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**THE ROMANIAN POPULATION IN THE TURN OF THE CENTURY:
AN APPROACH TO DEMOGRAPHIC BEHAVIOR IN ROMANIA
DURING THE GREAT TRANSFORMATIONS
OF THE TRANSITION FROM THE 20TH TO 21TH CENTURY**

José Díaz-Diego, José Manuel Jurado-Almonte***

Abstract

This article describes, analyses and discusses some of the main demographic indicators of Romania during the last two decades, which we have entitled 'Romania of the great transformations', since the data analysed corresponds with a historical period characterised by a profound social, political and economic transformation following the fall of the Ceaușescu socialist regime in 1989 and the rapid introduction of the Romanian society and State into the capitalist market and neoliberal logics, fostered eventually by its incorporation into the European Union in 2007. The analyses presented comprise statistical data from official Romanian institutions as well as excerpts from semi-structured interviews to specialised Romanian informants, and fieldwork notes taken by the authors in some of the main cities of the country. The data reveals an important decrease of the Romanian population in addition to a marked ageing, the feminization of the elderly and the masculinization of the young conditioned to a great extent by the excessive emigration during the last decade (which has not been rigorously estimated in the official statistics until recently), the fall of birth-rates, the rise of life expectancy, and the second transition of its family demographic structures.

Key words: *Romania, population, demographic behavior, Turn of Century*

The Romanian Demographic Indicators

Until very recently, the demographic data on population in Romania should be read with some caution because its National Statistical Institute (INS) had been calculating the population as of January 1st, for every census year, on the basis of the demographic data of the last census, to which it was applied the natural movements of population and the migratory balance (INS, 2012a). This methodology has been launching intercensal data with a high margin of error that, necessarily, increased in recent years as one of the variables of the demographic equation, the applied migratory balance, was only the one registered and not the real, far greater than this, a product of, among other circumstances, the economic crisis in Romania after the collapse of the socialist system and its transition to a market system, in addition to the occurred right of its citizens to free movement in the European Union after its accession in 2007. This situation facilitated the movements of population, especially the population interested finding a job abroad.

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The free movement of persons made even more difficult the record of the actual volume of the Romanian emigration, as indicated by Mercedes Gordo (2008) in the case of migratory flows toward Spain. However, the INS not warned about this, at least directly, in their methodological notes, even when in the latest progress on the Census of Population and Housing of 2011 published on 2 February 2012, before the final results appeared already in 2013, was estimated for the total of Romania a population of only 19,042,936 inhabitants (INS, 2012a), a great mismatch for almost 2,370,000 inhabitants with regard to the official figures published just a year before, on 1 January 2011 and revised on 20 June of the same year. Finally, the census estimated the stable population of Romania as of 20 October 2011 in 20,121,641 inhabitants (INS, 2013).

Still on the demographic indicators and focusing consciously until 2010, Romania is a country that, as it was said previously, slightly exceeds the 20 million inhabitants¹. Of the almost 23 it had in 1992, experiencing a steady decline in its population from the political-economic transition of the early nineties of the twentieth century and accelerated in recent years, with a decline by over 12%. The new context took back the Romanian population to figures prior to the beginning of the sixties of the last century. Until then, the population had grown steadily at a mean intercensal rate above 10%, particularly sharply after World War II and during the economic boom experienced in the country in the decade of the sixties. With the crisis of the seventies and eighties, population growth moderated due mainly to a sharp fall in the birth rate, which rose from 19 to 11 per 1,000. This led the Romanian Government to implement measures to stimulate the birth rate and the reduction of mortality, which did not prevent the real growth of the population shifting from 12.86% to 5.80% in barely one and a half decade, the first decline in more than 100 years.

Table 1. *Evolution of the population in the censuses of Romania, 1910-2014*

<i>Census</i>	<i>Inhabitants</i>	Δ <i>between censuses</i>
1910/1912	12,768,399	-
12-29-1930	14,280,729	1,512,330
01-25-1948	15,872,624	1,591,895
02-21-1956	17,489,450	1,616,826
03-15-1966	19,103,163	1,613,713
01-05-1977	21,559,910	2,456,747
01-07-1992	22,810,035	1,250,125
03-18-2002	21,680,974	-1,129,061
10-20-2011	20,121,641	-1,559,333
01-01-2014 (Annual Review)	19,942,642	-178,999

Source: Ghețau and Damian, 2006; INS, 2014.

¹ The latest update of the population statistics as of 1 January 2014, a resident population (*populația rezidentă stabilă*) of 19,942,642 inhabitants was estimated for the total of Romania (INS, 2016).

