaro with alcohol, were drunk before or immediately after meals. Dry liqueurs are usually drunk after dinner, while beer was drunk mostly during the afternoon. Comparing studies from the 1970s with those of the 1980s, it appeared that the main time to drink alcohol tended to become dinner rather than traditionally lunch, especially as far as wine was concerned. However, people over 65 years of age still did the opposite, drinking more wine at lunch than at dinner, while for younger generations consumption was very common during evenings and away from mealtimes. This pattern demonstrated the changes that have taken place in the structure of daily life with regard to eating habits. However, in all surveys for any time period, wine consumption was always strongly linked with meals.

People most affected by socio-cultural transformations (younger generations, city-dwellers, those with high education levels) were also those who exhibited the biggest change in the preference and mode of drinking each type of beverage. The traditional model of basically drinking wine with meals within the family household, typical of social groups that were poorly inclined to changing lifestyles due to education or cultural levels, gave way to a more flexible model of drinking alcohol away from home and in various settings.

Between 1982 and 1989, specific studies were carried out in Tuscany concerning the impact that the working role may have had on alcohol consumption (Allamani e coll., 1988; Allamani e coll., 1995). Four types of professional occupation were considered: industry personnel, agricultural workers of a wine-producing area, Florence craftsmen, and teachers. The hypothesis being tested was that environmental and relational factors, and occupational stress could explain the variability of alcohol consumption between different occupations, as had emerged from various population studies. The four studies showed that environmental, physical and relational conditions of the daily working place were not correlated with the quantity of alcohol consumed or with the way in which it was consumed. On the other hand, all studies showed the importance
of the cultural level in which the people working in different areas had grown up in, i.e. rural, urban or post-industrial areas.

Indeed, in these four areas of occupation there existed two extremes on the consumption scale. On the one hand, we had very high *per capita* consumption levels in rural workers, who represented a strongly conservative group as far as wine consumption was concerned, as it was considered of major importance both from an anthropological and economic point of view. At the other extreme, with the lowest consumption levels, we found teachers, who regarded alcohol as a potentially harmful drink, and who ideally also refrained from consuming products containing tobacco and caffeine. In between, we had industry workers and craftsmen. The first category drank alcohol moderately, with manual workers drinking more than white-collar workers, while craftsmen appeared to represent a more complex area, as there were a large number of teetotalers and heavy drinkers. On the whole, epidemiological studies carried out in the working environment tended to give more importance to cultural factors that were typical of their profession, rather than to contingent stress mechanisms, in determining their mode of alcohol consumption.

These represented the most homogeneous conclusions that could be drawn from a comparison of all the different surveys published. Other important findings emerged from single studies.

The following interesting observations added significance to our discussion.

1. 1977 Survey carried out in Tuscany (401 adults from the province of Florence).

In addition to previously-mentioned data, this study, coordinated in Florence by Antonio Morettini (AA.VV., 1982), also produced other findings, among which:

- preference for wine was more strongly correlated to social activities, i.e. the desire and freedom to socialize with others, with respect to preferences for other alcoholic beverages which tended to exhibit an opposite correlation. Desire for success was more common among those who preferred amaro and sweet liqueurs, while the desire to keep well in touch with reality was significantly correlated to a preference for aperitifs and amaro;

- 14 statements were posed to drinkers and non-drinkers concerning the properties of alcoholic beverages. The answers, ranging from 1 to 9, represented the level to which the interviewees agreed with the initial statements. The answers showed that wine was the alcoholic beverage that received the most positive and favourable opinions (see Figs. 1.2-1.5). The person who drank wine was considered to be a connoisseur; wine made one happy, eliminated shyness, was pleasant to taste, neither bad for one's health, nor too expensive. Dry liqueurs were also positively perceived, as they depicted a certain level of social status and facilitated social relationships. But they were also considered to be more expensive and harmful to one’s health. Instead, a more negative opinion emerged for beer. It was not considered as having a good taste, did not cause happiness, was neither favoured by
connoisseurs, nor was it a beverage preferred by people of a certain class. It was, however, considered to be the most thirst-quenching alcoholic beverage. Sweet liqueurs were also attributed predominantly negative opinions, mainly due to physiological aspects (thirst-quenching properties, appetizing and digestive powers) and for causing a good mood. Other beverages presented less defined results, apart from the classical stereotypes, e.g. Holy wine had a good flavour, aperitifs stimulated one's appetite, amaro helped digestion;

- psycho-pathological conditions (alienation, frustration, impotence, passiveness) seemed to have had less influence on alcohol consumption in any form and of wine in particular, although some people who preferred to drink alone were among the heavier drinkers of spirits and amaro.

The data from this survey was presented in 1980 at a Regional Congress which, for the very first time in Italy, compared agronomic economic data concerning wine to bio-medical data, concerning the consequences of its consumption and excessive consumption. It was interesting to report the statements made by some of the speakers during the conference concerning the future of wine and general alcohol consumption. In particular, Clara Stella, director of the Agricultural Industry Department at the University of Florence, on commenting the findings of a study carried out towards the end of the 1970s by IRVAM (now called ISMEA) (Stella 1982), underlined how health awareness was the main cause for wine consumption reduction reported by those who had started drinking less (about 50%), while only 8% of them had said it was due to taste. 14% of interviewees declared that they had chosen white wine for dietary or health reasons (41% because of taste, 31% due to habit, 7% due to local availability). At the same time, this was only true for 2% of consumers preferring red wine (53% taste, 30% habit, 11% local availability). Over 75% of wine drinkers in central Italy bought wine wholesale, especially directly from wine-producing cellars, as they considered this choice a way to ensure quality and safety. During these years, only 21% of regular wine drinkers were aware of the difference between common and quality wine. Consumption of quality wine was confined to the top social class, especially in the north, and to the younger generations. During the 1970s, the regular wine drinker was still drinking common wine. Thus, health motivations and consumer preferences for high-quality wine had started becoming important factors in explaining the fall in consumption rates.

During the same congress, Reginaldo Cianferoni, Director of the Agricultural Economy and Policy Department at the University of Florence, and a careful observer of rural lifestyles, while describing the future scenarios of wine consumption due to the observed negative trend, stated: "the significant fall in per capita consumption levels [of wine, editor's note] in Italy that started in 1968-70, must be attributed to changing lifestyles, to the ever-increasing phenomenon of eating meals away from home and in the working environment, and to the growth in urbanisation." (Cianferoni 1982) In confirming the findings of research conducted by Morettini et al., he suggested focalising
attention on the fact that "farm workers ... having emigrated to cities to work in closed factories, have been forced to reduce their wine consumption ...", since he believed that the urban environment created conditions of higher biological and social vulnerability to the harm inflicted by alcohol, and encouraged a spontaneous reduction in consumption. Cianferoni supported this hypothesis by citing the historically low alcoholism rate of agricultural workers in rural environments, due to the deeply rooted drinking culture, which enabled them to self-regulate the amount of alcohol drunk according to the manual labour required (typical in the agricultural world) and social consent. The low alcoholic grade of farm workers’ "watered-down wine", often below 4-5 degrees, furthermore allowed high consumption levels in terms of volume, and this was certainly more tolerable when compared to city wine. The latter was of better quality and higher alcoholic content, also favoured by "enrichment" processes that were popular during those years. The habit of "adding water" to table wine confirmed the empirical point that during the 1960s-70s a high consumption of low-grade and low-quality wine prevailed.

Cianferoni's presentation, referring to the 1977 Florence research study, had already highlighted the positive symbolic value that wine consumption had in rural environments. This fit in well with agricultural labour, having a socializing effect at the same time. But wine consumption was reduced when workers were forced to move to urban life, with the road paved for the consumption of other types of alcoholic beverages, better suited to a solitary lifestyle.

2 - The 1988 Turin Survey

Even though this survey did not provide quantitative data, it was nevertheless interesting because it focused solely on consumption patterns (Favretto e Sarzotti, 1990). It illustrated how differences in the patterns of alcoholic beverage consumption between the sexes were more noticeable for beverages other than wine, especially in a context away from the family. Female drinking patterns, on the other hand, were similar to male drinking patterns when traditional wine-drinking behaviour was observed. The study also showed how the proportion of people drinking alcohol with lunch was lower than at dinner, thus underlining the inhibiting effect working hours had on drinking (as on eating). Drinking in public was always more similar between males and females if they belonged to the younger generations, while it was less common among those who had lived for a long time in the countryside. This was due to the fact that those originating from a rural background preferred to drink at their own home or at friends' homes. Older people attributed a positive aspect to wine consumption, while younger people, who drank both wine and beer, were less prepared to attribute positive meanings to these drinks, as if they had not yet fully understood the values of drinking. The study further suggested evidence of new drinking patterns that added to, or in some cases substituted, at least in part, old patterns. It continued to show that a high percentage of people (about 20%) who did not drink were following medical advice, even though the majority of non-drinkers were teetotalers for reasons related to taste.
3 - The 1992-1995 Florence Survey

This survey's most significant finding was that wine, despite a drop in consumption, continued to be the most dominant alcoholic beverage consumed on a daily basis (Quartini et al., 2001). Other alcoholic beverages were becoming more important for younger generations, but also for older ones. The study also showed new consumption patterns that were less self-regulating.

4 – The 1994 Lazio Survey

This survey highlighted an increased regular daily consumption pattern of wine in the average-adult age bracket, a more irregular weekend pattern of beer consumption in the younger generations, and a more sporadic consumption pattern of spirits in those middle-aged (Scafato et al. 1999). Furthermore, a section of this survey analysed consumption variations over the last 5 years, and discovered that many people had reduced the quantity of alcohol drunk (67% of males, 56% of females), or had stopped drinking altogether (16% of males, 31% of females). This was mainly due to health reasons (37% of males, 35% of females), and occurred more often at an advanced age. For both sexes, 57 years seemed to be the average age to stop drinking alcohol.

5 – The 1992 Milan City Council Survey

This survey better identified the profile of the moderate drinker (Gatti, Cittadini e Axerio, 1994). While excessive drinking was associated with the lifestyles of poorer social classes, moderate drinking was associated with high levels of social integration, typical of lifestyles of the wealthier social classes. These enabled higher consumption rates of luxury items, and more social activities in which the consumption of food and alcoholic beverages played a decisive role. Consumption data in the Milanese area showed quite moderate levels, which the authors attributed to the area's productive structure. In particular, moderation was due to the absence or scarcity of groups of people with rooted wine-drinking traditions, such as farm workers and manual workers. These were substituted by white-collar workers, directors, managers and free-lance specialists who, in metropolitan areas and with career opportunities in mind, could not indulge in drinking in excess, as this would have jeopardised their sharpness and been a waste of time. The organization of daily life was also important. Lunch was typically eaten away from home, and was frugal as far as the quantity and variety of food were concerned, in order to make better use of concentration, calories and time.

Among the original findings of this survey was the observation that the age at which alcoholic beverages other than wine started to be drunk was lower for moderate drinkers with respect to those who drank more heavily. With regard to knowledge of the alcoholic properties of the various beverages, wine was the best-known, while a correct understanding of beer and spirits was rarer.
Wine was considered to be less dangerous than other alcoholic beverages, as only 6% of the population believed that wine should not be drunk in order to prevent harming one's health, while this percentage rate climbed to 17% for beer and 46% for strong spirits. Positive opinions on the consequences of wine drinking definitely prevailed (better health, producing happiness and improving socialization for about 70% of the interviewees), even if women were more judgmental in their expressions.

1.8 **AD HOC NATIONAL STUDIES**

The "Osservatorio Permanente Giovani e Alcool" surveys that were performed in 1990, 1993, 1997 and 2000 in collaboration with DOXA, discovered many facts related to consumption behaviour, opinions and attitudes towards alcoholic beverages. However, only the surveys carried out after 1993 considered only adult Italians. As they took place during the last part of the alcohol and wine consumption curves, we will only point out the most interesting results that emerged when comparing this data with the local *ad hoc* studies carried out during the early 1970s. In particular:

- the consumer types already illustrated in the local *ad hoc* studies were confirmed. These referred to age groups, sexes, geographical areas, social classes, education, profession, types of community, higher alcohol consumption, places and occasions where drinking took place, and type of drink;

- during the 1990s, 80% of Italians drank some type of alcoholic beverage every three months, 65% of these being regular drinkers and 15% occasional drinkers. Drinkers increased from 1993 onwards, when they represented 73% of the adult population. In the 2000 survey, the proportion of occasional drinkers grew, particularly with respect to the previous three years. This occurred more in the young/adult age group (25-34 years) and adults (over 54 years) rather than in the younger age groups;

- with respect to 1997, the percentage rate of women drinking beer rose by 3%, while the percentage rate of those drinking beer dropped by 6% for both sex groups between the ages of 15 and 24. Drinking of strong spirits dropped among those between 45 and 54 years of age;

- the percentage rate of those who got drunk was stable between 1993 and 2000. The rate of those who confessed to have drunk a bit too much at least once over the last three months, instead, dropped (from 18.0% in 1993 to 15.8% in 2000). There was also a slight decrease in the proportion of drinkers with major alcohol-correlated risk factors, with 3 positive answers to CAGE (from 1.3% in 1997 to 0.8% in 2000), and the proportion of drinkers with more
moderate risk factors (with 2 positive answers) fell a bit too, from 3.3% in 1997 to 2.3% in 2000);

• alcohol consumption, of any type, for more than half the interviewees was something to be done with friends, and in 10% of cases by oneself;

• though to a lesser extent, traditional wine drinking at home, with meals, was still the most popular form of alcohol consumption during the 1990s, even if occasions where one drank away from home and during social events became more frequent;

• the relationship with meals was still strong, especially that of lunch and dinner. More wine was drunk at lunch, and especially at home, where a considerable 86% of interviewees still had lunch. - even if this finding diverged from other information supporting the idea that wine was drunk mostly at dinner. However, as well as being widely drunk with meals, wine started being consumed at other times of day as well. The consumption of beer with meals dropped, but grew at other occasions. Overall, lunch seemed to be less important, and more alcohol was being drunk away from mealtimes, but always together with others and at social occasions;

• with respect to non-drinkers, regular or occasional alcohol drinkers tended to be more active in social and recreational activities away from home. Regular drinkers seemed to visit cinemas more often, read more books and papers, carry out more voluntary work, practice sport, use a PC and navigate on the Internet more;

• with respect to the surveys carried out in earlier years, the 2000 survey recorded more moderate alcohol consumption, even when only on an occasional basis;

• with the increase of occasional consumption, with respect to 1997, the frequency and occasions on which one drank had decreased, according to interviewees. Occasions during the week in which wine could be drunk decreased for all ages and for both sexes. Beer-drinking occasions also lessoned, but only for males in the 15-24 age-brackets, while they increased for all other age-brackets and females. Occasions for drinking other types of alcoholic beverage decreased;

• regional comparisons, only available in the 2000 study, revealed that some regions had high consumption levels but a low proportion of heavy drinkers (Tuscany, Emilia, Liguria, Marches, Umbria, Lombardy, Piedmont, Valle d'Aosta, Apulia); other regions had low consumption rates and low rates of heavy drinkers (Lazio, Campania, Sicily); still others had higher rates of heavy drinkers than the national average (Abruzzi, Molise, Sardinia, Basilicata, Calabria, Trentino Alto Adige);

• alcohol appeared to be more socially acceptable in the 2000s than in 1977. Among the 18 statements concerning alcohol consumption, negative statements were less popular, while
positive statements received more favour. This happened both for drinkers (whether occasional or regular) and non-drinkers. Despite this, almost 7% of interviewees stated that they had at least one person suffering from alcohol-related problems within their family group, and 23% of them knew of at least one person with such problems among their friends and acquaintances.

1.9 Market research surveys

Some publications regarding the market of alcoholic beverages covered the topic of alcohol consumption within the population and provided information regarding the various drinking patterns. Here we provide some interesting data taken from these publications, conferences dealing with food and wine consumption, and Internet sites.

A 1985 DOXA research project carried out for the Italian confederation of wine-cellars, and following an earlier project performed in 1951, found that the main characteristics attributed to wine included pleasure, its energetic and socializing effects, genuineness and traditional value. The research found that wine consumption was gradually narrowing down to meals eaten in relaxing conditions and therefore away from the working environment (Donati B, 1987).

According to a "FIESA – Confesercenti" survey, the proportion of food eaten out of the home increased from 21.2% in 1974 to 31.8% in 2003. The number of people employed in the preparation and distribution of meals away from home increased by 64% since the 1970s (firms increased by 38%). In absolute terms, in 2003 there were 650,000 people employed and 217,000 businesses (bars, restaurants, cafeterias) in the food sector. Food shops decreased by 54% (-204,000) between 1971 and 2001, while during the same period the number of unspecialized stores (supermarkets and hypermarkets) increased 4 times (from 600 to over 8,000). During this same period, shops specializing in selling oil, wine, beer and alcoholic beverages decreased by about 74% (from about 18,000 to about 4,500). The peak of these reductions took place during the years 1971-1991(http://www.confesercenti.it).

According to a survey carried out for "Federvini" in May 2004, 40% of interviewees between the ages of 15 and 74 stated that they drank a bit less with respect to a few years earlier. This was mainly due to health awareness (60%), while only 21% to a preference for other beverages, and 3% to saving money. The first concept associated with drinking was being in the company (58% of others. Almost all Italians were in favour of a moderate drinking pattern (94%), even if many (81%) would have liked greater control and a more consistent enforcement of existing laws. Furthermore, 71% stated that too many laws could prove to be counter-productive for the younger generations and 52% were against prohibition (http://www.federvini.it).
2. WINE CONSUMPTION IN ITALY

One of the most popular hypotheses for explaining changes in wine consumption occurring between 1950 and 1980 was the strong link Italians had between drinking wine and eating meals. The rapid growth in wine consumption that started in the ‘50s reached its highest point at the end of the 1970s. That it started dropping steeply and steadily throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s could be explained by examining the change in Italian eating habits during the same time period. Thus, wine was considered as one of the components of Italians’ eating behaviour. In order to find significant comparisons and correlations, we carried out an analysis of eating patterns during the years ’50-’80, using various different sources. Eating patterns that referred to earlier and later periods than the wine consumption period were, instead, simply summarized, as it was impossible to draw time-related comparisons.

2.1 SOURCES

Excluding national budget statistics, which provided long historical data series concerning family purchases by product (including food and drink products), Italian data sources used for quantifying foodstuff consumption per capita, regardless of price, were basically the same as those already listed and dealt with in depth in the initial section dedicated to the analysis of alcohol consumption. These were:

2. Family Consumption Survey (CF).
3. Sample surveys by the National Nutrition Institute ("Istituto Nazionale della Nutrizione" - INN, now INRAN).
4. ISTAT Multi-Aim Surveys (aspects of everyday life).
5. Epidemiological studies and research projects.
6. Studies carried out by specialized firms in market research (Doxa, Demoskopea, Nielsen, Eurisko, etc.). In the agricultural area, the Nielsen ISMEA/AC family Panel should be mentioned, as it recorded weekly food purchases of samples representing Italian families.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL PICTURE: FROM FAMINE TO PLENTY

The available historical sources allowed us to give a reasonably good summary of the food consumption evolution in Italy during the last two centuries (Somogyi, 1977; Livi Bacci, 1987; Quirino, 1991; Sorcinelli, 1992; Marescotti, 1998).
Between the 19th and early 20th century, the Italian diet was that of a rural population, which was largely predominant in the country (about 60% of the active population), and led uniformly very poor lifestyles. Except in some privileged sectors, there was heavy unemployment and, towards the end of the 19th century, inevitable mass emigration was taking place.

The cost to feed a rural family constituted 60-80% of its total expenses. Typically there was "hunger for meat" and nearly always a negative caloric balance. The daily diet was based on bread (nearly always of very poor quality and hardly ever made of wheat), polenta, minor cereals and dried legumes (mostly broad and other beans), and a few vegetables, among which were mainly onions and cabbages. The potato, already a nourishing and vital food item in several European countries, had not yet reached Italy, and would become popular only after the 1940s. There were some differences when local food items were used, but the nourishment rate was always very poor here as well: sweet corn, chestnuts, broad beans, lupins, and also acorns. On rare days when meat was available, generally on important occasions or when someone was ill, this was generally pork or meat from other farmyard animals. There was little milk or cheese. Pasta was still confined to towns; rice was restricted to certain agricultural areas. Wine was present in central and northern Italy in particular, but it was of poor quality and heavily watered-down, with a very low alcoholic content compared to the wine of today. Quality wine was sold in cities, where it was present every day with meals. In the countryside, real wine was found in taverns, the only places where social and recreational activities took place in rural environments. Alcoholism was present, and documented. Wine consumption grew until the end of the 19th century, also due to a price reduction resulting from commercial conflicts with France, the major importer of Italian wine.

From a nutritional point of view, the situation was slightly better in the cities, especially for the wealthier social classes, which were, however, a minority. In the cities' more populated areas, as in the countryside, there were serious difficulties in keeping an adequate caloric balance. So, except for a few rich people, there were similar difficulties in eating habits between cities and the countryside, at least up to the end of the 19th and the start of the 20th century.

With the start of the new century, the citizens' eating pattern consisted of three meals. Their structure differed according to social class and income, with more meat being present in meals of wealthier families, and more vegetables in those of poorer families. Fruit, on the other hand, was present in almost all family meals, while dessert was not. Wine was always present for everybody, even if its quality differed according to the family’s income. It was mostly present with lunch, less with dinner, and often replaced in popular districts by a visit to the tavern, after a meagre dinner. In the countryside, the situation remained the same as always: the main objective was to fight hunger rather than eat for pleasure. Different purchasing power was the main factor that determined one’s food choice.
Conditions remained like this for the first years of the 20th century, when the availability of wheat and small farm animals improved slightly, together with a modest and slow growth in the agricultural sector. After the First World War, the purchasing power of poorer households improved, and this enabled a rapid, but brief, rise in consumption levels. With the onset of fascism and its economic and agricultural self-sufficiency policies, as well as the international crisis, living conditions of the poorer families worsened, both in towns and in the countryside, and per capita consumption of food diminished. Restricted sectors of wealthier city-dwellers took advantage of policies that favoured purchasing potential during this period, which gave rise to the start of consumerism in Italy, already widely diffused in other countries. In our country, instead, it remained an elitist rather than mass phenomenon, mainly tied to the industrial triangle. The country's economic and social evolution during these years was still limited by a modest degree of modernisation. Meat and fish were almost absent and everything else was rationed, and the situation was often worse in cities than in the countryside.

After the war, structural changes took place in Italian society, and Italy started growing strongly from an economic point of view. The GDP started rising by steps of 6% up to 1963, then of 5% from 1963 up to 1973, of 3.7% from 1973 up to 1980 and of 0.6% during the three-year recession period of 1981-1983. It then rose by 3% in the following years in the 1980s. At this point, the so-called economic boom era was taking place. Employment levels started to rise, emigration ceased, people left the countryside to go to live in cities and towns, self-sufficiency decreased, low-cost labour diminished (low-cost labour forces were typical of the preceding era), and the purchasing power of the population increased. Food consumption, at the same time, changed rapidly in a way that had never occurred before, although with rather less evidence in the southern and rural areas. Between 1958 and 1973, the proportion of income dedicated to food collapsed, while at the same time the total caloric intake available grew by more than one-third, in excess of 3,000 calories per capita per day. Italy was now matching other European countries, while in previous years it had occupied last place.

Now we will review the consumption trends of the main food items in detail.

2.2.1 Italian eating habits during the wine curve period (1940-1980)

For this analysis, we decided to use only ISTAT consumption data expressed in terms of units of weight, with an approach that considers nutritional characteristics. We therefore excluded food purchase statistics that also took economic factors into account. Even though food consumption data published by ISTAT in its various publications was not always comparable and updated, it still enabled us to depict an acceptable general overview of Italian eating styles, particularly for the period following the 1940s.
From the late ’40s and early ’50s, the consumption rates of single food items started to rise, even if at a variable rate. The best known and most significant rise (also considering its relatively high cost) was that in meat consumption, which grew by a factor of 4 from the 1940s to the 1980s (see Fig. 2.1). This rise was particularly significant, at least in the early stages, for beef. About 7 kilos/year per capita of beef were eaten in the early ’50s, and this doubled in the early ’60s (14 kilos/year per capita in 1961), and was more than 25 kilos/year per capita in 1971. After this, the growth slowed down, and there was a relatively stable period up to the early 1990s (25.2 kilos in 1981 and 25.4 kilos in 1991). Thereafter, there was a tendency to reduce consumption (the BSE – mad cow disease also having an impact) and this occurred up until the early 2000s (21.0 kilos in 2001). During the decade between 1960 and 1970, Italy had the highest ever increase in per capita income of its history (about +60%), and in these years there was a parallel increase in food purchases (+55%), with the increase in meat purchase being even higher than this (+103%).

Carefully observing the types of meat that were consumed during the years after the 1950s, an increase in pork consumption could be noted (see Fig. 2.2). Pork was consumed less than beef until the 1970s, but over the following years its consumption grew considerably, and by the early 1990s Italians were eating more pork than beef. Poultry consumption was also important. In the early ’60s it kept pace with the strong growth in beef consumption, but then slowed down during the mid-1970s, when pork consumption overtook it, continuing to increase slightly but constantly over the following years.

The contribution of other types of meat (rabbit, game, giblets, mutton, lamb, goat, horse) was always low. We have no data, instead, for salami and other meat-derived products that ISTAT included in the data of the previous sections. During the same years (1941 to 1981) the consumption of meat-derived products grew considerably, though not as much as meat itself. Milk consumption grew by 142.7%, cheese by +184.3%, and eggs by 79.6% (see Fig. 2.3).

Only demands for lard and suet weren’t as fortunate, while among animal fats, butter consumption doubled (see Fig. 2.4). Olive oil consumption trebled, and significant consumption of margarine and vegetable oil occurred as well.

As for other food items, fresh fish started to be eaten in the early 1950s, but only in very small quantities. The main consumption rise was observed during the 1970s and 1980s. Consumption of dry or tinned fish was always stable or slightly decreasing and, in any case, was never very significant in absolute terms (see Fig. 2.5). Preferences for vegetable products followed a more complex pattern. Fruit and vegetable products generally increased according to the overall pattern, with a more than two-fold increase between 1941 and 1981 of fresh fruit, and a 25% increase of vegetables (see Fig. 2.6).

In contrast to other vegetables, the consumption of potatoes and cabbage, after an initial increase, started decreasing (data not illustrated). Even in the case of fruit, although increases in
consumption prevailed, variations in different directions were evident in some years, and for certain types of fruit, and not for others. Consumption of wheat and of fresh legumes increased, even if only slightly, while for all other minor cereals (sweet corn, rye, barley, rice) and for dry legumes it diminished (see Fig. 2.7). From 1970, wheat consumption started to fall, this being an indication of a drop in consumption of derived products among which, above all, bread and pasta.

Over the same period, sugar consumption trebled (see Fig. 2.8). Figs 2.9-2.12 show the consumption patterns of nutrients and calories from 1925 to 1985. These were the direct consequence of all the consumption changes of the individual food items just illustrated.

Carbohydrate consumption could be observed as having increased slightly from after the war to the late 1970s. Thereafter, it remained stable until the 1990s. Since the ’40s, fats (both animal and vegetable) constantly rose, clearly due to the increase in the consumption of meat, butter, olive oil and vegetable oil. Protein consumption increased too, thanks to the positive trend after the Second World War in meat, milk and cheese consumption. Animal-derived protein intake increased, but that of vegetable-derived protein tended to decrease. The total caloric intake grew constantly from the end of the war up until the 1990s.

Considering only the years for which the wine consumption pattern is of interest (’50s-1980s), it can be observed that during the 1970s-1980s, as well as wine, Italian preferences for wheat (bread and pasta), rice, dried fruit and dry or preserved fish also diminished. Wine consumption, however, started decreasing before these other food items did. All other food items increased, even considerably, but during different years for each product. It is interesting to note that the items that decreased the most were the more traditional ones, which for centuries had represented the basic nourishment of the poorer people. Wine, brown bread, onions, cabbages, potatoes and legumes, poor-quality meat or dried fish were all characteristic food items of rural lifestyles. One can easily imagine that during the change towards metropolitan lifestyles during the ’50s and ’60s, as well as abandoning their cold farmsteads without running water with no remorse, there was also a strong temptation to abandon the "poor" flavours of food items that were all too familiar.

However, the available details were insufficient for validating this hypothesis. We could have done so if, alongside wine consumption data, we had had "tracking" data with which to compare it, in the form of changes over time in the consumption of bread, split into brown, white and oil bread. Finally, one must be careful when drawing interpretative conclusions by comparing statistical time series by product type, where the self-sufficiency proportion is high, especially true for rural families up to the mid-1900s (wine, chickens, rabbits, orchard products).

In conclusion, all these graphs illustrate how consumption patterns, since the war up until the present day, approached the consumption patterns of other European countries, and how the meagre Mediterranean diet was progressively abandoned. Animal-derived consumption rates rose
considerably more quickly than the Italian agricultural food products. Consequently, there was a strong need to rely on other countries for meeting the home demand for such products.

This was not, however, the case of wine, which was produced in excess. Wine consumption patterns followed those of other products typical of the rural eating culture of the time, such as rice, bread, pasta, dry fish and dried legumes. This probably confirmed the presence of nutritional and social factors determining the changes in Italian food preferences between the 1950s and 1970s. We may assume that, to the rural people who started moving to towns and cities to work in factories, these food items symbolically represented their past "hunger for meat", for which they had suffered for so many years and were more than willing to put behind them. With respect to other "poor" food items, however, wine consumption started falling later, with a time-lag that seems to have suggested the presence of other anthropological-nutritional determining factors.

Italian eating habits were still changing in the late 1990s, evolving towards international models and recovering some of the traditional products and dishes of the richer version of the “Mediterranean diet,” rather than the poorer one. But at this point, wine consumption had already ended most of its heavy decline, and had reached the decreased level recommended by the World Health Organisation Alcohol Action Plan (World Health Organisation, 1992).

### 2.3 Regional Characteristics of Food Item Consumption

In order to further test the hypothesis that Italian wine preference factors over the years followed the same patterns typical for other food items, we analysed the per capita consumption of groups of food items by geographical area in depth.

ISTAT family consumption surveys (CF) covered the period 1973-1996, which overlapped completely with the wine consumption drop in Italy. At the present time, ISTAT only publishes data for 15 food items among those recorded: beef, poultry, other meat (excluding salami), cheese, eggs, milk, fish, bread, pasta, fresh and dry fruit, sugar, coffee with tea and surrogates, olive oil and vegetable oil, mineral water and wine.

In order to interpret the geographical differences and trends over time more easily, we have grouped the consumption data into the 4 Italian macro-areas, which are: the north-east (Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Emilia Romagna), the north-west (Lombardy, Piedmont, Valle d’Aosta and Liguria), Centre (Tuscany, Umbria, Marches and Lazio), the south and the Islands (Abruzzi, Molise, Campania, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia).

For every macro-area and group of food items, the average consumption for the first five years (1973-1977) was calculated, as well as for an intermediate five-year period (1982-1986) and finally for the last 5 years (1992-1996). We then determined the percentage variation for each
macro-area of the average food item \textit{per capita} consumption rate of the last 5-year period with respect to the first one. In order to understand how food and drink consumption rates changed at a geographical level, we worked out the regional variability coefficient of the average consumption rates of the first and last 5-year periods, and compared these to the overall national variability coefficient.

According to the CF surveys, the geographical consumption differences varied according to the type of food item, as shown in Table 2.1. During the first 5-year period available (1973-1977) differences were greatest for three types of food. Pasta consumption was almost double in the south with respect to the north, with intermediate values in central Italy. Bread consumption was 33% higher in the south with respect to northern Italy. Finally, beef consumption was highest in northern Italy, about one-third more than other geographical areas. During the 1970s, poultry and other types of meat were most popular in central Italy, while vegetable oils showed about 25% higher consumption in central and southern Italy, with respect to northern regions.

There was an evident north-centre-south negative gradient as far as milk was concerned, while northern Italy consumed the most cheese, but southern Italy came before central Italy. During the 1970s, fish consumption in southern Italy was double that of northern Italy, the increasing gradient here being south-centre-north. Sugar consumption behaved in exactly the opposite way, decreasing as we went further south. Geographical variations for fruit and egg consumption during the 1970s were, instead, only slight.

Always in the 1970s, the geographical distribution of wine consumption saw the central and northern (particularly north-western) areas traditionally favoured over the south. In conclusion, bread, pasta and fish were the most popular in the south, meat, milk and sugar in the north, and wine and oil in the centre.

