ABSTRACT: The post-1989 political changes in Romania had a major and at times irreversible impact on the dynamics and structure of the population. The most significant change was a drastic population decrease of over 3 million people within 22 years. Important deviations were also registered in economic sectors, resulting today in a process of artificialization of the population share in the tertiary sector. Urban population increased slightly from around 52% in 1989 to 53.4% in 2012, following the artificial conversion of a significant number of villages into the category of urban areas. There were no significant changes in ethnic structure, except for the Roma population where, due to the self-identification census, 621,573 people declared themselves Roma (2011) as compared to around 300,000 in 1988. The largest minority group, the Hungarians, comprises stable 6.6% of the population. Around 2 million of unemployed people were registered during the last census in addition to an increased number of retired people. This paper examines some of the major demographic changes in the dynamics and structure of the Romanian population influenced by a number of political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors. It deals with analytic and moral questions arising from an in-depth overview of the aforementioned
transition period and argues that political unbalances are clear indicators of demographic changes and disturbances in national and regional economic development.

KEYWORDS: Romania, post-communism, demographic changes

INTRODUCTION

Following the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, Romania went through rapid economic changes driven by a cumbersome process of restitution of the private property expropriated during nationalization. This political-economic process reversed the growth trends specific to the previous period (1966–1989) and witnessed dramatic changes in the dynamic and structure of the last century’s national demographics (1996–2014) which resulted in much lower birthrates, pro-abortion policies, and outmigration in search for employment. Thus, Romania's population declined considerably over the last 25 years, from 22,810,035 inhabitants in 1992 to 19,603,879 inhabitants in 2014 [National Institute of Statistics] (Fig. 1).

The demographic decline has been accompanied with dramatic structural changes consisting of rapid growth of the elderly population (over 65 years of age) and reduction of the demographically young population (under 14 years of age), the emergence and plummeting of unemployment rates as major socio-economic phenomenon, artificial creation of a tertiary economic sector, and a continuous change of the relationship between rural and urban population with an increase of the latter from 50% in 1985 to 53.8% at present [Vert 1995; Trebici 1996; Mureșan 1999].

METHODS

As methodological support the authors used official statistical information taken from the Statistical Yearbooks elaborated by the National Institute of Statistics for each available census as well as some unofficial documents such as selected unofficial estimates from media, NGOs, municipalities, and Centers for Social Work. Viewpoints of the authors support the current literature whereas additional charts and a map created in ArcGIS graphically represent the structure and evolution of the population within the aforementioned period of time.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In 1966, the communist regime in Bucharest adopted Decree 770 of October 1st 1966 [Flister 2013] that officially banned abortions and regulated the termination of a pregnancy. Article 1 of the Decree provided that an abortion is forbidden. Exceptions to this provision were few and very strict. The rationale behind this policy was attributed to slow population growth as compared to the economic progress and the need for labor.

Thus, in just one year after the law was introduced (between 1969 and 1970) the number of births doubled (from 234,000 to 450,000). A real witch-hunt started against physicians and specialized medical staff. Numerous media
headlines denounced the persons involved in abortions. The means of implementing the abortion law was especially brutal in rural areas, resulting in a high mortality rate among pregnant women, especially among the youngest ones. Militia surveys among women who may have undergone clandestine abortion were common ways to identify the abortion routes. Children born in 1969, 1970 and 1971 as the result of this Decree were called “decreței” or Children of the Decree [Kligman 1998; Lataianu 2001; Iepan 2004]. Many of them, unwanted by their mothers, were born with physical deformities and mental disabilities, thus increasing the number of people with disabilities nationwide. Consequently, from a birth rate of 14.3 per thousand, the nation reached a rate of 24.3 per thousand. Hence, despite such legislative efforts, the expected levels of national population have not been reached, especially because of inadequate economic measures for mothers and families in general.

Romanian population increased systematically from 1859 to 1982. Two major factors contributed to this trend: (1) peasant family tradition of having many children (up to the Second World War) and, (2) legislative measures (largely) imposed during the communist period.

Just to name a few statistics: Romania’s population in 1966 included 19,103,163 inhabitants, and the year after the aforementioned Decree the population reached around 20,000,000. From 1969 to 1990 (21 years) the population increased by over 300,000 inhabitants, reaching 23,206,720 inhabitants which was the all-time highest population count for the nation. Since 1992, when the population was 22,810,035, until today Romania witnessed alarming population decline (19,603,870 inhabitants by 2014). In absolute values, considering the highest and the lowest between 1992 (the peak) and present (2014), Romania lost a demographic corpus of 3,602,850 people.