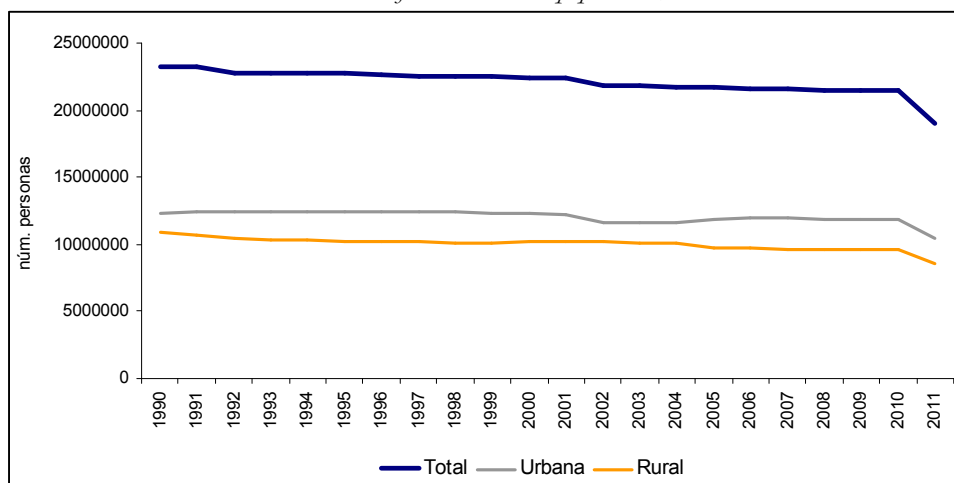
As can be seen in Chart 1, the negative trend has continued throughout the last decade, being particularly intense during the past few years. Among its factors has obviously been present what Van de Kaa (1987, 1993 and 2002) and Lesthaeghe (1991) christened “second demographic transition”, characterized by a strong decline in fertility and therefore the birth rate below the threshold of replacement, in addition to an important influence of international migration that, according to the direction of the migration flows, has accelerated the loss or gain of the population of certain Western countries at a pace not well estimated in the demographic predictions.

This concept, already circulating in mid-70 expressed itself not only a demographic trend but a deeper change in the demographic and social structures, such as the family ones. Western families not only consolidated their new nuclear status but considerably reduced the number of children while the mothers gave birth increasingly late. The incorporation of women to the work market but also new patterns of consumption, the perception of a more extensive youth, the expansion of university education, the advance of moral secularism, the symbolic weakening of the family as an essential social institution, the growing importance of the individual’s leisure and the couple projected as incompatible with the upbringing of children, the cost of living, etc., have played a crucial role in a reproductive revolution¹ that has disrupted both the profile and the number of members of the traditional Western family, sometimes very stereotypical, there is to say.

The second demographic transition, that in many of the countries of the Western Europe already took place in the 70’s, and in other countries, especially in the South, took place in the mid 80, is not experienced intensively in Eastern Europe, and especially in Romania, until the collapse of the socialist regime, the adoption of abortion and, above all, the change of mentality of the hard transition to the capitalist market and its difficult economic context, which in no way facilitated the constitution of young families and its stability for the upbringing of children, especially when the emigration began to be not only a possibility but almost an obligation in the thinking of young people Romanians with prospects and ambition for a better life. All this drew, therefore, a downward trend in the demographic evolution of the Romanian population, incorrigible so far, both in the rural environment and in the urban environment (Chart 1).

¹ On the concept of reproductive revolution we can read John Maclnnes and Julio Pérez (2005, 2008), cited in the bibliography, who carry out an interesting analysis of some of the most representative demographic changes of postmodernity, from a demographic and sociological perspective, rescuing ideas already classic, such as those from June Davis (2006) about the social pressure on reproductive capacity. As for regional examples, there are those from Bertrand Hervieu and François Purseigle (2009).

Chart 1. *Evolution of the Romanian population, 1990-2011*



Source: INS, 2010, 2011, 2013.

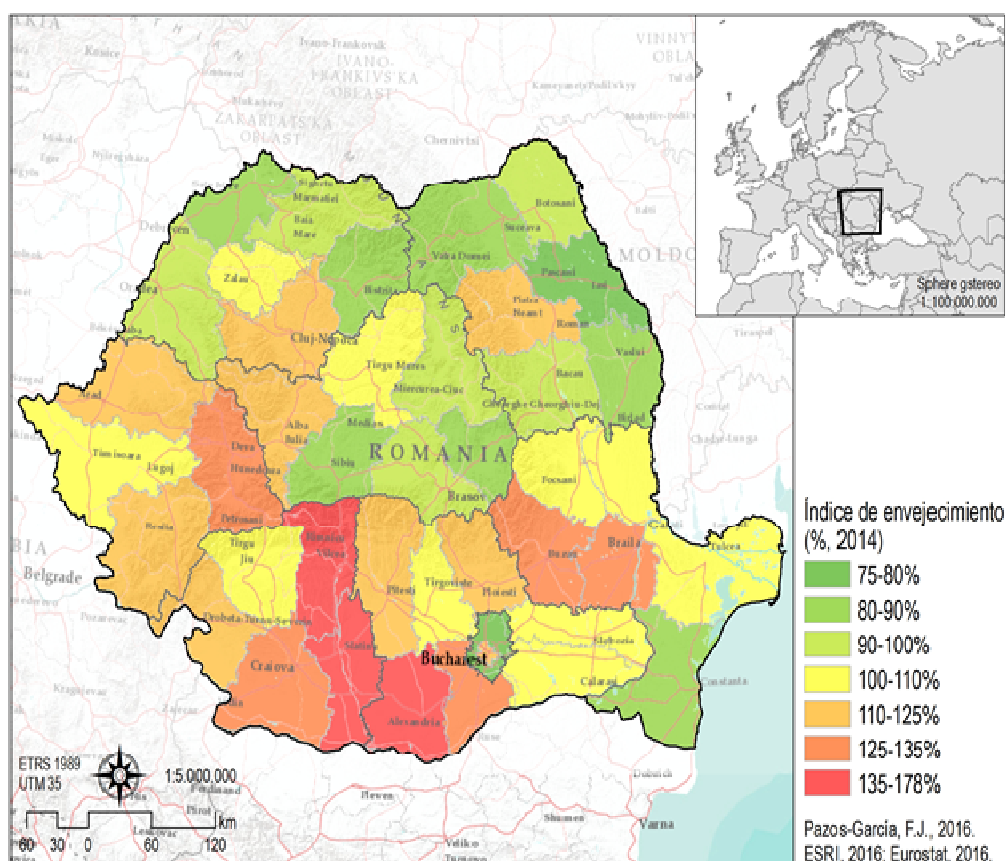
Indeed, as highlighted by Monnier (1996) and Seys (1998), the socio-economic crisis of socialist collapse caused a true demographic shock among the former communist societies, as is the case in Romania¹, affecting basic indicators such as the number of marriages, the number of births and the volume of migration.