The 1980-84 survey performed by the National Nutrition Institute ("Istituto Nazionale della Nutrizione" - INN, now INRAN), contained more information regarding food items and drinks, and used more reliable survey methods. Their results confirmed the picture just outlined, though there were some differences (Saba et al. 1990; Cialda & Saba A 1990).

If we observe average consumption differences of the 14 types of food items between the last (1992-1996) and the first (1973-1977) five-year periods available, eight products clearly decreased at a national level (see Fig. 2.13). Ordered by reduction rate, these were: wine, eggs, meat other than beef (salami excluded), sugar, bread, beef, poultry, and pasta. The remaining six types of food items increased in consumption. In order from the smallest increase to the largest were: milk, olive and vegetable oils, cheese, fresh and dried fruit, fish, and coffee (including tea and surrogates). Thus the strongest reduction during the period 1973-1996 at a global Italian level involved wine
Its reduction rates were similar in all the macro-geographical areas, with only a minor tendency of being greater in areas where the initial consumption was highest, and with a slight one of converging to the same value.

Analysing the trend in different areas enabled us to find that, despite lower values, the wine consumption ranking order did not change significantly over time. In 1996, central and north-western Italy were still the leaders as far as wine consumption was concerned, followed closely by north-eastern Italy, and with the usual larger gap with the south. Using unpublished data obtained from ISTAT, and concerning the consumption by region, of beer and spirits during 1985-1996, we calculated the total consumption of alcohol (assuming an average alcoholic content of 12° for wine, 4° for beer and 35° for spirits). Thus we estimated that the total Italian alcohol consumption dropped by 40.8% from 1985 to 1996. The largest reduction was in the south (-44.8%), followed by the north-east (-42.7%), the centre (-41.7%) and the north-west (-37.7%). However, it should be mentioned that in this survey ISTAT estimated a beer consumption reduction in Italy (-6%) and spirit consumption decline (-26%), while in other surveys beer consumption during the same period was constantly rising (while the consumption of spirits was stable or, more often, decreasing).

The family consumption survey's under-estimate is most probably due to the fact that consumption that took place away from homes was systematically omitted. And this was where a large amount of beer consumption took place in Italy. Instead, seasonality factors, which were of great importance in beer consumption in Mediterranean areas, should not have had an influence on the survey's estimates, as this survey (unlike others) considered the entire year.

The observed decreases and increases in food consumption, as a whole, indicated an improvement in the quality of the Italian diet, as these followed the recommendations for preventing primary chronic degenerative illnesses (tumors, cardiovascular illnesses, diabetes, hypertension). Nutritional epidemiologists viewed consumption decreases in meat (beef, poultry, and other meats), eggs, sugar and wine favourably, as well as increases in the consumption of fish, fruit, and olive oil (Berrino & Krogh 1996; Buiatti & Verdiani 1999).

Details of salami consumption are missing in this data, as such a type of food was not viewed favourably by nutritional experts. Due to its "ready-to-eat" characteristics, most probably, both its importance and consumption have grown over recent years.

The patterns over time described for the entire country were also evident for the macro-areas (see Figs 2.14-2.17). However, there were some significant differences and peculiarities particularly:

- in the south and in the islands, meat consumption of all types increased, even if only slightly, while it decreased in the centre and north;
- in the north, and the north-east in particular, milk consumption decreased, while in the south and centre it increased;
wine and fruit consumption variations exhibited the most regular trends over the geographical areas – with wine consumption decreasing, and fruit consumption increasing.

The most consistent observation emerging from analysing the consumption variations by geographical area between the 1970s and 1990s, was the substantial convergence of consumption rates towards average values. In other words, for most of the products for which consumption was decreasing, this reduction tended to be greater in those areas where the initial consumption rate was the highest. In the same way, for products whose consumption levels had been increasing, the rise is greater in those areas where the initial consumption was the lowest.

The per capita consumption rates deriving from the two nationwide INRAN surveys (1980-84 and 1994-96) confirmed that food item consumption changes between the 1980s and the 1990s took place in Italy. These INRAN surveys were individually more accurate than the ISTAT studies, but the methodology used did not allow for a complete comparison over the two periods (Saba et al., 1990; Cialda & Saba, 1990; Turrini, 2001). In brief, and having analysed only additional information, the comparison of the two INRAN surveys suggested that between the 1980s and the 1990s, there had been a consumption increase of dietetic food and sweeteners, with a consequent reduction in sugar and honey consumption. Fatty cheese was less favoured, while the demand for non-fatty cheese generally remained stable. Unlike whole milk, which lost demand, non-fat and partly-skimmed milk grew in popularity. Similarly, the demand for beef decreased or remained unaltered, while cold cuts and other types of meat grew in popularity. Fresh or frozen fish also became more popular. The vegetable consumption increase recorded was almost entirely due to an increase in frozen products, rather than fresh ones. On the whole, the INRAN surveys revealed that all products used in recipes, to be prepared at home and that required lengthy cooking times, were losing out in popularity, while semi-prepared products or "ready-to-eat" products grew in popularity.

The previous graphs and tables show how the tendency for consumption to converge among geographical regions varied according to a particular food item. It was clear, but not excessively, in the case of wine. It was relatively true for fresh fruit, more true for milk and meat. Cheese consumption grew more in the central and southern regions with respect to northern ones, where it had already held top place. The same was true for fish, whose popularity grew more in northern and central regions with respect to southern ones, although southern regions continued to be most popular for this product. With respect to wine consumption, it is interesting to note how preferences for bread and pasta dropped everywhere. This was more noticeable in central and southern Italy, where bread and pasta had always been present on the dining table, whether due to taste or budget. Sugar also lost favour everywhere, while oil consumption, particularly that of olive oil, increased everywhere.
In the last analysis, with some exceptions, the differences in the average food macro-area consumption levels were lower for the more recent five-year period. This confirmed an interesting hypothesis formulated during the past years which suggested there being a tendency for Italians living in different geographical areas to progressively converge their eating habits.

The eating habit convergence theory, verified in some international studies, was recently tested in Italy as well. This was done at a regional level using ISTAT family consumption data, showing that eating habits of the central and southern regions tended to converge towards those of north-eastern and north-western regions respectively, while northern regions seemed not to have modified their behaviour in the direction of other regions, and in particular of the southern regions (Pilati & Fanelli, 2003; Fanfani & Salluce, 1997). From the three types of diets of the 1970s (Mediterranean in the south, Hybrid in the centre, and Continental in the north) there was a move towards following more complex types of diets in the 1990s. Rather than substituting the previous ones, they were integrated into and co-existed with them. The new eating models did not, in other words, eliminate the older ones. And new products competed with the traditional ones, which still were favourably attractive.

FAO data (FAO, different years) shows how this phenomenon took place on an international level, even though the convergence was clearer in the case of total fat consumption, and was unconfirmed in the cases of fruit and vegetables. On a European level, there indeed remained a growing north-south gradient for the consumption of these products, which was particularly high in Italy, Greece and Spain. Instead, the convergence of European countries in the case of wine consumption was obvious.

Consumption of alcohol in Mediterranean countries dropped, due to the collapse in wine consumption that started during the 1970s, with the consumption increase of beer not being sufficient to counterbalance the situation. On the other hand, there was a general tendency in Europe to converge not only in eating habits, but also in lifestyles, even if in some cases the variations existing within a country may have exceeded those between different countries.

### 2.4 Summary

In general, the Italian food consumption evolution from post-war days to the present has lessened, compared to other consumption expenses with the increase of per capita income. This decrease is in line with the evolution in other high-income countries. Due to greater amounts of food being eaten, in particular cereals, and with individual energetic and nutritional requirements being met, however, the first step of this evolution reduction finished at the end of the 1960s.

In the next phase, resulting from the country's industrial development and keeping pace with the increase in average income levels, vegetable-derived calories were gradually substituted by those animal-derived, due to a strong consumption increase of red meat, and milk and its by-
products. Everything was consumed in larger quantities. Meat was now eaten on normal days as well as on special occasions, and Sunday lunch started to include new nutritional symbols, such as desserts and cakes. Animal-derived products such as milk, cheese, eggs and butter were consumed more as well. Mass consumption patterns started to emerge, when higher-income consumption preferences of the richer classes were mirrored by the poorer classes.

The economic boom was accompanied by a food consumption boom. The economic well-being of the 1960s spread to several social class levels, even if northern/southern regional and countryside/town differences persisted, especially in the distribution of wealth which began, however, to be less important in influencing food item preferences. For example, nutritional differences between cities and the countryside decreased, unlike income.

Food consumption continued growing during the early 1970s, but in a more moderate way, while traditional food items of the rural past were becoming less popular and were being substituted by new ones, preferred by the newer generations. The first food item to lose in popularity was wine, followed by bread and pasta.

In the 1980s and 1990s, new tendencies emerged, favoured by differentiation and personalization processes. Meat, especially beef, was consumed less; cereal consumption remained stable, while vegetables, fruit, fish and non-alcoholic beverages became more popular. Oils, fats and wine were used less. A saturation phase was reached, where food consumption increased slowly, and consumption patterns of the main nutritional groups remained quite stable. During this saturation phase, income and price considerations were less important than in the past when they were of utmost importance.

Other socio-cultural related variables began influencing consumer preferences. The most important factors included: the awareness of biological and medical effects of the food items, the de-structuring of regular mealtimes due to new lifestyles, and a greater concern for environmental problems and for other populations and cultures. What emerged was a more balanced and health-conscious model, in which vegetarian-based patterns became more popular, high-quality food and drink were preferred but consumed in smaller quantities, traditional and Mediterranean-diet foods were re-discovered in modern versions and a greater awareness on the part of the consumer when buying food was present.

In the new concept of eating habits, consumption was no longer a single act. It was, instead, part of a larger process in which important aspects were not only what was bought and consumed, but also how, where and when food was purchased and eaten. Therefore, the deciding factors governing food consumption increased, and included socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects as well.

Time became one of the key factors in consumer choice. Saving time in general, and spending it on oneself and recreational activities became increasingly important. Shopping took place in
supermarkets and hypermarkets, where one could find practically everything, not just food, thus eliminating the problem of having to visit several shops in order to complete one's daily shopping. Simple food items that required less time in preparation and cooking were favoured. At the same time, meals became more flexible, less linked to formal occasions and with simpler and more diverse patterns. This penalized food products requiring specific places and times for preparation. Meals away from home were more popular, whether they took place in communal structures (offices, schools, hospitals) or in private/commercial areas.

Consumer choice was now based on socio-cultural factors. Among such factors were behaviour patterns that favoured personalization, acceptance of pluralism, recreational and exploratory behaviour, health considerations, and the rejection of city life-styles together with the desire to return to more genuine and healthy values.

We will return to analyse these changes in the following sections. But first we will discuss an important topic that may be defined as the "demographic hypothesis".
THE DEMOGRAPHIC EXPLANATION: ITALIAN POPULATION AGEING AND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION

It has often been suggested that changes in the population's age structure can explain the changes in overall wine consumption. Wine consumption tends to be nil under the age of 14 years, very low from 20-25 years, after which it rises and touches its highest value between 40 and 65 years, to then decrease after 65-70 years of age. As a consequence, it is possible that the reduction in alcohol consumption (and of wine in particular) over the last 30 years may have been partly due to the presence of the larger population proportion being in the older age-bracket, where wine consumption is very limited.

In analysing the Italian population trend, as recorded since the birth of the nation to the present (see Fig. 3.1) we can see that the population has more than doubled. However, this increase has not been constant. The population doubled over the approximately 100 years from 1861 to 1961. During the 40 years following, it only increased slightly, by about 6 million people.

As far as this study is concerned, only the population trend over the last fifty years will be considered, and our analysis will be based on the evolution of certain elements as discussed below.

To start with, it is important to consider that from the 1950s until today, various factors affecting the Italian demographic structure have changed radically. Fertility, infant deaths, marriages, ageing and migration have all been all factors interacting with socio-political variables that have taken place in Italy. Divorce, abortion, changes in women's social conditions, and the family's role, etc., have completely different characteristics nowadays compared to fifty years ago.

It is essential to analyse the demographic trend, as this may well be a deciding factor in explaining the reduction of alcohol consumption in Italy. By simply plotting two variables (births and deaths) we can immediately observe (see Fig. 3.2) that the two curves tend to meet one another over time. This represents the "zero-growth" phenomenon, which during the years 1991 to 2000 went even further and became a negative growth.

In other words, starting from the 1960s (the baby boom years), the Italian population has progressively aged. This has been due both to a lower number of births, and improvements in medicine that has considerably extended average life expectancy. The same information may be deduced from the following graphs (see Figs 3.3 and 3.4) which illustrate the old-age index (i.e. the ratio between the population over 60 years of age and the population under 15 years of age) and the population's average age, respectively.

Considering the alcohol consumption trend (see section 1), and the population trend, it is essential, before moving on to explore other factors, to ask ourselves the following question: could the reduction of alcohol consumption be due to the progressive ageing of the population, since we are well aware of the fact that the older age group drinks much less alcohol?
A further variable could be added to this model: the birth rate. This was quite high during the 1950s and ‘60s, when it reached a record level of 2.4 children per woman. Therefore, during this period alone, we could hypothesise that the high birth rate contributed to lower the alcohol consumption rate, since children do not drink alcohol. However, the birth rate started falling drastically during the 1970s, and so it could no longer explain the drop in alcohol consumption. We have therefore excluded this variable in our model.

Table 3.1 illustrates the Italian population breakdown by age and gender, from the 1950s to the present. Considerable differences can be seen in the two extremities of this distribution (elderly and very young), leading to a progressive ageing phenomenon of the overall population.

Focusing our attention on the period of 1950s-1980s, which corresponded to the growth-fall in wine consumption, we can see that the proportion of population representing the main wine consumers (35-64 years) grew from 34.1% in 1950 to 35.0% in 1960, reaching a maximum value of 36.0% in 1970. This represented a positive growth of two percentage points over twenty years. By 1980, the 35-64 year-old population had dropped by 4.5%.

Even though it only varies slightly, the curve of this age group is similar to that of wine. Furthermore, from 1980 to 2000 the 35-64 year-olds started increasing again, while wine consumption continued to fall. During the same period, the 65-74 year-olds increased regularly, even if they only represented a small proportion of the population, growing from 6% in 1950 to 10% in 2000. The over-75 year-olds were also constantly increasing (from 3% in 1950 to 8% in 2000).

Overall, the proportion of people over 65 years of age grew proportionally every 10 years, from 8.3% in 1950 to 9.4%, to 11.0%, to 13.2%, to 14.5% and finally to 17.8% in 2000. Therefore the population trend in this age group (wine drinkers of poorer families) could explain the drop in wine consumption, but not its increase during the 1950s and ‘60s. So, the first impression we can derive from the quantitative analysis of our demographic data, is that neither the slight fall in 34-64 year-olds during the 1970s, discontinued over the subsequent years, nor the more considerable increase in the over-65 year-olds seemed to justify the heavy drop in wine consumption.

The hypothesis that the demographic curve might explain the wine reduction drop has never been tested. Therefore, we decided to test this hypothesis using more formal statistical methodologies, which could be considered being similar to a standardization process. We then tested the relationship between consumption by age and the variations over time of the Italian population. We hypothesised that the overall drop in consumption levels was not due to individual choice factors, but only to the increases in population of those age groups that drink little alcohol or no alcohol at all.

We know the age and sex breakdown of the resident Italian population during the 1950s-80’s, but have no information for that time period concerning alcohol consumption by age group. Instead,
we do have information concerning alcohol consumption by age group during the 1990s. By applying the average alcohol consumption rate by age group of the ‘90s to the corresponding age group population sizes of the 1950s-80s, the average per capita consumption of Italian residents during the 1950s-80s (the "expected" consumption), could be estimated, assuming that the population during those years drank alcohol at the same rate, by age group, as in the 1990s. The "expected" consumption should be close to the "observed" value of the average national per capita data given by national balance figures.

In order to estimate the "expected" consumption, we used the original Doxa research data of 1993, 1997 and 2000, carried out on behalf of the "Permanent Observation Group of the Young Generation and Alcohol". This is the only data source available that could provide us with the national per capita alcohol consumption rate by age group. More specifically, we used the answers from the question "How many glasses of wine (beer, aperitifs, strong spirits) did you drink yesterday?" which was formulated with the aid of photographs of 4 standard glasses in order to enable a more accurate assessment of daily consumption. Thus, the average daily per capita consumption rate by age group and sex was calculated, using the average results from the DOXA studies for the three years (1993, 1997 and 2000). This value was then multiplied by the Italian population size for each sex/age group for the years 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1999. In this way we obtained the expected consumption, or in other words the total amount of alcohol that Italians would have drunk during 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1999 had their average consumption rates by sex, by age group and by area been the same as those calculated on average for 1993, 1997 and 2000.

The "observed" consumption is, instead, that recorded by ISTAT national budget statistics. We further corrected this figure by using specific correction factors for wine (correction factor = 0.8), beer (0.6) and spirits (0.7), based on the observed differences between the 1993, 1997 and 2000 Doxa sample surveys' per capita consumption rates.

The comparisons between "expected" and "observed" consumption rates are given in Table 3.2. This table illustrates the relationship between the true consumption rates and those which would theoretically have occurred if the population at the time had drunk "as much and in the same way" as the present population.

In the case of wine, the comparisons clearly show that all the “observed” consumption rates were higher than the “expected” consumption rates for all the years considered, and especially for the years 1969, 1979 and 1989. In other words, if the 1969 population had drunk wine in the same way as the present population (i.e. if there had not been any changes in individual consumption patterns), we would have had an annual per capita consumption rate of 30.6 litres. Instead, the “observed” consumption rate was three times greater (91.9 litres per capita per year). Since we have assigned the “observed” consumption rates attributed to the population age groups of 1993-1997-2000 to the same population age groups of 1969, any variations due to the changed
population curves between 1969 and 1993-1997-2000 were eliminated. At this point, with the hypothesis of there being no changes in the consumption behaviour between the two different periods, the “expected” and “observed” values should be equal. Instead, in 1969 the "expected" value was three times less than the “observed” one. This difference cannot be justified by the changes in the population's characteristics, Consequently the original hypothesis is invalid and we can conclude that changes in consumer preferences within the various age groups of the periods studied must have occurred.

It can be said that the populations following the 1960s effectively modified their individual alcohol consumption behaviour. The differences between observed and expected wine consumption rates diminished with time, but were still noticeable in 1979 and 1989. The consumption rate differences due to population changes could be better analysed by comparing the values of the "expected" consumptions for 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1999. If the populations of these years had drunk in the same way as the 1993-2000 population, then the differences with the "expected" values of 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1999 would have been caused by the population changes of these years. In the case of wine, if the consumption patterns by age group had remained constant over the years, the population changes would have caused a rise in consumption, rather than the reduction, which actually occurred.

Conversely, had the 1969 population drunk beer in the same way as the present population, the per capita annual consumption rate would have been 12.1 litres, while the data recorded using the availability method was about half this (6.6 litres per capita). The bigger differences were those for the more distant periods, while from 1979 onwards differences were smaller, and in 1989 "expected" beer consumption was close to the recently "observed" values. Thus the same conclusion can be drawn both for beer and wine, but in the opposite direction: the observed increase in beer consumption cannot be explained by the variation in the population's characteristics (for example the increase in population of the young-adult age groups representing the main beer drinkers), but by a true increase in individual consumption rates. The changes in age structure within the 1969 and 1999 populations would not even justify an increase of 1 litre of beer per capita per year. Even in the case of spirits, in 1969 the differences between “observed” and “expected” values were three-fold, even if during more recent years the differences were smaller and the values coincided for 1999. In more recent years, changes in consumer choice have had a reduced effect on observed consumption rates of spirits.

In conclusion, population age group and sex proportion variations between the 1960s and 1990s had no major effect in determining the consumption reduction trend. Thus the reasons for this reduction must be sought in individual consumer choice variations over time for alcoholic beverages. This may have occurred due to an overall drop in consumption, or to variable reductions depending on the population's characteristics (age, sex, social class, alcohol consumption bracket,
etc.). It could have been due to those who drank the most, or the least, in that there could have been an increase in those who stopped drinking or in those who had never started to doing so. Or the reduction could be due to more complex combinations of all of these possible explanations. We know little or nothing, however, about the type of function of the consumption curve.
3. OTHER POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

The alcohol consumption curve grew from 1940 to 1970 (see section 1). According to econometric studies, this trend was due to two factors: higher individual income (both in absolute and relative terms) and falling prices. These factors encouraged larger quantities to be purchased.

After 1970, alcohol consumption continually decreased to the present. Many factors contributed to this negative trend, but were not strictly related to income levels any longer. This was because prices continued to drop at least until 1980, and so this factor was no longer influencing alcohol consumption in any way. In other words, the fact that less wine was being drunk was not due to its cost, but to other factors, which we will now attempt to identify.

In order to identify the factors that may have influenced alcohol consumption from 1970 onwards, it is essential to bear in mind that during the very years in which this consumption drop occurred, Italy was experiencing a number of extraordinary changes. Social, economic and cultural factors interacted with each other resulting in an alteration of the country's features. Working conditions changed radically, causing irreversible changes in family structures and family roles. New consumption models took over, and new lifestyles were being followed. Many of these phenomena had already appeared on the Italian scene during previous decades, and they started spreading globally and rapidly during the period now under consideration. They will therefore need to be taken into account when we attempt to understand the reasons why Italians changed their alcohol drinking habits, particularly as far as wine was concerned.

A general idea, full of potential, considers how cultural and symbolic changes might have affected the "wine" product. In Italy, in pre-industrial times, wine was not only important for its socializing properties, but it was also considered a significant product from a nutritional and even pharmaceutical point of view, to be used as a tonic and remedy against certain illnesses. Many proverbs and popular sayings clearly illustrated this. Such beliefs would have favoured the consumption of wine, and not only within the family household, but also in the working environment. Agricultural land-owners encouraged wine to be drunk a lot, as they believed that in this way manual workers would work harder and with less interruptions.

Instead, during the first industrialisation period (late 1800s), new company owners had good cause to fight the over-drinking habit. On the one hand, this habit decreased the efficiency of workers who drank too much wine, and on the other, especially, because of "the evil influence the

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2 It should be pointed out that the progressive changes in alcohol consumption occurred without any dissuasion campaigns and/or information programs concerning the risks associated with excessive drinking. Not only, during Italy’s economic boom and the new wave of consumerism, alcohol consumption (usually strong spirits, digestive liqueurs and aperitifs) were advertised and promoted like all other consumer products, as a means and symbol of well-being.
growing number of taverns had on the conduct and character of the workers" (Pela and Sorcinelli, 1999, p. 289).

Therefore, in this new social picture, wine consumption started to acquire (or maybe highlight) a function of protest against factory systems and a refusal to accept certain working situations and rhythms. "With the advent of the steam engine... the requirement to maximize machinery usage caused stricter laws, and the owners fought strongly to combat any type of irregular behaviour that could jeopardize working activities, such as not arriving at work or reducing activity during the first days of the week (the infamous Saint Monday), as a consequence of excessive gambling, drinking and fighting that occurred during the day of rest" (Belloni, 1998, p. 559).

Thus, production level requirements "moderated" alcohol consumption (and not just alcohol) of the new generations of workers who, abandoning their rural dwellings in mass sought work in northern factories as a consequence of the industrialisation process that had taken place during the 1950s and '60s.

Wine drinking started decreasing from 1970 to the present, and has continued in this direction. The period to be analysed is therefore quite long and, as mentioned earlier, has been dotted with social, cultural and political happenings. In order to investigate factors contributing to reduce wine consumption, we have split this period into two parts - the years preceding and those following 1970. This was not done for simplifying the analysis, but rather because it is our belief that different factors were in effect during these two periods.

Each element that came into play will be analysed in full detail. However, in general, we believe that the consumption decrease of the first period (when there was a global decrease in quantities of wine drunk) was caused, among other things, by the new organization of work by mass production, and the massive urbanisation process that took place. These seem to be the two main factors which, as well as causing other changes, contributed to drastically changing people's behaviour (not only in eating and drinking terms), and to cause wine consumption to constantly decrease from one generation to the next.

During the second period, wine consumption continued to decrease, despite the fact that the above-mentioned factors no longer had any influence (the services sector overtook the industry, and there was no longer migration towards cities). Other factors which seemed to have had an effect on alcohol consumption patterns included a new awareness of one's health., as well as a tendency, even if within a framework of lower consumption, of favouring higher quality products.

Each of the above-mentioned elements is known to have played a role in reducing alcohol consumption. But all are considered to be only the so-called primary factors involved. This is because they also produced several side-effects that, in turn, became factors in explaining the consumption reduction (even if indirectly and usually to a lesser extent). Some examples of this
included improvement in education levels, changes in the classic woman's role and within the family structure, and greater consumer choice possibilities (not only in food).

The analysis of the trends of each phenomenon, necessarily inserted in the overall picture of the conditions characteristic of the periods being examined, seems to indicate that there was a relationship between these elements and the alcohol consumption curve. It is not possible to deduce the importance of each single relationship. In other words, we cannot "measure" how much less alcohol was drunk because of one specific factor rather than another. However, we can state with a reasonable level of confidence that the alcohol consumption decrease from the 1970s up to today has been caused by the occurrence of specific phenomena. However, these phenomena neither occurred together nor during the same period.

In other words, it is as if the alcohol consumption curve were the result of two different curves. Each curve is specifically modelled by the relationships with characteristic phenomena that occurred over a given period. The fact that both curves are descending in nature does not mean that they were caused by the same factors. In order to be more precise about each factor’s role in each curve, each one will now be analysed in further detail, with the aim of explaining its relationship with alcohol consumption.

### 3.1 Market, Prices and Consumption

In 1980, Cianferoni carried out an econometric study that specifically investigated relationships between costs, income and wine consumption compared to the consumption of other alcoholic beverages and food items over the period under study (Cianferoni, 1982). At that time, agricultural economists in the wine-producing area started to believe that it was possible to solve the consumption crisis by exploiting the wine’s quality. There was less wine, but it was of better quality. New production policies were being advanced during those years, such as reducing the areas for vineyards and at the same time investing in wine-making technology. These policies would start to bear fruit after the 1970s and 1980s.

Corsi (1977) analysed a set of economic factors that influenced the migration from "quantity wine" to "quality wine" in Italy. During the 1970s, wine production in Italy was still high, despite the fact that there was an internal drop in demand (-10% during the 1970s). The internal market during these years was strongly aided by the large growth in export levels, which nearly trebled during the years 1979-1981 with respect to 1969-1971. The percentage of exported wine over the total quantity of wine produced grew from 7% in 1970 to 17% in 1980 and up to 27% in 1982. This growth in exports almost exclusively concerned low-quality wine. Such wine had become competitive in the international marketplace, following the devaluation of the Italian lire with respect to the currency of countries to which Italian wine was traditionally exported. At the end of
In the 1970s, 40% of wine exports went to France, which used it for raising the alcoholic content of its own wines (in competition with southern French wines), and 25% went to Germany. During these years, more than two-thirds of exported wine was consequently reaching the European market.

Between 1976 and 1979, following the European economic recession, and also due to the "wine war" between France and Italy, the European Commission on agricultural policies took measures to reduce wine production. These were further enforced in 1982 with actions that tended to discourage the production of low-quality wine, and encourage the closing down of vineyards, using economic incentive schemes.

During the years 1989-91, significantly less wine was produced in Italy (-27% with respect to 1979-1981). A considerable reduction in land for wine-producing grapes was recorded by agricultural censuses between 1982 and 1990. This was due to the combined effects of less Italian exports, lower wine consumption in Italy, and European agricultural policies, which produced the opposite situation that had taken place during the production boom of the previous decade.

The reduction in exports, already present in 1983, suffered a major setback in 1986, the year in which the methanol scandal occurred (-38% exports in one year alone). During these years, on a worldwide level, wine consumption was drifting towards high-quality wine consumption, and this damaged Italian exports, which were based on lower-quality and lower-priced wine. European monetary policies acted along the same lines as in the mid 80's, when the Italian lire was over-valued in real terms, because of higher inflation rates compared to other countries. Italian wine exports towards France collapsed, while those towards Germany resisted, and continue to do so today.

However, production decline was still not enough to compensate for heavy reduction in the internal consumption and, during the 1980s, external consumption, as well. For this reason, in certain years, up to 30% of wine production was removed from the market and used for distillation purposes.

All of these negative indications, as well as the correct analyses performed by agricultural economists during those years, as well as the identification of new consumer choice patterns, pushed the Italian market towards the production of higher quality wine. This process started during the 1970s, but was still confined to only a few very high-quality cultivations, and not very extensive ones. In 1968, "Sassicaia", the new Italian Cabernet Sauvignon, officially entered the market with only 3,000 bottles. In just 10 years, it was awarded first prize as 1978’s best Cabernet, out of 32 worldwide competitors by the famous magazine "Decanter". The production of Italian DOC wines grew during the 1980s, and always more DOCG wines were created. The policy of quality over quantity expanded during the 1980s and confirmed itself during the 1990s. Indeed, export levels of high-quality Italian wine grew so strongly towards the end of the 1980s, especially in non-European markets, that it actually reached 50% of total wine export levels. This international demand
increase for high-quality Italian wines, rather than the devaluation of our currency, counter-balanced internal consumption reduction, helping it to meet the still decreasing demand during the 1990s.

Table 1.20 is derived from the Cianferoni study of the 1980s. It addresses the effects of prices and Italian income levels on the consumption of food items, of which wine is one (at least in the Mediterranean culture). We can see how wine consumption prices dropped, in real terms, from 1926 to 1980, even when compared to other food items. Price trends in bread were most similar to those of wine (lower in 1950 and higher in 1979). Milk, on the other hand, had always cost less than wine, but in recent years has nearly caught up with it. Meat had always cost more than wine, but the difference with respect to wine had always grown, so much so that in 1979, the difference ratio with respect to wine had almost trebled with respect to 1940.

In 1980, the unit price of alcohol derived from common wine was lower than that of all other alcoholic beverages, about half the price of high-quality wines, and a ninth of the price of strong spirits. On the whole, therefore, during the rises and falls in its consumption (1950s, '60s and '70s), wine could be considered to be a reasonably-priced drink. Table 1.21 confirms this observation and illustrates how much was spent on wine by Italian families during the 1926-1978 period. Wine expenses are expressed in absolute terms and in percentage terms with respect to the overall expenses for food items.

In percentage terms, the price of wine had notably dropped, passing from 15.6% of family food expenses and 9.7% of total family expenditure in 1926 to 5.2% and 1.6% respectively in 1978. These values have not been very different in recent years (7% and 2% respectively). In agreement with Cianferoni's analysis, we can deduce that wine consumption in the late 1970s was not limited by income levels. On the contrary, during those years there were all the conditions for heavy drinkers of low-quality wine to pass to drinking higher quality wine, but, as might be added today, in lower quantities.

In order to fight diminishing consumption levels, agricultural economists were planning sustainable scenarios in which more high-quality wine could be produced, land dedicated to producing low-quality wines would be cut back, and more exports would occur. In theory, an increase in consumption was also hypothesised, but in reality this was unconvincing, also because during the 1980s, clinical studies were being produced that documented health damages caused by alcohol.

Twenty years later, we can say that these forecasts were very well-founded. Already in the late 1970s agricultural economists had started thinking that reduction in wine consumption had been driven by economic reasons. And that later, it had persisted mainly due to changes in society, emerging health awareness, and changes in consumer choices, with the latter being more concerned about quality rather than quantity.
3.2 URBANISATION AND MASS MIGRATIONS

Between 1951 and 1971, the Italian population underwent a migration process that had never occurred before: millions of people moved from the countryside to towns, and from southern to northern Italy. Apart from being an interesting phenomenon in itself, it also represented one of the possible interpretations to the main question of this study: what were the reasons behind the observed reduction in alcohol consumption (wine in particular) from 1970 onwards?

Indeed, we believe that the sudden change of habitat (from countryside to cities) experienced by these millions of people may have interrupted habits (including wine drinking) that had survived for generations. Immigrants were living new lifestyles and many links they had previously had with their rural origins tended to be progressively eliminated.

There are no reliable statistical figures describing these migratory movements. This is mainly due to a Fascist law (which was valid from 1939 to 1961) designed to prevent internal movements and urbanisation, but which in practice only stopped people migrating regularly.\(^3\)

Having said this, we can state with reasonable certainty that the heaviest emigration in Italy occurred between 1955 and 1963. It then halted briefly during the mid ‘60s, starting intensely again from 1967 to 1971, after which it declined until it stopped almost completely in the early 1990s (see Table 4.3). Over 9,000,000 people had migrated at an inter-regional level during the years when the phenomenon was at its peak (Ginsborg, 1998, p. 262). Trans-oceanic migratory figures should be added to these (in reality these were most intense between 1946 and 1957), as well as those of people migrating to northern European countries (France, Switzerland, Belgium and, later, Germany).

