

BETWEEN HERITAGE AND MODERNITY: EMPLOYMENT AND INCOMES IN RURAL POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

SIMONA ILIE

The paper follows up the changes emerged in employment and living standards of Romanian rural households over the post-communist period. On the background of the main changes in the socioeconomic context, rural employment is related to the situation by the beginning of the post-communist transition, and to urban employment developments. Based on secondary data analysis, an unfavorable rural labor market profile and educational structure are identified. However, improvements in the employment characteristics for the last decade might be noticed, together with overall income increase and marked inequality against the urban.

Keywords: employment; rural development; inequality; rural – urban.

INTRODUCTION

The fall of communism came with the hope of better life, plentiful consumption by eliminating rations, diversified supply and the possibility of choosing, next to a series of civic and economic freedoms. For the rural areas, the expectations were related also to incomes, as these were smaller and less certain than in the urban; directly or indirectly, in tangent activities, rural employment gravitated around the agricultural-zootechnical field, and it was almost completely organized in cooperatives. Though it was not distinctly monitored by public statistics of the communist period, consumption in kind was an element taken into account in formulating some social policies and aspects of rural economic life. The rural household was connected to the urban as main supplier of food, by commuting to non-agricultural workplaces in urban localities, and by the extended family, the young generation attracted to the urban by the industrialization and urbanization process of the first communist decades.

Address of the corresponding author: Simona Ilie, Research Institute for Quality of Life Romanian Academy, Calea 13 Septembrie, nr. 13, sector 5, 050711, București, România, e-mail: sf_ilie@yahoo.co.uk

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The European post-communist transition occurred at a time when the theories of development were diversifying, calling to attention the human development, as well, and not only development as economic performance. The transition to the market economy began with a decade of in-depth restructuring. After 2000, the Romanian economy was circumscribed to an increasing development trend, halted only by the financial crisis of 2008. At the same time, Romania became more open towards European trends: next to privatization and liberalization, technology and services gained gradually more room in the economic landscape, and the policies regarding employment and education, just as the agricultural policies and the rural development strategy assimilated priorities and principles of the European programs.

The paper analyses the dynamics of the rural employment level and structure based on age, education, economic branches, and the dynamic of the incomes and poverty in the rural households in relation to the general economic trend, and major changes for the rural, subsequent to EU accession. The expectations related to improving the living standard are followed up on one hand in relation to the initial viewpoint at the time of the post-communist beginning, and on the other hand as related to the urban dynamic of the period.

In the preamble of the analysis, the theoretical framework is sketched, along with the milestones of the Romanian socioeconomic context in which these dynamics emerged. The indicators of the national statistics are mainly used, but also complementary sources (of the qualitative or quantitative type, legal and strategy landmarks of the Romanian rural development and, to some degree, news in the press) serviceable to the integrated understanding of the rural specifics for a time horizon, when the statistical methodology of employment and incomes for the population underwent repeated adjustments in the efforts of adapting to the socioeconomic reality. International statistics are connected minimally to the European reality of the rural.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The main data source is the *Tempo* online database of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). The definition of the indicators is the one of the sources used at various moments in time. To the extent in which the data allowed, we pursued to recreate some structures or comparable contents of the indicators. However, some limitations were inherent, the most important being explained hereunder.

The data regarding the employment level and profile differentiated on areas of residence are provided by the Household Labor Force Survey (AMIGO/LFS) as of 1996. The changes occurred in operationalizing the non-waged employment in 2001 had as outcome sensible changes at the level of rural employment, but not at the level of the urban one between 2001–2002. As of 1995, statistics are available regarding households' incomes as well, on residential areas, based on NIS surveys at households' level, however, with changes as of 2001 (the Survey on Household

Budget). As result of intensified migration as of 2002, NIS calculates the employment rate based on resident population (and not according to residence). The employment structure on economic branches changed as result of the expansion or constriction of some sub-fields, which led to changes in the coverage area, and even in the naming of some branches; to the extent in which data were available on sub-branches, we proceeded to identify a common structure for the entire period of interest.

Migration, especially abroad, does not have unitary statistical coverage for the entire period. Though mentioned as impact factor on employment and incomes, this factor is not clearly delineated in this paper.

Hence, for these reasons we resorted to segmenting the analyzed period. The year 2002 took the shape of an objective statistical milestone. The subsequent economic dynamic justifies the years 2008 (the last with a positive GDP trend) and 2014 (the first with a notable post-financial crisis increase) as milestones for the next period.

The beginning of the transition is described statistically by the Population and Housing Census (January, 1992). Based on this source, the employed population was deducted by subtracting the inactive population of those who were seeking a job for the first time, but not of those who were left unemployed as result of the initiated layoffs.