In Figure 2 one can see very clearly how the transition toward a free market impacted on the birth rate, which at the beginning of the 90s was 13.6 per thousand and that, in about a decade, fell to 9.8 per thousand². Ghețău and Damian (2006) emphasize in this regard the importance of the liberalization of abortion and the widespread use of contraceptives. The birth rate is not stabilized until almost the middle of the 1990s, returning to fall among the rural population already in the twenty-first century and would recover, but only in urban environments, with better socioeconomic conditions and a population younger than that in the rural environment. This last fact is very significant because for the first time since we have Romanian data, in 2010 the urban rate of birth rate (10 per 1,000) stood above the rural rate of birth rate (9.8 per 1,000), which reflected a significant change in the reproductive and family pattern, and therefore the demographic and sociocultural profile, not so much from the urban environment as from the rural environment, which was historically more fruitful and of larger families, whose aging and economic difficulties have put in jeopardy its generational replacement.

¹ In the specific case of Romania, it can be found in the work of the professor Ionel Muntele, summarized on: <https://scholar.google.ro/citations?user=IC66g68AAAAJ&hl=ro>.

² The birth rate was a 10 per thousand in 2012 and a 9.1 per thousand in 2013, according to Eurostat.

Map 1. *Aging index of the Romanian population by district/județ, 2014*



Economic conditions very improvable, some health services deficit, especially in rural environments, very low pension levels, the harsh agricultural tasks uninterrupted almost until the last years of life among a large part of the rural population and in many cases, the loneliness of being away from their children in the emigration, have been drawing the context of difficult aging which undergoes a very considerable part of the population of Romania and especially of the rural population (Diaz-Diego and Márquez Domínguez, 2009 and 2011), which has resulted in increasing the rate of Romanian mortality, 10.6 per thousand in 1990 and 12.1 per thousand in 2010¹, with peaks up to 16.5 per thousand of rural mortality in 1996. In fact, it is particularly significant the permanent gap between the rural and urban mortalities that share the same temporal variations without reaching converge. Currently, the gap between the urban and the rural mortality is nearly 5 points, with urban areas in the 10 per thousand and rural areas in a considerably high 14.7 per thousand (Figure 2).

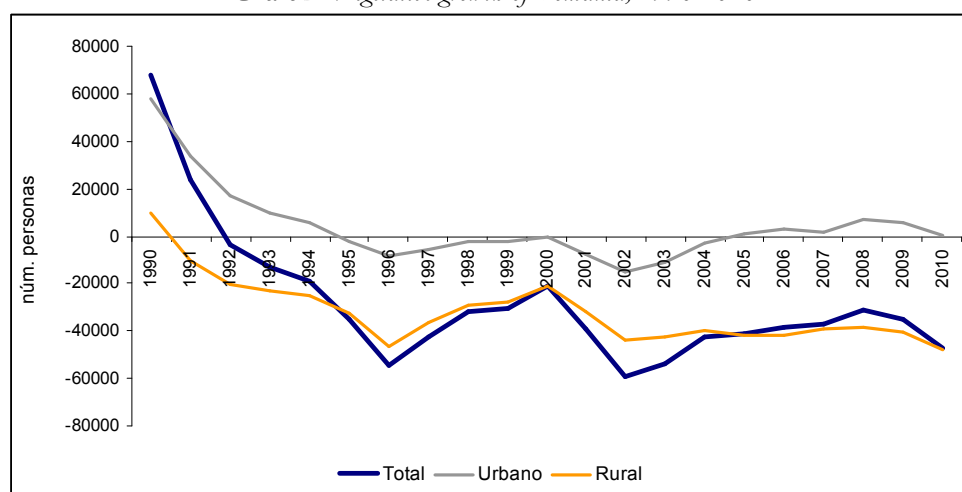
The difference between rates is observable even in the infant mortality, which registers an average of 7.7 children who died during their first year of life for every 1,000

¹ 12.3 per thousand in 2013.

born during that year in the urban environments and 12.3 per thousand in rural environments, while it is a rate that in both rural and urban areas, in contrast to the adult mortality, has been reduced considerably in the past 20 years, from 26.9 per thousand in 1990 to 9.8 per thousand in 2010¹ (INS, 2011 and 2012b) (INS, 2011 and 2012b). As in the rest of western countries, such a decrease in the infant mortality rate has been linked undoubtedly to the medical advances and to the improvement of the basic health care, without forgetting the cultural change by which, reinforced since social policies, minors have come to occupy a central place in the nuclear family, doubling the attentions and care toward them. However, these rates of infant mortality, still remain low, doubling the existing ones, for example, in Spain at present.