The various aspects of this mass internal migration are still being studied today. However, one of its most important characteristics was the enormous movement from the countryside to cities, especially to those in the expanding northern industrial regions (Turin, Milan, Genoa, but also Mestre, Padua, Verona, Varese, Brescia, Ivrea, Bergamo), as well as towards Rome and, to a lesser extent, Naples.

Southern immigrants escaping from very poor conditions were not the only cause of the rapid expansion of urban population sizes. Arrivals from rural areas of the north-west, north-east and the centre were also important. Data indeed confirmed that 70% of immigrants to Milan during the 1953-1963 decade originated from rural provinces, and from 1951 to 1964 the agricultural

\(^3\) Despite being largely ignored in practice, this law managed to produce two effects: 1) it placed immigrants in a contractually weak position (because they were illegal); 2) it irreparably falsified all emigration statistics, as all those who had moved in previous years were only official after 1961, when the law was abolished (Ascoli, 1979, p. 111; Treves, 1976, - 77-8).
population in the north-western regions fell by 12%. This was even more noticeable in north-eastern and central Italy: during the same period, the number of agricultural workers dropped by about 21% in both of these geographical areas, with the difference that central Italian rural workers emigrated to nearby cities and not to the north (Corsi, 1977, p. 723).

From 1951 to 1967 the Roman population increased by about 1,000,000 people; Milan attracted more than 400,000 immigrants, and turbulent growth was enjoyed in hinterland towns as well, such as Monza, Cinisello Balsamo, Rho and others; Turin was literally invaded by a migratory influx that almost doubled its population size (from about 700,000 to 1,200,000) and experienced, even more than Milan, an approximate 80% growth in the resident population of its hinterland towns.

The type of immigration illustrated by the above figures, differed considerably. While immigrants to Milan were mainly from Lombardy and Veneto (70%), Rome, and to a greater extent Turin, drew masses of very poor immigrants from southern regions. Suffice it to say that during the late 1960s Turin represented the third "southern" Italian city, after Naples and Palermo (Meneghetti, 1971).

In any case, not all southern immigrants were the same. We could say that some were more "immigrant" than others, due to their rural origin. These were the majority. The minority that had left the southern cities integrated more rapidly, as they spoke Italian quite well and were more accustomed to city life. Instead, their fellow villagers originating from rural environments often spoke a very strong dialect, dressed inadequately and had trouble adapting themselves to the rhythms of city life (Fofi, 1964, p. 78).

The reasons for which such a large proportion of the southern rural population emigrated are well-known: their land was not very fertile, they were constantly threatened by low employment rates and very poor living conditions, and the 1950 agricultural reform was extremely unsatisfactory. We should also add that certain laws forced the smaller rural property-owners to deal with even greater difficulties: drastic reductions in credit allowances, and gradual liberalization of the cereal market, which led to lower selling prices.

Added to these precarious conditions were the advantages of having a stable job, regular working hours and an income (no longer linked to seasons), allowing them to improve their quality of life and that of their families. Even those without a family were attracted to city life, to the new images of consumerism which began to be diffused via television, and by the prospects of a more comfortable, "city-style" life.

Despite the fact that during the years under consideration there was a mass urbanisation process, we also have indications that since 1861, a slow but constant migration from the countryside towards the cities had begun taking place. From that time up to 1971, the phenomenon had evolved according to a very simple rule: larger towns had higher population growths. In other
words, the larger towns grew more rapidly than the smaller ones due to progressive migration from peripheral areas to the centres.

From 1971, this trend started to change until, in the 1981-1991 decade, a completely inverse process took place: excluding towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants, growth factors decreased with town size. This fact raised several arguments in favour of an unexpected "return to the countryside" (see Fig. 4.4). In practice, such considerations could not hold if the situation were more accurately analysed, considering not only the town's size, but its geographical position (metropolitan area or not) as well.

Martinotti (1993) showed that in these cases town populations certainly diminished, but rather than returning to the countryside, people migrated to smaller towns of metropolitan areas. Such movements were linked to the quality of lifestyles, but could also have been of an economic nature. Thus, this migration represented a shift from the centre to the outskirts, and as such did not change the population's level of urbanisation.

For the purposes of this study, the most interesting phenomenon is undoubtedly that of a mass urbanisation which brought millions of people into the cities. Entire families, within a single generation, experienced a radical and totally new change in lifestyle, ways of thinking, and consumer models. Again, all this represented an important factor that must be taken into account when we ask ourselves the original question: what were the causes of the alcohol consumption reduction that started in the 1970s? Undoubtedly, country life's particular pace and collective rituals, linked to the self-sufficiency reality, the characteristic large family size (which, as we know, would be replaced by smaller family units) led to such habits being passed on to the next generation. These traditions were suddenly interrupted because of the mass emigration process.

Various factors contributed to this, and will be analysed in detail later. They can only be separated for analytical purposes, as in reality they are closely correlated to one another. Some of these factors were closely related to the urbanisation process and new ways of life dictated by working conditions (in factories rather than on land). Others were linked to the possibility of purchasing consumer goods that were unreachable before, and to the consequential development of lifestyles that tended to imitate those of the higher classes. Still other factors were linked to the new situation in which women found themselves, and to changes in the family structure. Living and working in large (and medium) towns created individual requirements and desires very different from those one had when living in rural areas. These requirements and desires also served the purpose of setting boundaries between urban and country lifestyles. The new lifestyle had to be as different as possible from the old one, where habits were conditioned by poverty.

Consumption habits changed accordingly, and previously unheard-of symbolic values were attributed to certain objects. In particular, the consumption of food items that were most representative of rural lifestyles diminished (see section 2). In this sense, the fall in wine
consumption could be part of a wider phenomenon than the one just described. Wine followed the same fate as that of other food items that were tied to traditional consumption patterns, and as such it was not considered adequate with the constant spread of new urban lifestyles. However, this relationship between urbanisation and wine consumption patterns may be plausible only for those years in which great socio-economic changes occurred. As we know, despite the fact that migration and urbanisation processes were dying out during the 1980s, alcohol consumption continued falling. So other factors must be identified to help in building up the consumption pattern of the more recent years.

3.3 LABOUR MARKET AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Another key factor for explaining the wine consumption drop is represented by changes in working environment structures. In the very same period we are now considering, these changed enormously, due to the increase in industrialisation (especially in the northern regions) and to the enormous development of the services sector.

As can be seen from Fig. 4.5, at the start of the last century, and up to the 1950s, the agricultural sector employed the largest proportion of workers, with percentage values ranging from over 60% to about 40%. Only in the late '50s was the number of employees in the agricultural sector exceeded by those in industry, and after a short period by employees in the public utility sector. The maximum employment rates in industry were observed between the 1960s and '70s, then they diminished and finally gave way to the service sector, which employed more than 60% of the workforce in 2003.

Over about twenty years (between 1950 and 1970) a large part of the Italian population abandoned rural lifestyles, which had remained unaltered for several generations, and moved on to face a totally new and constantly changing life. "Manual" labour progressively diminished, being replaced in large part by office positions or jobs in trade. According to Bourdieu (1979), this could have changed the symbolic representations of entire generations, changing their consumer preferences. As we shall see, these preferences seem to have initially been directed towards purchasing lasting goods, and then in a second phase to purchasing status goods (see section 4.5, Lifestyles and Consumption styles).

The consumption of alcohol (and of several other types of food) was also influenced by the new working environment structure. It is useful to recall that different types of activity required diverse types of performance. In agricultural work, physical strength was the most important feature, as this was required to face the fatigue of particular tasks and long working hours. There was less physical fatigue in factory work, and more importance was given to other characteristics, such as discipline and efficiency in carrying out one's tasks. Finally, work in the public utilities...
sector required an almost exclusively mental effort, necessitating sharpness, concentration and communication skills. Thus, different types of work seemed to have had a different relationship with alcohol in general, and wine consumption in particular. This was encouraged in agricultural work, despised in industry, and to be avoided in typical jobs within the public utility sector.

The economy did not develop in the same way over the entire country. North-western Italy thrived with industries and activities, while the southern regions were disadvantaged, due to national economic policies that did not invest enough money there. These regions were, in practice, unable to reduce the high unemployment rates. Central and north-eastern Italy developed afterwards with respect to the economic boom years, a model Bagnasco (1977) defined as the "third Italy", i.e. a system of small family-run businesses - a definite novelty compared to the previous situation based on several sub-let families.

Italian industry developed very rapidly, adopting the mass production model where consumption goods were produced automatically in series. As is well-known, this growth was led by certain sectors: domestic appliances (especially refrigerators, washing machines, and dish washers), cars (where Fiat dominated the scene) and the engineering industry in general—typewriters (Olivetti), petrochemical industries, plastic industries and steel.

Production during the early 1950s largely served to satisfy internal demand, which was growing due to families' improved purchasing power and a spreading consumerist mentality encouraged by television, advertisements and women's magazines. From 1958 to 1963, the picture changed. Investment levels reached new highs, increasing by 14% a year, and Italian goods exported to other countries grew progressively. For example, the percentage rate of goods sold to the CEE grew from 23% in 1953 to 30% in 1960 and to over 40% in 1965 (Kaiser, 1974).

Even if not at a comparable level with what was happening in the north or even, to a lesser extent, in the centre, southern Italy also underwent transformations during these years. This was due in large part to sustaining policies such as the "Cassa per il Mezzogiorno" which, among other projects, provided financing for business start-ups, and supported the development of state industrialisation in forced steps. Unfortunately, the “Cassa per il Mezzogiorno” was also well-known for having been reckless through extensive patronage, which resulted in the construction of the so-called "cathedrals in the desert". The large industries built in the south by the State or by private owners (Fiat, Olivetti, Montecatini) were investments unable to revitalise the area in the long run, failing to give the necessary impulse to the local economy, which remained largely dependent on the traditional model. Soon most of the small factories in the southern regions were swept away by unsustainable (for them) competition from northern industries.

Central and north-eastern Italy developed differently from the industrial triangle. As mentioned earlier, these two areas were widely populated by sub-let families, who became owners during the 1950s and who over a few years moved from the agricultural to the small business sector.
In the north-east especially, the métayer reality was represented by very poor living conditions. In Veneto, in particular, there was a true and proper exodus between the years 1955 and 1961, with almost 250,000 people emigrating from these areas to the industrialized north. Many less people emigrated from central Italy, some regions remaining stable in numbers (Emilia Romagna), some others even growing in size (Tuscany).

Between 1962-1971 the situation changed slightly. Fewer people emigrated from Veneto, while central Italy became more attractive. In these years, the economic miracle known as the "third Italy" began to take shape. Based on the development of small or very small businesses (20 to 50 people) that were very flexible and adaptable to market changes, it reached its peak during the 1970s. The vitality of these businesses based on family structures of people with no previous entrepreneurial experience or tradition, who worked in the textile sector, shoes and leather, lay in the helpers that the single families managed to employ. One-time métayers recruited workers from the agricultural sector and employed them in new production activities.

Even the physical positioning of these businesses was characteristic. To describe this, new terms were invented such as "urbanized countryside" or "diffused industrialisation". This was because the powers of the "third Italy" did not usually develop around major cities, but in small towns of once-rural areas (Prato, Sassuolo, Vicentino, etc.) where real and proper industrial districts were gradually built up.

The new job market caused large numbers of workers to leave the agricultural sector and work in industry or in the public utility sector. Modernisation also brought about another very noticeable consequence: women joined the factory workforce and even more so the services sector. Rural work was well-known to traditionally involve women as well, and in the north, entire agricultural sectors (for example, rice-fields) employed women almost exclusively. As mentioned earlier, during the 1950s the daily work in the Po valley disappeared. The countryside was abandoned for several reasons, not least due to the use of mechanical machinery and chemical products that, from the early '60s, eliminated a large part of this workforce, including women (Lanaro, 1992, p. 179-80). Over time, these women would recover their productive role and progressively broaden their presence in the world of paid jobs.

Women's occupation levels generally started falling in the years preceding 1960 and started recovering a little only during the 1970s, involving older women as well (see Fig. 4.6). With respect to the past, however, they worked in a context that no longer had the family bonds that allowed them to perform their classical role within the family at the same time. This eventually would have a large impact in changing women's tasks and in steering their decisions in life.

As women's activity levels grew, so did their education levels (see Fig. 4.7), which helped to strengthen their position in the workforce.
women, born from 1950 onwards, has had a much higher activity rate for all age groups than that of the previous generation. This is so true that during the 1970s and 1980s, the rise in demand for women’s jobs was particularly addressed to women with higher education levels.

As well as this, the phenomenon of women temporarily leaving their jobs because of marriage or giving birth to children gradually diminished over time. The traditional model describing a woman's working cycle was represented by an upside-down "L" curve: work started at an early age and was abandoned with the onset of marriage and motherhood, with low chances of return. This model is now being replaced by the so-called "bell" curve, which is typical of northern Europe. As such, a woman's working cycle is no longer interrupted for the above-mentioned reasons.

Instead, the curve was found to be lower at younger ages (due to the difficulty in initially finding a job) and at older ages, and has no longer been low during the central period of a woman's life (Reyneri, 2002). Of course, this change has not occurred uniformly throughout Italy. Women's activity rates have grown more slowly in the southern regions, and this difference has grown from the late 1970s onwards. While at present, the average national employment rate for women is 38.3%, the employment rate in the south is only 24.6%, compared to the north, where it is 50% and the centre, with a rate of 43.4% (2000 ISTAT data, in Reyneri, 2002, p. 258).

Apart from these differences, women joining the workforce represented a general phenomenon that brought about significant social and economic changes. More women working away from home inevitably changed family habits. Since more money was being earned, more consumer goods could be purchased. Women working away from home also represented even another factor that changed the rural way of life and tradition: they were less available (with respect to their mothers) to spend time within the household in general, and more specifically, in the kitchen.

Contrary to widespread belief, this phenomenon cannot be considered to have had an effect in lowering alcohol consumption levels, however, at least up until the late 1980s. This is because women had reached an overall statistically significant employment level starting from the 1970s, when the alcohol consumption curve had already started falling. Thus, any presumable influence could have started only during the next decade, when women's employment levels could have begun taking effect. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the women’s gradual change in lifestyle (as happens with modernisation) could have had an effect on the entire family picture including eating habits – "...on the one hand, new consumer goods influenced women's lives. On the other, the growth in levels of education and working activities ended up having a negative influence on the same consumptions" (Liguori, 1996, p. 685). These consumption patterns affected all social levels and thus created an important time of change in people's lives. Obviously, the actual impact of new lifestyles on the populations changed according to social class. In particular, middle
classes showed a strong tendency towards hetero-direction (and hence conformism), and imitating ways of life of the higher classes.

Women certainly played a crucial role in modifying the family structure and function, and this can be linked to the phenomenon labelled as "mealtime de-structuring" (still not at all widespread – see below). Women were also essential in diffusing new consumer models, as they were chosen as the main targets of advertising messages\(^4\). All these factors, either indirectly or together with and depending on others, have without doubt helped to bring about changes in habits that were previously consolidated. However, the importance they may have had in causing alcohol consumption to first drop is very difficult to determine. It is probably more reasonable to consider these elements as consequences of the more general changes that took place in the country's entire social structure. The family institution suffered modernisation’s influence on the loss of important attributes such as the exertion of authority, as well as the handing down of traditions, customs and habits.

Economic, social and political changes pushed families to make radical transformations, and their culture changed gradually. Family sizes decreased (see Fig. 4.8) and, above all, the individual ways of life of each family member were greatly affected.

Historically, our country has never had a uniform distribution of family models. Indeed, in the recent past, there have been many types of regional variations. Large families were especially frequent in the regions of the "third Italy" i.e. in the north-eastern and central areas. Other areas, especially the south and central-northern cities (the latter, however, having a very significant statistical weight) had a majority of small family units\(^5\). These were especially frequent in the poorer areas, while the upper middle class and nobility usually lived within large families\(^6\) (see Table. 4.6).

The patriarchal type of family started to go through a crisis a long time before industrialisation took place between the late 1700s and early 1800s, thus giving rise to the so-called married family\(^7\). This occurred especially in the case of the intellectual middle classes, while a further century and a half passed before this type of family took over in rural areas.

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\(^4\) The division of labour within the family saw women as being almost exclusively in charge of consumer and expense decisions, so much so that it was stated that “in our society, women alone purchase roughly 80% of all products” (Ceserani, 1980). Already in the 1920s, American advertising agents identified women as “general purchasing agents”, and they were therefore explicitly expected to play a mediation role between the family members and consumer goods.

\(^5\) Typically, the new family created by the son did not live with his parents, but in his own home.

\(^6\) Since the vast majority belonged to the agricultural population, these territorial differences seemed to be due to three factors: “the prevailing cultivation regime, size of cultivated fields, and form of population settlement. The size of the agricultural family tended to be smaller when the centralized form of settlement dominated, extensive cultivation was frequent and farms were smaller.” (Barbagli, 1984, p. 111).

\(^7\) This was a type of family in which roles were more flexible with respect to the patriarchal family. The family system was less linked to sex and age, and authority relationships were more symmetrical. The choice of one’s spouse was less conditioned and the bond between spouses was more important than the bond between the groom and his parents (Bagnasco et al., 1997, p. 434).
As Barbagli (1984, p. 121), recalls: "In Italy, between the late 1800s and early 1900s, with respect to those living in the countryside, those living in cities followed the smaller family model much more often, and more commonly lived in smaller families if they married, and otherwise by themselves if they remained single or became widow(er)s. Industrialisation contributed enormously to promoting the smaller family unit, by moving part of the population from farms to cities, separating working from domestic life, and by separating working from living sites. These changes occurred very slowly, because part of the agricultural population continued for a long time to live in farmhouses and in complex family groups even after having joined factories. Thus, the changes took full effect only after 1950 when the industrial process had an effect of vast proportions".

In this sense, even these changes could be viewed as elements that indirectly (along with others) contributed to reducing wine consumption. As already mentioned, wine was considered as being part of a traditional lifestyle weakened during the industrialisation process.

3.4 Social Mobility

Social mobility processes are closely linked to urbanisation and changes in the labour force. We can briefly mention how these processes took place in Italy in order to further analyse and clarify the above statements concerning the main two factors identified as causing reductions in alcohol consumption.

According to an analysis by the "Consumption Sociology", tendencies to purchase certain types of objects, or consume selected food items rather than others, are closely connected both to one’s social class, which determines one's taste, and to patterns suggested by the upper classes, which tend to be imitated by those in the lower ones. As such, the social mobility phenomenon represents a possible explanation for the variations observed in alcohol consumption in Italy.

According to Bourdieu (1979), western society is made up of several classes, or parts of them, which may be separated according to the different levels of capital (in terms of money, culture and society). Each different class is characterized by different lifestyles (which may be attributed to or acquired thanks to the social mobility mechanism), and expresses itself in terms of taste, which leads to consumer preferences. Thus, consumer choices do not depend on purchasing power alone (although this is obviously a crucial variable), but also on the type of profession, patterns and trends typical of that particular class, and other non-economic factors.

The passing from a lower social class to a higher one, is due to social promotion processes that bring with them, among other things, the acquisition of new lifestyles and consumer patterns. These are often experienced as civilisation processes, becoming the cause of "hate for the old man, his way of speaking, body, tastes, and everything to which he was attached" (ibid, p. 260).
This would appear to be particularly true for second-generation immigrants. It is, however, plausible to hypothesise that it was a valid consideration for their parents as well. In other words, if Bourdieu's analysis had been correct, the improvement in living standards experienced by the former farmers that had become factory workers in cities would have caused them to set aside objects (such as wooden furniture, substituted by formica furniture), habits, food, and in practice all values typical of their rural origins.

In his study carried out in France during the 1970s, Bourdieu stated that wine consumption, for example, was considered by the higher classes to be a common, vulgar, ordinary habit, typical of those "who don't know how to live, spend more in richer, heavier and more coarse common food which makes them fat; who dedicate less money on clothes and to caring for their bodies, who are 'unable to relax', set their tents in the most crowded camp-sites, allow themselves to be attracted to organized entertainment..." (ibid, p. 188); In short, people’s lifestyles tended to be set aside when passing to higher class levels.

The same phenomenon may have happened here in Italy. The opportunity to attain more stable and well-paid jobs, initially, and the improvement of one's level of education, later, (see Fig. 4.9) gave rise to more absolute social mobility. In order to identify the social mobility process, it is necessary to classify the population by social class.

One of the better-known efforts in laying out and quantifying social class sizes in Italy was made by Sylos Labini (1974; 1986; Fig. 4.10). His analysis illustrated the rise of the middle-class urban workers, who represented the majority; the rise and fall of the working classes, who reached their peak in the 1970s; and the drastic reduction of rural classes swept away by modernisation.

More recently, other attempts were made to further separate the classes. These were made by Schizzerotto (1993) and Chiesi (1997; see Fig. 4.11). Martinelli and Chiesa (2002) stated that these historical-sociological models generally referred to a very dynamic social structure. More specifically, they witnessed the migration from a closed, economically and culturally poor society (where manual labour and physically trying jobs dominated the scene, and upper classes were very scarcely represented) to a more open society, in which people were generally better educated and more aware of their rights. Jobs were less manual and better paid, a certain level of well-being had spread, and upper classes were more open to accepting emerging individuals.

Thus, a high number of people underwent an absolute social mobility path, to such an extent that 60% of people interviewed in a 1986 ad hoc survey occupied a different position with respect to their fathers (Martinelli and Chiesa, 2002, p. 115).

In general, the characteristics of the social mobility phenomenon that took place in our country can be summarised as follows (Segre, 2004, - 60-61):
a) social classes remained tied to destiny: advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a
given class tended to last over time and be passed on from one generation to the next;
b) class differences tended to persist, both from an absolute and a relative point of view, as
they depended not only on the economic and cultural wealth possessed, but also on the
social wealth, or in other words, on the quality and quantity of human relationships
possessed. Other factors of difference (such as sex, age, area of origin, etc.) were not
considered to be as significant as belonging to a certain class;
c) starting with the 1950s, absolute mobility in Italy increased considerably during the years of
the first industrialisation process, and again, but to a lesser extent, from the 1970s. Instead,
during the same time periods, relative mobility remained stable;
d) vertical mobility took place only in small steps, in general;
e) the two most privileged classes – the middle (entrepreneurs and free-lance specialists) and
so-called services (public and private directors and managers) classes – had very low levels
of individual mobility, typical in Italian society.

In conclusion, during the years on which we focused our study, important mobility processes
were occurring in our country which undoubtedly affected consumer behaviour. In particular, as
already stated elsewhere, this rise to more well-off "urban" classes represented, to first-generation
immigrants, a refusal of everything that originated from their rural background, which was
considered to be synonymous with poverty and hardship. Together with a second key factor (the
new working organization in factories) this factor has, among others, caused the habit of drinking
large quantities of wine to be set aside.

The second generation, composed of immigrants' children who were often born in the
immigration areas, had a higher level of education with respect to their parents, and often had better
jobs (less tiring, better paid) in the services sector. As far as wine consumption was concerned,
leaving the class they were born in did not influence the consumption decrease, but did affect their
attitude regarding wine’s quality. The generation following the migratory wave drank on average
less wine than their parents, but it was of better quality. More was paid for such wine, and often it
was drunk at social occasions (with friends or during meals away from home), rather than on a
daily basis.

Had this analysis been correct, then the social mobility mechanisms (which in turn would have
been a consequence of other decisional factors that we have already discussed) would have had an
effect on alcohol consumption habits both for the first part of the curve (1970s) and for the second
part (1980s and 1990s).
3.5 LIFESTYLES AND CONSUMER STYLES

Social mobility processes occurring in our country significantly contributed to the change in living standards and, consequently, consumer behaviour. These changes also affected wine consumption, with various magnitudes in different periods. During the urbanisation and economic boom years, wine was seen as a product linked to rural lifestyles, and so its consumption progressively declined. Together with this, new working conditions (in factories at first and in the service sectors later on) should be taken into account as well because, as discussed earlier, these also discouraged the drinking of alcohol. Additionally, we should consider the fact that the "saturation threshold" had been reached, and so the tendency to purchase food rather than other types of products was inverted.

From the 1980s onwards, new consumer patterns replaced those observed in the 1960s and 70s. "Citizenship" goods were substituted with status ones, thanks to a growing importance attributed to the products' symbolic component. Wine was directly affected by these new social mechanisms and developed into, along with other products, an "indicator" of the individual's status. During this phase, amounts of wine drunk continued to fall, but a new awareness was taking place regarding its quality, which helped in building up the new image of Italian wine.

The first general theory's formulation concerning consumption should be attributed to the statistician Ernst Engel (1895). He observed that the percentage of expenses a family (or any group of people) dedicated to food products was higher (with respect to the total expenses) the lower the total available income was, and vice versa. Therefore, as the economic conditions improved, more expenses were dedicated to satisfying needs other than food.

This theory, which continues to hold true, was further developed by the work of Halbwachs (1933), who found that income level was not the only factor determining consumer decisions. He observed that, income levels being equal, family consumption was influenced by several social factors such as the head of the family’s job, area of residence, level of education, and so on. Furthermore, needs and related consumer models evolved over time and did not necessarily depend on salary levels alone. This means that in addition to economic factors determining these requirements and purchases, social and cultural aspects were influential.

Furthermore, it should also be considered that, in agreement with the intuition expressed by Veblen (1899), consumer goods did not only represent the social position of individuals. The competitive behaviour exhibited when they possessed a certain type of item which identified their privileged class would eventually be transferred to other social classes as well. This diffusion process was based on the model in which every social group referred to the social level above it in a status (a process also known as the "trickle effect"; Fallers, 1954).
Bearing these theoretical models in mind, we will now describe (in ideal/typical terms) the succession of consumer models that our country experienced, starting with those which, according to Biorcio and Maneri (1993, p. 185), are characteristic of the traditional (i.e. pre-industrialisation) model:

a) consumption solely for survival;

b) goods selected according to their functionality, savings, frugality;

c) information on consumer products derived from close circles (relatives, friends);

d) purchase locations selected according to proximity;

e) time for purchasing found during spare time left over from other activities.

During the following period, when the economic boom took place, the increase in income (both absolute and relative)\(^8\) and the availability of market goods in quantities unheard of in the past, enabled most Italian families to purchase consumer goods they had been unable to buy before (this is why they are sometimes called "citizenship goods").

Consumer patterns were, of course, strictly linked to social layers. Despite this, the consumer patterns that developed from the years of the economic boom, despite their variability, could all be associated with a general system of consumer preferences that were shared by almost all the population. The increase in availability of wealth gradually altered not only the amount of products consumed, but also the overall consumption structure – exactly as predicted by Engel's theory (see Fig. 4.12)\(^9\).

During the first phase of economic-industrial development (1951-1958), family consumption rose constantly, thus allowing long-lasting goods to be diffused for the first time. This indicated that the times of pure survival conditions experienced in rural conditions were definitely a thing of the past.

The first wave of consumerism, typical of those years, was therefore linked to the mass purchase of goods required to meet primary needs. But during this period other types of goods gradually began to be purchased, such as televisions, cars, and "Vespa" mopeds, which satisfied other types of needs. Indeed, a new consumer sector started developing during the boom years, which was altogether new and the consequence of "spare time",\(^{10}\) which was beginning to become available. This was due to the modern urbanized society whose working rhythms were no longer those dictated by agricultural and craftsman tasks, but rather by machinery and production in series.

\(^8\) Between 1952 and 1970, the national average per capita income increased (+134%) as well as the purchasing power. The latter increased more than the available income, allowing families to purchase better quality goods at lower prices (Biorcio and Maneri 1993).

\(^9\) For example, while in 1951 over 50% of total expenditure was dedicated to satisfying basic food requirements, in 1979 only about 35% of total expenditure was required, and in more recent years percentage values of less than 20% have been recorded (Biorcio and Maneri 1993).

\(^{10}\) The modern concept of spare time started to form only after the industrial revolution, with the development of factory work, that separated the workplace from the home. These differences were unknown up to that time.
The increase in cultural and entertainment expenditure was closely related to the increase of available spare time, and represented the fulfillment of a need that spread widely when the general economic conditions of the country started to improve. This new phenomenon produced prevalent habits (e.g. going to the cinema, dancing, going on holidays, participating in sports) which launched a true and proper entertainment industry.

There was no real media market during the mid-'50s in Italy, but in that period an important historical event occurred that would bring about several consequences: television programmes started to be broadcast. The television swiftly became a mass consumer item (see Fig. 4.13). Indeed, by 1956 (two years after the first broadcast) television was already being watched, even if occasionally, by more than half the Italians (Ercole 1993, p. 210), and thus represented a socializing and uniting agent.

Food consumption also changed considerably (see section 2), and the nutritional regimes improved both in quantity and in quality. A typical example of this was represented by the almost daily presence of meat in Italian meals.

Despite this, the image of a country that at this point was wealthy must not allow us to forget that, although there was more well-being during the 1950s, the average Italian family still lived in a condition of simple subsistence11.

The country's most significant economic growth period started in 1958 (1958-1963), and this was also brought about by families' improved purchasing powers. Between 1959 and 1963, the number of refrigerators in Italian houses grew from 370,000 to 1,500,000, and televisions increased from 88,000 to 634,00012. A 1966 study by the "Banca d'Italia – Central Bank of Italy"13 showed that 59.5% of families had a television, and 32.2% a washing machine. A large proportion of families at this point had TVs and washing machines, but in analysing this distribution and comparing it to an average income, we found that only 25% of families with an annual income of less than Italian Lire 600,000 possessed a television, while 85% of families with an annual average income in excess of Italian Lire 3,500,000 did. About 10 years later, during the mid-1970s, the possession of these consumer goods was almost global: 97% of families had a television, 94% a fridge, 79% a washing machine and 65% a car.

11 For example, 1958 Doxa data illustrated that 84% of families had no television, refrigerator, or washing machine. The analysis of professional conditions confirmed this picture: 62.6% of office employees possessed none of these items, and neither did 93.7% of manual workers or 98.8% of farm workers.

12 Data recorded during those years illustrated how some consumer items were distributed according to social status. For example, the 1963-1964 Eurostat survey (where 9,924 Italian families were interviewed) showed that those owning a car included: 13% of manual worker families, 3% of farm worker families, 14% of farmer families, and 44% of families working as office employees/managers. The owners of washing machines were also distributed according to social status. The percentage of such owners were: 14% of manual worker families, 38% of office employee/manager families, and only 2% of farm-working families (whether workers or owners).

13 This was the first study carried out by the "Banca d'Italia – Central Bank of Italy" on the subject of “Income, saving and wealth structure of Italian families in 1966”. 
Between 1960 and 1970, the consumer model evolved along lines that closely followed those of other European countries that had already undergone a similar economic growth in previous years:

a) slow, but constant decrease in income percentage dedicated to the purchase of food and drink;

b) unchanged percentage of income dedicated to purchasing clothing and shoes;

c) proportionally more money spent for transport, communication, hygiene and health;

d) unpredictable and variable proportion of income dedicated to furniture, home services, houses, cultural items and recreation (D'Apice, 1981, p. 55).

Consumption in the 1970s was slowed down by the socio-political and economic climate. On the one hand, this was due to more fiscal pressure, and on the other to price rises caused by inflation that was getting out of control.

The variation in the types of goods purchased was undoubtedly a valid way of describing the changes occurring in Italian families’ lifestyles. The overall increase in wealth caused more income to be spent on items of different quality. During 1951, 49% of expenditure in the south was for non-food items, while this value was 57% in the north. During 1970, these values rose to 57% and 61% respectively. Even within the food sector, there was a gradual shift in purchase rates from poorer products to richer ones, not only from the amount of protein present, but also from a symbolic point of view (see section 2).

However, the most interesting purchase sector was that of non-food, which started to become discriminating as far as social differences were concerned (see Table 4.7). Goods with a higher elasticity coefficient, with respect to income were the so-called "new consumer categories". These included transport, communication, hygiene, and health. A growing proportion of expenditure was dedicated to these categories throughout the entire country. Starting from the 1970s, the biggest status differences could be observed by analysing these categories of purchase.

