

TERRITORIAL MOBILITY OF THE ROMANIAN POPULATION. CAUSES AND EFFECTS

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Abstract: *For the first time in human history, more people are living in urban areas than in rural areas. Every year, millions of people decide to leave their rural homes and migrate to cities across the country or even across the border. Most of these people want to move to seek new job opportunities and, of course, to improve their lives, while others are forced to migrate because of sudden or slow-onset conflicts or natural disasters, such as rising sea levels, droughts and floods, which are often exacerbated by climate change and environmental stress. In addition, rural populations, whose livelihoods depend to a large extent on agriculture, are particularly vulnerable to pressures from migration. This article aims to provide an overview of rural-urban migration in Romania, detailing the causes and effects of this process. Romanian citizens from rural areas move to the country's big cities to enjoy the facilities offered by urban areas. In the current context, migration is the population's impulse from one topographical location to another, thus connecting temporary or permanent settlements. However, this process, like any other, brings with it both positive and negative economic, social and demographic consequences, which will be discussed in detail in this article.*

Keywords: *migration; history; economic; social; work;*

JEL Classification: *J11; J15; J18;*

1. Introduction

Today, most of the world's population lives in urban areas. More than 90% of urbanization has taken place in developing countries and is mainly concentrated among young adults aged 15 to 30. There are many reasons that influence people in making this decision, as cities offer a more promising location for social activities, much better medical facilities compared to rural environments and, most importantly, metropolises provide income, jobs and access to education for all. However, rapid urbanization is leading to progressive poverty, putting pressure on already strained public structures and services. For this reason, proactive and inclusive urban planning at the local level, as well as national mobility management policies, are fundamental to reducing the vulnerability of rural areas and harnessing the socio-economic potential of the migration process for the development of migrant citizens and host societies. In addition, migrant remittances can enhance rural food security while increasing economic and social investment in places of origin.

Internal migration is now one of the most important factors in reducing poverty rates and facilitating economic development. However, the internal factors affecting population mobility in Romania and the relationship between internal and economic migration are difficult to understand. This paper aims to provide an analysis of population mobility in Romania in order to understand the relationship between internal migration and economic development. This topic was chosen because it is essential to understand the link between internal migration and the economic development of the Romanian state in order to design appropriate policies to facilitate development, promote workers' rights, and prevent food shortages caused by the imbalance between urban and rural populations (Afsar, 2003; Satterthwaite et al. 2010).

In this context, the fundamental objective of this paper is to carry out an analysis of population mobility in Romania in order to understand the relationship between economic development and migration. Achieving this objective implies obtaining answers to the following questions:

- What is the evolution of the internal migration process in Romania?
- What are the characteristics of population mobility from rural to urban areas?

In the last part of the paper, the results obtained will be presented in detail, focusing on the questions presented above. The results section thus reveals the implications of the results as well as future research directions.

2. Specialty literature

Migration is the public's impulse to move from one topographical location to another alternative, thus linking temporary and permanent settlements. Internal migration is also recognized as an important mechanism by which the spatial distribution of people changes over time (Greenwood, 1997). The movement of people to different areas is a complex phenomenon involving both economic and demographic aspects. Empirically, migration studies can be classified according to their purpose, which is to find the determinants of migration or to study the consequences of migration.

Historically, people have always been on the move, and this is a particularly important means of economic and social development (McNeill, 1984). Over the past decade, the number of people moving within and across borders has steadily increased, outpacing global population growth rates (UN, 2017). Moreover, in 2017, there were 258 million international migrants globally, an increase of almost 70% since 1990 (UN, 2019). Migration theory has been at an impasse for decades (Arango 2000; de Haas 2010a). The field of migration studies has remained a surprisingly under-theorized area of social research. This is unfortunate because we cannot develop a richer understanding of migration processes unless we conceptually separate them from the broader processes of social change of which they are a part. Much migration thinking continues to rely, implicitly or explicitly, on simplistic push-pull models or neoclassical assumptions of individual income (or 'utility') maximization, despite their obvious inability to explain real-world migration patterns and processes. Although earlier theories of migration have rightly been criticized for their unrealistic assumptions, researchers have generally been better at disproving these theories than at finding viable theoretical alternatives.

