

Demographic Component-Support of Regional Economic Development. Case Study: Tecuci Plain

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Abstract: Regional economic development is strongly conditioned by the demographic component, the analysis of demographic trends and demographic projections serving to substantiate proper development plans and strategies. This study aims to determine the demographic trend of human settlements in the Tecuci Plain, a space that can get the future status of micro-region, to identify the favorability and/or restriction factors, to draw up useful demographic projections for policy makers at local and regional level.

Keywords: demographic trend; demographic projections; regional development

Jel Classification: J1, J11

1 Introduction

Demographic changes we are witnessing in recent decades are a growing concern in the entire world. In Romania, the "demographic winter" installed after 1990 and the accentuation of regional disparities, require a closer analysis of demographic component in certain "micro-regions", which may redraw the administrative-territorial map of Romania, whose future development can generate increased decentralization policies and implementation of more focused development strategies. In this context we consider that the area of Western and North-Western County of Galati-Tecuci Plain-, requires a careful analysis of demographic component, trying to establish the demographic evolution of this territory between the end of the nineteenth century and the last census, and to identify patterns of demographic evolution of human settlements that distinguish the region.

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2 The Territorial Administrative Frame and Demographic Evolution

Tecuci Plain has an area of about 905 km², approximately 90.5% being administered by Galati County (49 villages administered by 20 communes) and only 9.5% by Vaslui County (3 villages administered by 2 communes). Thus, the region currently includes a number of 52 villages grouped in 22 communes and one town municipality: Tecuci.

Statistical and demographic information used for Tecuci Plain (statistical papers, population censuses) reflect a growing population of the region between the late nineteenth century and 2002 - the year that marks the last census organized in Romania. Basically in this period of over a century the population in Tecuci Plain tripled its number, from about 48 197 inhabitants in 1893(Ciuntu, Th., 1897, p.2) to 151976 inhabitants in 2002. (Figure 1)

However, calculating the average annual increase and growth rates of the population of the region shows that there were, according to recognized demographic vitality of Moldova, different intensities of population growth, demographic behaviour being influenced by a number of historical and economic factors that marked the entire Romanian space.

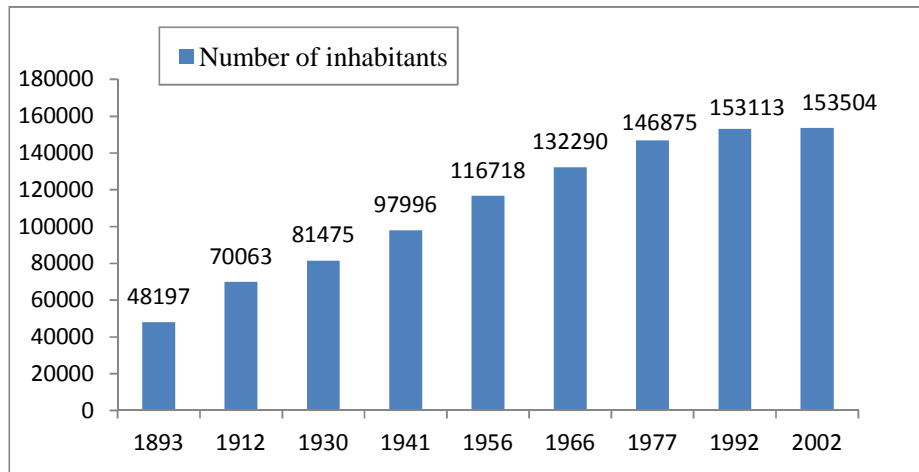


Figure 1 Demographic Trend in Tecuci Plain (source: calculated data after censuses of Romania)

Thus, during the *period 1893-1912*, Tecuci Plain records the highest population growth due to a high birth rate and lack of major political events with negative consequences for the region's population. In this period the average annual increase and growth rate of the population are 1151 inhabitants and 45.3%.

