

MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN THE NATURAL DEPRESSION OF MARAMUREȘ. IMPACT ON THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

The migration of the population of the Maramures region within and beyond the borders of the Romanian territory has manifested itself from ancient times in one way or another, the first written records dating back to the 15th century (Filipașcu Al., 1940, Popa R., 1997). It has increased in the last 10-12 years, for at least three reasons: the socio-economic conditions, the existence of a long tradition of moving away for seasonal jobs, the freedom of movement especially within the European space. Some of the most important consequences of the international migration of the people in the Natural Depression of Maramures are: the alteration of the traditional habitat, the changes in the food and eating habits, the changes of the clothing, the introduction of new customs, etc.

All these, and many others, have led to a new hierarchy of social values, in which the land, the church or the importance of one's roots are no longer at the top. Yet the truth seems to be a whole lot more different, beyond this theoretical research in the field of cultural and behavioral geography. The real territory, as resulted from thorough investigations, enables us to state that Maramures is a typical example of an accelerated transition into the so-called "modern present age", displaying accelerated processes of alterations of the local identities and the emergence of a new logic of creative and social order and values.

Within this context, in which the traditional Maramures is a mere theoretical construction of folklore and of ethnography experts, the new social reality calls for educational measures, especially in schools, as well as through activities that aim at raising people's awareness, motivation and involvement in the process of saving and highlighting the value of the heritage, educating people, and also calls for the need of enforcing laws that would limit the building of a chaotic neo-architecture that is cut off from the traditional local identity.

KEY WORDS: *natural depression, region, migration, periodical emigration, migration dynamics, system of social values.*

The analysis of migration dynamics illustrates a common practice of the people living in the region of Maramures of moving to a different place, usually for a fixed period of time, in order to work or because of their jobs. The oldest data concerning this periodical migration can be found in the 15th century documents (Filipașcu Al., 1940, Popa R., 1997). Morariu T. (1939) mentions some information regarding migration present in Hungarian statistics around the 1900. From the analysis of these numbers, around 11,980 Romanians left the country between 1899 - 1913, especially to the United States of America (3,335 people only before the First World War). The percentage representing these emigrations is as follows: in 1911 - 82.2%; in 1912 - 76.9%; in 1913 - 82.3%, out of the total number of people who left the region. To these results the number of people from Maramures who left the region and moved to a different part of Romania is added (14.2 ‰). According to the National Statistics Records of Romania in 1913 1,249 people from Maramures moved to the old Wallachian Kingdom (Morariu T., 1939).

The most common causes mentioned by researchers (mostly from the historical perspective) are:

- The reduced proportion of cultivable land;
- Calamities: long periods of draught, or the 18th century "small glaciation" period;

- Hunger or epidemics;
- A generally high birth rate, as a consequence of the high fertility of population and of people's mentality and customs.

It is well known in the history of Maramures that after the historical 'dismounting' of Bogdan Voevode and his relatives in Moldavia and the establishment of a state, a massive migration of the people from Maramures to Moldavia took place, leaving huge gaps in the layers of Romanian population in the region, thus reducing the political strength and their endurance. The emigration of serfs to Moldavia and Bucovina is clearly a consequence of the fact that the latter received cultivable land in these areas, land that was scarce in the Maramures region.

1990 families migrated to Moldavia in 1789 (according to A. Filipașcu, 1940). In a 1776 document people coming from 72 Maramures villages are mentioned to be living in Bucovina. Most of the nobility migrated to Chioar, Lăpuș, Ugocea, Sătmar și Năsăud.

After the Second World War most of the emigrants were Jews who left for Israel, and German minorities who left for Germany. As a consequence, the number of inhabitants in the region of the Vișeu River, Iza Valley and around the city of Sighet diminished.

The main features of the migration of Maramures population throughout the years are:



- Seasonal jobs, migration of population to agriculture and construction areas in other parts of Romania (Banat, Transilvania, Bucovina, Muntenia and Moldavia), between 1924—1940 8,849 workers were placed through the Agency of job placement Sighet (Morariu T., 1939);
- Many villages in the Maramureş Natural Depression area are historically known to have worked in the forests (the Romanian term is ‘butinărit’), mostly in the mountains of Sebeş, Lotrului, Călimani, Gurghiu, Bucovinei, Petroşani, the Apuseni Mountains, Parâng, Muscel, Topliţa;
- Migration of workers in the mining industry, most of them to Petroşani and Baia-Mare, the number is, however, much lower than the number of people who left home to work in agriculture and in the forests.
- Seasonal jobs in agriculture (especially during crops season) were popular among women as well.
- Migration within and beyond the borders for an indefinite period of time was less frequent than the seasonal one and this has been the case in the present as well.
- Economic restructuring and other events that appeared after the 1989 have led to an increase of the migration phenomenon, but this time new migration trends appear, such as the migration from urban areas towards rural ones.
- As to immigration, Sighetu-Marmaţiei, Vişeu de Sus and, to a smaller extent, Sălişteia de Sus and Dragomireşti are the main centres of attraction.

