

CHRONO-SPATIAL DISCORDANCES IN THE TOTAL BALANCE DYNAMICS OF THE POPULATION OF VRANCEA COUNTY

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Abstract. The dynamics of the demographic system of Vrancea County is the result of the combined action of a plurality of elements of diverse nature, among which historical, political, economic and demographic factors play the primordial role. The analysis of the total balance of the population of Vrancea County at the level of the basic administrative units proves the antithetical relationships between towns and villages on the one hand, between the two political and economic tried out patterns on the other, revealing specific aspects such as: resistance or lack of demographic vigour, propension for emigration or, on the contrary, a polarization potential able to generate and focus endodynamic migration flows.

Keywords: *total balance, demographic vitality, demographic decline*

1. Introduction

The change of the political regime in 1989 meant a turning point in the geodemographic evolution of Romania, the year 1990 representing the beginning of a new stage, in which the demographic behaviour of the population escaped the control of the political factor but entered the incidence of the economic one.

The pre-December period clearly opposes a well expressed urban dynamism and a stronger and stronger rural exodynamism, with a maximum amplitude at the beginning of the 80's in the urban context of both a certain overrepresentation of the migration component and of the advance gained on the level of natural dynamics under the circumstances in which the drawn rural population preserved (at least during the first phase) its specific behavioural habits.

The post-December period (with its cortege of dysfunctions derived from inheriting a strongly state-controlled economic system – high unemployment, erosion of urban life quality against the background of the violent increase of estate prices and monthly rates) practically meant the generalized failure of the communist policy, bringing about changes of demographic attitudes, mentality and behaviours. The newly acquired repulsiveness of towns is reflected in a negative general dynamics in the conditions of a deep migration deficit amortized by the natural balance only at a minimum level. In the case of the rural environment, the first years of capitalist experience faced a significant appreciation of the total balance even under the circumstances of an obvious overrepresentation of the volume of

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deaths in comparison to that of births, this negative element being annihilated in the context of the intensification of return migrations.

2. Typology of total balance dynamics in the period 1966-2009

The typology of the total balance dynamics from 1966 to 2009 groups the administrative units of Vrancea County in 6 evolution types, in relation to the specific way in which the two basic elements of the demographic increase superpose each other (Table 1, Figure 1).

Type 1 (19 administrative units – 29.7 % of the total number) reflects a *sustained capacity of demographic resistance* even under the circumstances of some *certain exodynamic migration tendencies*, performed on a moderate level until the end of the 60's, visibly intensified in the 70's, this period of maximum territorial mobility moulding on the climax of the urban industrialization. This propension for migration acted regressively by means of the erosion of the demographic potential force, thus justifying (by overlapping a migration balance in which out-migrations constantly exceed in-migrations) the present negative general dynamics of the population.

Largely represented at the spatial level, this evolution pattern covers almost compactly the Carpathian and Subcarpathian area at the south of Șușița basin and Zăbrăuți Piedmont but, sporadically, against a demographic background somehow more favourable than the general one of the surrounding regions, also makes its appearance in the low plain area (Bălești commune). The inclusion in this group of Panciu town draws attention on the idea of the vicious way of urban modernization performed by the communist authorities; in the absence of a surplus of rural population which might have played, at least for a while, a dynamizing part, its increase being provided through its own forces.

The precocity and intensity with which the communes of **type 2** (21.9 %) joined *the rural exodus* justifies *the prematurity and force of the insertion of the natural decline*, whose deepening tendencies practically annihilate the recent back migration movements, not leaving room to a demographic increase. From the territorial point of view, such an evolution pattern can be spotted in the Subcarpathian area, where it joins the previous type (Soveja, Răcoasa – in Șușița basin, Valea Sării and Năruja – in Putna basin, Jitia – in Râmnic basin). However, it is also present in the piedmont area (Cârligele, Jariștea, Străoane), where the early decrease of the fertility rate hastened the setting up of the natural deficit. Tutova Hills and the extreme south-west part of the plain region (Tătăranu, Ciorăști, Măicănești), profoundly rural and agricultural areas, with a little offering economic potential, clearly stand out due to the advance registered in rallying to the rural-urban migration, with extremely critical consequences on the dynamism of the demographic system.