Table 1 The Evolution of the Average Annual Increase and Growth Rate of the Population in Tecuci Plain (source: calculated data)

Period	Average Annual Increase (number of inhabitants)	Growth Rate (%)
1893-1912 (19 years)	1151	45,3
1912-1930 (18 years)	634	16,2
1930-1941 (11 years)	1501	20,2
1941-1956 (15 years)	1248	19,1
1956-1966 (10 years)	1557	13,3
1966-1977 (11 years)	1325	11
1977-1992 (15 years)	416	4,2
1992-2002 (10 years)	39	0,2

Between 1912-1930, we are witnessing a drop in the two indicators analyzed, the population growth rate being only 16.2%. This decrease is mainly due to poor socio-economic status of most inhabitants of the region which gradually worsens during World War I, being reinforced by the economic crisis whose signs are beginning to be felt throughout the country since 1928.

The period 1930-1941 is characterized by an 20.2% increase and an average annual increase of 1501 inhabitants, values that were almost identical in the postwar period (1941-1956) when population increased by about 19.1 %.

The first signs of demographic rebound start with the *period 1956-1966* when the population growth rate decreased to 13.3% as a result of continuing decline in the birth rate and rural-urban migration growth. Is the period that marks the construction of one of the most important industrial projects from the communist period-*Steel Plant* from Galati City- partially opened in 1968 which generates an increase of about 57.3% of the city population during 1966 – 1977 (Oancea, 1973, p.62)

After 1977, population decline continued, Tecuci Plain recording insignificant increases ranging from 4.2% in the period 1977-1992 and only 0.2% between 1992-2002. The fall of the communist political regime and the establishment of the current political system had a major demographic impact on the region studied. The repeal of the communist pronatalist policies, considered forced ones, and especially the lack of strong and coherent policies to stimulate the birth rate in the 90's, generated a continuous decrease of the demographic vitality, affecting also Tecuci Plain.

In conclusion, although the numerical evolution of the population in Tecuci Plain had an upward trend, it was not atypical, changes recorded at the national level at the end of the twentieth century and early this century leading to a major change in demographic behaviour even in regions with recognized demographic "traditionalism", with negative effects on medium and long term also on our region.

3 Demographic Trends Of The Human Settlements In Tecuci Plain

The analysis of demographic trends in each human settlement in the same period has enabled me to identify three types of major evolution (Figures 2 and 3):

a. upward, 48 settlements (90.5%), among which we mention: Tecuci, Malu Alb, Drăgănești, Munteni, Matca, Ghidigeni, Cosmești, s.a.;

b. stagnant, one settlement (1.8%): Satu Nou;

c. downward, 4 settlements (7,7%): Cârломănești, Gara Ghidigeni, Torcești, Mălureni.

If we analyze the evolution of population size and fluctuations occurred in each village within the region we can draw the following major conclusions:

- from a total of 40 villages in 1893, prevailed low ones - 13 villages, about 32.5% (Drăgănești, Podoleni, Cosmești, Băltăreți, etc.) - and medium ones- 14, about 35% (Negrileşti, Cârломănești, Furcenii Noi, Tălpigi, etc.), while the very large ones were represented by only 3 villages, 7,5% (Corod, Cudalbi, Liești), large ones by 4 settlements, 10% (Munteni, Bucești, Matca, Tudor Vladimirescu) and very small settlements by 6 villages, 15% (Slobozia Blăneasa, Satu Nou, Hanu Conachi, Slobozia Corni, Poșta, Condrea);

- in 2002 the situation is diametrically opposite, large and very large villages are represented by 10 settlements, about 19.2% (Drăgănești, Malu Alb, Ghidigeni, ș.a.), and 11 settlements, about 21,1% (Liești, Matca, Ivești, Bucești, ș.a.). The biggest share is still held by the medium villages (20 villages, about 38.4%), while the number of small and very small villages has significantly diminished (6 small villages, about 11.5% and 5 very small villages, some 9.6%).

- the analysis and classification of each human settlement in population size classes, also reflects three major evolutions: *upward* recorded by 35 villages (67.3%), the largest variation recorded by Hanu Conachi; *stagnant*, recorded by 16 villages (30.7%) and *downward*, recorded by a single village, Mălureni (1.9%).