After the 1960s, because of collectivization especially, thus taking away from the Maramures peasants the land that still remains one of the fundamental values of the rural area, the movement for within the borders of Romania increased. As a consequence, the people in the region brought back new customs, changes clothing, new construction materials, new architectural patterns (even to the way the roof was built, the so called ‘four-water draining system’ very well adapted to the climate environment). We can now say that this is the beginning of the end of the traditional habitat of the “Land of Maramures”.

As to *international migration*, it has always manifested itself in a way or another, since the early days, as previously stated. It has increased dramatically in the last 10-12 years, at least because of three reasons:

- The social and economic conditions characteristic to the transitional period to a new way of life;
- The existence of a true habit of leaving for a seasonal job;

- The chance of free travelling, in the entire world and especially in the European countries.

One of the major issues throughout the field enquiry conducted in the region was the analysis of the effects the international migration has had upon the inhabitants of the Maramures Natural Depression and upon the evolution of the cultural heritage (especially the buildings) in the area. Although the numbers only show 30% of people who have worked abroad (95 out of the 352 people interviewed, as illustrated in chart 1) the changes these have brought about are significant; that is why these will be dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

	Frequency	%
I have never been	257	73,0
Up to three months	17	4,8
Less than a year	13	3,7
A year	21	6,0
Several years	44	12,5
Total	352	100,0

Tabel 1. The frequency and number of those leaving the area to work abroad (as they arise from the analysis of the questionnaires)

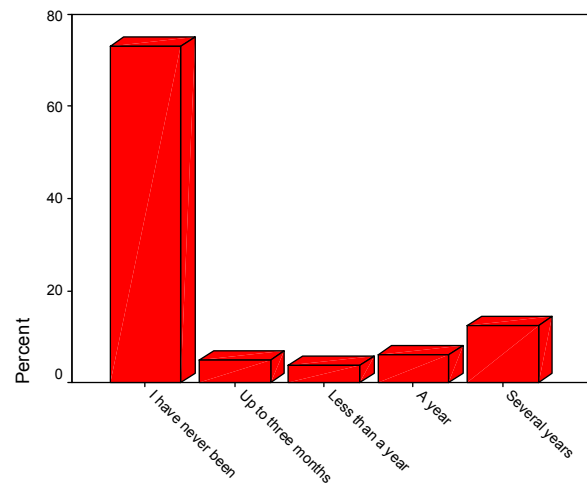


Chart 1. The frequency and number of those leaving the area to work abroad (as they emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires)

By analysing the frequency of the countries in which the interviewed people have been to, the following numbers have come up: Italy (44 people), followed by Spain (16), France (11) and Germany (10 people). The lowest frequency is represented by Austria (one person), Bulgaria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Turkey.

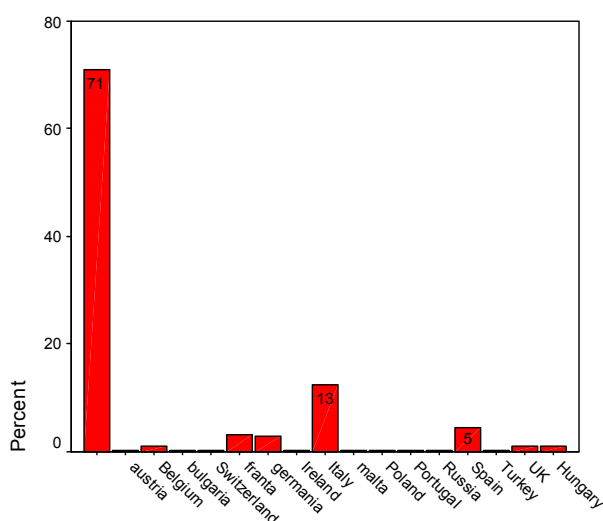


Chart 2. The numbers representing the countries in which the interviewed people have been to (according to the information provided by the questionnaires)

Country	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Have never been	250	71,0	71,0	71,0
Austria	1	0,3	0,3	71,3
Belgium	4	1,1	1,1	72,4
Bulgaria	1	0,3	0,3	72,7
Switzerland	1	0,3	0,3	73,0
France	11	3,1	3,1	76,1
Germany	10	2,8	2,8	79,0
Ireland	1	0,3	0,3	79,3
Italy	44	12,5	12,5	91,8
Malta	1	0,3	0,3	92,0
Poland	1	0,3	0,3	92,3
Portugal	1	0,3	0,3	92,6
Russia	1	0,3	0,3	92,9
Spain	16	4,5	4,5	97,4
Turkey	1	0,3	0,3	97,7
UK	4	1,1	1,1	98,9
Hungary	4	1,1	1,1	100,0
Total	352	100,0	100,0	