Both factors, a decrease in the birth rate - with certain exceptions - and an increase in the mortality rate², have contributed, obviously, to the investment of vegetative growth that, with jumps, has not ceased to decrease since the fall of the socialist regime. Thus, without taking into account the emigration, i.e. relying solely on the negative balance that shed the fewest number of births and the highest number of deaths, Romania is losing since 1992 about 35,700 inhabitants per year, with peaks up to 46,700 in 1996 and 44,100 in 2002 (Chart 2).

Chart 2. *Vegetative growth of Romania, 1990-2010*

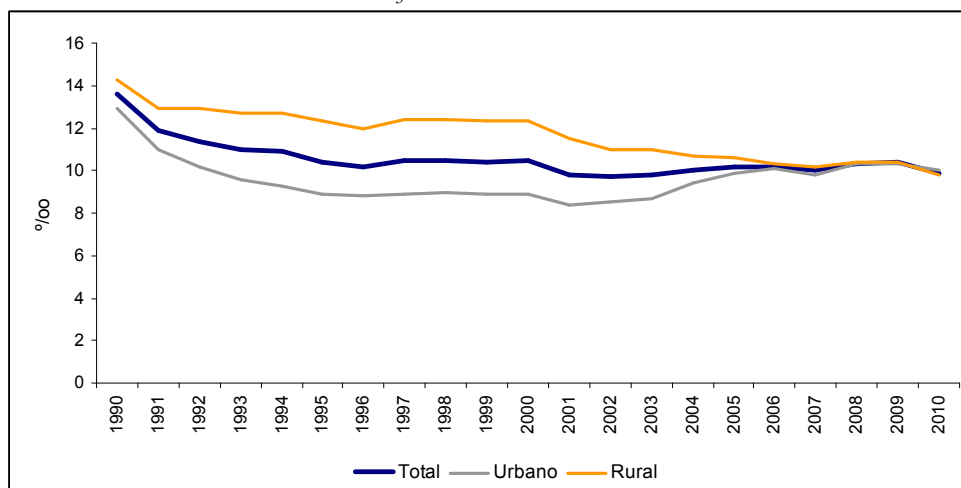


Source: INS, 2011, 2012b.

¹ 9 per thousand in 2012.

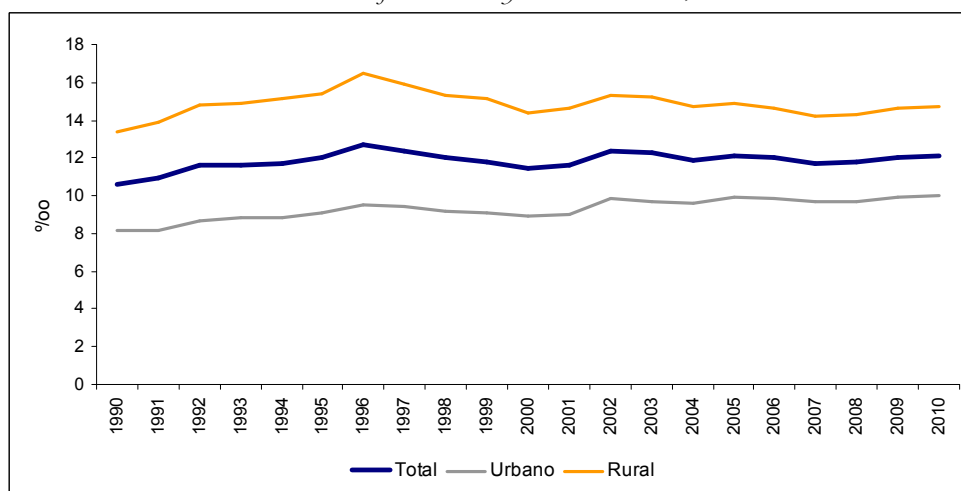
² The latest statistics reflect a birth rate of 9.1 per thousand in 2013 and an overall mortality of 12.3 per 1,000, with a vegetative growth of -3.2 per thousand in 2013.

Chart 3. Evolution of the birth rate in Romania, 1990-2010



Source: INS, 2011, 2012b.

Chart 4. Evolution of the mortality rate in Romania, 1990-2010



Source: INS, 2011, 2012b.

To complete the main factors of the Romanian second demographic transition and therefore its loss of population, it would be necessary to analyze the reverse of its vegetative growth highlighting the fall in fertility motivated by the raising of the age of the betrothal, the incorporation of women to the labor market and the assumption of various responsibilities outside the home, the prolongation of the waiting time to conceive the first son, the decline in the number of marriages, the increase in the number of consensual partners and of the unmarried, the increase in the number of children born out of wedlock, the increasing number of divorces and separations, the increase in single-parent families generally aimed not to increase the offspring, the diversification of family models

and the generalized use of the contraceptive methods, without the high impact that in this demographic behavior has had the effect of migration.