Earlier contributions in the field such as Lee's (1966) migration theory, Mabogunje's (1970) migration systems theory, Zelinsky's (1971) mobility transition theory, Skeldon's (1990) work on migration transitions, Harris and Todaro's (1970) neoclassical migration theory, Piore's (1979) dual labor market theory, Stark's (1978, 1991) new economics of labor migration, and Massey's (1990) cumulative causality theory, have all attempted to come up with generalized understandings of migration. With the exception of a few authors (Carling 2002; Faist 2000; Hatton and Williamson 1998; Skeldon 1997), systematic theorizing of migration processes has been largely abandoned in recent decades (Skeldon 2012). In their overview of migration theories, Massey and his colleagues (Massey et al. 1993, p. 432) concluded that much migration thinking "remains mired in nineteenth-century concepts, models, and assumptions." Unfortunately, not much has changed since then compared to the current situation.

Over time, migration flows became more heterogeneous and complex, and by the end of the 20th century new conceptual frameworks had emerged. The new economic theory of labour migration (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark 1991) derives from the neoclassical perspective and is its most refined version. The key feature of this approach is that it views migration as a family or household decision rather than an individual decision. According to this perspective, migration allows for diversification of household resources in the event of failure or risk to local sources of income. Thus, older relatives and those remaining in the home country can rely on remittances, thus ensuring the welfare of older cohorts, especially in developing countries. While the new economic theory of labour migration incorporates consequences for countries of origin, the dual labour market theory (Piore 1979) focuses on destination countries. This approach also moves from the micro-level perspective of previous economic theories to a macro-level explanation of the structural factors that determine migration. Piore's approach asserts that the constant demand for labour for foreign workers is an intrinsic feature of labour markets in modern industrial societies. Other important studies not explicitly mentioned in this section can be found in the references.

3. Research Methodology

The paper entitled "Territorial mobility of the Romanian population. Causes and effects" is based on a mixed research methodology, as it combines both the descriptive analysis method used to introduce the current state of knowledge and the dynamic macroeconomic analysis to identify the evolution of the migration process in Romania. In addition, this paper investigates the link between migration and economic development. The main data sources used are taken from the websites of Eurostat, the National Statistical Institute and the International Organisation for Migration, as well as the European Commission.

Finally, the results of the research are presented in tabular and graphical representations, and the theoretical information underlying the scientific approach was extracted from economic and social papers and articles, books and studies both nationally and internationally relevant to the field of research.

4. Case Study

Over the last two decades, the process of territorial mobility in Romania has become increasingly complex and interesting. The first specific feature of this phenomenon is the gradual change in migration rates. The beginning of the 1990s was an important period in which a significant number of citizens changed their residence as a result of the fall of the communist regime and the changes that followed. It should be noted that this peak was known in the literature as a reaction to the mobility policies of the communist regime, given that internal mobility prior to the 1990s period was very low. Moreover, in the 1960s and 1970s, the communist regime promoted urbanisation, and in the 1980s temporary mobility was encouraged, which involved commuting rural populations to urban areas close to home or temporarily relocating labour for major infrastructure investments. In the last decade of the communist period, very strict and dramatic controls were imposed on change of residence, either by limiting access to certain urban centres or by restricting the mobility of certain operational groups. The institution of labour allocation for university graduates is one example, where the state made its point by forcing young intellectuals to take up jobs in certain areas and, of course, for a considerable period of time. When they refused to do so, their profession became much more limited and they suffered as a result. It should be noted that a large number of jobs have been administratively relocated in a decentralised manner, preventing people's freedom to pursue their preferences as to where they live. Consequently, after the collapse of the communist regime, these relocations materialised in a high rate of internal migration, when about 3.4% of the population changed residence.