With a rather reduced spatial spreading, **type 3** (4.7 %) comprises only 3 communes with similar evolution specificities but derived from distinct reasons: Homocea and Slobozia Bradului represent the typical example of interference of the ethnic and religious factor in the demographic structure; Nereju is the prototype of the preservation of an ancestral demographic behaviour against the background of a maximum geographic isolation. In both cases, *their exceptional demographic vitality* perfectly outranked *the rather moderately exodynamic impulses of the population*, thus representing the token of the accumulation of masses of people and so far providing a hindrance to population deficit, therefore representing the most stable dynamic type.

Type 4 (4.7 %), specifically urban (Focșani, Adjud, Mărășești), perfectly reflects the way in which the evolution or the involution of the economic system accurately acts upon the

demographic one, triggering chain reactions. The graphical coordinates of this evolution pattern certifies the tardy modernization of Vrancea urban industrial structures, the role of the rural exodus in the natural dynamization of the population (at least symptomatically, at the level of the first urban generation), the direct correlation between the socio-economic problems derived from the difficulties encountered by a planned economic system in adjusting to the suppleness of the market economy mechanisms and the territorial distribution of the population following the transposition of migration circuits between village and town.

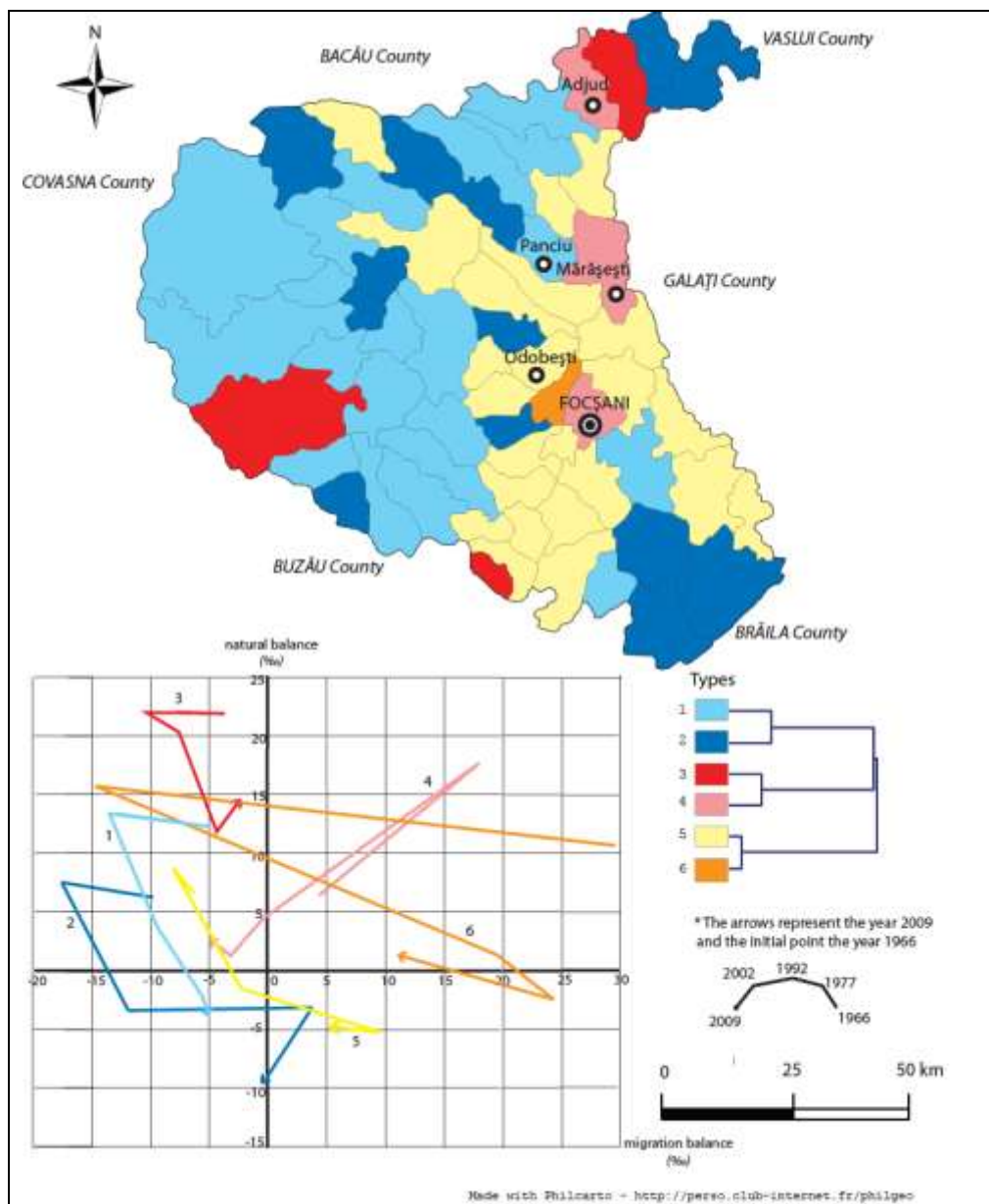


Figure 1: Evolution tendencies typology of the components of the total balance of Vrancea County's population during the period 1966-2009