- the single urban settlement within the region, Tecuci City, recorded an upward evolution, evolving from a very small town in the late nineteenth century to a small one by the last census;

- the demographic hierarchy placed, at the end of the nineteenth century, on the first place Cudalbi village with 3970 inhabitants in 1893 and on the last place Posta village with 93 inhabitants; at the 2002 census first place is occupied by Matca with 11797 inhabitants and the last one by Gara Ghidigeni with only 20 inhabitants.

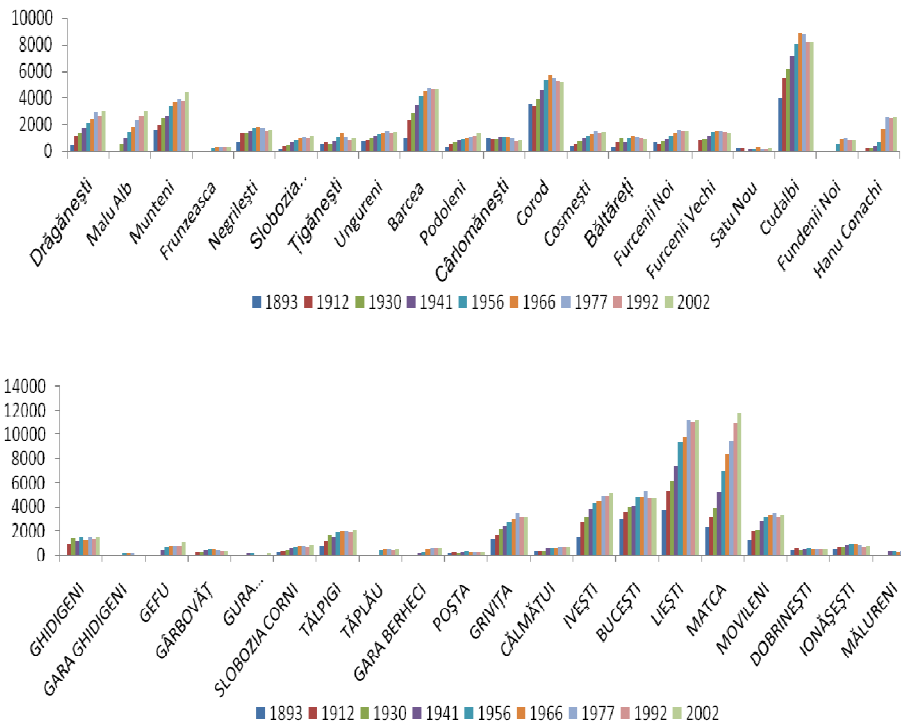


Figure 2 Demographic Trend of Rural Settlements in Tecuci Plain (Source: Censuses in Romania)

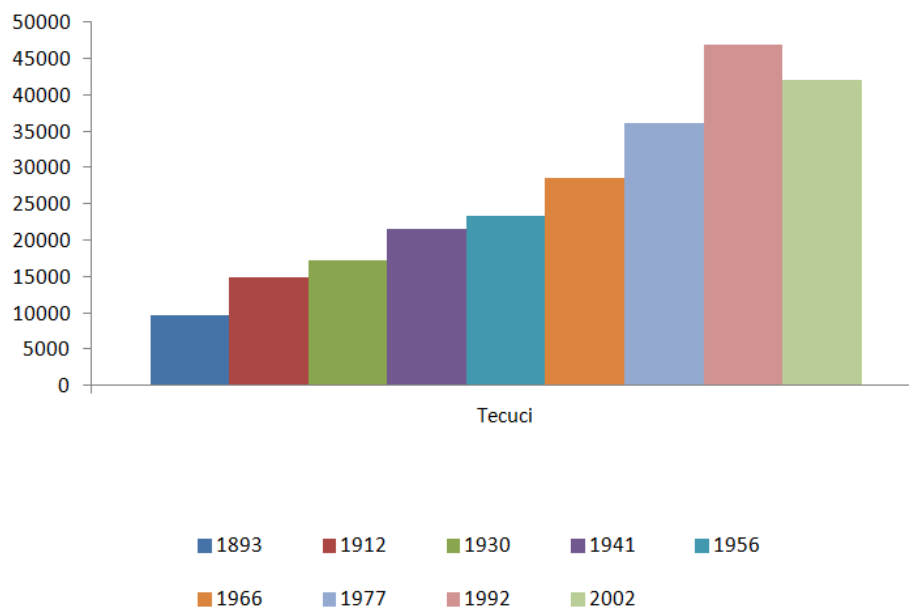
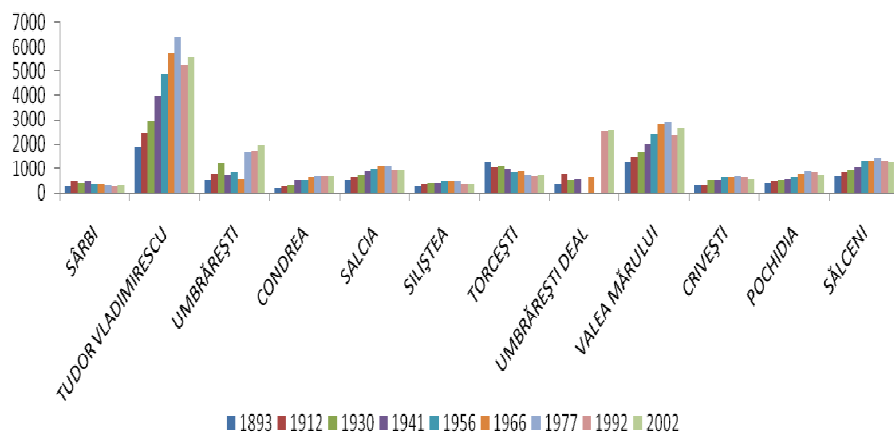