In graphs 5 and 6 can be checked how it has experienced a steady decline in marriage among Romanian¹, with the exception of some peaks that do not blur the decreasing social trend. The most significant upturn occurred in 2007, a time in which Romania entered into the European Union. This upturn, led mainly by the increase in the number of marriages in rural areas, apart from the widespread optimism with which they lived the accession and what it might suppose as for their decisions about their life, it has few more explanations that the willingness on the part of couples to formalize their relationship in terms of marriage and, therefore, to strengthen their social and administrative ties facing a new horizon of migration, in other words, to decide to sat the "I want" before the migration project of one or both members of the couple. Surely, although this is hypothetical, here joined optimism in view of the new situation on the one hand, couples who, being outside already, returned to marry thanks to the greater security that the new European framework guaranteed them in regard to their mobility and their return and, finally, couples who decided to marry to undertake a new life abroad, all of this with the developed Europe in the background.

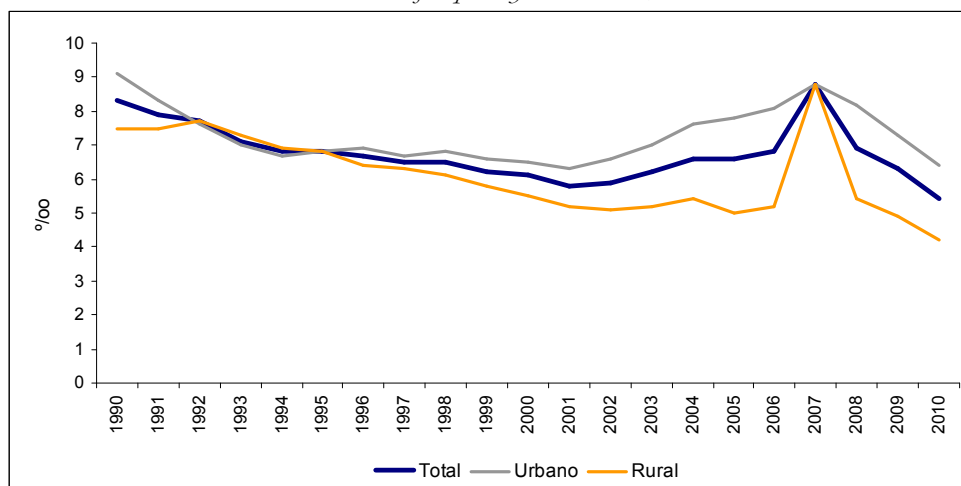
Similarly, the decline in the number of marriages has been accompanied by the increase in the number of divorces and separations, a growing trend that, as in the rest of Western countries, is defining matrimonial projects of less stability and duration². In the Romanian case, it is particularly interesting to note how the divorce rate in rural environments has grown at a rate much higher than the corresponding urban rate and, although still considerably away, presented a converging trend, which implies a rapid modernization of rural family patterns, until now more conservative and traditional than their urban counterparts. In fact, the main urban districts of the country, as with Bucharest, Timiș, Constance, Iași or Brașov, the divorce rate has decreased considerably in the past 20 years. For example, Timiș, the most western of the Romanian districts, has changed from 2.13 per thousand of divorces to 0.83 per thousand in two decades.

Certainly, all this should be understood in the context of a smaller number of couples who finally decided to get married and the relative weight of non-matrimonial unions is increasingly important, so that it would be logical to think that new marriages are constituted by couples more convinced of the next step to take and less tied to social pressure and its informal control, and therefore more stable over time. However, it is the rural population which really is finalising an accelerated process of breaking with the traditional conventions and the pressure of the informal control of their rural societies in matrimonial topics, as in the case of divorce, provinces (*județe*) as Vaslui, Botoșani, Maramureș, Neamț, Tulcea or Calarași, among others, have increased their rates very quickly. In fact, Vaslui has doubled it in 20 years, from 1.01 per 1,000 in 1990 to 2.10 per 1,000 in 2010.

¹ The marriage rate in 2012 was 5.4‰

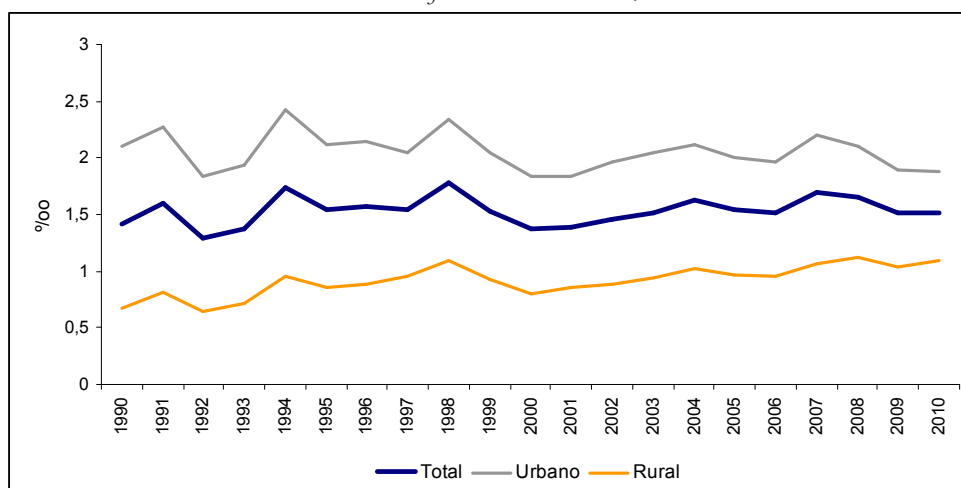
² The divorce rate in Romania was 1.6 per thousand in 2012.