After the crisis of the 1970s (inflation, unstable political situation, energy crisis), during the following decade, there was a new widespread wave of consumerism which had different characteristics with respect to the earlier one. During the 1980s, there was massive investment in advertising, and this pushed consumers towards new purchasing behaviour. Goods now purchased were no longer those which served to satisfy simple primary needs (food, drink, clothes), but other types of goods and to which artificially inflated symbolic values were attributed. In other words, goods were no longer advertised for merely their necessary use, but for the status granted to the consumer, containing symbolic values necessary for expressing oneself. In this, the widespread
diffusion of commercial television became increasingly important, as it was the principle means for advertising\textsuperscript{14}, being at the crossroads between the demand and offer of products.

As mentioned earlier, television appeared on the scene in the mid-1950s and more than any other means contributed to spreading the new city lifestyle, which gradually became dominant even in rural areas that had not been directly affected by industrialisation. At first, public television had an educational and service function to carry out, and so for ethical reasons advertisements were all placed in one daily programme ("Carosello"). But during the 1980s, the commercial television model deteriorated. The quality of television programmes worsened, while the frequency with which advertisements were broadcast increased.

These two television models represented two sides of society with different consumer patterns. The first type of television was careful to promote changes taking place, but at the same time it conserved traditional values. Higher consumer expenditure levels were targeted that were by now available due to better living standards. Advertisements were aimed towards women in particular, especially housewives.

The television of the 1980s (and after) was much more commercial, and suitable to advertising products not only for what they were but also for what they represented symbolically, in their association to specific lifestyles. Television became the main means through which a certain type of publicity was promoted, where the new consumer was guided to desire what the products represented in an ethereal way.

In both cases, television was used for broadcasting messages that indicated to the viewer what should be desired. From the 1960s onwards, television gradually proposed a new (to most Italians) lifestyle. It publicised the modernisation paradigm and new consumer preferences. It contributed to changing single people's habits, suggesting what was desirable. Further, television pushed them in the industrialisation and urbanisation direction we already described, thus increasingly inducing them to abandon traditional rural ways of life, and substituting them with new lifestyles.

During the 1980s, status differences were determined by the quality of goods one had rather than by their quantity, and more in general by the possession of goods that could ensure high living standards. The characteristics of this new wave of consumerism could be summarised as follows (Biorcio and Maneri, 1993, p. 188):

a) communication and symbolic values of purchases emerged, which expressed one's personal character, status, or ecological values in displaying disapproval of the industrial society;

b) a growing awareness towards the manufacturing and aesthetical values of a product and to its images were conveyed through advertisements;

\textsuperscript{14} During the 1980s, investments in media advertising grew from Italian Lire 1,320,000,000, to Italian Lire 7,448,000,000. A very large part of these investments concerned television ads (Dorfles, 1991).
c) time and information dedicated to consumption became increasingly recognized as being self-governed and specific;

d) shopping was done in different places: no longer in the nearby store, but in large department stores and specialized or designer shops.

We therefore could observe a progressive change during which the hedonistic key of ethereal and symbolic values of the products were ever more important. Purchases, above all satisfied the need for defining individuality (whether by standardizing one to others, or distinguishing one from them) and one's social level.

A characteristic feature of this period was the widespread diffusion of the social value of aesthetics. Technical and functional characteristics of products were now taken for granted, and the buyer demanded that they have a nice appearance, and be well-suited to the image he/she intended to convey of himself/herself. This tendency was especially important in classic consumer areas such as furniture and clothing. But it also applied to the purchaser himself/herself, who gradually developed a lifestyle more aware of considerations of his/her physical condition, where aesthetics and health were joined in the care of one's body. These considerations pushed the purchaser into new consumer areas which had been previously very limited, demonstrated by the growing number of people frequenting gymnasiums, those who said they were going on a diet, the huge consumption of beauty products, etc. (see section 4.7, Hygienist model).

The fact that one tended to describe consumption phenomena by illustrating the types that appeared to dominate, did not mean that they were unable to co-exist with other types of models. Having mentioned that different consumption patterns could co-exist with one another, the importance of the habitat in which these took place should never have been underestimated, as it was a vital indicator of their meaningfulness. For example, while it was true that during the 1980s, the traditional consumption model was still present, it was also true that this model was steadily losing ground. This was apparent from the poor visibility of the values it expressed, and its marginal distribution within the social and geographical areas where it was most common (elderly, low-income classes, small towns, southern regions; Censis, 1987).

In order to build up a summary of this changing universe, it is useful to refer to the consumer types identified by Biorcio and Maneri (1993, p. 195-9) for the second half of the 1980s:

a) upper styles - made up of two sub-styles: the first type purchased at high expenditure levels-exclusive, fashion and designer items; the second was more balanced, preferring more elegant and sober items, and was less influenced by fashion;

b) exploratory styles - where there was ostentation, frequent changes in goods (clothing, cars, etc.), journeys to far-away countries; if with lower income levels, curiosity and carelessness were present when purchasing goods;
c) traditional styles - which were typified by relative well-being, convention, awareness of savings, sales and special offers;

d) marginal styles, which were typified by poverty, no interest in fashion, awareness of the practical purposes of goods, major shopping awareness.

Further changes took place in consumer behaviour over the next decade, when traditional habits started to return. In the food sector, the Mediterranean diet based on pasta and vegetables was revaluated. This was a consequence of the health-conscious revolution, which started during the 1970s and '80s. One of the features of this dietary revolution was a drastic reduction in meat consumption (especially red meat) which, as mentioned earlier, had represented the symbol of the improved purchasing powers and well-being of Italian families during the '60s.

At the start of the 1990s, we observed a general reduction in sales, due to the political and economic crisis which overcame the country. Values such as frugality, care in shopping, caution, quality/price considerations again appeared on the scene. With respect to the previous decade, when the emphasis lay in the expressive function of consumer items, now the purchaser seemed to attribute a confirmation of his identity to the goods purchased. The purchaser’s very being and role showed a certain need for security that was also required in other strategies of choice. The overall impression was that, with respect to previous years, less importance was given to consumption, and more to the quality of life, which was linked to the health-conscious change just described. Families were better informed and more knowledgeable, so they were better able to make choices. It became a habit for the consumer to request a guarantee of the product's quality, to know from where it came, of what it was made, and so on. He gradually became capable of identifying a trademark by its symbol of reliability and safety. This all took place thanks to the fundamental help of publicity which, due to its persuasive powers, managed to convey new products with a symbolic and cultural identity in which the consumer could associate himself/herself, or project his/her desire to imitate. Products therefore became assets of society (Minoia, 1993) used to express the buyer's identity, tastes and the class to which he/she belonged.

The birth and development of the food culture was also an example of this process, in that a simple product necessary for survival was transformed into something quite different. Wine also had this role. And together with other products, it has remained even today a symbol of "good living". As mentioned previously, the quantities of wine drunk remained very low (they actually continued to decrease), and emphasis was increasingly placed on quality.

During the previous decades, for many reasons, wine had not been considered as being a suitable product with which one could represent the changed lifestyle of the "new city man". But during the 1980s and '90s its image was revaluated, and in particular its qualitative levels were

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15 Comparing 1992 to the first semester of 1993, we have: cars -27.5%, TV & hi-fi -23%, clothing -10.4%, foodstuffs -7.5%.
The type of wine drunk and offered therefore became (along with other elements) one of the indicators of the individual's status, lifestyle, and, in conclusion, social identity.

### 3.6 The De-structuring of Meals

Another phenomenon recently considered as one of the characteristics of modern society and ways of life is the so-called "de-structuring of meals". The argument is that the separation between the working and living environments, occurring as a result of industrialisation, forced many people to gradually change their eating habits and to have lunch away from home (in cafeterias, bars and restaurants). This tendency was furthermore favoured by the fact that women started to work and earn more, and consequently spent less time at home. Thus, the progressive reduction in the consumption of alcoholic beverages could be due not only to the reduction of the rural population (typical wine drinkers), but also to the de-structuring of traditional meals, where wine played an essential role. In other words, by reducing the number of times people ate lunch at home, the number of opportunities of drinking alcohol together with these meals was also reduced.

However, this hypothesis was not consistently confirmed by present data. In fact, it seemed to hold true only for a minority of the population, because more than 70% of those interviewed by ISTAT declared that they had not changed their tradition of eating lunch at home (see Table 4.8). This result was probably due to the average/small size of the vast majority of Italian towns, where the relatively short distance between the working place and home allowed people to return home quickly and spend their lunch time there.

Observing this phenomenon historically we may, however, observe how in 2001 the interviewees who stated they ate lunch at home were 8% less than 8 years before. This figure certainly indicates an important trend, which is still evolving. We should also add to this that the proportion of the population believing that lunch is the most important meal of the day dropped by 8% in 10 years (from 1993 to 2003; see Fig. 4.15).

All this indicates that there is a growing tendency to eat lunch away from home. But this is generally a light lunch, or snack, which helps one to continue working well during the afternoon carrying out tasks that require mental energy and sharpness rather than physical energy (it should be recalled that over 60% of the workforce is employed in the service sectors). At this point, a drop in alcohol consumption could also have accompanied this phenomenon. Wine is well-known for producing undesirable effects in those who need to continue to work in the afternoon and therefore, should be avoided altogether or drunk only in moderate quantities.

We believe that the de-structuring in traditional eating habits is an important phenomenon that should be observed carefully. But so far its influence in reducing wine consumption has been relatively slight.
3.7 **The health-conscious model**

As has often been stated throughout this study, one of the factors that seems to have significantly contributed to the reduction of wine consumption is the health-conscious model. Rather complex to describe, the model must be so considered for the purposes of this study only for the second part of the alcohol consumption curve (the period starting in the 1980s).

Studies have shown that from the 1970s onwards, wine consumption reduction was linked to changes in working conditions and to the desire of setting aside everything that represented rural ways of life. During the 1980s, these two factors were practically non-existent, and so they gave way to other types of causes, among which were those linked to new concepts involving one's health and well-being. According to Bosio (1993), throughout the 1970s the health concept simply implied not being ill, and was not a target to be attained and maintained with appropriate behaviour. It was set in direct relation to cures and fighting illnesses with the help of medicine and doctors. Therefore, this health perception neither contemplated the general (not only physical) well-being concept, nor the possibility of adopting attitudes at a personal level with regard to one's state of health, which was completely in the hands of family doctors. During the 1980s, the concepts of illness, well-being, and health were completely revised (Beccaria, 2004) and the pharmaceutical-centred vision for health was less followed. New aspirations and needs took shape, that tended to prevent illnesses rather than cure them, and the general target was to look after one's state of health.

An extensive care of one's body changed the habits of part of the population and, in only a few years, these people took on behaviours and attitudes that were very different from previous times. The need for being fit and having a good state of health led to, among other things, a higher proportion of the population performing some type of physical activity (see Table 4.9).

In the presence of these ideas, there was a growing awareness for "healthy, ecological, low-fat" types of food (Minoia, 1993). Vegetables, pasta and whole grain foods regained popularity, while other types of food lost out (for example, red meats). Many of the foodstuffs that only a few decades earlier had been symbols of frugality linked to rural lifestyles – and thus purposely excluded from diets – had now become symbols of healthy and well-balanced eating habits (see section 2). Wine was not, however, among the food items that were "salvaged" from tradition. Instead, its consumption continued to fall, evidently because it was not regarded as a suitable product in a health-conscious eating regime (see Table 4.10).

Other types of behaviour, such as avoiding fatty foods or going on a diet, were also more common at this time than previously, and indicated a general change in lifestyle habits. This was also confirmed by the growing number of people who gave up smoking (see Fig. 4.16), due in
particular to the behaviour of younger generations. The need to keep one's eating behaviour under control in order to prevent many illnesses for which unhealthy eating habits were deciding factors became imperative, as did the desire to be thin, in order to follow the aesthetical fashion of the times.

According to Censis studies (1988; 1998), during the 1990s health was no longer perceived as an overall psycho-physical well-being of the individual, but mainly as a person's physical condition and efficiency. In this context, individual responsibility was even more important, especially for preventing illnesses and for caring for oneself, while in the past more importance had been given to environmental and/or social factors. Health-conscious targets were attained by adopting correct lifestyles and appropriate habits. Generally, this type of attitude included being more aware of the true aspects of well-being, rather than the apparent ones (see Table 4.12).

During the 1990s, the need for health continued to develop. This was accompanied by a growing awareness of ecological topics such as environmental protection and concern for pollution levels. These widespread ambitions for a better-quality life usually brought about real changes in consumer patterns. Thus, as mentioned previously, a clear change in eating habits that tended to return to the Mediterranean diet could be observed, coupled with an awareness of the quality and origins of foods.

According to a 2003 Censis survey, 54.4% of the interviewees believed that one’s lifestyle (eating, physical activity, lack of stress) represented the most important factor in order to attain a good state of health. Furthermore, the same survey clearly illustrated that, above all others, food represented the key factor around which a correct lifestyle could be attained. In general, consumers no longer had economic problems, and almost all the types of foodstuff available could be afforded by everyone. This freedom of purchase, from a nutritional point of view, was transformed into an awareness of product quality, returning, under certain aspects, to more natural lifestyles, which were able to satisfy the newly found quest for genuine products.

To all this, a growing interest in purchasing biological foodstuffs could be added, as well as tourist excursions combining gastronomy and culture. Particularly noteworthy were, wine tours attracting 4 million tourists, producing a turnover of Euro 2.000.000 and a 120% increase (Censis, 2004) during the 2001-2003 period of events and shows promoted during wine-routes.

This last observation did not contradict what was stated earlier. This is because the greater attention given to the characteristics of food products (to which wine belonged, at least in Mediterranean countries) also concerned wine production, and encouraged drinkers to seek

16 For example, during the period 1978-1993, the percentage of smokers in the 18-24 year-old bracket dropped by 21.7 percentage points (from 52.3% to 30.6%), in the 15-17 year-old age bracket it dropped by 21.3 points (from 31.2% to 9.9%), while the total population that smoked (in the 15-64 year-old age bracket) only dropped by 11.9% over the same period (from 44.6% to 32.7%; data source: Eurisko, “Psicografica e Sinottica”).
information in the very areas where production took place. This reminds us of a concept mentioned elsewhere: wine consumption continued to fall, but the quality of the product consumed increased. This element perfectly coincided with the new tendency of encouraging consumers to check a product’s quality and characteristics.

Returning to the general question from which this study started, it can be affirmed that an increased awareness in one's state of health can be considered to have been one of the deciding factors in causing the wine consumption reduction curve (in its second part). In fact, it is plausible to assume that potential damage to one's health derived by excessive wine-drinking was generally known among the public by the 1980s. But, since there had been no extensive information campaigns on the subject, it is probable that this was due to a popular diffusion of knowledge that originally stemmed from talks with family doctors.

Over the course of one generation, a noticeable change of values was experienced. Up until the 1950s, wine consumption had been considered as a nutritional, if not curative, positive factor. Since then and up to the present day, i.e. about 30 years after modernisation, the consumption of that same beverage has started to be considered, instead, as a possible cause of illness. Moreover, during the last few years there has been information asserting that moderate wine consumption could actually help in defending oneself against certain cardio-vascular illnesses (Cipriani et al, 2004).

Another important phenomenon has also started occurring in recent years. Though insufficient to affect the shape of the consumption curve, it has had an influence on consumer habits: wine products have been gaining popularity from a cultural point of view, with constant improvements in its overall production quality. This new pattern of wine consumption promoted by wine producers is summarised by this simple formula: less quantity, better quality.
PART II

LIFE CYCLES AND CHANGES IN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION
THE RESEARCH

1.1 THE OBJECTIVES

In order to understand the micro-sociological explanations behind the decline in alcoholic beverage consumption, particularly wine, in Italy during the last thirty years, we studied social mechanisms affecting the behaviour of individuals. The analysis of these mechanisms permitted the passage of a macro-sociological perspective to a micro-sociological one, enabling researchers to understand how their subjects acted and the meaning they assigned to their actions. We could then analyse how different macro-sociological changes affected the circumstances (the system of obstacles/opportunities) in which the subjects formulated their consumption decisions. The question asked was the following: “which process or mechanism generated the effect of x on y?” (Barbera, 2004, 56)

This study of the mechanisms was characterised by a procedural process based on three distinct operations: “How the social environment influenced the individual (macro-micro mechanism or “situational”); How individuals acted and produced effects on other individuals (micro-micro or “creation of the act”); How individual actions and environmental conditions interacted with each other (micro-macro mechanism or “transformational”)” (ibid, p.8-9).

With respect to these central objectives, we began our study by looking at the history of alcoholic consumption of interviewed individuals, then identified the significant characteristics of their consumption changes, their interdependencies and capacity to cope with this change. The social conditions that presumably influenced patterns of alcoholic beverage consumption changes were described in the first part of the book.

1.2 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The complex study of alcoholic beverage consumption was addressed with interviews that combined completely standardised techniques (questionnaires with fixed questions and answers) and partially standardised approaches (semi-structured interviews). In the opening part of the interview, the structured questions permitted the portrayal of socio-demographic information and reconstruction of the interviewee’s stage of life (Russel et al., 1997). Particular attention was given to the turning points, those events leading to a change in the professional or family status of the individuals.
The calendar representing the stage of life was organised as a double-entry table, with a list of events covering his/her residence, school, work, marriage, birth of children, military service, etc. The interviewees indicated the years in which the above-mentioned significant events occurred.

Next, the participants were asked to graphically illustrate their alcohol consumption patterns over time. This allowed the interviewer to identify moments in which the quantity of alcoholic consumption changed. Consequently, a series of close-ended questions were asked with the objective of identifying eventual changes in the consumption pattern between the present, and the period of maximum consumption. In addition, the graph permitted us to partially take note of the attitudes towards alcoholic consumption of the participants. In doing so, we sought to understand their attitudes towards drinking companions, the context and patterns of consumption that characterised the moment of alcoholic consumption.

Designed to understand alcoholic-related behaviour, the questionnaire included such aspects as the quantity and substance consumed (weekly frequency, daily pattern, drunkenness, drunk driving and other negative consequences related to alcohol consumption), and the context and company in which it was consumed.

The semi-structured part of the interview, consisting in open-ended questions aimed at stimulating the sharing of stories and opinions, was used to understand the reasons behind the alcoholic consumption changes. The use of different methods of questioning within the same interview allowed us to develop a deep understanding of the processes behind alcohol consumption, and reduce to a certain degree the margin of error attributable to the passage of time between the present and the moment the stories described occurred. In reconstructing their consumption history, the interviewees were invited to define their phases of consumption and describe the prevalent consumption style in each of these phases. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and successively elaborated with Atlas.Ti., a software specialised in qualitative analysis of texts.

In addition to the individual interviews, two focus groups were used. Such groups are utilised in a technique of social research “based on the discussion of a small group of people in the presence of one or more moderators, focused on an issue that is the subject of in-depth investigation” (Corrao, 2000, 25). The essential elements of a focus group are the interaction between the participants in the discussion and the presence of observers, normally two – a conductor and an assistant.

The first focus group was preliminary in nature, and its objective was to acquire familiarity with the subject under study and collect useful indications for putting together the interview. Eight key individuals participated in the first group, who, for professional reasons occupied positions allowing them to observe the phenomenon under study:

- Two people from the world of alcoholic beverage production;
- A bar and restaurant owner (also representative of the union of public operations - EPAT);
- A journalist;
- A dietician;
- Two physicians: a general practitioner, a physician specialised in alcoholic disorders
- A hygienist.

The participants were requested to provide their opinions as to the cause of the alcoholic consumption reduction in Italy in the last thirty years. Other three major informants gave their opinions in face-to-face interviews.

A second focus group was conducted at the end of the research with five participants, the characteristics of whom were representative of the first interview, to discuss the research’s results.

1.3 The sample description

In order to reach the objectives of the research, 117 men were interviewed (3 interviews were discarded because incomplete), all of whom had reduced their alcohol consumption over the course of their lives. Since the sample interviewed was not a probability one, no statistical inference was carried out. This type of sample was used because of the explorative nature of this phase of the study, which was oriented towards identifying the social mechanisms behind the consumption reduction. Therefore, only individuals with the specific socio-cultural characteristics necessary to identify the above-mentioned social mechanisms were interviewed.

During the training day of the interviewers, each was asked to identify 15 people with the following characteristics:

- sex: male;
- age: 40-45 years and 65-70 years;
- “normal” drinkers who had reduced their alcohol consumption;
- profession: factory/farm worker; employee, shop owner, artisan, company director; professional;
- people able to communicate and reflect upon their experiences and on the people in their personal lives and context;
- people whose lives have been characterised by some sort of identifiable change (a move from the countryside to the city; social level; profession; lifestyle).

It was decided to interview only men due to the fact that epidemiological studies on alcohol consumption in Italy have shown that women have maintained their consumption level, and in recent years have, in fact, increased it (see section 1.5). Consequently, in order to explain the
consumption decline, we felt it appropriate to interview only men. The sample was divided into two age groups of 40-45 years old (n. 56) and 65-70 (n. 61).

This breakdown of the age groups was designed to enable us to record the consumption habits in the initial phase of the period of interest – that is the early 1970s – of two important social groups. The first one was young and in their adolescent years during the ‘70s. This group was presumed to be particularly affected by the culture of change characterising this period, and thus representative of individuals who had broken with past traditions and introduced innovations into their lifestyles. The second age group, on the other hand, was made up of people already in their adult years. Presumably, these individuals had had the traditional values representative of the period preceding the early 1970s’ period of change.

The sample of interviewees originated from the 4 most important alcohol-producing Italian regions (Piedmont, Tuscany, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Puglia) and was also representative of the four statistical areas into which Italy is divided (northwest, northeast, central and south).

48.7% (n. 57) of the interviewees came from metropolitan areas (Turin, Trieste, Florence and Bari) and 61.3% (n. 60) from rural areas: this choice was important, as studies have indicated that, still today, there are considerable differences in the drinking habits and attitudes between metropolitan and rural areas. 75.2% (n. 88) of the interviewed were married or shared a home, while 15.4% (n. 18) were single and only 6.8% (n. 8) were either separated or divorced. Three of the interviewees were widowers.

79.5% (n. 93) of the sample had children, with an overall average of 1.6 children per person. 52.1% (n. 61) of the sample resided with both their spouse/partner and children, 29.9% (n. 35) lived only with their spouse/partner and 10.3% (n. 12) lived alone.

Table 1 below illustrates the breakdown of the education level of the sample. 35.1% (n. 41) of the interviewed possessed a high-school degree, 27.4% (n. 32) a university degree and the remaining 37.5% a degree below that of high-school.

One third of the sample were retired people, 21.4% were either freelance workers or company directors, 14.5% employees and 9.4% shop owners or farmers. The least represented professional categories were factory workers and artisans.

1.4 THE FIELD WORK

The interviewers were given ample discretion in selecting the people to question. The main sources of recruitment were personal networks of relationships, with the exclusion of family members and people who were too intimate so as to avoid embarrassing or uneasy situations. On several occasions, intermediaries were used in accessing people to interview. This was especially
done in rural areas where the traditional network of contacts was weak: for example, a number of interviewers contacted associations, unions and recreational centres.

A number of difficulties were encountered in recruiting the interviewees. Specific professional categories included in the sample were poorly represented in certain geographical areas, and refusals to participate were also high in those cases where there was no intermediation of a personal contact of either the interviewer or candidate. Not only did many individuals not consent to being interviewed, thus prolonging the search, but among those interviewed, many declared having either increased or kept stable their alcohol consumption. Consequently, many interviews needed to be conducted in order to complete the necessary sample level.

Among the difficulties encountered in this phase, the most significant was that relative to the social perception of drinking: it was not easy to explain our search for “normal” drinkers rather than ex-alcoholics. Notwithstanding our efforts to explain the study’s objectives, many of the participants adopted defensive attitudes during the interviews, a sign of a widespread social perception attributing negative values to the notion of “drinking”.

However, once the interviews were underway, we observed a satisfactory degree of willingness on the part of the participants to recount (especially, as predictable, in the older age groups) their life stories and respective attitudes.
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Alcohol consumption patterns, context, time of day, people with whom it was consumed, regularity and quantity consumed, all vary over the course of a person’s life. The meaning attributed to one’s drinking experience also varies, thereby changing the values connected to alcohol (food, thirst quencher, social, etc.)\(^{18}\).

Several longitudinal studies carried out in various European and North American countries (Silbereisen et al., 1996; Fillmore, 1988, ref. to in Neve et al., 2000, p.163) illustrated that the most significant differences in consumption habits occurred in different phases of life (adolescence, adult age, old age). Different mechanisms were used to explain the changes: psychological, genetic, social and environmental (Fillmore, 1988). One of the approaches adopted in analysing changes in consumption patterns was the sociological “Approach to Life” course that focused its attention on the transitions from one phase of life to the next and looked at the paths characterising the lives of the individuals (Neve et al., 2000; Paradis et al., 1999).

Such an approach treated the individual’s personal biography as a dynamic process involving multiple interdependent trajectories (careers) that developed over a lifetime (Saraceno, 2001). This concept of trajectories (careers) looked at these developments and studied them in their context of experiences or social position (Olagnero and Saraceno, 1993; Olagnero, 2005). The trajectories were related to the different dimensions around which a person’s existence was framed: family, relational\(^{19}\), work, educational, etc. Both social as well as individual processes (Heinz, 1996,) the trajectories of a person’s life were determined by individual experiences in their social context consisting of social, institutional and normative dimensions, previous experiences and interaction with other people (for example, the illness of a child could force a parent to give up work).

These sociological studies identified the degree of interdependence between the trajectories and evaluated the individual’s ability to cope with biographical events having significant impacts on their lives. Particularly important was the study of “moral careers” (Goffman, 1968, p.154), that focused on the “continuous change in an individual and consequently that of his judgement of himself and of others”. This specific study thus identified the individual’s changes of his/her self-image, as well as changed conceptions of others.

In describing and understanding both the social and individual significance of the different life courses, it was useful to refer to the “biographical actor concept” (Heinz 1996). This concept “integrates a person’s life history and life perspective, his/her perceived options and situational circumstances. It constitutes a complex and constructive frame for the life course decisions. Biographical action refers to the fact that individuals attempt to link their experiences to

\(^{18}\) On the values associated to drinking please refer to Forni (1997).

\(^{19}\) The sequence of changes that characterised the network of relationships of an individual.
transitional decisions and that they interpret their options not only with respect to subjective utilities and social norms, but in terms of the legacy of their personal past” (ibid, p.56).

Changes (transitions) can occur within different phases of life, conditioning a person’s life history. Similar transitions (the loss of a job, the death of a family member, etc.) can have varying impacts at different stages of life for different people. The impact that a transition can have on an individual – and his/her capability to confront it (Meo, 2000)\textsuperscript{20} – depends on many factors:

- Whether or not the event is predictable or expected (the death of an elderly parent is expected, whereas the accidental death of a young child is unexpected and debilitating);
- The temporal phase in which it occurs (a young man without family responsibility who loses his job will attribute a different significance to this stressful event than will an older adult with a family);
- The degree of control that a subject is able to exercise on the transition of status, as some status transitions are dependent upon institutional or regulatory norms: for example, obtaining a degree at the end of a scholastic career necessitates that an exam is taken (Ebaugh, 1988);
- The importance of a preceding status in an individual’s identity: each of us holds numerous roles in society, some of which are more important than others; we organise our identity and are identified by others around our hegemonic status (Hughes, 1945);
- The degree to which a transition is reversible: such a degree is also conditioned by the importance of the preceding status on the individual’s identity (Ebaugh, 1988);
- The degree to which it is interconnected with other trajectories;
- By the material, symbolic or relational resources that an individual is able to utilise (in preparing for a transition or at the moment of transition or in order to manage the post-transition phase).

Individual consumption of alcohol could also be broken down into stages, structured in a sequence of trajectories\textsuperscript{21}, each of which is characterised by a specific consumption style: adolescent patterns of consumption\textsuperscript{22} in which alcohol prevailed as a social and transgressive instrument was different from adult patterns of consumption which tended to utilise alcohol as food, and for convivial reasons.

Changes in status or particular personal critical events could condition one’s life phase and thereby influence his/her consumption patterns. Several studies (Neve et al., 2000; Paradis, et al., 1999; Kunz and Graham, 1996; King et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 1998; Miller-Tutzauer et al., 1991; Perreira and Sloan, 2001; Temple et al., 1991) demonstrated how transitions occurring in certain

\textsuperscript{20} The way with which individuals confront significant biographical events was discussed in Meo (2000).

\textsuperscript{21} In this particular context, a “phase” could be defined as a period of time during which the consumption pattern remained relatively constant (York, 1995, 329).

\textsuperscript{22} For a greater study of adolescent alcohol consumption styles reference can be made to Cutino and Prina (1999).
periods of life (the transition from student to worker, single to married, etc.), or from personal critical events (the development of an illness, the death of a relative, etc.), resulted in changes in alcohol consumption pattern changes. A correlation was discovered between status transitions linked to working life (employed, unemployed for a brief period, unemployed for a long period, retired), family life (single, married, father, separated/divorced, widow) and changes in alcohol consumption patterns.

Which social mechanisms could explain this correlation? Why did married men have lower chances of becoming problem drinkers than did single men? Why did unemployed men stand a greater chance of becoming problem drinkers than did those who were employed?

“(…) Social positions in professional relational, social, and parental domains involve specific obligations, during the performance of which drinking is mostly forbidden. Thus, the occupation of one or more social positions decreases the risk of drinking problems within consumption categories” (Neve R. et al., 2000, p.166).

Analysis of literature showed that changes in status per se did not have an impact on the consumption of alcohol, so much as:

- the quality of social relations connected to one’s particular status (Paradis et al., 1999; Neve et al., 2000)\(^{23}\). For example, several authors (Horwitz and White, 1991, ref. to in Paradis et al., 1999, p.56) ascertained that the presence of children in a household could lead to an increase in problematic consumption of alcohol of the man because their presence impacted the quality of the married relationship. Other authors (Johnson et al., 1998) discovered the opposite phenomenon;

- the degree of commitments to an individual’s different roles (Paradis et al., 1999). In carrying out their different social roles (father, worker, husband, etc.) the majority of individuals, in order not to compromise their reputation and/or regular activities (Becker, 1987), behaved in accordance with norms set out by those around them as to the expectations of behaviour of the different roles. People acted according to their different roles and social circumstances in a way expected (or not) by their surrounding environment. This had a consequential impact on their drinking habits (an individual should not drink at work, but could at a bar in his free time);

- the meaning that an individual attributed to a life transition, which could be confronted (as we saw earlier) as experiences which were more or less “critical”, “destabilising”, and/or “stressful”;

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\(^{23}\) Neve et al., (2000, p.165) dealing with quality of roles, distinguished between “positive, gratifying role relationship from negative, frustrating role relationships.”
• the degree of social\textsuperscript{24} and individual vulnerability of a person—his/her ability to cope (Neve et al. 2000; Gorman and Brown, 1992), defined as "the combination of actions and strategies with which an individual reacts and adapts to difficult circumstances they come across" (Meo 2000, p.4).

\textsuperscript{24} Social vulnerability could be interpreted as a social framework which fell inside a triangle formed by three corners representing the following problems: a) limited availability of the resources needed for survival and family reproduction; b) limited integration (formal and informal) in society's network of relationships; c) limited ability to address difficult situations (Ranci, 2002, p.29-30).
3. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF THE INTERVIEWEES TODAY AND AT THEIR MOMENT OF MAXIMUM CONSUMPTION

This chapter describes the alcohol consumption models of the sample interviewed and analyses their alcoholic habits today, and in the peak consumption periods they identified. The habits we looked at included a study of the behaviour, social and personal context and details that characterised alcohol consumption at any particular moment. This part of the study was conducted by first asking the participants to fill in a questionnaire of closed-ended questions (114 valid questionnaires), then by submitting them to a semi-structured open-ended interview where their lifetime use of alcohol was discussed.

The questionnaire addressed the following items: types of substances consumed, quantities of each of these substances, weekly regularity of consumption, distribution of consumption over the course of the day, regularity of abuse, drunkenness and driving under the influence of alcohol, opinion of the quality of the substance consumed, and effect of the alcohol consumption on various aspects of the individuals’ lives. The objective of the research’s preliminary section was to understand if changes had taken place in the consumption habits of the sample between their moment of maximum consumption and today. Any reductions would be matched with the individual’s life history by examining possible changes in habits, contexts, actors involved and in the values associated with it.

At a later stage, the quantitative support of the study regarding the drinking habits will be integrated with the individuals’ life histories. This will allow us to indepthly reconstruct the different phases of the sample’s drinking histories. Only two of these phases are dealt with in this section.