Fig. 1. Numerical evolution of Romania’s population

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics
After 1989, the process of counterurbanization took place as a consequence of widespread industrial collapse and increasing costs of urban living, which had a major impact on the Romanian demographics. Thus, from 54.3% of urban population share in 1992, 10 years later (in 2002) the urban population share decreased to 52.7%. Romania went through a regrettable anti-historical process in relation to the modern world, where urban population rose and reached values of 70%–80%. Today, as a result of many disputed policies (e.g. the conversion of rural settlements, lacking minimal urban infrastructure, into the urban category) the country managed to artificially reach 53.96% share of the urban population, similar to that of 1992 (Fig. 2).

In terms of the structure of economic sectors, as mentioned before, we are witnessing a process of artificial creation of a tertiary sector of the economy, amid the invasion of foreign products of any kind, from industrial to farm goods, in the Romanian market. Today in Romania “almost no one produces, but everybody sells!” [Surd 2001].

In 1966, the primary sector of the economy employed 57.1% of the working population, 24.6% was employed in the secondary sector (industry and mining), and only 18.3% worked in the tertiary sector. Today, less than 30% of the working population works in the primary sector (Table 1).

Fig. 2. Urbanized areas of Romania (2014)

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics
In terms of ethnic composition, there were no dramatic changes, except for Roma (Gypsy) population whose number increased. The Romanian ethnic population remained at around the same level of 88%–90%, dominating in both absolute and relative aspects (in percentage) in 39 of the 41 Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) level 3 administrative units of the country as well as in Bucharest.

According to 1992 Population Census, Roma population numbered 401,087 (or 1.8% of the population of Romania). In 2002 (the following census), the population of Roma people reached 535,250 persons (or 2.5%). The unofficial leader of this ethnic group, Senator Madalin Voicu, in an interview for Antena 3 Television estimated the Roma population to be between 700,000 and 1.3 million persons. In the 2011 census, the number of Roma people doubled, reaching 621,573 (or 3.3% of the population), of which 390,303 (or 62%) live in rural areas. Almost 35% of the Roma population is concentrated in five counties (Mures – 46,637; Bihor – 33,697; Dâmbovița – 26,281; Dolj – 28,911 and Călărași – 22,974). In Mures County, a number of the Roma population members declared themselves Hungarian, whereas sociological survey results suggested that two thirds of the Roma declared themselves Romanian being ashamed of their Roma ethnicity.

The largest minority group are the Hungarians with 1,227,600 people (Romanian Census, 2011), which represents 6.5% of the population. The entire Székely population in eastern Transylvania, estimated at 670,000 people, declared and considered themselves Hungarians. In the 2002 census, the Hungarian population comprised 1,434,377 people, dropping in 10 years by nearly 200,000 (194,061) persons, while Roma population increased during this period by 83,867 persons. In terms of numbers, the Hungarian population dominates two counties – Harghita (85.21%) and Covasna (73.74%). These counties, along with Mures County, are home to more than 50% of the Hungarian population in Transylvania.

The German ethnic population suffered the sharpest decline in the last 50 years. Today, there are 36,000 members of German population comparing with 382,595 people in 1966, which is a decrease of more than 10 times, with some ongoing weak signals of growth. Among other ethnic groups with over 20,000 people we could mention the Ukrainians (49,547 people) and Turks (20,179 people), followed by other ethnicities with less than 20,000 people, the Russians Lipovans (189,710) and Tatars (18,143).
Table 2. Counties in Romania with significant shares of Hungarian population in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harghita</td>
<td>257,707</td>
<td>85.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covasna</td>
<td>150,468</td>
<td>73.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mureș</td>
<td>200,858</td>
<td>38.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihor</td>
<td>138,213</td>
<td>34.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satu Mare</td>
<td>112,588</td>
<td>25.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sălaj</td>
<td>50,177</td>
<td>23.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluj</td>
<td>103,591</td>
<td>15.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics

Table 3. Ethnic structure of Romania from 1966–2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Romanians</th>
<th>Hungarians</th>
<th>Roma</th>
<th>Germans</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>Other ethnicities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16,746,510</td>
<td>1,619,592</td>
<td>64,197</td>
<td>382,595</td>
<td>42,888</td>
<td>247,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>19,103,163</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>21,599,910</td>
<td>1,713,928</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>227,398</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>359,109</td>
<td>24,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>22,760,449</td>
<td>1,620,199</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>409,723</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>119,436</td>
<td>9,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>19,043,767</td>
<td>1,227,600</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>621,600</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>360,000</td>
<td>3,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics

The ethnic structure correlates with the confessional structure of the population in Romania. Hence, the confessional structure did not suffer significant changes during the studied period if we do not take into account overall national negative population growth. Thus, the Orthodox population share is 86.5% (2011) as compared to 86.8% in 1992, the faith being specific to the majority Romanian population. The percent of the Roman Catholic and Reformed denominations members, belonging mostly to the Hungarian population, reduced to 8.5% and 7.6% respectively. The Pentecostal denomination nearly doubled, from 1% in 1992 to 1.9% in 2011.