Secondary processing is realized by the author by using datasets of the research program „Quality of Life Diagnosis”¹, which links the first decade to the next by a comparable methodology from the perspective of self-evaluating the households' incomes.

THE RURAL CONTEXT OF EMPLOYMENT

Theoretic substantiation

The hypothesis of improving the living standard of the post-communist rural household does not resonate only with the expectations of the population related to shifting to the capitalist organization (Zamfir, 1999; Pasti, 2006), but also with the paradigm of inclusive economic growth, and with the European one of rural development (RD), both boosted by the last decade of the past century. They were shaped out as mitigation to the „costs” of development as seen only in relation to general economic growth (Reyes, 2001; Milanovici, 2002; Bădescu, 2006; Halperin, 2018).

It is to be expected that economic growth is realized together with, and for, as wide as possible segments of the population, by means of, and as outcome of human capital development by education, its preservation by adequate social safety nets and access to decent and productive employment opportunities, that would

¹ The research was developed by the Institute for Quality-of-Life Research on representative samples at national level. It was carried out yearly between 1990 and 1999, and subsequently only for the years 2003, 2006 and 2010. The national sample contained 2 000 respondents (1990), 1 500–1 600 up to 1999, and respectively about 1 100 thereafter.

reflect also diminishing inequality and poverty (UN, 2001). The current paradigm of RD has as explicit purpose increasing the quality of life and incomes in the rural area. This is incumbent on increasing productivity and the quality of agricultural output, but also on expanding the rural activity to non-agricultural fields. The last one stabilizes for the rural incomes, by smoothing the extra-seasonal risk of agriculture, and puts to better use the local resources (Ecosfera *et al.*, 2011; MADR, 2015; ACZ Consulting *et al.*, 2015; EC, 2017). Aligned to the rural traditional direction, of importance are the size of the agricultural exploitation, diversifying the agricultural production according to the local environmental potential, developing some agricultural pre- and post-production activities (research, primary-processing, warehousing or supply, resorting to new varieties or cultures adjusted to climatic change, healthy food and animal welfare, as well as diminishing the negative impact of agricultural activity on the environment.

The emphasis on RD changes the profile of the rural: it meets some new expectations, amplifies the relationship with the urban environment, brings changes to the socio-occupational structure of the rural, provides new opportunities, motivations and perspectives to the rural household. The attention granted to RD increased, in the opinion of Van der Ploeg *et al.* (2000), also as result of reaching the intrinsic limits of agriculture's modernization. Around the year 2000, RD turned into an explicit objective of the European policy, added to the ones of the Common Agricultural Policy (Bleahu, 2005). Both inclusive growth and RD are rallied to the objective of sustainable development (WCED, 1987), taken over by the social and economic policies after 1992 (Ilie, 2006; UN, 2015).

Assuming integrated RD makes room explicitly and systematically to expanding services also to the rural. In an accelerated expansion in the postindustrial era, the integration of the technological progress in the current production and diversification of the services' sector consistently decrease the employment in agriculture and the presence of this branch in the economic landscape. Scientific and technical progress touches upon the agricultural field as well (in equipment, raw materials, treatments, ways in which agricultural-animal-forestry products might be used in non-food industries, etc.), hence the continuing need of vocational training, otherwise also a precondition for the development opportunities in the post-industrial era (Bell, 1976). On the other hand, not all services reach the rural: visible are the tourism and recreational services, and less ITC or business services. „The public good” that is the landscape, the air and water quality, the contact with nature supports not only tourism but also the phenomenon of „counter-urbanization” (Bryden and Bollman, 2000; Bertolini *et al.*, 2008), triggering independently the development of infrastructure and of the non-agricultural field.

Even on decrease, the agricultural activity remains the core of the rural economic landscape. At the time of communism's fall, in the Central and East-European

countries (CEEs²) employment in agriculture represented on average 22% from total employment (OECD, 1999), against below 10% in EU-15 countries (Post and Terluin, 1997 apud Bryden and Bollman, 2000). The drop of agricultural employment was predictable at differences of productivity to the disadvantage of CEE countries, and the foreseeable intensification of exchanges in the European area, next to the even simple shift to an economy valorizing profit at higher level. This process was, however, not even, nor was it at the beginning point. Added to the specifics at the beginning (degree of cooperatives' expansion, agricultural employment, employment in services, GDP/capita), reform in agriculture, pressure or opportunities resulting from the way in which various reforms succeeded, the level of support provided by the pensions and unemployment policies influenced the dynamics of agricultural employment in the CEEs. By the end of the decade (1997), only in Albania, Romania and slightly in Bulgaria employment in agriculture was superior to the one by the beginning of the period, while the contribution of the field to GDP dropped in all countries, save for Albania (OECD, 1999). After 2008, the decreasing trend continued also in the EU-15 and in the CEEs, but by over 20%, Romania has currently (2019) the most extended employment in agriculture in the European area (Eurostat, lfsa_egan2).