The outline of **type 5** (24 administrative units – 37.5 %) eloquently exemplifies the way in which *the two fundamental components of the general dynamics can work compensatorily in order to provide a demographic increase* or the one in which (by *acting together on a negative level*) they bring about deficit. With a significant spatial spreading (in the piedmont area at the south of Putna, extending towards the plain area in the eastern part of the county, but also axially expanding along Putna and Șușița), this type discloses a strong devitalization of the human potential through a long lasting and intensified exodus, also induced (to a certain extent) by the high human pressure on the local resources, these areas overlapping the largest density values; the rebalancing of the general dynamics equilibrium, even under the circumstances of the natural decline, is the inherent consequence of the active manifestation of the rural return, also favoured by the urban proximity of the afferent areas.

Through its only representative – Câmpineanca commune – **type 6** describes an exceptional evolution pattern at the level of Vrancea County, revealing the way in which the periurban position of a locality can act upon itself in an unfavourable or, on the contrary, positive manner, in the specific conditions of a certain political and economic experience model.

Table 1: Evolution type profile of the components of the total balance of the population of Vrancea County in the period 1966-2009 (‰)

Type	BN 1966	BM 1966	BN 1977	BM 1977	BN 1992	BM 1992	BN 2002	BM 2002	BN 2009	BM 2009
1	12.0	-4.9	13.5	-13.7	3.5	-9.5	-2.1	-5.7	-3.7	-5.2
2	6.2	-9.8	7.1	-17.3	-3.6	-11.8	-8.0	3.5	-9.8	-0.2
3	22.4	-3.8	22.3	-10.4	19.3	-7.5	12.0	-4.6	14.5	-2.6
4	6.0	4.6	17.5	18.0	4.2	-0.3	1.3	-3.1	2.8	-4.8
5	6.5	-6.0	8.7	-7.9	-1.4	-2.2	-5.3	9.6	-4.9	5.5
6	10.8	29.4	15.5	-14.9	1.7	19.8	-2.7	24.5	1.4	11.0

3. Quantitative evaluation of the ratio between the migration and natural balances (1956-2009)

The quantitative evaluation of the ratio between the migration and natural balances synthesizes the problems of the total balance and of the manner in which its two components integrate each other, providing an image on the way and extent to which they have influenced the demographic system (Figure 2).