Chart 5. *Evolution of nuptiality in Romania, 1990-2010*



Source: INS, 2011, 2012b.

Chart 6. *Evolution of divorce in Romania, 1990-2010*



Source: INS, 2011, 2012b.

The Romanian emigration, a phenomenon of little statistical coverage

Without depleting them all, the last factor that has influenced heavily the evolution of the Romanian population has been emigration. As it has been stated previously, the National Statistics Institute of Romania, which is the official body of the Romanian State in the area of demographic information, has been providing data on international migration flows very distant to those which have actually been produced and today they continue to occur in the Carpathian country. With official data, it has been impossible to know the exact number of Romanians who had fled their country, mainly in the pursuit of better employment outlook, so it is very difficult to include with statistical accuracy the

migration variable in the evolution of the population beyond less empirical estimates and assessments, which does not influence the abundant information on the impact of migration that have unveiled the jobs of more qualitative nature in the Romanian society.

With regard to the Romanian emigration, there have been more reliable statistics that those made on their own from Romania and not by a small margin. As can be seen in the data table that accompanies the figure 7, the emigration volume recorded by the Romanian Institute was implausible. According to official figures, from the country it would have emerged toward emigration, since the fall of the communist regime, 414.607 Romanians, when only the National Institute of Statistics of Spain stood that the Romanian population resident to 1 January 2013 was 773.122 people, having reached the 865.707 in 2011 (INE, 2012 and 2013), already with the economic crisis, discouraging the arrival and encouraging the return. For the same period, the National Statistical Institute of Italy estimated the number of Romanians in the transalpine country to be 968.576 (INSTAT, 2011).

Somewhat less underestimated, the INS estimated more than 910,000 emigrant Romanians (*persoane plecate in perioadă îndelungată*, i.e. people who have gone for a long period of time) for 2012, still distant from more than the estimated 2,000,000 that can reside only in Italy, France and Spain¹. On the other hand, the INS published that immigrants present in the country (*persoane temporar prezente*, i.e., persons temporarily present) exceeded slightly the 301.600 and neither in the case of migrants nor for immigrants offered once more disaggregated data with a low degree of error on their destination, origin, age, sex, marital status, education, work experience, etc.

The alternative official source, the statistical yearbooks (*Anuarele Statistice al Romaniei*), nor have they been particularly lengthy in the detail of the emigrant profiles, while clarifying the overwhelming feminization of the Romanian emigration, with a 63.10% of emigrant women compared to a 39.90 per cent of men, and the median youth, already entering a certain maturity of the main age group of these immigrants, with a 57.70% of the same between 26 and 40 years. In regard to the destinations, they have traditionally been important Italy, Germany, United States, Canada and Hungary, among which, for a little more than half a five-year period, must be placed to Spain² Just after Italy, as the second destination of migration (INS, 2008, 2012a, 2012b).

J. Diaz: What sectors of the population are the most likely to migrate? Ionel: *Young people, although there are people of 40 or 50 years [that also migrate] because it is very difficult for them to find work [here].* J. Diaz: And what about young students, of high academic level? Ionel: *No, in all categories. Emigration is general, they migrate with studies and no studies.* J. Diaz: And what about young people from 20 to 35? Ionel: *From 25 to 30, yes, that is the interval, although there are people who migrate for the first time at the age of 50 years, this is not something rare.* J. Diaz: What is the main destination of the Romanian migrants? Ionel: *If there is that destination. I think that is Italy. Most of these migrants are originating in Moldova and Transylvania. In Italy the emigrants [Romanians] are scattered all over the country, even in Sicily. They have an important presence*

¹ The latest revisions from the INS offer a migrant population of 2.29 million Romanians in 2011 and 2.37 in 2014.

² On the history and geography of the Romanian emigration, primarily in and toward Spain, is particularly recommended the work of Professor Rafael Viruela, summarized on <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=799089>

in the region of Rome, in Lazio, in the region of Turin, in the north, in the region of Milan, in Venice and in Tuscany. J. Diaz: And from the beginning was always Italy the first destination or were there any changes? Ionel: *Could not affirm... Italy is now the first destination.* [can be checked in the number of *flights that there is for Italy, even from [airports] provinces, as Iași or Bacău.* J. Diaz: Can you fly to Rome? Ionel: *To Rome, to Verona, Treviso, to Rimini... are very good communications. Now an important destination is being Spain, because in Spain there is a great [economic development]. You can work in agriculture or in the tourism sector.* Excerpt from the interview to Ionel Muntele, 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University of Iași.