Studies regarding the living standard indicate for the rural area a superior poverty risk against the urban, as education and infrastructure (transport and ITC), which are important for development have higher deficits, and the employment is more vulnerable – without contract, dependent self-employed, and hidden unemployment (Bertolini *et al.*, 2008; EC, 2017; Williams and Horodnic, 2018).

The observation is not necessarily valid for the developed countries. In the European area, Luxemburg, Austria, Denmark, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany as well (after 2012) had values of the (monetary) poverty risk in rural areas lower than in cities (Eurostat, ilc_li43). From among the CEEs, only the Czech Republic, and Slovenia are found sporadically in such a situation. Romania had constantly higher values of the poverty risk in the rural (Teşliuc, Pop, Teşliuc, 2001; MMFPS, 2011; Eurostat, ilc_li43), and even the highest gap in the European area.

The accession to EU oriented explicitly RD of the countries in question. The productivity increases in agricultural work motivated sub-objectives and explicit measures regarding the association of producers, keeping the youths in the rural area, and specific vocational training, next to preventing the degradation of rural lands, encouraging small entrepreneurship in the non-agricultural sector, revitalizing some zones or traditions, as well as developing public infrastructure.

² Countries referred here: Albania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

The situation at the fall of communism

Over the communist period, working the land supported in various ways the income of the Romanian rural household. Mention may be made here about the working norms in the Agricultural Production Cooperatives (APC), the output of the plot of land ceded to the household for delivered labor (the output was at the disposal of the household, but the land was still APC ownership), the contracted output corresponding to the land remained in the ownership of the household (gardens in the vicinity of the house, or inefficient plots of land for the cooperative's purposes), sales from their output, or the production kept for own consumption corresponding to these plots of land, as well as, or wages from auxiliary activities in the agricultural production (mechanization, commercialization, processing, management). The sale of the agricultural production could be done in peasants' markets, but mainly by dedicated trade networks, as a rule in the system of the consumption cooperatives' system (Petrescu, 2013: 78–79).

Working in APC could also contribute to receiving a pension. The pension right was gained together with reaching the legal length of service, in its turn dependent on achieving the norms during the active life. Achieving a fraction of norm yearly was translated in fraction of the length of service. During the last communist decade, the net average income in agriculture represented about 2/3 from the net average income in the economy (NIS, 1990; NIS, 1991). During free time, or holidays, the members of the households with non-agricultural occupations in the locality or outside it, as well as those of inactive age, or the members of the extended family residing in the urban, could help in achieving the working norms/production quotas pertaining to the rural household, or just for improving, thus, own consumption.

Much less present were wages from non-agricultural activities, out of which stood out the activities in the extractive and electric power generation industry, as priority branches in the Romanian economic policy of the time, as these were placed at the top of the wage hierarchy. To these were added wages from non-agricultural activities in the urban proximity, or on construction sites in the country, with earnings that were not only higher in amount, but also more stable than the ones in agriculture. Even less expanded were the earnings from the activities in crafts' cooperatives, just like the ones from self-employed activities, as they were variable with the first dependent on realizing the norm. The little individual production, either in crafts or services was informal as a rule (Sandu, 2000: 17; Bleahu, 2004: 90), and represented only a marginal resource of the household.

The crisis characterizing the last decade and a half of the Romanian communism was felt in the rural area not just by the precariousness in the supply of daily consumer goods, but also in the diminishment of the batches for the production of which they could dispose, the uncertainty related to the payment for delivered work as result of the agricultural risk or efficiency of the cooperative, small amounts, failure to comply with contractual commitments concluded with the

peasant household (for example, maize in exchange for livestock farming), but also imposing some crops and high quotas corresponding to the farmed land (Șișeștean, 2012: 244–245, 252–257; Țăranu, 2012: 146–149, 163–167).

Towards the end of the last communist decade, also the possibility of migrating to urban for labor was restricted, while there existed also the reversed phenomenon of temporary relocation of the workers from the urban (from economic entities lacking orders), first of those with fewer years of temporary residence in the urban, or by conditioning the access of youths from rural households to faculty on performing five years of practice in the APCs (Țăranu, 2012: 98–102): the agricultural activity required labor force and unemployment was not officially acknowledged. Temporary delegation outside the national area was low, mediated only by central institutions.

The first post-communist decade

The shift to capitalism in Romania after 1989 came with waves of layoffs, initially by constriction of activity as result of terminating the traditional economic relationships, and subsequently targeted on fields of activity (e.g., coal extraction, defense, after 1997). Having access to a plot of land as potential survival resource, the employees of urban enterprises residing in the rural were among the first laid off in the workforce employees. De-industrialization led to diminished commuting and urban employment; Sandu (2005: 82) estimates that between 1990 and 2002, rural – urban commuting dropped by half. An estimate of the mobility for labor up to the next Population Census (2011 vs 2002)³, shows that it tended to increase towards urban (21.6% against 19.2% individuals residing in the rural with jobs in the urban), respectively to another country (4.3% against 1.8%).