Table 2. The numbers representing the countries in which the interviewed people have been to (according to the information provided by the questionnaires)

As to the attitude towards the idea of working abroad, or the wish to work abroad, the results show that people leave home to improve their status, for most of them the aim is to save up enough money to build a house. From this perspective, there are more traditionalist villages, like Coştiui, Poienile Izei, Slătioara, Glod etc.), which are called by specialists “traditionalist isolated villages” mainly because of their remote position from any town.

Those who have been away until now, say that they are generally satisfied with what they are doing, although they would prefer work in Romania as long as they earned as much as they did abroad. Out of 107 people (30.4%) only 48% say they would like to go abroad again. (figure 3). The reasons are multiple, one thing is certain though, their love for the land on which they were born and the idea of returning “home.”

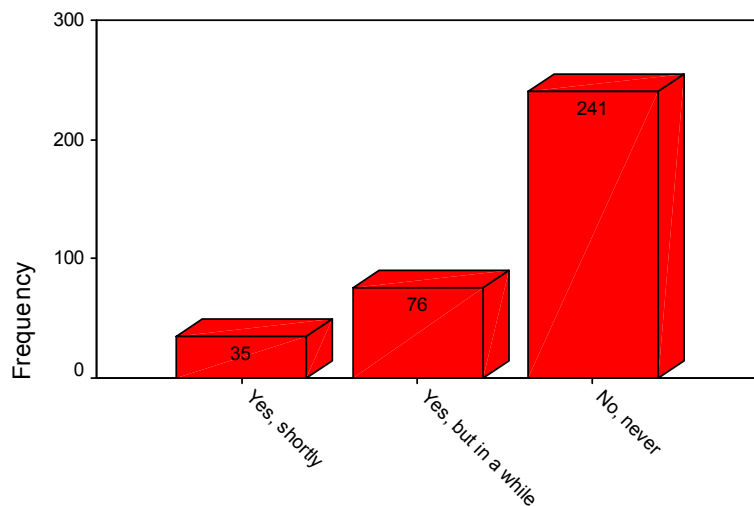


Chart 3. The wish to go abroad again

The wish to go abroad again	Frequency	Percent
Yes, shortly	31	8,8
Yes, but in a while	41	11,6
No, never	30	8,5
Not the case, never worked abroad	249	70,7
Total	351	99,7
Error	1	0,3
	352	100,0

Table 3. The wish to go abroad again

The answers to the question “If you have never worked abroad, would you still want to?” illustrates the fact that 68.5 % (241 people out of 352 people questioned) do not wish to go abroad and work there for a certain amount of time, and these are mostly people

who have never been out of the country. (figure 4). The reason could be the above mentioned traditionalism of the inhabitants of Maramures Hollow or the impossibility to leave the country for various reasons (their households, family, age, fear of losing their job in Romania etc).

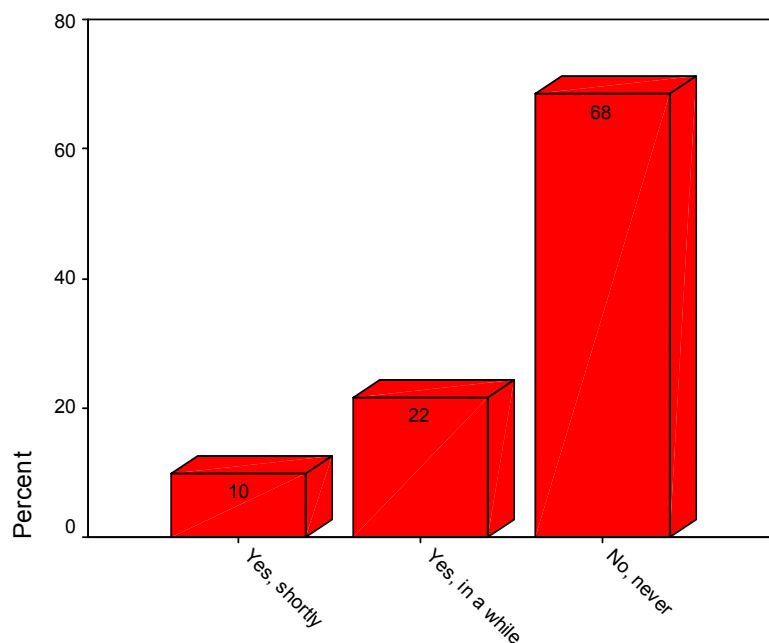


Chart 4. The wish to go and work abroad

Estimated Period	Frequency	Percent
Yes, shortly	35	9,9
Yes, in a while	76	21,6
No, never	241	68,5
Total	352	100,0

Table 4. The wish to go and work abroad

With regard to their education, most people who leave the country graduated only the primary (4 grade levels) or secondary school, and mainly work as unskilled workers on construction sites.