3.1 THE ALCOHOL CONSUMED

We begin with a description of the substances consumed today and during the moment of peak consumption.

Table 3 illustrates, as expected, a reduction in the variety of alcoholic substances consumed. Wine and beer remained the favourites, while the others, particularly strong spirits, were more marginal, falling in preference of the sample, followed by digestives and aperitifs. Also evident was wine as the only substance which grew (6.8%) in preference of the sample. The consumption fall seemed to have been accompanied by a concentration of substances consumed with wine and
beer benefiting at the expense of beverages with higher alcoholic content. Thus, the fall in alcohol consumption did not seem correlated, at least in our sample, to a decline in wine preference, which seemed to grow. In any case, we will see in the following pages, that this was accompanied by a reduction in quantities consumed.

Breaking the sample down by age showed how the elder age group (65-70 years old) maintained a strong preference for wine, while the group’s predilection for strong spirits, aperitifs and digestives diminished. The younger age group (40-45 years old) reduced its beer consumption (the preferred substance during the period of maximum consumption) in substitution with wine. A sharp fall in preference for strong spirits emerged as well, while only a slight fall in preference for aperitifs and digestives appeared.

Today, in general, the younger group continues consuming a greater variety of alcohol, while the elder group concentrates its consumption on wine and beer, and much less on the others. The wine preference increase in the sample seems to be a result of changes in drinking styles of the group in their 40s, while the reduced consumption of beverages of high alcoholic content in the elder group can be motivated mostly by greater attention to health concerns, as we will see later in this paper. Though wine remains firmly at the top of the preference list, the reduction in wine consumption could be explained by a lower regularity of use and/or a lower quantity drunk at a time.

### 3.2 The regularity of consumption

It can be seen in Table 4 that at peak consumption almost 90% of the sample drank alcohol every day and a little over 10% only once a week. Today the proportion of those who drink every day has fallen by 25%, while 15.4% drink two or three times a week, 11.1% drink once a week and the remainder drink sporadically. There has been a fall in regular consumers and a corresponding rise in those who drink occasionally. Those who drink once a week or less normally do so only on weekends.

Looking at this data from an age group perspective, it is evident that today the older age group consumes alcohol on a daily basis with more frequency than the younger one, as was the case during previous years. During the period of peak consumption, almost all the individuals over 65 drank alcohol daily. Today, that figure stands at a little over 2/3, nonetheless high. The percentage of individuals over 45 years of age, who consumed alcohol daily also stood at 2/3 during the peak period and has fallen to half today. The daily consumption decrease was similar in both age groups.

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25 Although beer did not fall in preference in our sample, almost two out of three of the interviewed admitted to drinking it.
3.3 Time of day of drinking alcohol

We can examine the time of day in which alcohol was typically consumed during the moment of peak consumption and today. The differences allow us to develop conclusions regarding the changing values associated with the drinking of different substances between one period and another.

Wine continues to hold a role as a food. Both today and in the peak period wine has been consumed in connection with food, as illustrated in Table 5. Today, wine consumption at mealtimes is as popular as ever, especially at night for dinner, rather than at non-working hours. Wine consumption outside of meals, on the other hand, has reduced significantly, especially at night after dinner and during the afternoon (morning consumption was always minimal). It is interesting to note that four wine drinkers of today did not consume wine in the past and seven of those interviewed used to drink wine in the past but no longer do today. 26

Looking at this data from an age group perspective, there are no particular differences between today and the moment of peak consumption, other than a slight increase of dinner-time wine consumption by the younger age group. Wine drinking at lunch-time, on the other hand, has decidedly become more widespread in the elder age group.

It is interesting to note the consumption patterns of beer (Table 6). In the peak period, in addition to being consumed together with food, its consumption was predominantly social and it was consumed in the afternoon or in public social locations at night after dinner. Today, beer is also drunk together with meals, particularly dinner. However, its socialising role has diminished significantly, particularly in the afternoon. Finally, 20 of those interviewed who drank beer in the past no longer do so today. Looking at this data from an age group perspective, while both age groups have decreased their afternoon consumption of beer. Night consumption of beer was typical of the 40 year olds, while a small number of the elderly age group drank beer after dinner during their peak consumption periods.

The overall consumption of strong spirits (Table 7) has seen a sharp drop (more than half of those who drank in the past no longer drink today) and in the practice of drinking in the afternoon and the evening. Today they are consumed essentially as an after-dinner drink. It is noteworthy how today no one drinks strong spirits in the morning or afternoon, and very few drink them at

26 In this case, as in the case of the other substances, the two samples were not equal in size. For example, those consuming alcohol either in the past or today total 114, those who do so today are 107. Thus, 7 people who drank yesterday today do not do so . Of the 107 who drink today, 4 did not do so in the past. 103 individuals of the sample consumed alcohol in both periods.
lunch, when they are probably at work, and have little inclination of drinking beverages of high alcoholic content.

A similar conclusion can be reached with aperitifs (Table 8), that maintain their role in accompanying meals by initiating lunches and dinners, notwithstanding the fact that the preferences for this type of drink have nearly halved. Only 4 of those interviewed, who did not drink aperitifs in the past, do so today.

Finally, digestives (Table 9) have maintained their traditional role of being consumed after meals, particularly at night, and after dinner. There has been a sharp preference drop in this type of drink as well, and only six of the interviewees who did not drink digestives in the past do so today.

3.4 QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF THE CONSUMED SUBSTANCES

Our interviewees have diminished their consumption of alcohol27. But the degree of their reduction has varied between the different substances.

Wine consumption at lunch has been reduced from 1,1 glasses on average to 0,8 (respectively 13,2 and 9,6 grams of alcohol28), while the reduction at dinner time has been less pronounced, dropping from 1,9 glasses on average to 1,6 (22,8 and 19,2 grams). Examining this data from an age group perspective, at lunch time 40 year olds drink exactly half a glass of wine (6 grams) versus a full glass (12 grams) drunk by the 60 year olds, while consumption at dinner time is very similar, with both drinking about a glass each. At peak consumption, the elderly group drank an average of two glasses (24 grams) at both lunch and dinner time; the younger age group drank an average of one glass at lunch and 1,7 (20,4 grams) at dinner. In conclusion, the differences in wine consumption between the two age groups is strongest at lunch, while at dinner their habits are similar.

Beer consumption is particularly low today, and at dinner only 0,4 glasses (4,2 grams) are consumed on average. In the past, 0,5/0,6 glasses (5,3-6,3 grams) were consumed during the afternoon, at dinner, and at night on average. 40 year olds today drink more beer at dinner (0,6 vs 0,2 glasses – 6,3 vs 2,1 grams) and at night. During peak consumption, the younger age group drank more than the elderly age group at night (1 glass vs 0,2 – 10,6 vs 6,3 grams) and at dinner, while at lunch and in the afternoon the elderly group drank slightly more.

Consumption of strong spirits is as modest today as it was in the past. If we exclude night intake, which reaches a peak of 0,8 glasses (8,9 grams) on average, it never goes over 0,2 glasses (2,2 grams). Consumption patterns of aperitifs and digestives are very similar. They are also

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27 The interviewees were shown cards with drawings of standard size glasses of the different types of alcohol on them: wine, beer, aperitifs, digestives, spirits.
28 In order to facilitate comparisons of alcohol consumption literature often measured quantities in grams. Consequently we reported the grams consumed in parenthesis. Glass sizes used for wine, beer, strong spirits and aperitifs, and amaro were respectively 125, 330, 35 and 75 ml, with alcoholic contents of 12, 4, 40 and 20 degrees.
essentially consumed at night and dinner, and their consumption is rarely higher than 0.3 glasses (3.6 grams) at a time.

One of the explanations given for the changes in alcoholic consumption in Italy is that the consumption reduction is accompanied by an increase in the quality of the substances drunk with respect to the past, when greater quantities were consumed, but of lower quality. Alcohol, and especially wine, in the past were drunk daily and acted as an accompaniment to meals. Today their consumption is more of a status symbol, as confirmed by our sample.

At present, almost 90% of our panel drinks good or excellent quality wine, as opposed to 50% at peak consumption periods (Table 10), when the other half was drinking alcohol of discreet or mediocre quality. In particular, it is interesting to note how, today, 40% of our sample drinks very good quality wine, versus only 11% in the past. Today, the two groups do not show any significant differences in the quality of alcohol consumed. In the past, it was the younger age group (approximately 50%) who drank discreet or mediocre quality alcoholic beverages, with half of the elderly age group declared having drunk good quality alcohol.

3.5 The contexts in which alcohol is consumed

We can now look at the context in which alcohol is consumed today, and compare it to that in which it was consumed during the peak period.

The first interesting conclusion of the study is the 25% decrease in occasions where alcohol is consumed. Compared to the past, the sample today drink their alcohol in a narrower variety of locations. If the panel members drank at an average of six different locations in the past, today they drink at an average of four. The decline in alcohol consumption can therefore be attributed to a reduction in the opportunities to drink, in addition to the decline in regularity and average quantities consumed.

In Table 11, the different contexts are detailed, showing that, with respect to the peak period, greater quantities are consumed at mealtimes at home, and less are consumed outside of them today. In addition, at present, there is a greater tendency of drinking alcohol at ritualised moments (at restaurants and/or special occasions, with friends) that strongly structures the quantity and location where alcohol is drunk. On the other hand, there is less drinking at bars, a traditional male drinking venue, at parties and the work place. The reason for the latter is probably due to changes in work practices and more severe legislation in dealing with the issue than in the past. In conclusion, it appears that alcohol is consumed at more structured and confined moments where the environment is more protected (at home) or ritualised (friends, restaurants and special occasions) than in the past. Drinking has become less a part of daily life connected to work, free time (bar and vacations) and school than in the past.
Our findings do not indicate any significant differences in the locations where alcohol is drunk between the two age groups, even though the elderly age group does drink mainly at home and less at locations like bars or restaurants. It is likely that the possibilities of consuming alcohol outside the family setting decrease with age.

3.6 With whom alcohol is consumed

Additional indications are produced by looking at the company with whom alcohol is drunk. Table 12 illustrates how the phenomenon of drinking alone or outside the family setting has decreased, while that of drinking with one’s spouse or family members has increased. This seems to correlate with the relationship change between men and women: the members of the panel drink less alone or with their friends at bars without the presence of females – long excluded from drinking social contexts – and drink more often with their family or wife, children or relatives. The context in which alcohol is consumed has been modified with changes in drinking companions and locations. It is probable that the values associated with drinking have changed as well, with alcohol assuming a greater role in connection with meals, and a lesser one for sociability and/or intoxication.

3.7 Alcohol abuse

When analysing literature regarding consumption patterns of both legal and illegal psychoactive substances, inevitably, one comes across the distinction between normal use and abuse (a problematic use) of and dependence on alcohol. We recognise that the issue is complex because the borderline between use and abuse is not always clear. (Damilano and Mussoni, 2002). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM IV 2000), abuse is defined as a “pathological substance use inducing clinically significant impairment or discomfort.” From a socio-cultural perspective, abuse is instead defined by social norms.

We largely considered the definition as being that which the interviewees provided concerning their own consumption experiences. It was assumed that the individual was “the principal actor in his/her own story (...) and his/her point of view represents the main source of information concerning his/her state” (De Leo and Patrizi, 1999, p.26).

Table 13 below clearly shows how the large majority of the interviewees today declared never having abused alcohol or to have drunk it rarely. Very few, on the other hand, admitted to drinking too much or too often. During the period of maximum consumption, the table shows the opposite, where only slightly over a third admitted to never having abused, or consumed alcohol
rarely, and another third of the sample declared having drunk excessively on a frequent basis. The remainder of the sample, the biggest portion, admitted to abusing alcohol only “sometimes”. Overall, the alcohol reduction consumption could therefore be attributed to a decline in excessive drinking and an intoxicating use of the substance. The shift to a pattern of lower frequency of drinking, with only a very moderate occurrence of excessive consumption, was evident in both age groups. The 40 year olds, 1/3 of whom claimed to have drunk too much and too regularly during their period of maximum consumption, showed a greater pattern shift than the elderly group. It is interesting to note how 3/4 of the 60 year olds today neither exaggerate in their drinking habits, nor abuse alcohol on a regular basis, while 2/3 of the 40 year olds confirm having abused it only on rare occasions.

Similar results emerged, as shown on Table 14 regarding the frequency of drunkenness. Alcohol abuse in general, has been rare. Only 5% of the sample admitted experiencing either occasional or regular drunkenness. The pattern during the period of maximum consumption was very different, with as much as 50% stating to have gotten drunk either rarely or sometimes, and only a small percentage admitting to have gotten drunk on a frequent basis. Such data confirmed the transition from a partially intoxicating use of alcohol to the moderate consumption of today, with episodes of excessive consumption being next to none. Again, it is the 40 year olds who diminished their incidence of drunkenness more significantly than the elderly. This latter group also exhibited moderate drinking in the past, but showed a lower variance and more moderate drinking habits than the younger group. Out of 53 interviewed who claimed to never have gotten drunk in the past, 37 are in their sixties, while of the 24 who claimed to have gotten drunk in the past, 19 are in their forties.

Statistics on drunk driving have followed the same trend, with only a minority involved (Table 15). If today almost 90% of the sample never drink and drive, there are still almost 10% who admit to having driven after consuming excessive alcohol either rarely or on occasion. More alarming is the data relative to the period of maximum consumption, where 50% of the interviewed admitted to drinking under the influence of alcohol either rarely or more often. Albeit there has been a drastic reduction in this type of behaviour, even in a sample of interviewees who have moderated their consumption, there remains a small percentage who have not completely abandoned this practice. This latter group is exclusively forty year olds, 50% of whom declared to have driven drunk during the period of maximum consumption either rarely or sometimes, versus 25% of the 60 year olds overall.

The last section of the questionnaire addressed the effect that use and abuse of alcohol had on various aspects of the interviewees’ lives: health, family, work, social relations and friendships, and eventual problems with the law. Today, 10% of the interviewees declare to have had alcohol-related health problems, whereas other negative effects have not been mentioned. During the period of
maximum consumption, 50% of the sample declared having had health problems related to alcohol, followed by problems at work (10%) and with the family (8%).

3.8 Summary

In conclusion, this first series of data illustrated how our sample diminished its alcohol consumption from the period of maximum consumption up until today, due to a change in drinking habits with the following characteristics:

- The variety of beverages consumed has diminished with a preference towards wine and beer, and a strong reduction in strong spirits, digestives and aperitifs. The reduction in wine consumption therefore could not be explained by the increased preference for wine manifested by the sample.

- A stronger impact on consumption could be the drop of drinking regularity, with a reduction in daily consumption and a rise in occasional drinking. Quantities consumed have also fallen, especially regarding wine at lunch time, beer and, in part, spirits. This consumption reduction has been accompanied by an increase in the quality of alcohol consumed.

- There has also been a clear trend towards drinking mainly at mealtimes and away from drinking at social occasions, especially beer. This has been true for all the substances, though to different degrees. Excessive (or intoxicating) drinking has been considered less important, as information on excessive consumption and drinking and driving has shown. There has been a sharp drop in such incidences today, with respect to the period of maximum consumption.

- Contemporarily, the location in which alcohol is consumed has changed: today it is drunk mainly at home at mealtimes with spouses and family, and less with friends at bars, work, or school. The gender segregation characteristic of alcohol consumption in the Mediterranean culture appears to have diminished. Moreover, drinking at ritualised and standardised events such as restaurants, parties and special occasions has increased. A greater social control seems present at these events and excessive consumption, if regulated, appears to be tolerated.

- The two age groups seem to manifest two different drinking models: the elder one, though having diminished the quantity of alcohol consumed, has largely maintained its drinking patterns of wine and to a lesser extent, beer. Consumption at mealtimes and in social contexts, has not been significantly impacted, with a very rare incidence of intoxicating
drinking. In short, a classic Mediterranean style of drinking has been manifested. With respect to the past, this age group drinks less on a daily basis, in external environments such as at work or at bars, with friends or others, and more with the family. These changes could be explained by a greater care for their health as well as a physiological reduction in drinking opportunities outside of the home environment for the over-65s. On the other hand, in the younger age group, the reduction in drinking seems to be due to a marked change in drinking habits. This group has shifted from a pattern in which the prevalent beverage was beer with a discreet consumption of high-grade alcohol, which had a largely social role with relatively frequent episodes of excessive consumption with friends in non-family contexts, to a classic Mediterranean style of consumption very similar to that of the elder age group. To some degree, today, the two age groups have similar drinking habits. The 40 year olds, after having consumed alcohol with habits similar to the post-adolescent phase typical of dry cultures, seems to have adopted consumption habits typical of their parents. This drinking culture into which they were introduced as children, was apparently embraced, and the “intoxicating” phase was still a part of it.
4. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Having reconstructed the consumption patterns of the interviewees, we then separated the phases in which they developed, starting from when they began to consume alcoholic beverages, until the actual moment of the interview. A "phase" can be defined as every period in which the consumption patterns remained relatively stable (York, 1995).

In considering the sociological aspects of the consumer's life, particular attention must be paid to the life events that lead the subject to consider modifying his consumption habits (the transition from one phase to another). All those interviewed have reduced – at one point or another – the quantity of alcohol consumed.

Upon analysing the reports, three prevailing models of consumption pattern can be categorised:

1. The use of alcohol gradually increases (in most cases during the teenage or young adult years) and remains a constant along the subject's life until the adult phase is reached, when it decreases (Graph 1);

2. Alcohol consumption rises gradually until reaching a peak that characterises a phase of elevated consumption\(^{29}\) (correspondent to the young adult period), after which it decreases (Graph 2);

3. Alcohol consumption varies considerably over the years: a pattern which is characterised by different phases (Graph 3).

4.1 THE CONSTANT CONSUMPTION MODEL

In this model, the use of alcohol gradually increased (during the adolescent/young adult period) and remained constant over the course of the subject's life. Alcohol consumption habits of those interviewed belonging to the group over 65 (two thirds) is reflected, while only 10% of the rest associated their own consumption pattern to this model.

In analysing the reports, it could be stated that the fluctuation of consumption patterns was relatively poorly impacted by the events in the subject's life. Those who fell under that pattern – unlike those who fell under the "peak consumption model" – did not place much importance on the various status transitions over their life course. If any transition had an impact on consumption habits, for some, it was that of going into retirement. Stating that this transition represented an important change in their lifestyle (due to the variation in their social life, exposure to alcohol, and/or physical activity reduction; with caloric foods such as wine not being required), some of the

\(^{29}\) The peak in this type of pattern represented the consumption phase in which the subject believed to have consumed the most alcohol.
Interviewees reduced their consumption. On the other hand, other interviewees declared that, as a result of their retirement, they had more free time to spend even with friends, and were more likely to be exposed to drinking.

Common to all the testimonies was the change in the subject’s consumption habits for “health” reasons. Some of the interviewees declared reducing their drinking because of digestive tract problems. (“heartburns”, "digestion problems”).

P62: Bari 65/70
…because of the burning feeling in my stomach that I felt … I realized it on my own, the doctor did not tell me. I suffered from heartburn and headaches so I decided to eliminate coffee and drink less wine. One glass was enough to help digestion. I feel better now. When I leave the table I don’t feel heavy but light.

P31: Piedmont, 65/70
I tried to diminish stomach irritation and heartburn, partly due to glycaemia, although at lunch I might have had an extra glass… during a wedding, or a union dinner as well… but usually I wouldn’t drink more than a glass at home. When I decided to start drinking less, I was around fifty, living in Turin, working and had two children. Life was going well …but then I began to feel the first stomach irritations. This was no different than today, just that instead of drinking one glass of wine, I had two or three. Sometimes at work (at Fiat) I would take a magnum of wine and a glass and drink it not only during meals, but during the whole day. After forty I didn’t do it anymore.

Most people changed their consumption patterns the moment they where diagnosed with an illness or directly after surgery.

P23: Piedmont, 65/70
I started consuming less alcohol around the age of forty five because my gall bladder starting hurting, and so I found it difficult digesting alcohol or greasy foods. In 1994 after a cholecystitis procedure, which didn’t solve my health problems, I was convinced that even though these problems weren’t too serious they were enough so to make me reduce. It is not that the procedure solved all my problems, but I didn’t return to a higher consumption level. Instead I maintained a limited intake of alcohol.

P68: Trieste, 65/70
The period in which I drank the most was between my thirties and sixties. After that, I had four by-pass operations and began drinking less, but better quality wine. I still drink at mealtime, however less. I can say that this change was not only due to the operations, but also to my new food habits and outlook on life. I have to take better care of myself to be healthier. Until I was forty-five/ fifty, I also drank whisky and cognac (not to get drunk, of course) but now I don’t drink them any more. It can happen during a dinner with friends, but rarely. I now avoid drinking liquor but I still drink wine. This is also because after having had the surgery, I was surprised to see the doctor offer me a glass of red wine for a number of days afterwards. As it is known, if consumed moderately, wine can be good for coronary arteries.

A good percentage of those interviewed changed their consumption habits in order to prevent health problems. These were individuals (predominantly seniors) worried about their health. They adopted what would be considered “healthy” lifestyles, in which alcohol (and food) consumption
levels had to be controlled. At times, this awareness of their own psycho-physical condition became “the organiser of their daily lives” (Calvi, 1993).

P72: Tuscany, 65/70
From a point of view regarding health, I have understood that it is better. The fundamental reason is that one’s health benefits from drinking less; one’s stomach, blood pressure… At the age of 45-50 when a person tends to drink a little more.. Then, in aging little by little, it’s important to drink less, as later on an individual’s health becomes more vulnerable.

P1: Friuli 65/0
I was always taught that meals could improve or deteriorate a person’s health. Therefore I say: “why should one eat or drink to feel sick?”. If I am aware that certain behaviour, or amount or quality of wine is bad, I will not wait for the doctor to tell me to reduce it. So when a doctor tells me that I am overweight and that I should reach a standard weight, I will do everything possible to reach that goal.

Hence, drinking less becomes part of a final strategy in controlling one’s health: as one gets older, health problems become more manifest than at younger ages., So more effort is concentrated on maintaining one’s mental and physical condition, and in “deceiving their bodies less” (ibid).30

P55: Bari, 65/70
Clearly the young are more superficial…as people grow older, they pay more attention to symptoms.

From the analysis of the interviews, there was a recurring pattern proposing health as a value to maintain and promote. Health was defined as the individual’s capacity to maintain or re-establish a positive idea of his/her psychological and physical well being. The well-being of a person “could be seen within the person’s quality of being” (Sen, 1994, p.63). Information seemed to play an important role in this regard.

P113: Turin, 65/70
Most probably my health choices are based a little on information or better still, on my cultural surroundings. It is true that over the last thirty years there has been a diffusion in health-oriented activities …. When I was young, we went skiing, but not because it was a healthy thing to do. Today, activities are more linked to health issues. Information in general is more focused on radio, television… when the TV is switched on, one finds discussions on fitness, health, fat … there is a great deal of sensitivity on the issue.

4.2 THE PEAK CONSUMPTION MODEL

In the second model (particularly with the interviewees between 40/45 years old)31 changes in consumer behaviour were influenced by three phenomena:

- Status changes

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30 All of the members of the elder age group of 65/70 declared being careful about their health, while only a minority of the younger age group admitted to being active in caring for themselves, even though they admitted recognising the importance of their health.

31 71.4% of the younger age group of 40/45 and 20.3% of the elder age group of 65/70 related to this model of consumption.
• The decision to take care of oneself
• Overcoming an uneasy or a difficult situation; whether individual, social, or in the family

4.2.1 Status changes

The stories of those interviewed, confirmed the empirical data found in numerous studies, and previously quoted, indicating that when the subject changed social position (from student to worker, military to civilian, single to married, from non-parent to parent), his/her roles were redefined.

As lifestyles changed, opportunities to drink decreased.

P 3: Friuli, 40/45 years old
I never drank liquor, a little wine if any, and some beer. Let’s say that I drank the most beer between the ages of 25 and 30, as a student. Between the ages of 20 and 22 I didn’t drink alcohol, as I practised competitive sports. After that I never overdid it…When I started to work I didn’t go out at night due to the work rhythm I had… Now even less since I started a family two years ago. I think though that work has had the biggest impact on my drinking habits.

P19: Piedmont, 40/45
Everything changed after marriage. Since I’ve been married, I might have gone twice to a discotheque. I’ll go out to dinner with my friends, during which we’ll drink a bottle of wine, not alone and then only once a week, and then not even every week. Marriage has changed my lifestyle and the occasions to be together with groups of people. We are often 8-10 people, all couples with life experiences of having a good time together and whose only objective is to spend a serene night. During the week, we usually don’t drink and I happily drink water, though sometimes I enjoy a beer with pizza or wine with dinner.

P50: Bari, 40/45
I have no vices … I drink normally. Between 18 and 30 I drank (yet moderately) because I went out with my friends more often than I do now that I work, have a family and three young children. We can say that since marriage and the birth of my children, I’ve drunk less. With my family, when can I see my friends? On certain days, when I return from work, I am exhausted and with a horrible headache and don’t want to see anyone.

Consumption patterns changed as they became incompatible with the social role of the individual. In the so called “wet” (Cottino, 1991) drinking cultures, certain educational messages were acquired during the primary socialisation phases, social norms and informal sanctions that predetermined (Zinberg, 1984) behavioural patterns of learned alcohol consumption. These were thus modalities of consumptions applied in the context and time of day in which they were consumed, influenced by one’s social environment. On the other hand, “dry cultures” (Cottino, 1991), followed a certain routine (getting drunk at weekends) while “wet” ones followed a broader range of consumption (places, times, frequencies, and use values).

The study showed that alcohol consumption was lower at lunch than dinner, probably because it was consumed away from home and could harm work performance.

32 85% of the younger age group of 40/45 and 76.9% of the elder age group of 65/70 whose lifetime consumption pattern could be associated with the second model, believed that their lifetime status transitions explained the changes in their consumption habits.
P33: Tuscany, 40/45
I feel like a more responsible person with the birth of my son. Under no circumstances do I want to lose control. I don’t know, becoming a parent has given me more responsibility and I never want my son to see me drunk. When I was younger, I sometimes did have a little too much to drink.

P38: Puglia, 40/45
I have short breaks at work and feel that if I drink, work will become more difficult. I have a job in a bank and tend to work more hours than are required by contract, which means I must always be alert, even for up to 10 or 11 hours. Alcohol makes you sleepy, which is not ideal for work. Also when you have certain responsibilities towards clients you can’t just leave when your work time is over.

P72: Tuscany, 65/70
It is not that I got drunk often, although I drank every now and then, but only responsibly. It is obvious that it is not good to be seen tipsy in public. It would certainly hurt your image. (subsequently this interviewee reduced his consumption levels further for health reasons.)

4.2.2 The decision to take care of oneself

Four of the members interviewed (all between 40 and 45 years of age) retained it necessary to diminish their alcohol consumption - after they reached the peak - and take better care of themselves.

Studies from the 1980s and ‘90s showed a cultural pattern of health becoming a condition for well-being (First part, ch. 4.7) that must be actively sought. Changing one’s consumption pattern meant embracing a healthier lifestyle. Healthier people would be “free from health concerns”. They would seem younger in age and would pay close attention to their mental and physical well-being, practise sports, follow a healthy diet. (Calvi, 1993).

The following testimony was a typical example.

P76: Turin, 40/45
It is based on these two following elements. First, the desire to pay more attention to my body, practising more sports and being more aware of my caloric intake. Secondly, I have found pleasure in drinking quality beer, wine and liquors and base my drinking decisions on quality. These are the two aspects that have altered my drinking habits. On the one hand, I have reduced the amount I drink, while on the other, I have improved the quality of my drink.

4.2.3 Overcoming an uneasy or a difficult situation

Feedback from the interviewees confirmed how changes in consumption patterns were not only influenced by the commitment of individuals to their roles, but also by the quality of the social relationships associated with them. Stressful events in a person’s life could result in consumption
pattern changes; an improvement in a family, individual or social situation could influence a change in habits (possibly even by completely abandoning certain ones).

P77: Turin, 65/70
The (consumption) increase came hand in hand with family problems. In 1983, when I was 49 Marco died. He was ten and he fell from the balcony while he was feeding pigeons. I got home and found him in the courtyard… Meanwhile there was also Paolo’s very difficult situation. He was 21 and on drugs. It was a horrible situation, and during that time my consumption rose. I was afraid of becoming an alcoholic and consequently reduced my consumption habits to normal levels.

P40: Puglia, 40/45
The cause [behind the change in consumption style] was when I realised that I was drinking when returning from work [at the time the interviewee had serious work problems]. The time I had available for my wife I spent drinking and sleeping. I therefore decided to reduce my alcohol consumption to drinking wine at meals so I could dedicate more energy to my wife and daughter. I was scared, and I told myself that if I went on like this I would seriously lose control. I also stopped drinking beer during office breaks as I would get sleepy. Now I only drink Coke.

4.3 THE MULTI-PEAK CONSUMPTION MODEL

The use of alcohol in this model varied considerably over the course of the years (graphically represented by more peaks). One out of ten interviewees associated his consumption pattern with this model. This was a typical example in which the subject’s consumption pattern was influenced by changes and particular events in his life. An example of such a pattern was provided by a 43 year old man from Trieste, who diminished his alcoholic consumption after marriage and his son’s birth.

[…] My wife didn’t drink, while I had the tendency to do so. When I was young I would go out drinking with my friends. Then when I got married and had children I had less time and more important things to do, which didn’t allow me to go out with my friends. Unfortunately my wife and I never had anyone else to help us with the kids. Working long hours I would come home late and tired, and would generally have no desire or energy to go out.

At 35 he changed job and his consumption pattern changed again.

I began to drink more when I began with this job: all my new colleagues drank and would often do so during breaks and after work. I had more free time when I began working for this urban cleaning company, and that had a big impact. It was easy to find friends to drink with. And then, in this job, at the time, we would to go from door to door, especially outside of the cities in the small towns, and it was easy to meet someone who would offer you something to drink out of kindness.

34 Ten members of the 40/45 age group and three from the 65/70 age group.
When he realized that his drinking habit could cause problems at work (as driver of the company car) he once again altered his consumption.

I then understood that I could not drink and drive, as I had a responsibility, and I began thinking differently. It has been a few years now since I’ve been drinking less. Yes, every now and then I meet someone with whom I might have a glass of wine, but I don’t exaggerate like I used to at the beginning.

The following story is of a retired 65 year old man from Florence. He reduced his level of consumption after his marriage and the birth of his children (after he was thirty). At the age of fifty, after the birth of his grandchildren, he felt the need to keep up with them and thus drank even less wine. He changed jobs when he was sixty, and spending more time out of the house, had more occasions to drink. Consequently he increased his consumption. Lately he has “slowed down”.

The 20s were the years of youth, and one began drinking wine at mealtimes, then would go out to the town feasts, and countryside, where there would be a number of festivals. With friends one would drink even more. These were the years in which alcohol consumption was at its highest, although always within certain limits.

I married at 26, so with family responsibilities and work I began to drink less. After I was 30, I had children, so there was less alcohol and entertainment, and more control.

I drank even less as I had to keep up with the grandchildren […] It was a period also where work kept me at home, so I went out less and drank less. At 60, I changed jobs and had more opportunities to go out; I was away from home more often at night, and so had more opportunities to drink, resulting in my drinking more. But now I have slowed down.

The conclusion from the two stories was that people’s consumption habits were determined by the social relations and role a person maintained (for example, by working in a specific company).

The opportunities to drink were structured by these social contexts (Neve et al., 2000).

Alcohol consumption habits could vary over the course of someone’s life, as we have seen when describing the single peak consumption model. Even in circumstances where someone has undergone a personally traumatic event in his/her life, many studies have shown that the consumption of psychoactive substances could be considered a form of self-medication.

P117 is a 45 year old male university professor who lives in Florence. He too, after marriage, reduced his alcoholic consumption, even “almost completely” stopping. Then he began drinking again at mealtimes. Afterwards, he entered into a period in which he began drinking “a lot”; it was a period when he was “unsatisfied, unhappy”, “he had problems at work”. When “things began to normalise”, he began drinking less again.

I began drinking between 15 and 20 years old, around 18. The graph shows two peaks […]. The first peak shows when I almost completely stopped drinking after marriage. Then I began drinking normally at mealtimes … After, there was the period I drank a lot … dissatisfaction, unhappiness … and now it has normalised… that is, the graph falls
because things have normalised. In a few words, just as the graph went up because I was having problems at work, it went down because things began returning to normal.