On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that the negative migration flow rural – urban of the first post-communist decade was tempered once restructuring became targeted (1997). Less mentioned is the fact that the balance ceased to be negative initially for the advanced active age groups (those over 50 years of age), followed by the age-group 35 to 39 years, while for the young-adult active age (25–29 years), the negative balance continues uninterrupted even now (Tempo, POP303A). After the fall of communism, migration abroad was liberalized, an option intensified after 2002, as result of visa waivers and, subsequently, because of EU accession. For longer periods of time, or for seasonal work, migration abroad for labor of the Romanians continues to be an acknowledged phenomenon (Sandu, 2000; Palumbo and Corrado, 2020).

³ Estimates of the author relying on data of the Censuses from 2002 and 2011, based on the indicator regarding geographic location of the job in relation to the locality. The latter is the place where the individual spent most part of the time (not necessary the place of the domicile), or where the household to which he/she belongs is found, the individual being absent temporarily. (Training CPL_1 and _2 ppt) <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/presa/proceduride-lucru-aprobat-de-stc/>.

The substantive change of the post-communist rural environment resides, however, in the land ownership retrocession as outcome of wide popular will/consensus. Perhaps, also because of the aggressiveness in the Romanian cooperatives' expansion, maybe also motivated by the crisis context of the last decade, the arguments regarding the efficiency of the farming work, possible on some large surfaces failed to become instituted in the Romanian rural immediately in post-communism. Anachronic as compared with the western European trend, regaining ownership of land was an option lacking significant opposition (Socol, 1999: 31; Şişeştean, 2012: 244).

Entering into ownership proved to be a lengthy process: entitlement, and inheritance rights had to be proved (by documents or witnesses) and, moreover, the returned land could have had currently another destination than the agricultural one, and a compensation procedure had to be determined. The land surface possible to be retroceded was initially of 10 ha, thereafter of 50 ha, and later on, also the retrocession of forestry ownership entered into consideration (L18/1991, L167/1997, L1/2000). As outcome of the first restitutions, resulted about five million owners of land who each held, in average, less than two ha of land, dispersed on average in four different places (Socol, 1999: 35).

The quality of landowner did not imply necessarily employment in the agricultural field: age, residence in the urban, competences and/or various stable incomes determined unreceptiveness of part of those (re)instated in land ownership. What facilitated a minimum degree of pooling agricultural lands over the first post-communist decade was the Lease Law (L16/1994, L65/1998). As opposed to the Romanian Agrarian Reform from the interwar period (1921), in the majority of cases, the post-communist Romanian land leaser is not the landowner living from this resource and dividing the ownership into plots of land that are leased for more gain opportunities, but the owner of a plot of land that no longer can, knows or wants to work it. The positions in the hierarchy of incomes were reversed against the interwar period, the leaser being placed possibly at an inferior level of income to the lessor (in recent times, frequently a legal person), but who holds the means and knowledge required for working the land. The post-communist leaser, as well, receives in exchange for using the land, money or agricultural products specific to the output crop on the leased land. Also, similar to the law from 1921, the new law of recent times did not address the issue of access to machinery and mechanization, the process being individual this time, as well.

Land retrocession, fed also by the layoffs, was the main mechanism for building the segment of self-employed workers (SEW) in the rural. The openness to privatization led to an increase in the small entrepreneurial sector. Initially predominant in small-trade activities, more accessible as financing and required competences, these were added minimally to the farming SEW segment in the rural area. The 1992 Population Census registered 1.4 million persons as SEW, out of which 1.3 million in the rural, against only 42.1 thousand persons employed as individual small crafters, in 1980 (NIS, 1990).

Once the period of targeted restructurings began, more focused follow up was paid to encouraging small- and medium sized enterprises, and to developing rural tourism (Governmental Ordinance (GO) 62/1994, Emergency Governmental Ordinance (EGO) 63/1997 EGO 64/1997, L151/1998, L133/1999), but also more attention was paid to the ecologic component of the agriculture, as first influences of the European trends in RD.

Towards the end of the first post-communist decade, in the rural area were active less than half of the number of entities that developed crafts' activities in 1989 (46.2%), and only 17% from total SMEs were active in the rural area, and about 4% of the villages still had activity in the extractive industry, and about 3% in the processing industry (Ministry of Administration and Rural Development – MADR, 2000: 42, 388, 426).