Another important aspect is that they prefer countries they are familiar with or countries they have already

worked in before, like: Italy, Spain, Great Britain, France or Germany. This demonstrates the fact that either they have a good reputation in those countries or that they prove stable and hard-working, characteristics they have become famous for. (figure 41)

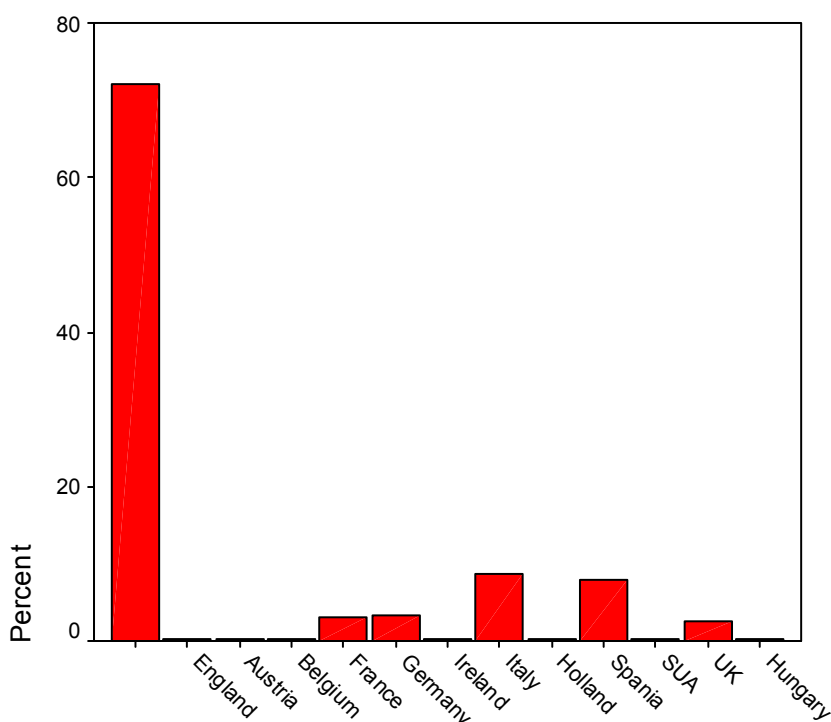


Chart 5. The countries the people want to go to and work

CONCLUSIONS:

There are conservative villages: Poienile Izei, Coştiui, Breb, which are considered “traditionalist isolated villages”

The higher frequency of going abroad to work is characteristic to some villages: Moisei, Şieu, Botiza, Vişeu de Jos, Bârsana, Săpâna, Ocna Şugatag ;

Judging by the sight of the landscape in rural areas (as shown in the pictures partly presented in the paper) we could say that the biggest changes are in Iza Valley, Vişeu Valley and in some parts on Mara Valley, and that the people who left for work abroad have brought about changes in attitude and behaviour;

Migration represents the key element in the diminishment of the traditionalist character of the

Romanian village (in general the impact of leaving the country and working abroad);

A more traditionalist character of maintaining the social and moral values is clear and predominant in villages like Breb, Sârbi, Budeşti, Hărnicieşti, Giuleşti in Mara Valley and Cosaului Valley but also in some remote villages (Bârsana, Onceşti, Şieu) ;

If in the traditional village one’s status was highly dependent on how much land one owned, today, especially because of migration, this depends on the extra-agricultural income, the house and its equipment

There is a tendency of ‘importing’ western habits and life style especially by those who have been abroad;

The increasing changes in the architecture of buildings and household items and goods



One must admit that the present architecture is mainly altered because of the workmen who have brought back patterns and examples from different regions and parts of the country and the world;

Direct contact between rural and urban areas, between the region and the West has caused the desire to have the same comfort at home

The changes in mentality, way of thinking, behaviour could have been caused by the following:

- Most think that their traditional way of life can survive with or without their constant attention
- One is not aware of what one has until it is lost
- The fascination caused by novelty alters the perception of personal values and the attitude towards community values
- People take everything for granted (an issue of history, culture, mentality)

The new social reality calls for educational measures, especially in schools, as well as through activities that aim at raising people's awareness, motivation and involvement in the process of saving and highlighting the value of the integral heritage, educating people, and also calls for the need of enforcing laws that would limit the building of a chaotic neo-architecture that is cut off from the traditional local identity.

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