4.4 Differences in consumption habits between the two age groups

Research (Scafato et al., 1999; Cipriani et al, 2004) aimed at analysing consumption patterns of statistically significant samples of predetermined population segments showed that alcohol consumption was linked to age: as consumption fell with age, young people adopted different drinking habits from elder people. In comparing different age groups, “the lack of a precise definition concerning association with age groups (and thus a precise allocation to a historical timeframe) of the sample members meant that results could be interpreted as being connected to the stage of life or changing social position” (Saraceno, 2001, 24).

The connection between age and consumption habits could partially be explained by the fact that one drank less when one aged. But it could also be described by the fact that younger generations were adopting new consumption models. So even when they were older, they would adopt new models, different from those actually practised by the current elder generation. The concept of age group became important if one wanted to study how consumption patterns had changed over one’s life course. This became fundamental, as the phenomenon was studied by placing it in its historical context.

Interviews confirmed how the age groups were characterised by a specific consumption model (the 40/45 age group exhibited drinking patterns associated with the second model35, while drinking habits of the other one were better represented by the first). As the mechanisms permitting us to understand consumption habits of the two models were different, it was probable that the empirical evidence was an expression of social change, rather than of the life stage. In the second (and third) models, it was the status changes that drove changing consumption habits, whereas in the first model these factors were not as important.

Why did the transition from being single to being married influence the drinking habits of the younger age group, whereas the same transition in status apparently had no effect on the elder age group? It is clear that this sort of change must be interpreted in its historical context.

We studied whether the differences in consumption habits between the two age groups had an historical interpretation by focusing our attention primarily on two aspects:

- The socialisation process behind the introduction and use of alcohol (starting age, norms and sanctions, etc.);
- The values attributed to alcoholic beverage consumption.

35 Practically all of the interviewees in this segment were distributed between this model and the multi-peak model.
5. SOCIALISING WHILE DRINKING

5.1 THE CONTEXTS: FAMILY AND PEER GROUPS

The majority of the interviewees (belonging to both age groups) started drinking alcohol between 14 and 16 years of age. The two social contexts of learning were the family and peer groups.

This latter aspect represented a significant difference between the two age groups. The majority of the elder group placed less importance on peer group socialization. It was within the family that unhealthy and/or correct consumption habits were learned, and where individuals acquired a system of informal social norms and sanctions (Zinberg, 1984) regulating not only alcoholic beverage consumption, but also its abuse. This process of socialisation was typical of the “wet” cultures that saw “the abuse of alcohol, if ritually regulated, as an accepted part of social behaviour” (Cottino, 1991, p. 111).

It was within the family context that rules regarding “regulated abuse” (ibid, p. 111) were learned. Rather, excessive consumption was accepted by the community, and in certain circumstances encouraged, as long as there was no threat to social interaction (for example, drinking a little too much at a party).

P123: Piedmont, 65/70
My parents drank normally during mealtimes and taught me to regulate myself. With my friends, when we were in a group, we tended to drink a bit more, but without exaggerating- this happened only once!

Behaviour contrary to the norms was stigmatised and informally sanctioned (“my father let me have it”).

P100: Tuscany, 65/70
I always saw wine on the table and always drank that and only that, with the exception of Holy wine on Sundays, or when visitors came to the house. I started when I was around 13 or 14 years old. My father started pouring it in my glass. Then I started drinking bad wine with friends at town festivals, but at least it was something different … someone would get drunk … I, otherwise my father wouldn’t let me have it.

The family also represented an important social context for the younger age group.

P76: Turin, 40/45
I started when I was fourteen, maybe thirteen, because the culture of wine was very prevalent on both sides of my family. The origin of both sides was the farm, so the culture of drinking wine at mealtimes was always present. It was a very natural thing in my family- my grandparents were farmers who produced wine for home consumption.
They would produce the wine annually for the whole year, and then they would have it at home.

New drinking habits were learned within peer groups— with respect to the more traditional ones of their parents and grandparents. Drinking patterns were less integrated into daily life (with alcohol consumption away from mealtimes and concentrated during the weekends).  

P59: Bari, 40/45
Let’s say that drinking alcohol allows you to be more expressive and extroverted, but the problem is with later. The act of drinking strong spirits is connected with being in company—it is a social thing—not to drinking on your own. I will drink a little glass if there is someone who will drink it with me. But if one exaggerates, it becomes a problem. I once experienced a hangover and it resulted in my having health problems, even at work. So it is something to avoid and which I will explain to my children when they grow up. No one explained these things to me and I risked.

Rules regarding drinking at mealtimes or shortly afterwards and in controlled social contexts (especially wine) were learned in the family environment. Drinking other alcoholic beverages (beer and strong spirits) in social/group contexts was learned in peer groups.  

P33: Tuscany, 40/45
Wine was always present in my parents’ home and was thus always consumed. I remember my grandfather letting me taste wine from the reed that he used to use to bottle the wine. My wine consumption was initially limited to drinking a few fingers of it mixed with water at mealtimes, and grew between the ages of 15 and 20. It was between the ages of 20 and 30 that the real alcoholic consumption transpired with friends and company in general. It was a fact of cultural tradition, and I have memories of my grandfather bottling and putting wine into flasks, so it seemed to me a nice thing to do. It was a family rite, in the end. […] With friends, yes … that was an occasion to be together … it was a social occasion, so we drank together. Probably, if no one drank, I would have drunk less as well. Once in a while we did enjoy getting drunk … and abusing alcohol a bit.

P36: Puglia, 40/45
I started at school. At home, my parents drank wine at the table, but I was allowed to drink some only if we were celebrating something. I used to meet with my high school friends just to drink, let’s say, starting at 14 years old. We used to buy demijohns of wine, beer cans, whatever we found as long as it was alcohol; we absolutely needed to … today you say “get smashed”, transgress, feel older. But for as much as I tried, I was never able to feel the effects of alcohol my friends felt. I could always handle it in a good way. While my friends were there vomiting, I would be barely drunk.

P88: Turin, 40/45
I started at 15 years old because my father used to drink at mealtimes, and so I started at mealtimes as well. Then there were the peak moments when I would go out with my friends, and moments when I drank little or none at mealtimes because I was hardly ever home anymore. At my peak moment of drinking, I often drank with my friends and it was during that period that strong spirits were very popular. I have a high tolerance for alcohol, so we would go out one night a week and drink quite abundantly.

36 Several of the interviewees of the elder age group admitted to having adopted these drinking habits when younger, but the majority had not: more common was the habit to drink on social occasions such as parties. This did not mean that they did not abuse the alcohol consumption, but that such behaviour did not have getting drunk as its objective.

37 Also for the elder age group, the rules regarding the drinking of beer and hard liquor was learned outside the family context.
Drinking habits of the group had an impact on consumption styles of the individual members.

P10: Friuli 40/45
I knew a lot of people who didn’t drink. And I noticed that those who used to drink and were members of a group of friends who didn’t drink, were encouraged to drink less, and generally did so. Groups of friends who didn’t drink often encouraged drinkers to lower their consumption. It was probably absurd, but … I did witness it. At least in my group of friends, those who drank, altered their style and consumption significantly.

Structural changes in consumption of food (and other products) in Italy could explain the differences encountered between the drinking habits of the two age groups. In the 1970s, the development of mass consumption, characterised by a process of homogenisation in eating and drinking habits was accompanied by a process of differentiation, fuelled by the ever-increasing variety of goods (and alcoholic beverages) available for mass consumption (Fanfani and Salluce, 1997).

Members of the younger age group – those who were entering adolescence in the ‘70s – were thus exposed to new drinking habits (beer and strong spirits consumed in their free time) that accompanied traditional drinking patterns. This group was then able to compare different drinking styles (which their parents were unable to do) during their social drinking phases.

The intoxicating use of alcohol, which was integrated little into daily life, was abandoned by the majority of the younger group members, as life changes eventually impacted their drinking patterns. Eventually, they would adopt more integrated drinking habits that were very similar to those of their parents.

This empirical evidence confirmed what emerged from studies on living conditions of the young conducted in the ‘90s (Donati and Colozzi, 1997), which showed that more points of reference were present (and are still today) for the youth generations. A set of social rules existed in certain social contexts (frequented especially in certain periods of one’s life) that were totally different from those present in more institutionalised environments.

Intoxicating use of alcohol by the younger interviewees could not therefore be interpreted necessarily as evidence of malaise or deviation: it was simply a behaviour of consumption (and

38 Consumption of hard liquor began becoming popular in the ‘60s in a number of social classes (medium-high):
P113: Turin, 65/70, University Professor
The beginning corresponded to socialising activities with friends. It was not the case in my home. Not that they were contrari… It was tolerated but anyone who drank too much was always looked upon with suspicion… Once you saw more drunkards around. The beverages everyone started with were hard liquor and whisky typical of the period; they were instruments of personal growth, looked upon as innovations… It was a consumption style that was new to Italy in that period. Whisky was not drunk in Italy prior to that time and it was linked to the legends of the ‘60s cinema, the USA… It was a sort of status symbol in that it determined one’s position in a micro-social universe of the family and one’s friends… It was like cigarettes, to give oneself a certain aura… Somewhat of the same thing.

39 It was clear that consumption patterns of their parents were also eventually influenced by these structural changes. Many of the members of the elder age group claimed to have drunk (and still today drink) hard liquor.

40 It was integrated little because an intoxicating use would have a negative impact on daily social functioning.

41 The famous phenomenon of pluralistic norms.
abuse) that was determined by certain social norms. Such lessons did not damage the value those of more traditional drinking habits, which had a certain role in a specific phase of the individuals.

5.2 SOCIAL AND SELF-CONTROL

On the other hand, stories of the interviewees in both age groups were very similar, regarding social control of alcoholic beverage, consumption. As far as the younger age group was concerned, despite adopting a drinking culture foreign to that of the Mediterranean area (due to the historic phenomenon of “internationalisation of consumption”) traditional drinking norms were learned from the preceding generation (fathers and grandfathers), which included mechanisms of “automatic social control” (Quartini et al., 2001).

The expression “social control” means “the combination of mechanisms, reactionary actions and sanctions that a collective elaborates and employs in order to prevent the deviation of an individual or collective group from determined behavioural norms, by eliminating a deviation both by ensuring that the subject(s) returns to behaving in conformity with the norms and by impeding the deviation to be repeated or spread to others” (Gallino, 1993, p.190).

In “wet” cultures, individuals learn rules that sanction correct consumption behaviour, as well as the threshold beyond which behaviour is judged unacceptable (Cottino, 1991). While this form of socialisation favours forms of “self-control,” in that individuals integrate determined norms and values into their consciousness, it also backs forms of informal social control. The majority of those interviewed placed a lot of importance on “self-control”: an acquired capacity allowing individuals to distinguish between those who use alcohol in a “controlled”, “balanced” and “correct” fashion, and those who consume alcohol in an unacceptable way (according to the shared system of norms in their own social and cultural context).

P11: Friuli, 65/70
Well, we come from a family that has always had self-control with alcohol; it has always determined its own moral discipline.

P 5: Friuli 40/45
I believe a balanced person always knows how to control himself and to manage his alcohol. A person who exaggerates with alcohol is unbalanced, pretty much as with everything. I consider it a vice, because alcohol can be drunk together because you are obviously in company, and if you know how to handle yourself, it can be a partner in your social situation. But it has to end there and can’t go beyond, otherwise everything breaks down.

P16: Piedmont, 40/45

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42 The measures that sanctioned if and how different alcoholic beverages could be consumed in different physical and social contexts could be both informal and formal (addressed by law and applied by institutionalised entities). In “wet cultures”, the non-institutionalised social environment had a primary role in the employment of social control (Beccaria, Prina, 1996).
The trick was to realise on my own that already, after two Martinis, I would be happy, a bit stupid, would bug my friends, but I knew I could arrive up to that point. After a third Martini, I would start not understanding things; if you asked me what I said, I would reply – why, did I speak to you? I wouldn’t be completely drunk, but I would arrive at a certain point where up to then I would be “brilliant” let’s say. But after that point something snapped in me, I don’t know what, and that’s it, stop.

Abuse of alcohol in itself was not stigmatised. It was tolerated in certain social contexts and moments of the day and/or week (for example, it was acceptable to drink a bit more during the weekend, or at a party, etc.). It was generally tolerated as far as the person involved could ensure, by adopting different strategies, that the effect of the alcohol did not have any negative consequences on his/her ability to function socially and on his/her social relations.

P24: Piedmont, 40/45
In these cases I identify the “drinking too much”. There are times when I feel a little bit happy and then others, when I realise that I have passed my limits of resistance, at which point I either ask other people, or my wife to take me home or drive.

Analysis of the interviews seemed to point out how the system of norms typical of a “wet” culture, refuted both the use and abuse of alcohol, thereby avoiding that a “process of social construction of deviation be created” (Cottino, 1991, p. 111). A subject who in certain circumstances, (those foreseen by the shared model of consumption within the social group of reference,) “drank too much” (even to the point of altering his state of consciousness, rather, getting drunk), was not branded as a deviant. It was interesting to note how many of the interviewees stressed on several occasions during the interviews that they were neither “drunkards” nor “alcoholics” during their period of peak consumption.

P32: Friuli, 65/70
Normally, it seemed that it would be good for you, then it would be bad for you. You would seem to have more strength, then immediately afterwards, your strength sapped. When one worked so much in the fields, a glass of wine could’ve even been good for you. But I found that it would damage you when you went out with your friends to the bars, because they would offer to you this drink made of who-knows-what, and then you would arrive home with a headache. But, as I said, I was never a drunkard. I knew when enough was enough.

The absence of a process of negative branding influenced the moral development of these subjects, allowing them to maintain and reinforce their opinion of themselves as people able to control themselves.\(^{43}\)

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\(^{43}\) According to the inter-actional point of view of social relations (Becker, 1987; Lemert, 1951; Rubington and Weinberg, 1999), the way an individual defines his/her own situation and identity was a function of the definitions that other important people attributed to his/her situation and identity. If an alcohol consumer was branded as an “alcoholic”, or “drunkard” (thereby an unreliable, irresponsible, deviant person by his family, friends and/or colleagues of work, this perception could eventually affect his/her self-image and identity adopted. The reaction of these key people could therefore have a significant role in determining the future deviant behaviour of an individual as far as this point of view of the others in defining his own circumstances was “I fundamentally a drunkard?”). In this perspective, the attention was drawn to the processes that define behaviour as unacceptable, or deviant: “unacceptable behaviour is not a quality, present in certain behaviours and absent in others, but rather a product of a process that implies the reactions of other people to a specific behaviour.…” In short, that a specific act is unacceptable or not depends partly on the nature of the act itself (that is if...
This permitted them to organise their own identity in a way that their status as alcohol consumers did not become hegemonic, favouring the passage to the 40/45 age group, or the maintenance of the 65/70 one, of a more integrated style of consumption. As for other forms of behaviour, when excessive consumption becomes a drinking style that is “consolidated and rigid (...) it becomes a central and fundamental aspect of the identity of the person that abuses” (Damilano and Mussoni, 2002, p. 177).

We previously saw that, with consumption internationalisation, different systems of norms guiding the use and abuse of alcohol co-existed within our society. Consumption styles could be judged by referring to different criteria: the “intoxicating” use of alcoholic beverages (away from mealtimes and aimed at changing one’s conscious state) was more easily tolerated when occurring in determined circumstances by those adopting new consumption models. Instead, such use was stigmatised by those embracing traditional models; an “addicted” use of alcohol (that of an alcoholic or “drunkard”) was most probably stigmatised by both the groups.

The stories of our panel of interviewees confirmed the existence of both controlled and uncontrolled excessive behaviour. From a sociological point of view, only the second could be considered a problem, being a drinking behaviour that did not conform to those social rituals controlling alcohol consumption in determined social and cultural contexts.

P90: Piedmont, 40/45
In the last three years, I didn’t drink too much, nor did I get drunk. Before that, I would say that I regularly drank too much and frequently got drunk. At the weekends, you would eat out Saturday night and seeing that you were with friends, you would drink and return home drunk. On Sunday you would stay in bed to get rid of the alcoholic effects because Monday you had to return to work.

6. VALUES ATTRIBUTED TO ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

People learned consumption patterns that permitted them to satisfy specific needs. It was not possible to discuss the phenomena of alcohol consumption (or any other psycho-active substance) without analysing the significance individuals attributed to their consumption experience.

The consumption of a psychoactive substance is never an act without significance. Individuals always have a set of ideas which are learned in a specific historic-social context, that cover how the substance can be useful, how it can and should not be consumed (prohibited and stigmatised modes

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44 We qualify controlled (Zinberg, 1984) consumption as that type of consumption, though not occasional in nature and deprived of significance for the consumer, that does not interfere with one’s social, family and working relationships and with the health of the individual, and that is contained to those social rituals that allow for certain forms of alcohol consumption so as to avoid damaging or undesirable effects (both at an individual and social level).

45 Consumption models and needs were historically determined.
of consumption), and concerning the needs that can be legitimately satisfied (nourishing, quenching thirst, and curing oneself, etc.) and those that cannot (Palmonari, 1994).

Historically, alcohol has been used as a food, medicine, and a euphoric -inducing substance with which to alter one’s conscious state (Cottimo, 1991). Since each of these functions has been regulated in various societies by specific legal systems, alcohol could have been consumed in a "correct" or "deviant" way (as it still is today).

In this chapter, we will describe the functions (the values associated to use) that the people interviewed associated with alcoholic beverages and the differences found between the two age groups.

Upon analysing the interviews, we can state that today alcohol is considered to be:

- a food;
- a substance that produces euphoria, "leads to parties" and facilitates social relations;
- a drug that can be used to compare uneasy situations.

These uses, on the one hand, are not mutually exclusive (for example, in the traditional consumption model alcohol is a food, but also a substance that facilitates social relations.) On the other, each use can characterise a specific phase of the consumption pattern (a youth can adopt a consumption style in which anaesthetic value predominates, while after marriage a different style is embraced that emphasises nutritional value).

6.1 THE NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Alcohol, and in particular wine, nourishes. In our country the predominant value associated to consumption has been nutritional. For many of the interviewees (almost all of the elder age group and a majority of the younger age group\(^{46}\)) wine is part of the diet (for a few of the younger interviewees, even beer consumption can have this sort of value).

P68: Trieste, 65/70
Currently as I have already told you, I drink only good wine when I eat (food.) In the old days, one drank homemade wine of peasants. Now instead, one tries to drink good wine. I want to taste the quality. Let's say that I have always kept the habit of drinking while at the table; I don't go to bars. Yes, it happens that if I meet a friend, perhaps we go out to drink a glass, but I can say that almost always this is combined with lunch, or more often, adinner at a restaurant.

P 9: Friuli, 40/45
The quantity I drink reduces itself for the most part to sipping while eating, and sometimes afterwards, instead, there may be a party or something. But it is not a normal thing ... Wine is food. I cannot drink water while eating.

\(^{46}\) Around 20% of the interviewees in this age group associated alcohol with a socialising/convivial function
No, because wine for me is always part of the eating experience. I’ve always been taught to drink at the table, and I grew up seeing wine as part of a correct diet. For this reason, I have never overdone it, because for me it has the same importance as any other element of my diet, which I have always tried to keep balanced and regular.

The excerpts of the previous interviews brought to light a peculiar aspect of a "wet" culture such as the Mediterranean one: "in order for the diet to be perceived as sufficiently adequate" it is necessary that "wine never [be] lacking during meals" (Cottimo, 1991, p.41). In addition, wine, according to the traditional consumption model, was considered a substance that, for its nutritional and energetic value, had to be consumed when carrying out particularly heavy labour (especially in the countryside).

This dimension tied to nutritional value (the satisfying of energy needs) was associated to a specific social context: one typical of a peasant society (ibid). It was not a coincidence, in fact, that interviewees associating alcohol consumption with the satisfying of energetic needs belonged to the elder age group, and had either been farmers or grown up with alcohol in a peasant culture.

Since I used to do heavy jobs, (I started as a kid,) I liked to drink a few glasses of wine. Then in the morning I always ate, as for me morning was lunch time. I always liked to drink a glass of wine, and with the passing of years, as I grew older I drank a bit more, because the hardships were there and you were stimulated to drink a little more. Not too much though, but I did drink. Then slowly you decrease or increase ... in the families it’s like this, where work is heavy, there is always wine, and wine helps, doesn’t it? It gives you a charge, but not in excess. Thanks to a glass of wine sometimes I felt strong, I used to take off with the tractor. For all the years that I worked in smelting, I used to do the three shifts, even at night, and also worked 6-7-8 hours at home as well in the fields. certainly on average 12-13-14 hours a day, for 18-20 years.

The experiences shared by the younger interviewees (especially those belonging to the younger age group) demonstrated how increasing attention was given to the quality of the wine-food. This trend was part of a generalised phenomenon of a growing attention by consumers regarding the nutritional and qualitative aspects of food: "the consumer "destroyer" has ended: today we have the aware consumer, with a personal nutritional project, for whom purchasing means proceeding with coherent choices regarding a personal nutritional style" (Calvi, 1993, p.124).

But I like wine and beer, thus drinking them is as important as eating well. Objectively, there is a certain importance in the pleasure of taste and flavour. Maybe this is correlated with the decrease in consumption because I tend, since I reduced consumption, to prefer the taste to the quantity of alcohol. I prefer a glass that you drink with a meal, to drinking a litre of table wine found in a restaurant. A shift from quantity to quality [...] The importance that I currently assign to drinking is tied to quality, therefore to the flavour of what I drink. Today there is more importance given to flavour and if you wish, less propensity to be hectic.
In this perspective, the value attributed to alcoholic beverage (usually wine) use, was not simply nutritional, but tied to an experience of "pleasure" that "involved all the senses".

P60: Bari, 40/45
Alcohol was the common element between many people who had different jobs, with different ways of thinking and living when they met together and ... drank. Then it had a euphoric function: pulling all-nighters. You know that a glassful more allows you to weaken your inhibitions, loosen your tongue, throw yourself in a dance. Today alcohol for me is a pleasure to be enjoyed with moderation and an attention to quality. A pleasure that involves all the senses: sight, smell, I always sniff wines, the taste.

6.2 THESOCIALIZING/CONVIVIAL VALUE

But alcohol does not only have a nutritional function. If it were so, people would just stay home and drink alone. Alcoholic beverages also have a social function since:

- They facilitate social relations, as alcohol is an effective "lubricant", that can favour communications, the sharing of experiences and helping to make someone feel at ease:

P106: Florence, 40/45
But, let’s say, that initially it was a reason to party, be in company, and since I am a shy person, in order to loosen my tongue a bit... a little glass brings me a bit of happiness compared to how I usually am.

P 3: Friuli, 40/45
The consumption of alcoholic beverages in my life is important for my relationships, for the company, even because I have never exaggerated and therefore it is difficult to say... don't know, with company, you go out to a place to be all together. It is clear that you drink a little to stay together, alone there would be no reason to.

P119: Puglia, 65/70
There was the fact of being together...friends would come and you would do something, prepare lunch and open a good bottle... but never get into the habit of wine.

- They favour the feeling of belonging to a group:

P38 Puglia, 40/45
Well, spending more time with friends brings you to adapt to the group behaviour: if you didn’t drink with friends you’d be excluded from the group and therefore automatically you had to blend in with the habits of what many call a “pack.” Today wine is an excellent “bread spread” and as I said, in the right doses, it has a therapeutic function.

- They are consumed during holidays, both because certain beverages are traditionally and symbolically associated with specific ritual and recreational occasions (baptisms, birthdays, etc.), and because they loosen inhibitions, "bring happiness", "bring good humour, thereby avoiding depression":

As I have already said, for me the consumption of alcohol is tied to being with family and with friends, to those evenings in which one can let go a bit (without exaggerating), to the moments of feasts, joy, relax. It has this type of importance. To celebrate special events, a good wine, or a sparkling wine, is indispensible. That it is on the table is symbolically important.

Let's say, fundamentally: I like to drink good wine, therefore I am a passionate fan ... I pick which to open, I choose them in the wineries, I taste... it is a beverage that interests me and I enjoy discussing it in company, therefore it is a topic I like to bring up even at a dinner. The idea is not to get silly, but a glass at the dinner table takes away some inhibition, shyness and makes the evening brilliant without exaggerating...it does not make me sleepy. Wine makes me feel good.

As we have previously seen, when confronting the topic of social control, a social use is regarded positively as long as it does not harm the ability to socialise. One may be without inhibitions, but "only up to a certain point".

There is also the pleasure of being in company when drinking a glass... it's positive, in the sense that there is little to be ashamed of, as they say, it's always all right "in a tavern". Certainly being always in a tavern is an ugly thing, but in our towns it is actually an element of socialisation. In reality it is always the moment at which one meets with others, and often not with the limited and less noble goal of just drinking, but it is really to talk, it’s the tavern ... therefore I often say it’s useless to be white cemeteries, but instead recognise the reality of the situation and of society... unfortunately what’s lacking is the sense of limits. On this I agree, because this positive social aspect of wine has a negative connotation in that being together can become dangerous because together with a person who reaches a euphoric state, you can laugh and reason and joke about it, but as soon as you pass that limit (of the euphoric state), the experience becomes negative, even dangerous, because of misunderstandings.

Wine was not drunk to be hooligans at night, as is the case with today's youth, but because it made us sturdier and our meals tastier.

6.3 THE SOCIALIZING/INToxicATING VALUE

In the previous phrase, while describing a stereotypical representation of the relationship between youth and nightlife, one of the interviewees (belonging to the elder age group) attributed a socialising value to the youths that must be stigmatised, since alcohol was not consumed only to facilitate relationships. The interviewee described a dimension of transgression to the social drinking habits of the young. In this consumption model (that characterised the first phase of the

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47 This model also exhibited a socialising aspect as the alcoholic beverages – usually beer and hard liquors – were consumed in groups.
drinking career of many interviewees belonging to the younger age group\textsuperscript{48}) one could tread the line of abuse, since "abuse is deliberately practiced with a demonstrative (...) or provocative scope" (Forni, 1997, p. 112).

P 4: Friuli, 40/45
Now I drink a beer because I like the taste, not because I want it to make me get out of control.

P111: Florence, 65/70
When young you get rowdy, especially if you are together with many, to prove yourself, for competition, challenge ... then you realise that it makes no sense to drink that way, so you reduce or even stop.

It was not, however, a behaviour adopted by people "without rules". As we previously illustrated (see paragraph on alcohol consumption socialisation), it was a behaviour oriented by a specific normative system, allowing spaces (discos, pubs, etc.) and time (leisure) in which drinking could/had to be carried out.

In order to understand the significance that this consumption model had on many interviewees, it was necessary to focus our attention on leisure activities.

As Elias and Dunning (1989) sustained, leisure activities functioned by loosening tension from stress through the search for excitement. This search in leisure activities was complementary to the control and containment of emotions in daily life. According to the two authors, one could be understood without the other. They asked themselves why alcoholic beverages were generally consumed in the context of leisure activities: “\textit{To explain the social functions of drinking, it is not sufficient to notice that the loosening of a person’s inhibitions due to alcohol consumption produces a temporary sense of well-being. If people consumed alcohol only for this well-being they would drink at home. It is very probable that people drink alcohol in company because the loosening of inhibitions facilitates mutual friendly stimulation at a relatively high level of emotion, in other words it favours the expression of the essence of sociability}” (ibid, p. 153)

It was true, Elias and Dunning asserted, that there were rules prohibiting the passing of certain limits in the expression of excitement, but “\textit{there is always the risk that the situation may get out of hand. It is possible that even playing with fire, in this case, is part of the pleasure. Like in many other forms of leisure activities, this playing with fire, risk, seems to contribute to the pleasing excitement and thus pleasure (...) Nearing the limit of what is socially permitted and at times surpassing it, in other words, the limited crossing of social taboos in group situations, probably adds flavour to these reunions}” (ibid, p. 154).

\textsuperscript{48} The members in the 65/70 age group who claimed to have adopted this consumption model described a lifetime pattern characterised by one or more peaks (a trend typical of the members of the younger age group).
If the goal of drinking in an exaggerated fashion were that of searching for excitement in leisure activities, one could consume other illegal psychoactive substances giving them the same results. It was therefore not surprising that almost 40% of the members of the younger age group admitted to having used cannabis, associating it with the same social function as alcohol.

P117: Florence, 40/45
Yes, when I was young I smoked marijuana... a lot. I did it for the same reasons that I drank alcohol: to generate euphoria, a sense of pleasure, social behaviour... to share a sense of pleasure with others.

The socialising/intoxicating model, as we have previously seen, was connected to certain ranks of social status: when status was changed, so did the style of consumption.

P2: Bari, 40/45
Yes, I'd roll joints (...). I would smoke them for the same reason I drank alcohol. I stopped using them because I reached a point in my life where I had to draw conclusions: when young I lived for the moment, the day. Today I have responsibilities: work, family, my wife. Having to think of the future in terms of stability: this has been the key to my change.

If different psychoactive substances could carry out the same function, it was also true that not all alcoholic beverages had the same function: if, for example, wine were predominantly "tied to food", a strong spirit would not necessarily have any "relation with what had been eaten".

P59: Bari, 40/45
Let’s say that the consumption of alcohol leads you to be more expressive and extroverted, but the problem is afterwards. The consumption of strong spirits for me is tied to being in company, it is not to be done alone. I’ll drink a shot if somebody else drinks one with me. But if you overdo it, it becomes a problem [...] During meals the drinking of wine was tied to food. In the summer, fresh wine was quenching, like today a glass of water can be, and it was tied to company, to partying.

6.4 THE ANAESTHETIC/SELF THERAPEUTIC VALUE

In this consumption model, alcoholic beverages were considered a "means" to soften negative psychological states such as anxiety, depression, etc. Upon analysing testimonies, one could notice that this sort of value had always been accompanied by other use values, having never been adopted by the interviewees as their exclusive consumption model over the course of their lifetime. One interviewee out of ten (there were no relevant differences between the two age groups) declared having used alcohol for such a function.

49 Only one member of the elder age group admitted to having consumed cannabis at university.
In literature, numerous studies have documented this purpose of alcoholic beverages. The results of these studies identified how a relationship was created between a stressful event, the capacity to cope of the subject and alcohol consumption (Neve et al., 2000; Gorman and Brown, 1992). Alcohol could be served to "numb" the suffering that a determined problem brought to the subject (loss of work, separation, family loss, family conflict, work problems etc.).

But two sub models of anaesthetic consumption could be distinguished. The first model entailed a behaviour integrated with consumption style: typical of this was that when the subjects "felt under stress", they drank to "drown the bad feelings", "to evade" the hardships of daily life.

P39: Puglia, 40/45
I tend to drink more when... I want to "drown my bad feelings", when my state of mind is particularly under stress. Let's say that drinking for me is often a "way to burst out", do a thing that loosens me, "makes me go wild" even though I never reach the point of getting drunk.

P11 Friuli, 65/70
We have noticed differences also, [...] In our area we had, many drainage works - to treat the canals so that water would drain. Therefore many people sweat to build these drainage canals, all done with the shovel, there was no equipment like there is today. And therefore, when coming back from work, we had the occasion to drink wine. Why? We drank because we were tired. We drank thinking that we could run away from that fatigue so that we could start again the next day. Here, this was the category of people who drank too much. We noticed that their health deteriorated; as they aged, their physical condition worsened compared to those who drank less.

P63: Bari, 65/70
I drank to evade... when we used to sail, in moments of solitude etc, (I am not saying drowning,) but we found compensation for that which we were lacking, our family, our wwives... many times I drank alone, more often with friends, because I used to drink to be together.

The second sub-model of anaesthetic consumption assumed an "exceptional" behaviour, characterised by an atypical response of the subject to a critical "exceptional" phase pertaining to an individual's life history (a separation, a family loss, etc.)

P77: Turin, 65/70
Well, there were all the serious matters that I had said before, the death of M. in 1983, the illness of A. that started in 1988 and then the ugliest phase of P. that lasted ten years. P., in 1980 was hospitalized with Hepatitis B that he certainly contracted by injecting [...] I was burdened physically also because there was a period when I had four or five jobs and I used to work a lot. Then, when A. got sick, it was necessary to stay up at night, there always had to be someone with her. Alcohol always gives you the illusion of relief, but then it turns out not to be true – of relief for at least a moment, of giving you a little push. The objective was to numb yourself a bit when the stress became very strong and the pain also turned physical.