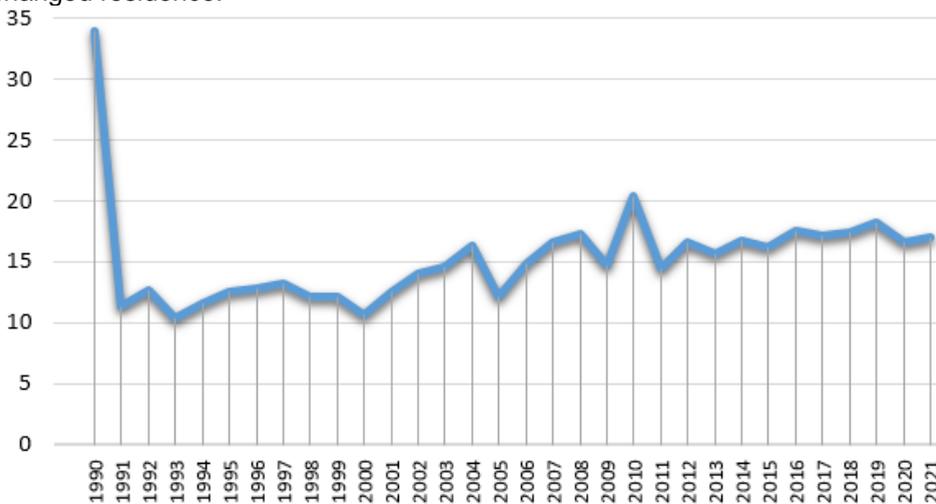


Figure 2: Internal mobility in Romania 1990-2021 (rates per 1000 inhabitants)

Source: Authors' processing based on data from the website of the National Institute of Statistics (INS)

In analyzing internal mobility in Romania, it is also important to take into account the economic and social transformations of the period under analysis, such as industrial decline, rising unemployment, the emergence of crises, economic

restructuring, legislative changes, etc. In this respect, there was a considerable increase in internal mobility (calculated as a rate per 1,000 inhabitants) from 8.6% in 1985 to 33.9% in 1990 and then gradually reduced to 10.7% in 2000. Since 2001, there has been an upward trend in internal mobility, often exceeding 16% in good economic times, while during the economic downturn there has been a significant reduction from 17.3% in 2008 to 14.7% in 2009. It is worth noting that before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, internal mobility in Romania was 18.2% in 2019, which fell to 17% in 2021 due to the effects of the pandemic and the measures taken.

Table no.1: Internal mobility in Romania 1990-2021

1990	33,9	2001	12,5	2012	16,6
1991	11,3	2002	14,1	2013	15,7
1992	12,7	2003	14,6	2014	16,7
1993	10,4	2004	16,3	2015	16,2
1994	11,6	2005	12,1	2016	17,5
1995	12,6	2006	14,8	2017	17,1
1996	12,8	2007	16,6	2018	17,4
1997	13,2	2008	17,3	2019	18,2
1998	12,1	2009	14,7	2020	16,6
1999	12,1	2010	20,4	2021	17
2000	10,7	2011	14,5		

For the analysis of territorial labor mobility, a central role is played by the flow from rural to urban as well as from urban to rural areas. Thus, in line with the graph below, we can state that during the period analyzed, especially after 1995, the rate per 1000 inhabitants of people who decided to change their residence from urban to rural is significantly higher than those who decided to move to urban areas.