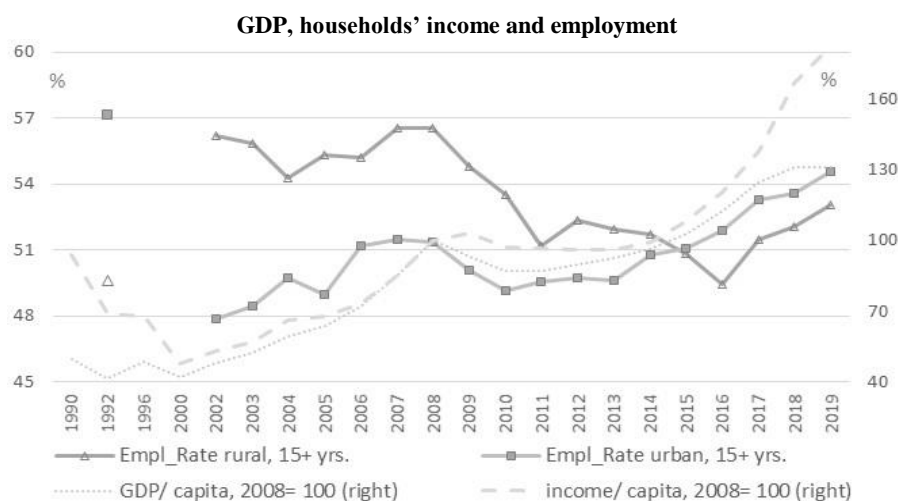
The incomes of the population were eroded strongly by inflation (1991–1994; 1997–1999), which reached 156%/year⁴ over the first couple of years. In the second half of the decade, the minimum wage and child allocations dropped below 30% of their level by the beginning of the decade, and the pensions to almost half, while the pensions of the former agricultural workers decreased below 10%⁵. Of importance for the rural households proved to be the incomes of the social benefit type (MGI), formulated first in 1995 as the difference between the income of the household, and a preestablished threshold. In an initially significant ratio (about 70%) against the minimum wage (in the period when the latter still reached its lowest post-communist levels), MGI continuing to depreciate thereafter. In relation to MGI, two trends took shape over time: seasonality, with decreases in the season of agricultural activities (Arpinte, 2018), and the rural as predilect destination. The ratio between the amounts pertaining to rural households (per capita), and the ones of urban was, in the first years, by 1.32, and 3 around 2000, respectively 7 in 2018 (Tempo: BUF105G, BUF105I).

All in all, the first post-communist decade was one of destructuring, and the stability of income sources was profiled only in the rural by working the land, simultaneously with a trend of abandoning the rural as place of residence. The GDP followed a consistently ascending trend only after 2000, disrupted by the financial crisis in 2008. Economic growth was slowly resumed in 2011, and more sustained after 2014. Simultaneously to this growth, the incomes increased in real terms, but the minimum statutory wage, in particular: by 2.5 times up to 2008, and of yet another 2.8 times up to 2018 (*Figure 1*).

⁴ NIS, data on CPI, annual data, <https://insse.ro/cms>.

⁵ In comparable terms, author's computation based on the legislation and administrative data.

Figure 1



Source: processing after the 1992 Census T08; UNICEF-TransMONEE (income, the first decade).
 Tempo: POP106A, POP108B, AMG110J, BUF105I, CON107B.

After 2000

The preparation for accession accelerated and diversified the national legislation for stimulating the increase in exploited land surfaces and the diversification of the agricultural production. Combined with the financial support accessible for European financing, the regulations with possible impact in these directions were diverse, such as subventions, fiscal facilities, or various eligibility criteria - a certain level of the volume of the activity, belonging to an association, the type of culture, technologization, farmer's age, certification of qualifications in the field- and supporting the distribution by conditions addressed to merchants (L108/2001, L571/2003, L566/2004, L1/2005, L247/2005, OG37/2005, L164/2016, L21/2019, etc.); however, the general landscape of the agricultural activity changed only to small extent.

In 2018 against 2008, the variety in agricultural – livestock and forestry –fishery production emerged niche activities with increases by three to seven times against the dominant activities, which increased about two times. Among the first we find the field of medicinal herbs, of plants and fruits from the wild growing flora, aquaculture, pre- and post-production activities, all on the micro-enterprises segment (Tempo, INT101W).

Between 2005 and 2016, the number of farms in Romania decreased from 4.25 to 3.42 million (Eurostat, ef_m_farmang). The trend of increasing the exploitations' surfaces, expressed indirectly by the decreasing number of farms, proved to be slower than in the European area: while in 2005, the number of Romanian farms represented 29.3% from the total in the EU area, in 2016 the share

was by 32.7%. The “resistance” to increasing the exploitations resides probably also in the way association occurs, in general. More landownerships enter under the sole coordination of a single person (or firm) specialized or not, of active age, or not. This person/firm takes over subventions (granted per land surface unit), ensures the exploitations according to the agreement, the specifics of the area, and to the possible conditionings of the authorized institutions, but does not benefit necessarily also from the work/ competences of those who granted use of the ownerships. Employment as member of a cooperative unit was, in 2019, of only 0.02% from total employed rural population aged 15 and over (*Tempo*, AMG1102).