For an overview of the literature on biographic events and the abuse of psychoactive substances, reference can be made to the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute of the University of Washington (2001).
I also reached drinking six litres of beer, and at times even more per day. This was all before I came to live here. I used to live on Corso Giulio Cesare. Especially when we were on unemployment pay...I remember the anger of that period and how I used to let off steam that way. When I was on temporary unemployment, there was anger, bad temper, many problems [...] There was a lot of bitterness. I remember they used to tease us. I still remember my colleagues working at Fiat who weren’t on temporary unemployment and used to tell us that they would pay us with their money... But we didn’t want severance pay [...] We passed some moments when there was a lot of anger and it was necessary to let off steam, and therefore... Like someone who gets drunk for a difficult moment...There were many bad moments, many who killed themselves, jumping under trains.

The substantial change came when I separated from my wife which as I said before, upset me a lot. In that period I actually drank a lot more, not only in company, but also on my own.

The model of anaesthetic consumption was generally abandoned once the critical situation was overcome: it was evident that the process of passing from a problematic use to a non-problematic one (especially when the problematic use was synonymous with a situation of being ill) could be more or less complex, perhaps requiring the assistance of informal resources (friends, family) and/or formal ones (social and health workers).

6.5 The differences noticed between the two age groups

In comparing the feedback of the two interview groups, significant differences regarding the function of consumption emerged:

- Almost all of the interviewees of the elder age group adopted a traditional model of consumption (known as "Mediterranean") in which alcohol was associated with a nutritional function as well as a socialising/convivial one; obviously social and cultural changes that took place in our country starting in the Seventies also conditioned consumption styles of the members of this age group. Several interviewees declared having adopted a "mixed" behaviour, in which beverage consumption (often strong spirits) between meals was integrated with a more traditional model;

- over half of the interviewees of the younger age group practiced a predominantly socialising/intoxicating use of alcohol (therefore exclusively away from meals), characterised above all by the consumption of beer and strong spirits, certainly influenced by the models of behaviour of the "dry" cultures;
• the interviewees who adopted a more traditional model of consumption characterised by a socialising/nutritional value of use, and who modified their individual consumption habits, reduced the quantity of alcohol consumed\(^{51}\).

The traditional model, adopted by most of the members of the elder age group, was that pattern of consumption in which alcohol use grew gradually (the period of adolescence/youth) and then remained constant for a long period over a person’s lifetime. Instead, the consumption pattern of the members of the younger age group illustrated an interesting "action-oriented learning mechanism": the traditional model of consumption, taught by the family, was that which the subjects had adopted after abandoning the socialising/intoxicating model, once their situations changed due to different life transitions. The historical-social process of "the internationalisation of consumption styles" did not seem to have reduced the influence of the traditional model typical of a "wet" culture: if anything, those who were adolescents in the 1970s were exposed to, as previously documented, several consumption models.

7. THE REDUCTION OF CONSUMPTION: SOME INTERPRETATIONS

In any study of individual life developments, a sociologist must always “conduct a double level of analysis, that which refers to the individual in flesh and blood, and that which refers to the typical individual. (…) The typical individual doesn’t only speak for him/herself, but also for the entire context in which he/she is placed” (Olagnero and Saraceno, 1993, p. 13).

The majority of the interviewees believed that their consumption patterns were similar to those they knew (who belonged to the same age group), so the lifetime consumption patterns also tended to be similar. The members of each group considered certain aspects of the consumption model to be particular to their age group\(^{52}\): they recognised that the factors inducing them to modify their consumption habits, were common to other members of their generation.

We have seen how both models allowed us to explain the different mechanisms behind a specific course of action. Substantially, the individual’s choice to modify his/her own consumption style by reducing the quantity of alcohol consumed could be influenced by a status transition or need to protect his/her own health (especially in the presence – or fear – of specific pathologies).

We have seen, however, that the differences between the two models were explained only by adopting a historic interpretation (by using the group concept.) Otherwise we would not have been able to explain why life transitions had had a visible impact on alcohol consumption only on the

\(^{51}\) These interviewees had also learned the norms regulating the traditional consumption model.

\(^{52}\) The “peak consumption model” for the younger age group, the “no-peak consumption model” for the elder age group.
younger age group (only the life transition to retirement was claimed by the elder age group to have had an impact on their consumption patterns\textsuperscript{53}).

So what were the situational mechanisms that, given the social and cultural contexts in which our interviewees lived, influenced their behaviour?

7.1 Changes in Employment Status

The industrialisation and increasing tertiary nature of our country’s economy has had a significant impact on the labour market, changing its context, tempo and production rhythm.

An analysis of the feedback from the interviewees showed how these changes, requiring an increase in efficiency and productivity at work, and a certain structuring of one’s time during the day (working, forced, free, and leisure time), have modified the traditional patterns of life and consequently also the consumption patterns.

As documented in the first section, in a prevalently agricultural society (as was that of Italy in the immediate post-war period) the energy requirements of a farmer were also satisfied by alcohol consumption (especially wine), as this consumption model had had little impact on the individual’s ability to function socially\textsuperscript{54} – due to the type of work and the organisation of time that characterised such a society. In one with a more industrial and tertiary nature, driven by a greater emphasis on productivity, the role of alcohol in daily life was reduced.

Moreover, the growing industrial and tertiary economy partly altered the traditional mealtime culture, of which wine was an essential element: this resulted in an increasing importance of meals outside of the home, where wine was consumed less. The changes in the labour market, and way of working and organising time could only partially explain the differences encountered between the two age groups. (compare. First part, par. 4.3 and following).

The interviewees of the elder age group who were not occupied in the primary sector also had to change their lifestyles and consumption habits. An analysis of the interviews shows how this age group was nonetheless able to adapt the traditional consumption model to integrate alcohol consumption into their daily lives (the no-peak model representing their life consumption confirmed this). What changed with this model with respect to the traditional farmer one were the energy and caloric alcohol levels\textsuperscript{55}: the role at mealtime and function as a food accompaniment as well as its social role all remained intact.

It would seem easier therefore, to integrate the traditional consumption model into modern daily life than the intoxicating consumption one. This empirical evidence highlighted an interesting

\textsuperscript{53} As can be recalled, a life transition could influence consumption in both directions: it could lead to an alcohol consumption increase as well as a decrease.

\textsuperscript{54} As we have sustained on more occasions, a “wet” culture stigmatised a consumption behaviour that compromised the more important social functions.

\textsuperscript{55} There were testimonies illustrating that the consumption of alcohol during the day was connected to the type of activity carried out.
social mechanism: that the organisation of work and how time was structured impacted the evolution of consumption patterns of the different social groups in a way controlled by cultural norms regulating alcohol use, and that the, members of these groups referred to these norms.

Proof of this theory was that the members of the younger age group had shifted from an intoxicating model of consumption to a traditional one. When changing status, they had decided that their consumption levels in the intoxicating model would have had a negative impact on their ability to function socially (and on their productivity at work). This was possible because they had been exposed to a more traditional model of consumption to which they could refer: they learned – in the “wet” culture – not only the rules regarding alcohol use, but also those concerning abuse, that did not have a negative impact on their social lives. Instead, in the “dry” cultures, consumption behaviour was largely regulated by restrictive norms (you must not do): in this type of culture, it was probably more difficult to acquire strategies regulating abuse aimed at minimising the negative effects of abuse. These strategies were generally the product of proactive norms – you do like this – and the presence of informal means of social control (both characteristics of which were typical of “wet” cultures).

7.2 Changes in the structure of consumption

As alcoholic beverages are consumer goods (goods like many others) with which consumers can satisfy different needs, trends in alcohol consumption can also be partly explained by an analysis of the changes in the consumption structure that Italy went through in the 1970s. The decline in alcohol consumption occurred during this historical period, which saw “a modernisation of consumption in Italy with the emancipation of large sectors of the population from the traditional consumption models” (Livolsi, 1994, p. 185).

This model “was characterised by several fundamental factors: the objective of consumption tends to reduce to a simple reflection and reproduction of one’s existence; goods are chosen on the basis of their functionality, savings and parsimony; information for consumption originates from the closest social circles (relatives, friends); the locations of acquisition are chosen on the basis of proximity; time for purchasing does not have its own autonomy, it is “hidden” within other daily activities” (ibid, p. 185-186).

The modernisation process of consumption was completed the following decade, following profound socio-economic changes.56

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56 “The computer revolution, transition from a standardised production to one that is more responsive to individual needs, growth of the entertainment business as an important tertiary industry, long favourable economic development between the late ‘80s and early ‘90s (Ginsborg, 1998, 163).
Four principal elements were identifiable in this new phase, characterised by “a much richer consumption wave – in all senses – and much more articulated than the previous one” (Ginsborg, 1998, p. 163):

- Hedonism, which oriented social behaviour towards seeking entertainment, pleasure, dreams, and adventure;
- The desire for knowledge, which oriented consumption towards increasing the amount of information possessed (the development of the internet is an example);
- A greater attention to aesthetics, orienting consumption towards fashion and personal care for one’s appearance;
- A greater attention to health, orienting consumption towards personal health care and the protection of one’s physical-psychical well-being (ibid, p. 161-164).

In this phase “energy [was] shifted from the simple satisfaction of the individual’s primary needs – in the most economic and functional way possible – to the exploration and expression of the consciousness through information and the purchasing and consumption of goods and services offered in the market” (Livolsi, 1994, p. 188). In addition, consumption modernisation was accompanied by an internationalisation of consumption habits (Fanfani and Salluce, 1997).

Placing the analysis of the interviewees’ alcoholic consumption in this socio-historic perspective, several situational mechanisms could be identified influencing the consumption behaviour of our panel. First of all, the members of the younger age group, having been exposed to alcohol consumption during the transitional phase, were central to the process of change, innovation and integration of the consumption models. They represented both a break and an innovation because, as our stories told, they had initially adopted non-traditional consumption models (both for the type of beverages consumed as well as the way they were consumed – frequency, quantity, locations) similar to those of “dry” cultures. Leisure (loisir) activities assumed more and more importance in the organisation of one’s time, and specific consumption behaviours were linked to such activities, of which alcohol drinking (beer and strong spirits) was a significant component.

Simultaneously, this group of people were important integrators because, having learned the traditional norms from their families, they were able to modify their consumption style when coming across a transition (change in status), thereby avoiding the negative consequences of an exaggerated use of alcohol regarding their ability to function in society. They did not seek the...
intoxicating dimension of alcohol any longer. Instead, they sought its alimentary and socialising functions. They rediscovered wine (drinking less, though, than their parents and grandparents), especially that of quality, and many continued drinking beer and (with different modalities of consumption than in the past) strong spirits.

In addition, a growing sensitivity to health issues in society also led to a greater attention to the food and drink consumption. The reduction of alcohol intake, especially for the members of the elder age group, could be interpreted as one of the outcomes of this social and cultural phenomenon. There was no doubt, as epidemiological studies demonstrated, that people drank less alcohol as they aged. What needed to be highlighted was the existence of new attitudes towards health, which were characteristic of recent times: health was not only a condition where illness was absent (and therefore drinking behaviour was not modified until one got sick), but it was a condition that had to be preserved and promoted (Beccaria, 2004). For this reason, information on health issues represented an increasing importance in the modernisation of consumption. Many of the interviewed, especially those belonging to the elder age group, declared having obtained information on “alcohol and health” from television programmes. This sort of information influenced lifestyles and alimentary habits.

Feedback from the elder age group illustrated another important phenomenon: frequent health checks. The more the elder group members underwent health checks, the more likely “health problems” emerged (such as those unidentified without a medical visit, for example, cholesterol levels), thus compelling changes in alcohol consumption. It was clear, then, that the containment of alcohol consumption was a phenomenon related to the cultural and organisational reasons introduced earlier, as well as to the accessibility of health services (and more generally, to health policies).

7.3 Changes in the Family and the Relationship between the Sexes

The changes in the family structure and the relationships between men and women that took place in our country beginning in the 1970s impacted social relations and lifestyles, having an indirect effect on their consumption models (compare. First part, par. 4.3). We showed earlier how transitions in family life (from single to married, from childlessness to parenthood) modified lifestyles (and consumption habits) of the members of the younger age group: the interviewed born

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60 Health sensitivities affecting lifestyles and eating and drinking habits could be identified in the younger interviewees as well.
61 It was clear how this behaviour was adopted by many of the interviewees.
62 Those who, due to their lifestyles, spend more time in front of the television.
63 Or the need to prevent specific pathologies.
64 Beginning in the mid ’70s a series of cultural and normative changes (in 1975, the new family law was passed) favoured the secularisation of the family (Saraceno and Naldini, 2001). Comp. chap. 4.3.
in the first half of the ‘60s claimed their life styles had changed by marrying and having children. Such shifts in status changed the way they used their free time, significantly reducing opportunities to drink alcohol in certain ways (social/intoxicating) and encouraging them to adopt more traditional consumption models (with alcohol adopting a greater alimentary and social value).

These changes also affected the way the interviewees defined themselves and their personal circumstances (moral development) in view of their new roles (husband, father). It was not a coincidence that many of those interviewed associated the changes with “responsibility”. The question to answer was: why did a marriage (or the cohabitation with a partner) and the birth of a child encourage members of the younger age group to spend less free time with their friends (especially on their own) and to place more importance on free time spent with their partners and children65? And, on the other hand, why did the same situation not manifest itself with the members of the elder age group when they had married or become fathers?

The distribution of different daily activities over the course of the day (paid work, free time, caring activities, domestic tasks, etc.) was not only connected to the organisation “of social time outside the family” (Saraceno and Naldini, 2001, p.197), but also “strongly connected to gender, age, position within the family” (ibid). During the 1980s and ‘90s, the patriarchal model of family organisation weakened, and the participation rate of women (and wives) in the workforce increased. This contributed to changing the relationship between the members of the family66: the weaker members – women and children – made “themselves heard as never before” (Ginsborg, 1998, 176). Such a phenomenon evidently influenced the way men allocated their time between different activities.

As sustained by the authors of a time-series study realised on a sample of alcoholic beverage consumers, “the manner in which positional roles are structured and acted upon has been deeply transformed in the last few years. The now obvious ‘revolution in women’s employment and family patterns’ (Gerson, 1993) has modified not only women’s roles, but also the manner in which men have come to involve themselves in family life and fulfil the responsibilities of fatherhood.” (Paradis et al., 1999, p. 54) It is therefore probable that these changes more heavily impacted the married and family life of the younger men (and women). And this could explain the differences we encountered between the lifetime consumption patterns of the two age groups.

65 We do not know how much time this group of interviewees actually spent with their children or partners. Several studies (Sabbadini and Palomba, 1995) showed that a persistent disequilibrium continues to exist in couples regarding the distribution of their time. It was evident however, that the younger age group placed more importance on spending time with the family than did the elder age group.

66 We must not forget that the increase of women in the workforce was not matched by a corresponding increase of men staying at home (Saraceno and Naldini, 2001).
8. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION: A “PRIVILEGED” LOOK

Explanations of the social mechanisms behind the consumption decline have been discussed and studied with several key witnesses\(^{67}\), whose observations represented a valuable complement to the output of the interviews. The opinions expressed, not always in agreement, highlighted the more significant aspects of Italy’s drinking culture, and the role of socio-economic factors in recent changes.

We saw that changes in drinking habits of alcohol, and wine in particular, affected the two age groups differently. The elder age group drank wine either as an accompaniment to meals, or as a socialising instrument, as they had throughout their lives. On the other hand, for the 40–45 age group, not only did wine represent an important part of a healthy diet, but it also had an important role in confirming social prestige. Social distinction was also expressed by alimentary habits of the individual (Bourdieu, 1983): working classes preferred abundance and simplicity in the assortment of wine and food, whereas the middle classes chose wine and food with other criteria, such as authenticity, rarity, area of origin, approach. For example, wine in cartons was typically drunk by the lower classes.

*Journalist specialised in oenology:* I thought these changes were always due to a different way of seeing alcohol consumption: the 60–70 year old person today came from a period when wine was simply a habit, having this link with wine as a product that permeated his life. The habit had its positive aspects because it gave you a degree of stable behaviour, but it also had its negative aspects because you could end up drinking bad quality drinks without realising it. This habitual aspect helped these people maintain an attitude towards wine without highs or lows.

If wine was associated mostly with certain alimentary habits and socialisation styles in people of a certain age, with the younger generations other elements were included in the picture, such as that of health – wine as a diet balancer – or that of the status symbol – wine as personal gratification or symbol of prestige. Being a behaviour that was not regular in occurrence, the consumption of wine was also closely linked to the economic circumstances of the individual: if I were doing well economically, I would let myself go in the consumption of wine as well. When I did not have great economic resources, or tranquillity for the future, I was much more careful in controlling my consumption habits.

*Journalist:* In my opinion, in the past one used to drink wine, while today one talks about it as a conversational item. One brought a bottle of wine when invited to dinner. If a rare bottle of wine were brought, the conversation commenced on the subject. It was a big thing to talk about, everyone wanted to be an expert, to know the terminology, like

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\(^{67}\) The following were interviewed: the Director of a vinery in Langhe and the Mayor of Barolo and Barbaresco, Alba, Langhe and Roero; a freelance journalist specialized in food and wine; the Director of the Consortium of the protection of Barolo and Barbaresco (Cn), town of Langhe whose economy is based on wine production, and Marketing Consultant for wine making companies; a General Practitioner who is the National Director of SIMG (Società Italiana di Medicina Generale – Italian Society of General Medicine) training activities Scientific Director of SIMG; a Marketing Consultant. Combined with what emerged from the individual interviews, several considerations from the initial focus groups were also included (see cap. 1.3)
“aftertaste”. This was also a fashion. One drank wine less, and had grand conversations about it.

**EPAT Representative:** There are two status issues, one is how one appears to others, the other is how one appears to oneself. We sell bottled products that few can afford. Some of these bottles are bought at these prices so that the buyers can show others that they understand about wine; others buy the wine for a sense of emotional gratification. I have made tests to see if people really understood wine, putting simple sparkling wine in a champagne bottle, and there were few who were really able to distinguish the difference. It is only a problem of status. One looks at the label, it’s a question of fashion.

**Company director:** [...] We see the same thing with whisky. Today, very costly, very privileged, high quality whisky is in fashion. I drink this type of whisky rather than two glasses of another, because I want to show my understanding of the field.

In Italy, however, wine consumption cannot be exclusively interpreted as a sign of social distinction, as the phenomenon is complicated by the existence of symbolic values and alimentary habits that are rooted in time as well as by new trends. Even bars, diffused throughout Italian territory, have responded to the new consumer trends by offering wine lists to their clients, something that a few years ago could be found only in restaurants. Indeed, many of these are often referred to as “wine bars” by their employees, where the importance of wine is emphasised.

**Director:** This is the only country where one drinks at mealtimes, whereas in Germany and the United States one drinks outside of them. For us, it is still important to combine wine with meal. This is part of our culture.

**Journalist specialised in oenology:** The wine bar is largely an Italian phenomenon, like the bar itself. It was a product of the attention commanded in this country to wine and particular types of foods. It is, to a certain degree, substituting food bars. Instead of just sitting down and eating a quick sandwich, one actually wants sit at the table, eat something in a little plate and have a glass of wine to accompany it. It started as a fashion, but I think it will remain, even if there may be a selection. With us, it is considered an evolution of the bar: in fact, it is a bar that offers a good selection of wines and tends to give more importance to wine in general.

The Director of the vine-growing company believed the changes experienced in the younger age group were caused by a shift from an alimentary to a hedonistic way of drinking. Wine, that for years occupied an important role in the diet due to its caloric value, has become a drink of prevalently hedonistic value. Today, wine consumption responds to a need for pleasure that characterises many of western society’s consumption behaviours. Discussion involving wine has become ever more vast and articulate, as illustrated by the explosion of articles, radio and television programmes on gastronomy, and specialised publications targeted at an increasingly vast public.

Changes in the organisation of working time and an increased attention to health issues have also had a significant role in wine consumption reduction.
Director: The evolution of wines and strong spirits have been profoundly different. I don’t know the reasons; probably what emerged from your research is true. In the younger generation (35-45 years old) we have seen a vertical drop in the consumption of strong spirits, while, since the early ‘90s, we have also seen a change in the perception of wine. Before, wine used to be part of the diet, a common and constant food. Lifestyles and types of jobs have changed, manual work has decreased significantly and thus energy needs have fallen as well. The need to drink wine as a source of energy has decreased. Today, at lunch, wine is no longer drunk because one needs to be lucid and efficient (it is thought that wine reduces efficiency, even if it is not at all like this, but this is what one hears!). Wine as a foodstuff has diminished a lot in importance. It has made inroads with people from a certain cultural level who drink it mostly for pleasure. Before, it used to be drunk because it was like a food, then it became a hedonistic instrument, so one drank it because one liked it, which is a phenomenon that used to exist in various societies of Northern Europe, where wine was not a habitual drink, as were strong spirits or beer. An example of a country is Germany, where the person who drinks wine is one who has made certain decisions, and therefore is differentiated. Professionals drink wine and they use it as an element of social distinction. They are people who can afford to buy bottles at certain prices…

This phenomenon has also spread in Italy, affecting the younger generation (between 18 and 30 years old), who have approached wine very differently from the past, with wine no longer being seen as a food, but as a cultural choice, a style of life. All this was helped by a series of publications and critical gastronomy trends resulting in wine being consumed in a certain way.

I agree with you that the elder consumer needs to reduce his/her consumption for both economic and health reasons.

Another change has been the way bars are frequented, where one drinks in a decidedly different way.

Modifications in the way alcohol is consumed in Italy can also be explained by changes in the opportunities to drink. People go out less at night, drink less in the family and have fewer occasions to drink.

EPAT Representative: As far as I can see, 80% of what is drunk at lunch is water. Every now and then someone asks for a glass of wine, or beer, but we are talking about 2 out of 10 people. We noticed this because we could be interested in selling something more “precious”. Water is the main drink at lunchtime: 8 out of 10 water, 1 wine, 1 beer […] As far as aperitifs are concerned […], consumption takes place at night, no longer at midday. There is a different culture among the young and the less young in their attitudes towards aperitifs. The quantities consumed have diminished but the person who asks for an aperitif is seeking a certain quality and wants the service to be good as well.

Company director: The daily occasion to drink is increasingly becoming a special event. Whether the special event is organised at night or at any other moment of the day is indifferent. […] What is happening in Italy is that our lifestyle is reducing the occasions to drink. This has reduced consumption […] We used to drink a little at a time on many occasions, When I participate at meetings like this in Europe, many ask me how Italy is able to produce results like these and my reply is: “I don’t know”. We don’t have rules, we don’t have training. Everyone asks us for the recipe, but there is none!

The SIMG physician agrees with the results emerging from the research, highlighting how the “constant consumption model” is part of the reality he has seen in his professional life. As a general practitioner, he takes care of his patients from when they are young and, except for rare exceptions, follows them over the course of their lives. It is frequent then, to see alcohol consumption changes.
in the biography of the patient, not only in terms of quantity, but also of types of drinks and regularity of their consumption. The younger consumption styles are characterised by a greater variability of alcoholic beverages and a concentration of drinking on few occasions. As adults, they tend to stabilise on more traditional models of drinking, where alcohol possesses a greater alimentary and socialising role.

*SIMG Doctor*: I would agree with your conclusion that the population has reduced its alcohol consumption for health reasons. This is pretty much in line with my experiences as a doctor. From my point of view, I have, on many occasions, seen patients with different problems, not necessarily serious, and when I study them in greater depth I discover that they’ve consumed alcohol excessively. By collecting the data, as we regularly do (on weight, height, smoking habits, alcohol consumption) we can identify risky drinking habits, those over the amounts considered “secure”. In these cases I, like my colleagues, intervene on the patient’s habits and over time, ensure that there has been a reduction in drinking. Here we are talking about people who visit doctors, so the doctor’s message has a certain effect. […] My experience tells me that there are many young people who claim to be abstemious, or that they drink only rarely (I am talking about 20 year olds). But the older generations shift to a more constant habit of drinking wine, at lunch and dinner. Once the younger generation reaches adulthood, their younger drinking habits are substituted with a regular consumption at the table.

All those interviewed placed a lot of importance on the **methanol** wine scandal of 1986 in explaining the shift in consumption patterns. While the decline in wine consumption had already been going on for over 15 years, this event definitely represented an important step in the change of Italy’s drinking culture, and perhaps in supporting the trend of its decline. In the early 1970s and ‘80s, drinking wine was not considered fashionable: in that period beer and aperitifs were gaining ground. Italian wine producers oriented themselves by producing quantity, but the methanol wine scandal threw this sector into total confusion, last but not least because it was not prepared to confront critical and frightened consumers. After a few years of disorientation by both consumers and producers, a sort of maturation was mutually reached: low cost products almost disappeared and customers reduced the quantity consumed even further, privileging more expensive brands that also provided more guarantees. In this way, the wine sector resurfaced from its ashes.

*Director*: The breaking point was 1986, with the methanol wine scandal, which shattered the illusion that you could drink good wine at low cost. For a period, that type of wine was no longer purchased, and many companies either closed or converted their sectors. This signalled the point of no return. It had become clear to all Italians that good wine had to cost.

*Journalist specialised in oenology*: There was a certain period in Italy’s history, the late 1970s and early ‘80s, when wine consumption suffered a negative image; it was not considered a modern drink. In that period, I was the Director of the Consortium of Barolo

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68 Of the Italian scandals, that of the methanol wine was one of the worst. In 1986 it was discovered that methyl alcohol (methanol) was added to the wine to increase the alcohol level. This practice caused the death of over 20 people and the Italian oenology market suffered a collapse. Consequently – under greater control – the Italian production of wine underwent a considerable improvement.
and of Barbaresco, and would often go down to the bar to drink an aperitif. It was very
difficult to drink wine, first of all, because the bar would generally not carry good quality
wines, and secondly, if you asked for a glass of white wine, you would be looked at as if
you were infected with some contagious disease. There was a total break from wine in
that period. Then, with the passing of time, as the sector was able to recreate its identity,
the situation changed. In that period there was a lot of poor and good wine circulating.
We must remember that DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata – denomination of
controlled origin) labelled wine, identifying its quality, and represented between 7-8% of
the wine in circulation up to 10 years ago, whereas today that number is around 30%.
Obviously, it depends on the area you’re talking about. The moment of the total break
was 1986, the year of the methanol scandal. It was from that moment that the image
began improving, focusing more on quality. The Italian reality was oriented towards wine
for the masses. The mission of the sector was to provide wine for all of Europe. This was
an error of the politicians of the period, who had not considered other producers in
Europe. Consequently we found ourselves in the ‘80s, where the demand for quality wine
was growing while we were producing mass quality wine. The ‘80s were the most
difficult years, and the consumer was receiving contrasting messages even from the
media.

Two concepts emerged from the methanol wine scandal. The first was that more
expensive wine was safer, and the second was that drinking less was better. Very
silently, another concept also emerged – the rediscovery of the direct relationship with the
wine producer. In order to get a good quality product, if you went directly to the producer
and bought bottles – not necessarily demijohns – you had greater guarantees.

*EPAT Representative:* [the methanol wine scandal] hit those people who in that period
were in their 40s-50s; there was a block with these people. I see that there has been a
return to wine by the young of today, a rediscovery thanks to the opening of wine bars
and specialty shops.

*Medical Nutritionist:* The idea of wine has changed; today people want to drink better
quality wine.

The people we interviewed, who worked in the sector, did not seem to agree on how the
demand for wine was influenced by price. The director of the vine-growing company was
convinced that the elasticity of wine demand reflected that of a product that was not a primary
necessity. Rather, if the price of wine increased, demand would decrease in equal proportion or
would shift to similar products of lower cost, as the penetration of Australian wine in European
markets illustrated. The journalist specialised in oenology believed that the price had begun
influencing consumption negatively only in recent years. Unjustified price rises and the
increasingly careful and informed customers less willing to follow such increases, made for a
general consumption slowdown.

*Director:* The fluctuation in demand is a function of price: if prices increase 10%, I
expect sales to fall 10%. The low-cost segment of the market has been growing in this
period, particularly in the last two years, as price has become increasingly important. In
a phase of economic difficulty, where there is greater uncertainty in the future, it is
instinctive for people to spend less and seek products that cost less. Then the Australians
arrived and showed the market that it was possible to have good quality wine without
paying too much. In Italy they encountered difficulty. But in those markets that don’t
produce wine, Australian wine competes directly with Italian wine.
The sharp rise in the price of wine has been a development of the last ten years. It is probable that there has been a price effect, and it is likely that it is felt more in the younger age rather than adult groups. Then there were those with strong family traditions who didn’t significantly alter their behaviour. They learned from their families to drink wine with a balanced foodstuff approach and therefore did not change their wine consumption in function of their economic conditions. They didn’t exaggerate when situations went well and, consequently, they didn’t reduce very much when things went badly. This was because they considered any type of wine as a fundamental aspect of their life’s equilibrium. This conclusion was valid for other kinds of foodstuffs as well, where price has had a visible impact only in recent years.

In the period under study, as already mentioned by some of the interviewees, the relationship between the producer and consumer also changed with regards to people’s purchasing habits. Even if it had not completely disappeared, the market for grapes diminished significantly, as the long period when common home production (synonymous with genuineness and quality) came to an end. Consumers stopped producing wine at home for many reasons: the lack of time, characteristics of the home, where available space was always less and inadequate for storing the necessary instruments, and above all, changes in consumer tastes. Home-produced wine, that for a generation was a source of pride before friends and relatives, is today regularly compared to wine purchased in bottles, which is easier to find. The latter’s taste is generally more appreciated and often able to convert even those the strongest defenders of the authenticity of home-produced wine, a beverage that is finding fewer and fewer people willing to drink it due to its acidic and rather unclear nature.

The act of purchasing, moreover, presents the opportunity for consumers to try new wines, alter or vary the contents of their cellars, and thereby avoid drinking the same product all year.

There has been a sharp fall in grape sales because people don’t have time any longer to make wine at home. In addition, the quality of wine that can be purchased puts one’s own wine in a very difficult situation. Lacking technical skills or professional instruments, when there is a good year, the quality of home-made wine is only mediocre. The consumer realises that the wine is not as good as the store bought quality. The authenticity of wine must be accompanied by good taste. Today, with the exception of generic table wine, there is not a great price difference between bottled wine and that purchased in bulk. Moreover, people have less space in their homes, with smaller cellars, and so purchases are made in increasingly smaller quantities. This way, the consumer also has the excuse to go around and visit new cellars. There is a great desire to try new wines, and the consumer is consistently less loyal. This has considerably changed consumption patterns. It is difficult to have a stable client. As we go up the hierarchy of prestige, this phenomenon becomes increasingly evident.

Once there was home production: today it still exists, but at minimum levels. Now, quality matters more, so home produced wine is less appreciated. Wine has become a pleasure and is no longer a habit. A young boy of today, whose father makes wine at home, eats out at a restaurant and drinks a good bottle of wine. When he returns home, he no longer likes drinking his father’s wine, as he’s learned to tell the difference between the two qualities.
Wine consumption changes has impacted all of Italy, albeit to different degrees. The smallest consumption pattern changes have been experienced in areas of production, whereas the cities and rural areas, though with different characteristics, have registered the biggest ones.

Journalist specialised in oenology: Those who remained satisfied by their positions and close to production, remained more stable, besides a brief period during the 1980s, when they were neither very convinced nor proud of their products. Today, many young people in these territories are proud of their local production, and they willingly taste wines such as Barolo and Barbaresco.

The city experienced stronger changes with the introduction of alternative drinks and a more dynamic lifestyle, with many more attractions: all of this favoured the shift to other products and then a return to wine.

The most vulnerable areas of all were those rural areas where grapes were not produced, where just about everything was drunk. The young probably abandoned wine in favour of consuming other products. The most negative aspect was the impoverishing of the habits. On the table, a bottle of wine was always necessary and they had difficulty in abandoning banal consumption habits, driven by comfort. Those who organised home delivery gained the most out of these changes.

A very interesting aspect that emerged from the group discussions was the role of doctors in teaching the public about correct drinking habits. Those physicians participating in the focus groups seemed to agree, though to different degrees, that their colleagues did not pay enough attention to alcohol-related problems and were thus responsible for not having adequately educated their patients on the risks associated to drinking. This opinion on the limited ability of the medical profession to influence alcoholic consumption habits was somehow weakened by the results of the “normal” drinkers’ interviews. Thus, doctors with specific training on the subject seemed to have had difficulty in seeing the social phenomenon, under-evaluating their ability to directly or indirectly (for example through the mass media) influence people’s lifestyles.

Medical Hygeniest: Regarding education, universities had enormous responsibility for this. Alcohol-related discussion focused on cirrhosis and other similar illnesses, but nothing else. Other fields were completely ignored and then we complained that doctors didn’t do what we wanted or expected. A recent example was the law on alcohol that stated that all courses involving public health – for nurses, doctors and even sociologists – had to include courses on alcoholology. In the final text, the “had to” became “could.”