Finally, phenomena such as those described above formed in the Romania of the major socio-political transformations a population structure slightly feminized, whose representation pyramid shows a significant concentration of population between 20 and 44, with a prominent investment of the bases, weaker, as a result of the vegetative decline intensified by the significant emigration of the last decade. In a more detailed way, by sex, women have accounted for 51.32 per cent of the population compared to 48.68 per cent of men in 2011¹. However, this feminization of society as a whole was not completely real, but a final balance sheet result of significant feminization of the population older than 45. From this step of age downturn, the population was slightly male, especially between 20 and 34, again as a result of the strong emigration of the past 10 years, where women accounted for a significant number of the bulk of migration. Thus, in the cut between the age of 30 and 34, the men accounted to 51.33% of the total number of this population, a percentage that is repeated, although slightly less in the entire young population of Romania. On the other hand, the most feminized group is the one that moves in a range of age between 70 and 74, with a 58.94% of women.

With regard to the rural population, which amounted to 9.635.620 inhabitants, i.e. the 44.99% of the Romanian population on 1 January 2011, was slightly feminized as a whole with a 50.12% women compared to a 49.88% of men. As was the case with the total set of the Romanian population, the feminization of the rural population was only partial as their assets were higher in percentage than the male aged from 55, with a marked inequality with advancing age. Thus, women above 84 represented a 63.68% of the total of its age. On the contrary, all age groups from 50 years down were slightly masculinized, especially the range between the 40 and 44, where men accounted for 54.43% of the total.

Why the set of the Romanian population was female from the age of 45, while the rural population started to be female from the age of 55? Again, it is necessary to make reference to the emigration to explain it. Obviously, the profile of the rural migrant and the profile of the national migrant, mostly urban, were dissimilar profiles and responded to different stimuli, in addition to having represented different migratory processes with dates and destinations also different.

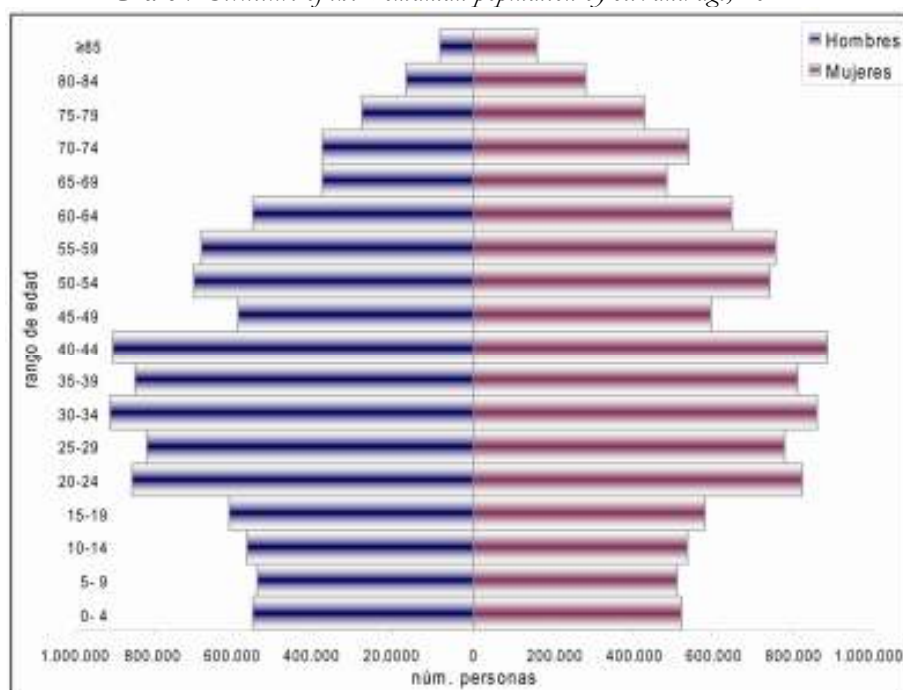
The Romanian rural population participated in the inner emigration long before the urban, directed mainly toward the outside. During the implementation of policies for the intensification of the Rumanian industry, under the regime of Ceaușescu (1967-1989), an important part of the rural population left the field to focus on intermediate cities, around the main industrial poles, and thus being used in the industry. That migratory movement caused which until recently, in the pyramid of the rural population, has been observed by

¹ The new figures of 2014 are the 51.14% of women compared to 48.86%, according to Eurostat data.

way of age groups significantly narrow. We refer to the shaped by those with more than 44 years. At the same time, that movement of rural population toward the cities was marked mainly by men, whose displacement feminized rural youth of its time, represented so far by that set of people over 55. On the contrary, the participation of the urban population in the inner emigration would expect until the 90s, with the privatization of the rural properties and the return of a significant volume of urbanites to the field, mainly thickening the rural ranges between the age of 30 and 44, among others.