Figure 3 Demographic Trend of Tecuci City (source: Censuses in Romania)

Table 2. Population Growth Rate of Human Settlements in Tecuci Plain during the period 1992-2002 (source: calculated data)

Nr.crt.	Human Settlement	Population Growth Rate (%)
1	Barcea	0.1
2	Băltăreți	-5.68
3	Bucești	-0.46
4	Cârlomănești	13.8
5	Călmățui	0.31
6	Condrea	0.3
7	Corod	-2.64
8	Cosmești	3.51
9	Crivești	-9.5
10	Cudalbi	0.3
11	Dobrinești	1.39
12	Drăgănești	9.94
13	Frunzeasca	8.94
14	Fundenii noi	-2
15	Furcenii noi	4.98
16	Furcenii vechi	-6.38
17	Gara berheci	3.22
18	Gara ghidigeni	-58.3
19	Gârbovăț	14.33
20	Gefu	30.2
21	Ghidigeni	18.06
22	Grivița	1.39
23	Gura gârbovățului	245
24	Hanu Conachi	4.87
25	Ionășești	3.32
26	Ivești	2.22
27	Liești	1.35
28	Malu Alb	11.46
29	Matca	8.42
30	Mălureni	-2.29
31	Movileni	6.64

32	Munteni	15.9
33	Negrilești	5.68
34	Pochidia	9.93
35	Podoleni	14.61
36	Poșta	3
37	Salcia	0.43
38	Sârbi	10.48
39	Satu nou	36.3
40	Sălceeni	-4.49
41	Siliștea	1.42
42	Slobozia Blăneasa	18.62
43	Slobozia Corni	19.05
44	Tălpigi	10.9
45	Tăplău	13.5
46	Tecuci	-10.1
47	Torcești	11.04
48	Tudor Vladimirescu	6.18
49	Țigănești	12.77
50	Umbrărești	12.94
51	Umbrărești Deal	0.87
52	Ungureni	3.11
53	Valea Mărului	13.9

4 Conclusions

Although the processes of aging and pauperization of the population are becoming more deeper at national level, being reinforced by the current economic crisis, demographic forecasts on the upward evolution of the region are optimistic considering the lately evolution, during 1992-2002, and the values of the population growth rate. Thus, the growth rate ranges between -58.3% (Gara Ghidigeni) and +245% (Gura Gârbovățului). Most settlements recorded a growth rate between 0 and 15% (36 localities, about 67.9%) out of a total of 43 cities that have experienced growth trends, while 10 cities (18, 8%) showed a downward trend. (Table 2)

In the end, we must admit that we are looking forward to the results of the census organized in 2011 which can confirm our calculations, being also an important check point for future projections.

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