The measures regarding the association of producers were counted among the less accessed after 2002, next to the ones regarding production methods aimed to environmental protection and rural landscape preservation (by means of SAPARD financing), respectively of vocational training and gaining competences, knowledge dissemination or encouraging the fruit sector, agro- and forestry environment and climate (for the financings in the CAP framework, programming 2007–2013, respectively 2014–2020, up to the intermediary evaluation in 2018; Ecosfera *et al.*, 2011: 77–82; Mihalache and Petrescu, 2013: 68; Trofin *et al.*, 2019: 21).

The dissolution of the old commercialization channels for farming output was not accompanied by developing an alternative equivalent system that would encourage also the production in individual households, and support incomes’ increase. Reason and, at the same time, effect of this situation might be the low availability of selling the production of the peasant household, which could not be a factor of pressure in this regard. Noticed by Janowski and Bleahu (2003: 3, 5) for the end of the first post-communist decade, this situation is found also two decades later, when over 80% of Romanian farms allot over 50% of the output for own consumption. In the EU area, there are 12–13 countries where less than 10% of the farms, or none, are in this situation. The singular position of Romania does not reside in the high share of those in this situation, but in its high consistency for the past 15 years. In 2005, in Slovakia and Hungary the weight of these farmers was higher than in Romania (92%, respectively 83% against 81%), in Slovenia, Latvia and Bulgaria it was by about 70%, so that, in 2016, only in Slovakia this segment was by 60%, against 86% in Romania. As average of the period 2005–2016, Romania was counted regarding sizes of the agricultural exploitations and average incomes per unit of land surface, as well, among the European minimums (Eurostat, ef_m_farmang).

As possible outcome also of the general increase in the incomes’ level of the Romanian population for the last two decades, and of the changes brought by the communication technology, next to the older religious, health- and alpine tourism, new tourist niches took shape for the rural area, for eco- and agro-tourism, hunting –, and adventure tourism, etc. (Haller, 2012: 56–58, 63–66; Moraru and Munteanu, 2012: 109–112). Over the financing period 2007–2013, the direction of encouraging tourist activities was, however, among the ones with lowest absorption degree, so

that the accommodation capacity in agro-touristic boarding houses increased in 2018 by only 4.4 times against 2005, nonetheless, still spectacularly (by 12 times) against the year 2000 (Tempo, TUR102D).

The diversification of the agricultural production and tourism had own infrastructure, vocational training and even age categories requirements. As a positive fact, the development of local environment and infrastructure, next to the little non-agricultural entrepreneurship were found both among the most accessed measures up to 2014, even exceeding initial allocations (Ecosfera *et al.*, ibidem; Mihalache and Petrescu, 2013: 67–68).

For the second half of the '90s, Janowski and Bleahu (2003: 4, 7) underscored yet other two characteristics of the rural household: the complementarity of incomes from agriculture with the incomes from other sources, and the ownership over the land as a chore. Similar situations were encountered (within qualitative studies) also in the years after the financial crisis, the range of arguments for agricultural labor containing explicitly: supplementing incomes, ensuring own consumption (sometimes because of the uncertainty of non-agricultural monetary incomes), or even of the extended family, barter with agricultural products between neighbors, the duty to work the land („*the land must be worked, if you have it/ the world judges you if you leave it derelict*”), which were completed together with the increase of the households' incomes with *I like what I'm doing, you obtain something necessary for life, natural produce* (Ilie and Stanciu, 2012: 71; Preoteasa, 2015: 47–49).

The imperative of agricultural work is transparent also in the priority of agricultural work against non-agricultural one: rural employers (as rule of the micro-enterprise size, from trade, tourism, but also from the processing industry) signaled the fingerprinting of the current activity by the seasonality of agricultural labor (by absence or shorter working program for young employees, involved in the agricultural labor in their household; Aligică and Matei, 2011: 72, 104). Also, for the last two to three years, the empirical observation identifies situations of incomes' complementarity in the southern area (Prahova, Bucharest-Ilfov), in rural communities, where the residents *prefer* employment in the nightshift, or prolonged shift programs (12 by 24 hours) in the neighboring large urban for allotting day time to farm work on the land in ownership.