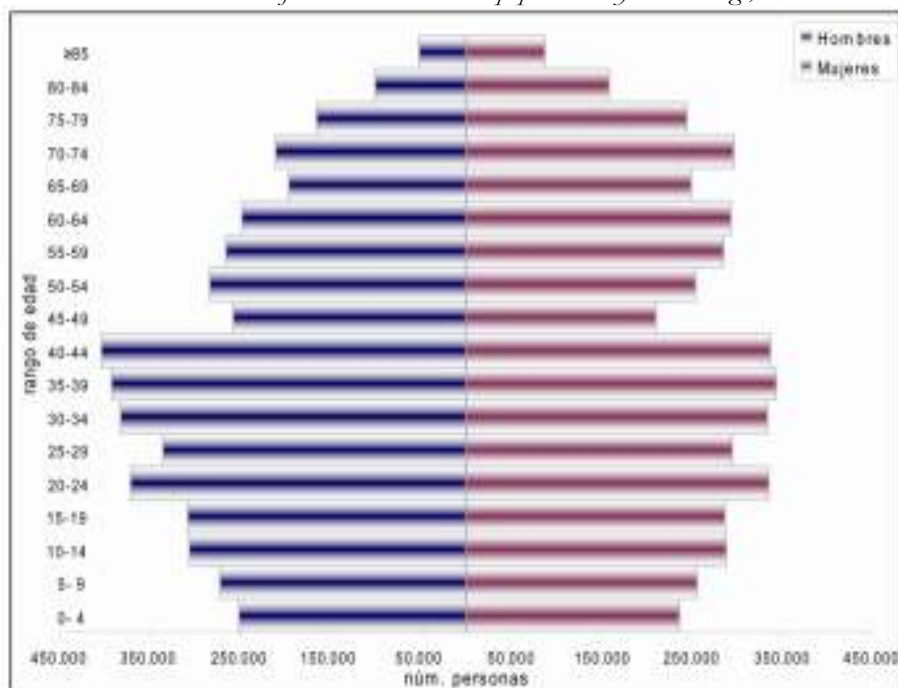
Finally, emigration toward the outside has been dominated from the outset by a larger number of inhabitants from urban environments, who suffered the dismantling of the heavy industry after the economic restructuring of the country and the resulting massive destruction of employment. This has been an emigration involving a larger number of women compared to men, masculinizing a cohort of younger age in the country as a whole, than the masculinized in the rural population.

Chart 7. Structure of the Romanian population by sex and age, 2011*



* Men at left, women at right. Source: INS, 2012c.

Chart 8. *Structure of the rural Romanian population by sex and age, 2011**



* Men at left, women at right. Source: INS, 2012c.

Final thoughts

After the fall of the regime of Ceaușescu (1989), not without certain episodes of violence, Romania was opened to the global world that in those years was in a huge political, economic and technological transformation. Its economic system, based on the duality of rural environments of farmers increasingly overshadowed, on the one hand, and urban environments of heavy state industry, on the other hand, suffered drastically and immediately. The loss of markets, technological backwardness and lower competitiveness of their agriculture and industry, coupled with the lack of political and social stability led to a huge crisis of their socio-economic structures. Since then, the dismantling of its industry, the agrarian reform and the increasing peasantry trait of agriculture, the territorial changes (Field-city) and the adoption of neoliberalism in their economic policies have been the highlights of its new historical cycle. The arrival of freedom to, among other things, migrate and move in the European territory. The Romania of the great transformations quickly opens to the West and, above all, to a European Union, to which with many hopes, finally, adheres in 2007, as the “magic formula” to achieve a desired development and welfare. All these factors are a cause and a consequence of the profound changes in the Romanian territorial distribution, its population and its demographic and social structures, markedly the family factor.

The sociodemographic events are appearing in other European countries in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century, as well as the fall in fertility and natality and the increase in the aging, among others, are going to happen at a later date in Romania but at a more accelerated pace from the 80s and especially from the 90s. These changes have been

accentuated to such an extent that at present, the Carpathian country, as other ex-Soviet, has a natural negative dynamics, despite the decline of the general and infant mortality, which contributes to an increased aging of its population.

Furthermore, these changes in the natural dynamics are reinforced by the phenomenon of foreign emigration, on such a social scale and political implications that the Romanian official statistics have not recognized in its entirety. This output, especially to other European countries, and even more so since 2007, has become the exhaust valve of several million Romanians, especially of young and mostly female, affecting both the rural and urban spaces. Regardless of their figures, more real if we take the statistics of recipient countries such as Italy or Spain, the constant flow of Romanians toward the outside has meant a significant decline in the total population of Romania, in addition to the detailed consequences in the demographic and family structures. This pace of exit toward the exterior has decreased in recent years as a result of the economic crisis in European countries such as Spain, but still there was a phenomenon of flows of returns that entails a demographic recovery, apart from other consequences on the economy and the territory. If this will not occur, during decades, the demographic structure of Romania will reflect this phenomenon of emigration, as a result of the historical context of the country in the framework of the European Union and globalization.

And as a result of this social and historic becoming, demographic projections of Eurostat predict, beyond the numbers, a gradual decline of the Romanian population in absolute terms and an increase in the rates of dependence, motivated this by the increase in the aging¹; a situation similar to that of other European countries, although in the case of Romania, this situation has come about in a more accelerated way by the lower temporary travel.

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¹ 16.5% of the population over the age of 64 in 2014, according to Eurostat.

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