Conclusions

The following **conclusions** can be drawn:

- the smallest values overlap the areas in which the early activation of the rural exodus acted in a regressive way through the moderation and (eventually) devitalization of the demographic potential, speeding up the setting up of the natural deficit (Tutova Hills, the extreme south-eastern part of the plain region, piedmont areas – Jarișteea and Străoane, Soveja – in Șușița upper basin);
- the Carpathian and Subcarpathian area at the south of Putna stands out due to its relative demographic stability, imputable to its sustained demographic resistance;

- the positive values of Golești and Gugești communes certify the positive role that a circum-urban position or the diversification of the economic profile may play in increasing the attractiveness of certain rural localities;
- in the case of the urban centres, the value of the ratio between the migration and natural balances is meant to provide the measure of the polarization capacity of the respective town – smaller in the case of the small ones (Panciu, Odobești, Măreșești), tardily included in the territorial systematization plans promoted by the dictatorial regime, increased when it comes to the capital city of the county, whose development (although at a smaller scale in comparison to other counties), reflects the specifically communist urban macrocephaly tendencies.

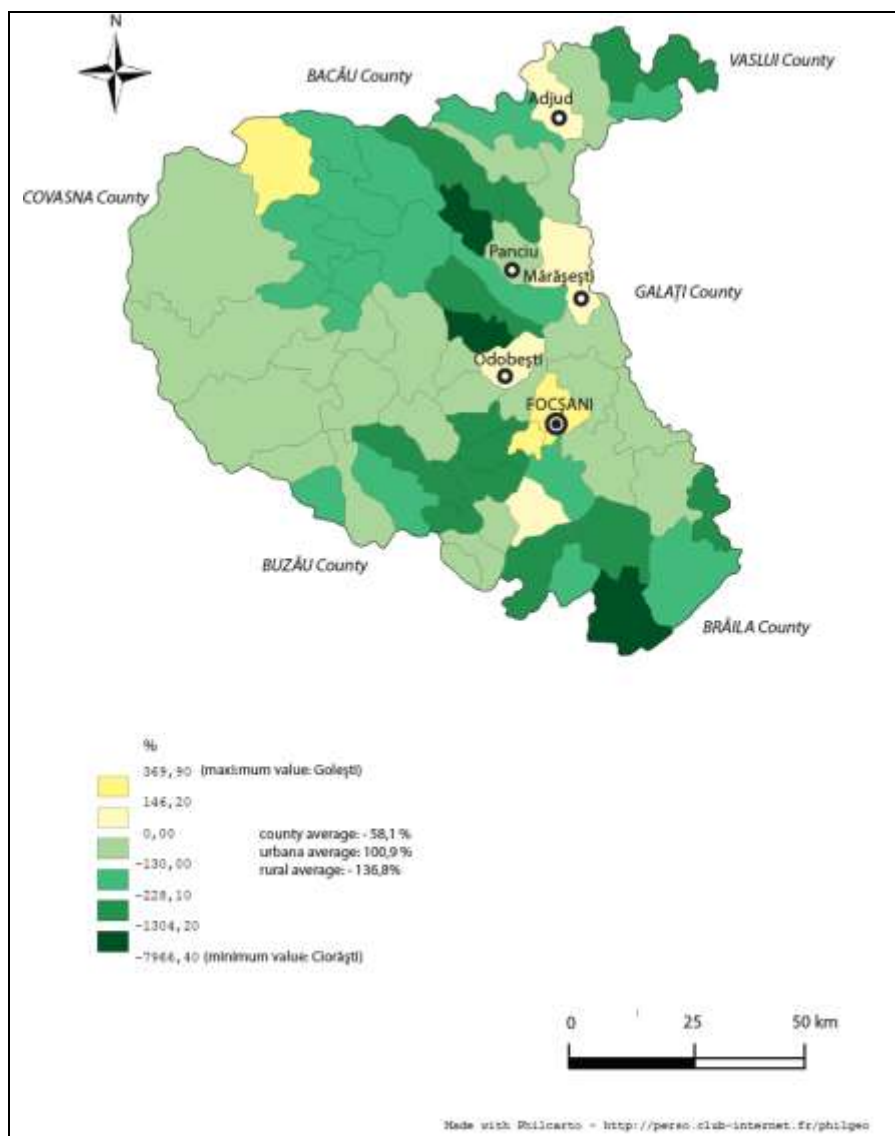


Figure 2: The ratio between the migration balance and the natural balance of the population of Vrancea County during the period 1956-2009

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