General practitioner: As far as I’m concerned, the medical classes do not have a very important role. They should, but they don’t. Some do it and others don’t.

According to some of the interviewees, the attention medical doctors gave to their patients’ alcohol consumption changed over the period in question of the research. During the 1970s, doctors dedicated themselves mostly to diagnosis, disease identification and its cure. In the ‘80s, the medical world slowly began adopting a preventative attitude that paid more attention to the lifestyles and risky behaviour of their patients, in order to prevent them from getting certain diseases in the first place. Differently from what had emerged from the key informants of the focus
group, it appeared that general practitioners were paying an increased attention to the alcohol consumption of their patients, and intervening in those situations in which their patients’ drinking habits were deemed risky.

_SIMG Doctor:_ I started practicing in 1975. At the beginning of my career my personal attention to alcohol-related problems was minimal. It was typical in that period to pay closer attention to the disease rather than to potentially risky behaviour. The ‘70s were characterised by a period of waiting; the doctor would wait for the disease to materialise and then intervene. Since the second half of the ‘80s, there has been an evolution in how general practitioners carry out their role. Attention given to risky behaviour has increased a lot as has reflection determined by the scientific community. It was during that period that the SIMG (Società Italiana di Medicina Generale – Italian Society of General Medicine) was founded and it was through this society that the educational and preventative role of the doctor was established. Greater importance was placed on the role of doctors in encouraging their patients to maintain healthy lifestyles. The attention given to risky habits grew from then on, albeit only slowly, until reaching the relatively high levels of preventative action today. Now, no one is surprised if a doctor asks a client about his/her sexual or alcohol consumption habits. In the ‘70s, one would barely ask if a person drank, and often one would write “normal drinker” in the patient’s file.

Unfortunately this culture of promoting health was not developed in the universities. The training of doctors at universities continues to focus primarily on the specific pathologies according to the biomedical model, focused on the causal link between different diseases and the singular pathogenic events.

_General Practitioner:_ Universities absolutely do not train doctors to adopt a protective and preventative approach to health.

Even though university preparation has not changed significantly, it can be said that over one’s professional life, doctors are solicited to adopt preventative approaches by training and informational programmes. General Practitioners have also experienced changes in the Italian alcohol-related culture. The socio-ecological approach of Prof. Hudolin spread rapidly during the 1980s. These alcohol self-help groups, together with Alcoholics Anonymous, had the merit of exposing the entity of alcohol-related problems in Italy and the incapacity of the health-care system to elaborate adequate responses to those interested. Yet, many General Practitioners have since distanced themselves from an approach that could be considered too “fundamentalist” to be used for preventive purposes.

General Practitioners today encounter difficulty in orienting themselves with all the scientific information made available from research published in important and rigorous publications, and in deciding what and how to communicate to their patients. A patient today is more informed and careful, but is also disoriented.

_SIMG Doctor:_ … the information we have available on alcohol has also changed: we started from a position of a traditional punitive attitude considering whoever drank as a
potential alcoholic. Then we went through the phase of talking about wine vs. other types of alcohol, and now we are in the phase in which we talk about alcohol in itself and not about wine as a preventative intervention. Personally, I have an ethical problem about discussing this, and believe that it is discussed little ... Someone must be asking why, until yesterday, we used to say "be careful with alcohol", then we began saying “it is better to drink wine than other alcoholic beverages” as a preventative suggestion. Then we began saying “no, it’s not only wine, but alcohol in general” … If we start saying that small doses of alcohol [are all right] this could also anticipate an overly-relaxed attitude towards alcohol, and someone could start thinking that if 10 grams are good, then 20 grams must be even better! One must ask oneself if the population is mature enough to handle this sort of scientific information or if it should be treated like a child.

The health/disease issue is addressed at various levels: by the **mass media** to specialised publications, from the general practitioner to the specialist, from the health care centre to the dietician. The consumption or abuse of alcoholic beverages are among many activities that, in the “society of risk” (Beck, 1998) could have negative effects on individuals’ health. Contemporary man, always more alone in the construction of his own biography, must be informed of the risks of certain behaviour so as to have the information necessary to make correct decisions, and always in a context characterised by the loss of the security that was provided by traditional society.

**SIMG Doctor**: If one wants to talk about medicine in the mass media, the initiatives must have an informative role with the objective to provide information for the self-protection of one’s health, and the cooperation with those who help you maintain it. Instead, if the information communication focuses on the technological aspects of intervention, encouraging the direct query (by letter, telephone or asking an expert on TV), this becomes deleterious because it reinforces the concept, in the minds of the citizens, that medicine is very mathematical and that the explanations for certain initial symptoms cannot be anything but that, when in fact this is not at all the case. This gets the population used to not discussing issues with doctors. We don’t handle Monday mornings with Elisir very well. On Monday mornings we suffer the Elisir pathology in a wide sense. Let’s not even talk about when non-shared messages are given. For example, one night they talk about genetic tests and then the next day everyone wants to do genetic screening. These situations put us in great difficulty. One should avoid consulting the media (for diagnoses and cures). […] There is definitely greater attention to and demand on behalf of the population for health issues in general. Publications on this theme have sprouted up everywhere.

**General Practitioner**: Part of this negative trend in consumption could be linked to the cult of one’s physical looks, and to emerging diet trends. Alcohol is treated as something to punish, to avoid.

It is difficult to measure exactly how much, but the mass media has probably influenced the spread of health attitudes amongst Italians, as well as introduced new tastes and increased knowledge of products and the attributes that establish their quality. This greater focus on the nutritional and alimentary aspects of consumption risks saturation, as it is probably occupying too much attention in the media. The fragmentary nature of the information diffused by the mass

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69 Elisir is an Italian TV programme on health issues.
media should be integrated by a proper alimentary education, which should be the responsibility of the Government through schools, and other institutionalised teaching.

*Director:* We are witnesses to a phenomenon that didn’t exist before, which is now risking to reach saturation. Gastronomy publications exist by the dozens, not to mention television programmes. This sort of attention is different to that of a typical concern for nutritional and alimentary issues. There are these concepts of matching wine and food which are almost didactic in nature. Television gives importance to issues in which it thinks the public is interested, and it is from there that we infer that Italians pay a lot of attention to what they eat and drink. Food is the most important thing for Italians. A recent research showed that 33% of Italians believe food is the most important personal issue, more than sex and reading. Obviously TV gives space to these issues, also because it is part of our cultural patrimony.

*Journalist specialised in oenology:* The last ten years have seen a different type of information delivered in the press and on television. Interest in wine producing areas has grown to the point where today it is fairly common for people to go on trips to the countryside to visit wine-producing land. If once you used to go to the sea for your trip, today you go to the hills. [...] The state was completely absent in educating the consumer. Even at school, any lessons on food issues were organised thanks to the goodwill of an individual teacher. In some cases, “l’Arcigola” took the initiative. In my opinion, in Italy we are still distant; we need to shift to a more adequate, moderate, knowledgeable, balanced and harmonious (with a certain regularity) consumption. In some classes this is already happening, but the preparation of the typical consumer on alimentary issues is very low. I don’t mean income levels of classes, but classes of awareness. I believe that we had much greater alimentary equilibrium when we were poor; in our countryside of the 1950s and ‘60s, we were much more careful about maintaining a balanced diet, through empiricism.

Our “specialist” interview panel members not only confirmed the conclusions that emerged from the individual interviews, but they also introduced partly or entirely new ideas. The experts confirmed that in Italy, wine often held a function of prestige for the younger age group (40-45 years old): wine consumption fell, while favouring more costly and prestigious products, and more attention was given to wine’s quality. The attention given to the quality was often a signal to others of the social class to which one belonged or aspired. Often it permitted the public to integrate new consumption styles with values established over time. Today, wine’s nutritional function has considerably decreased. Its integration with meals is no longer based on its caloric value, but its ability to please, and taste as a natural accompaniment to food.

Even the reduced occasions to drink, highlighted in the individual interviews, were confirmed by the key informants, and as such, necessarily lead to changes in consumption habits. If the occasions were fewer, then the choice of drink would be less habitual, thus providing more room for the pursuit of quality.

This greater attention paid to wine quality was also due to the emergence of Italy’s methanol wine scandal. This outrageous event surely contributed to the redefinition of wine’s role in Italy’s...
drinking culture. Paradoxically, following this scandal, wine established a new identity. The Italian consumer, for all the reasons explained earlier in the document, was gradually distancing him/herself from this beverage. Following the scandal, the consumer rediscovered wine’s quality and redefined its values, identifying new moments and ways of drinking it, introducing what we call an “alimentary-hedonistic” style of consumption. Wine, but also to a smaller extent, other alcoholic beverages, is drunk at the table with less frequency than before, more often at dinner than at lunch, and is never missing at social situations, where it often becomes a topic of conversation.

Wine is thus a source of pleasure. It accompanies the experience of eating even when consumed in the “ritual” of the aperitif, which today is the case of the many public bars that serve wine together with rich and abundant side dishes. The alimentary-hedonistic style seems compatible with the greater importance being given to health issues that emerged from the interviews with the consumers and key informants. Experts on alcohol believe that the attention level to alcoholic-related problems in Italy is insufficient. Research conducted has also revealed that the mass media, and general practitioners as well, have been paying increasing attention to citizens’ overall health. This is defined not only as the absence of disease, but also as the complex equilibrium needed to remain healthy, which looks at numerous factors relating to the lifestyle of the single individual, as well as to social and environmental considerations.
THE RESEARCH OUTCOME:
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
Why have the Italians, since the early 1970s, begun reducing their wine consumption in the absence of drinking-control policies, passing from higher to lower intake amounts, and attaining the consumption decrease recommended by the international bodies for health protection?

We tried to answer this question starting from hypotheses that had never been tested, even if they had been circulating for a long time among alcohol experts. Reaching an exhaustive answer was not easy. We had to proceed step by step, adopting different methodologies to approach the matter. First of all, through the collection of quantitative data, we chose to describe alcohol consumption changes in Italy since 1970, matching them with a number of indicators describing Italians’ food consumption and lifestyle changes. We then looked for potentially generating mechanisms. Examples of such were changes on individual levels, aided by a qualitative methodology attained by exploring and highlighting linkages between the changes that occurred in the individual’s ways of thinking and living, and the decrease in alcohol consumption.

This summary contains our research findings, and some final considerations drawn by them.

1. REDUCTION IN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

After describing temporal trends in alcoholic beverage consumption in Italy, and having defined drinkers’ profiles as well as the factors affecting consumption, our hypotheses is that the declining wine consumption curve that had started at the end of the 1960s, could have been affected by or related to:
- economic and market factors (wine price, family purchasing power, the market);
- demographic increase of that part of population that does not drink or drinks less (in particular elderly people);
- changes in dietary habits;
- changes from rural to urban lifestyles, associated with mass urbanisation;
- changes in the occupational structure, with a substantial reduction of the agricultural sector and manual jobs combined with an expansion of the services sector;
- changes in the role of women;
- transformations in the family structure and consumer tendencies;
- large scale diffusion of health-conscious lifestyles.

To test the above-listed hypotheses, we resorted to a number of documentary sources: traditional and “grey” literature (proceedings of specialist conferences, local reports dealing with health-related matters or the agricultural economy) and, for the more recent years, documents taken
from internet websites. Also, we used individual data gathered from archives of ISTAT, from the “Osservatorio Permanente sui giovani e l’Alcol,” and from ad-hoc researches carried out in Tuscany between 1997-2002, none of which, however, pertained to the period before the beginning of the declining phase of wine consumption.

Therefore, this part of our research was largely based on documentary reconstruction. Whenever possible, information focusing on wine consumption and the correlation between it and the temporal trends of those variables pertinent to the hypotheses was drawn upon, as well as the analysis of the original archives. In our opinion, the main difficulty in this research lay in the impossibility of analysing the data relating to the years preceding 1970 with statistical programs, as data was unavailable on an individual basis for that period which represented the turning point in the wine consumption curve. Despite such constraints, some conclusions were reached through our research. In particular:

1. Wine and alcohol consumption in Italy was consistent with international trends towards a convergence of alcohol consumption, consisting in a decrease of traditional drinks and an increase of new drinks, especially among the younger generations, due to substitution or overlap. This pattern was also present in Italy, where the trend towards convergence of alcoholic consumption in different areas of the country was supported by a steeper reduction in wine consumption in regions where such consumption had historically been higher. Wine nonetheless has remained the preferred alcoholic beverage in Italy, representing around 70% of the total alcohol consumption.

2. As far as can be inferred from our analysis of individual ISTAT data available since the ‘90s (i.e., since the final part of the wine consumption curve’s downward slope), the consumption decrease was not homogeneously spread among all the drinking categories. In fact, a decrease of non-drinkers and a parallel increase of moderate drinkers has been shown, with the number of drinkers growing, especially among young people and the female population. The decrease was therefore driven mainly by a decrease in heavy drinkers (more than half-litre per day) within the adult male population, the category that used to give the largest contribution to the average consumption.

3. Based on such evidence, it could be argued that a self-regulation mechanism developed within the Italian population, apparently rejecting “prohibitionist” approaches (however, poorly present in the cultural and political debate in Italy) while showing a preference for moderate drinking habits. We were unable, through literature or indirect data, to affirm that such a trend towards moderation had already been going on since the beginning of the ‘70s. If this had been the case, the overall downward slope of the curve too would have, in part, been attributable to
collective self-control mechanisms, which however remained to be entirely explored and whose existence could only be assumed as starting from the ‘90s.

4. *Ad hoc* studies confirmed that the profile of the major wine consumer in Italy was strictly linked to the rural tradition: wine, especially, was part of the diet and a typical product of the Italian regional culinary tradition. Wine was considered a risk-free beverage, associated with positive values, both nutritional and relational. Consequently, to renounce drinking during meals would have made no sense. The progressive weakening of this tradition by a large part of the population, due to the migration from the country sides to the city, could not therefore have developed without consequences on overall consumption ranges.

5. The growth in wine consumption between the 1950s and the ‘60s was consistent with the increase in purchasing power of the Italian people. It was therefore likely that, after years of poverty, among other appeals, Italians had demanded greater quantities of wine: a reasonably priced drink for the income levels existing at that time. At the saturation point of alimentary expenses, occurring at the end of the ‘60s, per capita calories had matched or exceeded the estimated necessary calories based on the prevailing typical job. Then, factors other than income and purchasing power, prices and market conditions had surely intervened to generate a decrease in the demand of wine.

6. The analysis of food and drink consumption temporal trends carried out on the basis of quantitative ISTAT data available from 1973 to 1996 by geographical area, corroborated the opinion that the fall in wine consumption accompanied the consumption decline of other traditional foods of the rural culture, including bread, pasta, dry vegetables, rice and dried fish. This demonstrated that wine was considered a beverage associated with the rural lifestyle, that recalled past experiences of misery and nutritional deficiency. This was in contrast with the upward trend of meat, that had historically been absent in farmers’ diets. The convergence of food consumptions shown also at a regional level was confirmed, though the convergence of wine consumption was a weaker phenomenon, at least throughout the period in question.

7. In the 1970s, the demand for quality (reflecting a demand for taste and safety) products began developing at the expense of a demand for quantity products, although this trend would strengthen in the following ‘80s and ‘90s. These years also saw the expansion of DOC and DOCG wines, which benefited from decisions taken at the European Community level, aimed at promoting a decrease in production to order to favour the development of quality products. If, on the one hand, this factor seemed to play a significant role in explaining the final part of the wine consumption curve over time, on the other hand it was unable to account for the changes observed in the early ‘70s.
8. As we demonstrated in the relevant section of this research, little or no portion of the decrease in wine consumption after the ‘70s was attributable to changes in the demographic structure of the population, and in particular to its growing average age.

9. Some of the major changes occurring in Italian society in the period following the 1950s were especially consistent with the trends in alcohol consumption. In particular:

- the abandonment of the country sides in favour of the cities, the successive economic boom, accompanied by an increased purchasing power, induced Italians to buy food and clothes, and later on to develop a tendency to purchase other goods. Such goods symbolised new social status, out of the desire to “forget” everything that recalled rural life. The consumption of wine, which among other foodstuffs and bread was a rural icon, was consequently impacted by such changes;
- the expansion of factory jobs and those in the services sector from the ‘60s onwards, required less expenditure of calories and demanded more mental attention compared to country jobs, where wine had dominated the moments of intermission and food;
- the change in the role of women and their entry into the labour force had obvious consequences on domestic life, above all on meal preparation: they had less time at home, and were outside of the home more. The consequent de-structuring of meals weakened the traditional link between wine and lunch, more so than that between wine and dinner;
- increased social mobility encouraged the adoption of new consumption and lifestyle benchmarks, rejecting popular, ordinary habits regarded as being trivial;
- the improvement of living conditions developed a demand for products, goods and services of a strong health-conscious nature, since physical health and personal care appeared to have become key elements of the hedonism trend of the 1980s and ‘90s.

As a conclusion, our research demonstrated that the wine consumption curve, between the 1950s and ‘90s suitably matched with the contemporary changes occurring at a national level that were characterised by the convergence of consumption.

The curve trend could be plausibly explained, in its upward phase, mainly by income and price mechanisms, while the downward phase by multiple factors. Although some of these factors (urbanisation, work in factories and services sector), were intensely developing in the alcohol consumption growth phase, they produced evident effects on the wine consumption decrease as well. In addition, overall consumption patterns of the ‘70s were affected, in conjunction with the consolidation of a new lifestyle imposed by the change. Thus, these factors determined the first phase of the trend’s reversal.

Other factors (social mobility, redefinition of ways to use leisure time, changes in the family structure and in the role of women, de-structuring of meals, personal care, health consciousness),
emerged and consolidated on a mass level during the ‘80s and ‘90s. In the continuing downward phase of the curve, it could therefore be affirmed that these factors played an important role in sustaining the decreasing trend of consumption, rather than being the principal driver behind it. In other words, they supported, and in part reinforced, the trend started in the previous decade.

How and why this happened became clearer by asking the actors of this change. To qualitatively reconstruct their experiences and the way in which they went through the processes just described, a quantitative point of view became possible to attain.

2. LIFE EXPERIENCES AND CHANGES IN CONSUMPTION MODELS AND VALUES

The qualitative part of the research was meant to investigate the social mechanisms which regulated the impact of transitions on the life course of people. Doing so made it possible to understand the factors behind the significant reduction in alcoholic consumption, in particular wine, in Italian society over the past 30 years, from a micro-sociological point of view.

From a theoretical perspective, the chosen approach was that of the sociological “life course.” Transitions that characterised individual lives and the biography of an individual as a dynamic process were considered, composed of multiple interdependent careers that developed over time.

We know from other studies that over the course of a person’s life, the places, situations and times of day when alcohol was consumed changed. People with whom alcohol was consumed changed, and the frequency and quantity of consumption varied. The meaning attached to drinking changed, as did the function of alcohol as a substance. Moreover, changes in drinking patterns could be related to status changes connected with one’s working career (active worker, short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, retired person) and/or the family and matrimonial career (single, married, parent, separated/divorced, widow).

In our case, the individual’s experience of alcohol had been conceptualised as a trajectory, rather, a career structured as a sequence of phases, each characterised by specific styles: the teenager’s consumption style, in which socialising and transgressive values prevailed, was followed by an adult period, during which values of nutrition and conviviality triumphed instead.

Obviously, not all of the trajectories were the same. In reproducing the consumption careers of the panel participants, we identified three main models:

• The constant consumption career model: alcohol use gradually grew (in nearly all of the cases, this growth occurred in the teenage/young phase) and remained constant for a considerable part of life until old age, when alcohol use decreased;
• The *peak consumption career* model: alcohol use gradually grew until it reached a peak characterising a phase of strong consumption (corresponding to the juvenile phase of life), then decreased at a mature age, stabilising at low levels;

• The *multi-peak consumption career* model: alcohol use varied considerably over the years, characterised by different phases in which consumption had been more or less significant.

But which social mechanisms could explain such changes? From an analysis of available literature, research suggested that changes in an individual’s status could not account for changes in consumption patterns, on their own. Rather, the mechanisms that took place depended on meanings an individual attached to the transitions from one role to another, to his or her involvement and adherence to role expectations and, finally, to the quality of the social relations associated with the changing nature of their status.

In an attempt to translate qualitative elements into generalised trends, the following could be highlighted:

1. The results of the interviews have permitted us to affirm that the decrease in wine consumption could not be explained by a decrease in the preferences of drinkers. The decisive factor was the reduction in consumption frequency and, most of all, of the quantities consumed, in particular with regard to wine intake during lunch. An improvement in the quality of wine consumed corresponded to a decrease in its quantity consumed.

2. Places, situations and players related to the use of alcohol changed. It was still customary to drink during meals at home (especially at dinner) with spouses and relatives, but it was less common to drink at the bar with friends or during working hours. It was common to drink in ritualised and standardised contexts, such as in restaurants, at parties or on special occasions: all situations in which social control was typically higher and the occasional abuse was tolerated, but disciplined. In such contexts, the segregation of beverage types which used to differentiate alcohol consumption in the Mediterranean cultures, diminished. In general, it could be said that the use of wine during meals remained central, that a thirst-quenching and partially socialising use of beer consolidated, while alcohol use for intoxicating purposes tended to lose significance, and consumption abuses decreased.

3. The two groups studied (one composed by 40-45 year old men; the other composed of 65-70 year old men) seemed to be characterised by two different ways of drinking: the older group basically maintained the same drinking model – typically Mediterranean – associated with wine and, much less, beer, with a dietary and socialising, seldom intoxicating, value of use. The decrease in alcohol quantities consumed in the past few years was due to the fact that the components of this group drank less on a daily basis, in external contexts such as at the bar or on the job, with friends and other players. On the contrary, they drank more at home, all the
while taking greater care of themselves and being more health-conscious. In the younger group, the consumption decrease was associated with an obvious change in drinking styles. Alcohol use patterns, in which beer was predominant, with a discreet use of strong spirits, a socialising and intoxicating value of use and rather frequent episodes of abuse with friends in non-family contexts, shifted to a typically dietary, Mediterranean use. This shift totally overlapped with that of the older group. Somehow, today the two groups have similar drinking styles. After a first phase during which they had consumed alcohol with a pattern similar to that of dry cultures, 40 year old men seem to have readopted a pattern typical of their fathers, returning to a drinking culture they had learned when they were young. This group did not appear to have been affected during the phase of alcohol consumption for intoxicating purposes.

4. The differences identified between the members of the two groups could be explained by making reference, but not limited to structural changes concerning the Italian diet. During the 1970s, the development of mass consumption and homogenisation of dietary and alcoholic consumption styles were matched by the development of increased differentiation, due to the wide variety of goods from which consumers could choose. The interviewees belonging to the younger group – who in the ‘70s were becoming adolescents – were therefore subject to new consumption models (beer and strong spirits consumed during leisure time; intoxicating value of use) after having grown up with the traditional model. The everyday use of alcohol has been abandoned by most of them: their consumption careers have been characterised by transitions in their life courses (entry into the world of work, marriage, children’s birth), which caused them to adopt a more traditional style (very similar to that of their parents) of drinking.

5. More in detail, the interviews and real life experiences demonstrated how situational mechanisms, shaping the social and cultural contexts in which the interviewees of both age groups lived, influenced their courses of action. Confirming what emerged in the section dedicated to the reconstruction of major social changes, the research showed that:

- the development of industrial processes and the services industry in the employment structure of our country directed substantial changes towards the organisation of labour, changing the contexts, times and rhythms of production; the search for greater efficiency and productivity, and the different organisation of time (spent working, being busy and for leisure) available during the day redefined the lifestyles of the workers and influenced consumption styles, resulting in a reduction of alcohol’s role in everyday life;
- the decline in alcohol consumption occurred when the process of consumer modernisation began, in particular involving the members of the younger age group, who were actors of the break-through, innovation and integration brought to the traditional consumption models. At the same time, because they had learned the rules of traditional consumption in
their families, as soon as, in the course of their life, they had been required to face certain transitions (changing of status), they had been able to modify their consumption style, avoiding negative consequences on their social behaviours. They were no longer searching for the intoxicating dimension in the drinking experience, but rather the nutritional and socialising/convivial one;

- starting from the mid-1970s, changes in the family structure and in relationships between men and women brought about a change in their relational styles, indirectly affecting consumption models. Family careers of the younger age group’s components affected their leisure lifestyles, reducing the occasions to drink alcohol for socialising/intoxicating purposes. Reference was usually made to the “responsibility” taken on with marriage and cohabitation, or the birth of a child, and importance of sharing leisure time with their own wife/partner and children. Undoubtedly, this was a consequence of the change concerning the relationship between the sexes over the last three decades of the last century, with the declining role of the patriarchal family relationship models, and the growing participation of women in the labour market. This was demonstrated by the fact that such dynamics did not involve the older age group, whose members did not feel the need to modify the way their time was allocated among the various activities and management of leisure time, even after becoming husbands or fathers;

- more recently, the increasing health awareness in society also affected this process; people paid more attention to nutritional issues in consumption, thus causing a reduction in the quantity of alcohol consumed, among both the members of the younger age group (who reduced alcohol consumption for the sake of physical efficiency) and those of the elders. For the latter, health-related information played an increasingly important role (with particular reference to the prevention of ageing-related diseases) together with resorting frequently to medical checks for health care and prevention purposes;

6. Having socialised with alcohol while living in the family turned out to be a decisive factor in the consumption career and life course of the interviewees. This exposure permitted the individuals to acquire a system of rules and informal social sanctions (either positive or negative) which not only regulated the use of alcoholic drinks, but also of their abuse. The learning of rules for a nutritional/thirst quenching and socialising/convivial consumption (especially of wine), that had occurred within the family environment, represented a useful point of reference also for the members of the elder group. Even though during their youth they had adopted use and abuse models unknown to the Mediterranean culture (due to exposure to international models of consumption), they had also learned the traditional rules and relevant drinking control mechanisms from previous generations (fathers and grandfathers.) These “internalised” points
of reference “surfaced” and guided their choices as they faced different phases of their life course.;

7. in this sort of context, it could be understood why most of the interviewees had attached a lot of importance to “self-control”, an ability that could be acquired, facilitating the distinction between a “controlled”, “balanced” and “fair” use and an improper use, of alcohol. It was confirmed, however, that it was not the abuse in itself that was stigmatised. Such abuse was tolerated in certain circumstances and moments of the day and/or week, as long as it did not have a negative impact on the ability to function socially and on social relations;

8. finally, the positive effects of the widespread rejection of the deviant “label” application on those who abused alcohol in certain circumstances had been observed. Put in slightly different terms, it had been possible to observe the absence of negative effects on the moral careers of the individuals (known as deviance-reinforcing effects.) On the contrary, the occasional alcohol abusers upheld and reinforced the definition of themselves as being capable of self-control.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND POTENTIAL RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

Closing remarks cannot help but attempt to do what any researcher expects from his/her job: that is, to clarify whether, and to what extent, the questions lying behind the research were answered, indicating the developments that appeared to be appropriate and useful.

No doubt this work led, for the first time in Italy, to the collection and analysis of all the available data relevant to alcohol consumption in the adult population. The correlation of the alcohol consumption trend, with several indicators of social change that had developed over the period under investigation, represented the second significant step of the research. The results achieved – with the caution required every time the analysis involved the interplay of a wide range of “macro” factors related to a specific change – pointed out plausible correlations, and permitted us to interpret the consistency existing between the trends of some indicators and the phenomenon being analysed.

What emerged was a picture of a series of factors which, developed in a documented chronological order and combined with changes occurring contemporarily in Italian society, seemed to have played a role of varying importance in affecting different parts of the wine consumption curve in Italy. In the upward phase, registered in the post-war period during the 1950s and ‘60s, the “price and purchasing power” factor prevailed, exhausting its momentum as the saturation of consumption was reached at the end of the ‘60s. Once people’s primary needs were satisfied, the
importance of wine consumption’s symbolic role emerged. Consumption decrease started with the increase in urbanisation, which represented the main driving force of consumption during the entire ‘70s. During the declining phase of consumption, during the ‘80s and ‘90s, other factors began intervening, such as social mobility, changes in family life resulting from the evolving role of women in the workforce and within society, the de-structuring of mealtimes and increased health consciousness.

If these descriptions had some limitations, they were due to the nature and quality of the data available, as explained in the first chapter’s introduction. The efforts made to collect the data could be considered increasingly useful, as it resulted difficult to collect and the trends arduous to describe. Hopefully, these efforts will encourage those people institutionally accountable for the collection and provision of data on alcoholic consumption habits of Italians, to equip themselves with instruments capable of providing researchers with clear references. In doing so, the quality and continuity of the data and information over time would be strengthened. Moreover, this would allow the institutions to keep pace with other national entities, who have already been seriously committed to the collection of highly reliable data, including figures covering this specific issue.

The connection between the quantitative analysis and the qualitative one – dealt with in the second part of the research – represented an example of the wealth that could stem from the integration of different research methodologies. Nevertheless, this connection also merits some clarifications.

First of all, the issue of the significance of the interviews was important when reaching generalised conclusions of the findings. We pointed out how important it was, in research of this kind, to ensure that the individuals interviewed were as representative as possible of the “typical individual” population. These individuals should not have only spoken for themselves, but also for those who shared the same socio-cultural and generational features. In this respect, we could affirm that they had the following characteristics in common: they identified a specific model of alcoholic consumption as a peculiar trait of their group. They described the role of the factors responsible for the changes in their lives, and consumption styles as a common feature among people belonging to their generation.

Secondly, the question might arise as to the appropriateness of using interviews referring directly to a micro-sociological dimension, as an instrument with which to interpret relationships between structural and cultural changes, and general trends relating to a specific phenomenon - in this case of alcohol consumption change – that addresses a “macro” dimension. In this regard, it could be said that the survey, despite its exploratory nature, permitted us to identify the sense and direction with which some situational mechanisms (the expression of wider social processes, both cultural and economic) developed. In other words, it was possible to see how the contexts in which
individuals lived and behaved affected their alcoholic drinking patterns when they faced different opportunities and constraints.

It was possible to identify the links between alcohol consumption reduction and the changes that occurred, to the structure of employment and organisation of labour, role of women in society, changes in the consumer, and family relationships. The comparison of generations characterised by significant differences consented us to appreciate the role played by alcohol in the socialisation processes, which differentiated drinking cultures present in Italy.

In other words, we attempted to open the “black box” linking the complexity of social change to the reduction in consumption. We identified reasons that further study may more solidly support, so as to provide a better understanding of the relevance of the elements that emerged as important guides behind lifestyles of Italians and their alcoholic drinking habits.

Research development was therefore possible at least on three levels. First, as far as the systematic collection of quantitative data was concerned, there was a rational and consistent collection of meaningful indicators. This enabled a collection of data that permitted diachronic comparisons, as well as meaningful comparisons with research conducted in other countries, where organic and functional data-collecting systems had been established for a long time.

Secondly, the research could be extended to other representative samples as to the issues that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative study.

Thirdly, important knowledge could be acquired by conducting a series of longitudinal surveys – a long-term project that in time could be helpful in identifying the alcohol consumption role in the growth processes and successive life courses of a group of representative individuals.

These research developments could help monitor what today appears as the characteristic trait of Italian reality, namely the co-existence of at least two alcohol consumption patterns. The traditional one, typically Mediterranean, is sustained by a group composed of adults and elderly people, mainly male, still bound to the nutritional rituals and to the socialising implications of drinking. The other, which is emerging among younger people, is more influenced by international patterns and biased towards the psychotropic effect of alcohol.

To date, the two patterns, though different, appear to have similarities. Their approach is oriented towards self-control and recreational alcohol use in the search of taste or relational pleasure, rather than the alcohol use to intoxicate oneself or escape from existential problems. The Mediterranean culture, though adopting ever more open consumption models, seems to act as a stabilising force in patterns emerging among the new generations.

With the disappearance of the age groups living directly or indirectly according to the ancient rhythm of seasons and land produce, drinking patterns of other cultures could consolidate themselves in our social context, bringing the related background of social and health consequences with them. Exploring processes that may activate or deactivate collective mechanisms of self-
control and moderation, with new and original studies conducted in our country as well as in others in the Mediterranean, could be noteworthy.

In practical terms, the possibility of reconciling effective preventative policies concerning collective and individual alcohol-related damages, including a due appreciation of the Mediterranean consumption style, based on a convivial and socialising value of alcohol beverages, should be examined. A further worthwhile association with this consists of messages promoting moderation and self-control, concerned with the quality of consumption and the psycho-physical health of the individual.