PROFILE OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT; DISPARITIES AGAINST THE URBAN

Level and structure of employment

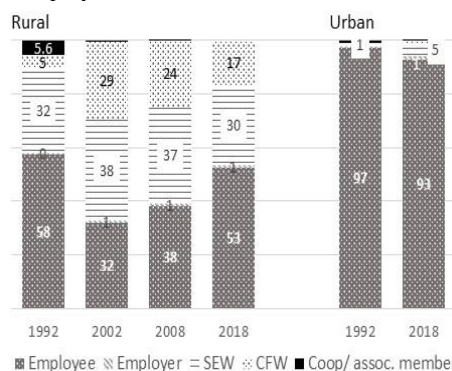
The economic recession of the first post-communist decade seems to have been beneficial for the rural (*Figure 1*): in this period, the urban employment level and rate (ROp; 15 years of age and over) dropped, and increased in the rural. Moreover, subsequently, the trends remain rather uncorrelated. The economic

growth at the beginning of the century was more favorable to the urban, where ROp reaches the maximum in the year preceding the EU accession. Affected by the 2008 crisis, urban ROp resumes growth together with the economic one. Employment in the rural followed a rather descending trend by the beginning of the century, increased in the years preceding immediately the financial crisis, and felt the shock of the crisis, while reentering on a positive trend with a delay by two to three years (2017), after the acceleration of economic growth. After the initial period, rural ROp15+, drops below the urban one, only for the last past years.

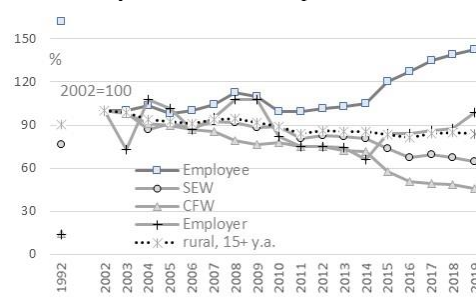
Figure 2

Employment trends: occupational status

a. Employment structure: rural vs urban



b. Rural: Dynamic of the occupational status



Source: processing after the Population Census 1992 T08; Tempo, AMG110J, <http://colectaredate.insse.ro/phc/aggregatedData.htm>.

Corroborated with the context dynamics, the *price* of the more favorable level of rural employment takes shape. The most visible consequence is the unfavorable structural change in relationship with the occupational status. Up to the beginning of the mid-decade, the segment of SEW, already consistent by 1992 (Figure 2a), was supplemented by a significant segment of contributing family workers (CFW), inexistent in the urban. A positive fact, the number of CFW had maximum peak in 2002, same to SEW, however, their numbers drop at a more accelerated pace than the one of SEW in the post-financial crisis positive economic context. To the contrary, in the urban the employees remained quasi-singular in the occupational structure. The recent ROp increase in the urban was achieved as well on the account of waged employment: lacking agricultural „supply”, the urban entrepreneurship, employers and self-employed expanded just recently only up to 7% of urban employment.

With an already low weight at the time of the Census from 1992 (5.5%), rural employment cooperatives diminished subsequently below 1%. Moreover, the size of the segment representing those identified as employers was by 1–2% from total for the entire post-communist period, but the mid-decade seems to have been encouraging for businesses, the category of employers registering its maximum growth (*Figure 2b*).

During the three decades, rural employers' entrepreneurship differed as dynamic from the one of SEW, tending to react similarly to the context, however, at different intensity as waged employment: the most exposed to the austerity of the crisis they abandon the decreasing trend after 2014.

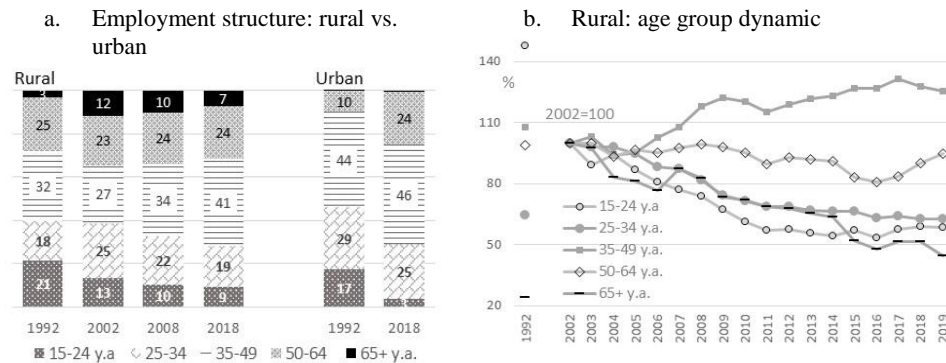
The SEW and CFW categories, and even employees hide the day workers in the rural area. The significant presence of manual work, outcome of the low size of the agricultural-livestock farms, the high seasonality of the agricultural work, the simultaneity of some local cultures, or their succession in the neighboring areas have claimed on a wide scale such working arrangements. These were accessed individually, or organized by the employers with or without transportation ensured to the location of developing the activity (Cace *et al.*, 2010: 85; Dobre, 2015). The available statistics⁶ indicate 60–70% from the national total of day workers as involved in the agricultural-forestry and livestock-fishery field (including beekeeping). Day work might be developed also in private households, in agricultural or non-agricultural activities, most often constructions, but also various services (Cace *et al.*, 2010: 40, 44; Cace *et al.*, 2012: 110; Preoteasa, 2015: 50, 53), occasional or that entered into the place customs, and which exceed the effort or competences of the beneficiary household (for instance, cutting wood for heating, religious rituals in elderlies' households). It is likely that these activities remain outside statistical records.