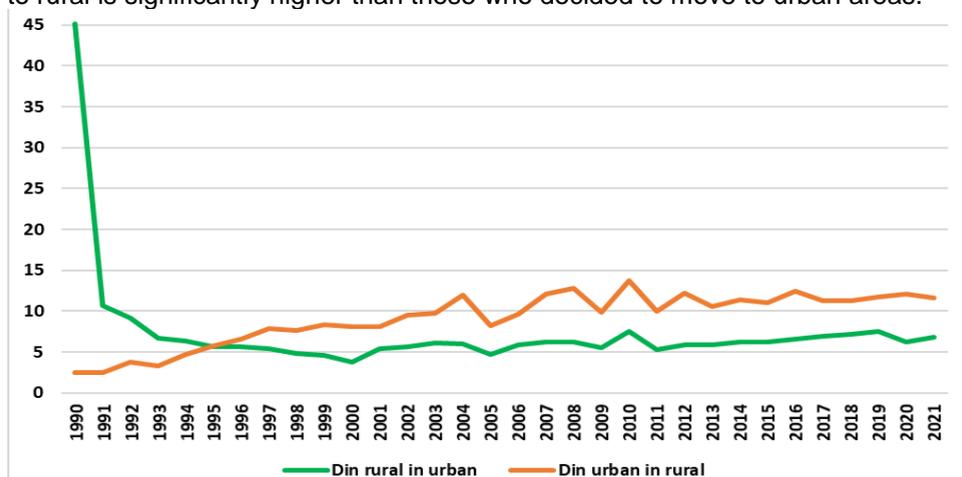


Figure 2: Structure of internal migration flows (rates per 1000 inhabitants)

Source: Authors' processing based on data from the website of the National Institute of Statistics (INS)

The explosion of people who decided to move from rural to urban areas in 1990 was due to the fact that immigration was controlled by the communist regime until 1989, and after its change it was decided to lift restrictions and increase the desire of people to move from rural to urban areas. At the same time, economic and political-administrative factors played a key role at the beginning of the period under analysis. Economic restructuring decisions, especially in industry, loss and insecurity of jobs, lack of funds and difficulty in buying housing, and the high cost of living in the city led more and more people to relocate to the countryside, as can be seen from the graphical representation opposite. So they decided to move to the countryside, where daily life was more affordable and they could farm, but for most people it was just subsistence farming. Another important factor that led people to choose the countryside was the adoption of the Land Law in 1991, which meant that many urban dwellers became landowners in rural areas.

5. Conclusions

Migration, like any other economic and social process, is influenced by a multitude of economic, political, demographic and social factors, which are associated with the migrant's state or city of origin, which are known in the literature as push factors, or with the state or city of destination, which is a pull factor. Internal mobility will continue to be a reality as long as there are disparities in well-being and development between different regions globally.

The demographic dynamics of the last decade confirm that Romania's population has declined considerably and that territories outside urban polarisation areas have experienced major demographic changes, whether resulting mainly from a negative natural increase, which has been marked by an increase in mortality at the same time as a decrease in birth rates.

It has also been found that younger people tend to move to urban areas and people over 35 tend to move to rural areas, while women tend to move more often than men. This, together with increased mobility to developed regions, poses a major challenge to economic development. In this respect, it is necessary for policy makers to take into account the current demographic crisis and to identify and promote public policies that improve migration and, by extension, demography, because if these problems are not solved or improved, it will put major pressure on future public finances. Thus, one solution to improving internal mobility to less attractive areas could be to provide quality jobs, easy access to housing, develop infrastructure, provide quality public services, support families and encourage birth rates and labour market re-entry by creating programmes to improve work-family realities. All these measures can contribute significantly to demographic growth and to the improvement of the economic and social situation of the Romanian economy, through the development of all regions.

Finally, but importantly, the analysis of this phenomenon is a broad one and this is one of the reasons why it is still too early to say whether the urban exodus has started, but rather it is the expansion of cities to the surrounding rural areas. In addition, the economic context of recent years, strongly influenced by the outbreak of the health crisis, has slowed migration to cities. In this respect, policy makers, through fiscal policy measures on taxes and charges, but also through budgetary allocations for infrastructure development in urban areas, have an important role to play in reducing disparities and balancing the territorial mobility of the population.

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