The current critical issues are, among others, low income, poverty-related diseases, school dropouts, corruption and poor performance of the authorities. For example, in the state institutions, top monthly incomes are 200 times higher than the lowest monthly earnings. The difference between agricultural pensions of 350 lei/month (about 100 USD) and the earnings of those working for the autonomous state-owned agencies (gas, electricity, urban services) and other areas such as justice, where monthly incomes amount to 20,000 or even 40,000–50,000 lei, is enormous.
Lack of an adequate family environment in the absence of parents gone abroad to seek employment in western and southern Europe, has led to increased number of student dropouts in the primary and secondary school. As a result of widespread economic collapse, it is estimated that at present around three million Romanians live and work abroad. With the money earned, in addition to supporting their families, permanent or temporary migrants build “McMansions” [Baker et al. 2013], many of which are empty all year round except for some winter holidays. Last but not least, many universities in Romania have adopted capitalist business models and turned into diploma factories [The Economist 2012] instead of being committed to forming future intellectual elites through quality education. Therefore, there is an immediate need for development of higher education system based on the local requirements of the communities and for the reconsideration of the role of education and professional and technical training [Andrei et al. 2007].

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, following the change of policy frameworks after December 1989, Romania is experiencing the worst demographic crisis in its contemporary history. Steep numerical decline, poverty, unemployment, poverty-related diseases, high rate of crime, corruption, and poor performance in the field of education affect all existential aspects of the Romanian society. Every passing hour we lose 37 Romanians [National Institute of Statistics, 2014]! The population projections for 2012 foresaw population loss by about 1 million people [McKinsey Global Institute – Urban World 1.1]. Such accelerated demographic changes should be considered more seriously by the politicians because they caused and are causing political, educational, social, mental, and economic unbalances that may have drastic (and possibly irreversible) impact on the future well-being of our citizens.

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ПРЕГЛЕДНИ НАУЧНИ РАД

ГЛАВНЕ ДЕМОГРАФСКЕ ПРОМЕНЕ У ДИНАМИЦИ И СТРУКТУРИ РУМУНСКОГ СТАНОВНИШТВА НАКОН ПАДА КОМУНИЗМА

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САЖЕТАК: Политичке промене у Румунији после 1989. имале су велики и понекад неповратан утицај на динамику и структуру становништва. Најзначајнија промена је драстично смањење популације од преко 3 милиона људи током 22 године. Важна одступања регистрована су у економском сектору, што је данас резултирало вештачким учешћем становништва у терцијарном сектору. Градско становништво незнатно је повећано са око 52% у 1989. на 53,4% у 2012, након вештачког пребацивања значајног броја села у категорију урбаног подручја. Није било значајних промена у етничкој структури, осим када је у питању ромска популација где се на попису 621.573 људи изјаснило као Роми (2011) у поређењу са око 300.000 у 1988. години. Највећа мађанска група, Мађари, чини стабилних 6,6% становништва. Поред повећаног броја пензионера, током последњег пописа регистровано је око...
2 milioane nезапослених људи. Овај рад испитује неке веће демографске промене у динамици и структури румунског становништва на које је утицало више политичких, социо-економских, културних и еколошких фактора. Рад се бави аналитичким и моралним питањима која произилазе из опширног приkaza наведеног периода транзиције и тврди да су политичке неуравнотежености јасни показатељи демографских промена и поремећаја у националном и регионалном економском развоју.

КЛУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: Румунija, посткомунизам, демографске промене

LUCRARE ŞTIINŢIFICĂ

SCHIMBĂRILE DEMOGRAFICE PRINCIPALE ÎN DINAMICA ŞI STRUCTURA POPULAŢIEI ROMÂNE ÎN URMA CĂDERII COMUNISMULUI

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Pe lîngă numărul majorat al pensionarilor, la ultimul recensământ au fost înregistră-ți 2 milioane persoane neangajate. Lucrarea de faţă examinează schimbările demografice în dinamica şi structura populaţiei la care au influenţat mai mulţi factori politici, culturali şi ecologici. Lucrarea se ocupă cu problemele analitice şi morale care rezultă din prezentarea amplă în perioada de tranziţie şi confirmă că destabilitatea politică este indi-cată de schimbările și tulburările în sfera naţională, regională și dezvoltarea economică.

CUVINTE CHEIE: România, postcomunism, schimbările demografice