Another *cost* of the superior rural employment rate was the presence of a significant segment of those exceeding the standard active age (about 10–12% of individuals aged 65 and over), a segment almost like absent in the urban (*Figure 3a*). Of opposing trend in the first decade, youth employment (15 to 24 years of age – y.a.), and of the elderly (64+ years) decreases together with the reconstruction of the economy, the former being slightly revitalized in the positive context of the last past years. Nonetheless, the current level of employed population of non-active age exceeds still notably the one from the first post-communist years. It is to be expected that the most receptive to economic growth was the employment for the age group 35–49 y.a., which is currently at a higher level to the year 1992 (*Figure 3b*).

⁶ Data provided by the Territorial Labor Inspector's Office on request of the author; not possible to breakdown on residential areas. Based on their first regulation (2011), incomes from day labor were declared by the employer and taxed only with the share corresponding to the tax on income up to 2019, when the contribution to pensions was implemented.

Figure 3

Trends in employment: age groups, %



Source: processing after the 1992 Census T09; *Tempo*, AMG1102.

However, *Figure 4a-d* catches yet another positive aspect, the one of the increasing weights of waged employment for the past years for all age groups, as it achieves half of the employment of the group, even for the extreme active ages.

As employment level, the active elderly group (50–64 y.a.) recovered the slight decrease, which was continuing up to then, only in the last past years, however, without reaching the level from the beginning of the period. Nonetheless, as structure, the improvement in employment was continuing, waged employment recovering from share of only 20% in 2002, respectively about one third in 1992.

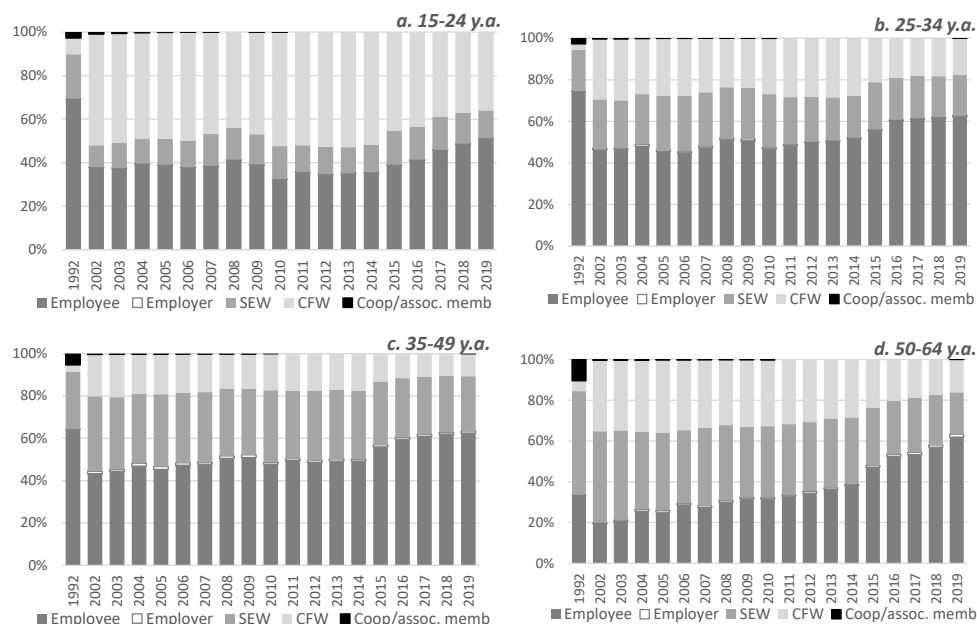
The less exposed to non-waged employment were the adult active age groups (25 to 49 y.a.). Still, the employment dynamic for the youngest of them (25–34 y.a.) remains circumscribed to the sphere of negative aspects of post-communist rural employment; it is on marked increase in the privatization and de-industrialization decade, the level of employment for these youths dropping continuously after 2002, and up to the last four to five years they maintain a share of about a bit more than quarter of employment as CFW (27%, on average). Even more worrying was the employment profile of youths (15 to 24 y.a.): save for the extremes for the 30 years of observation, to a decreasing trend of the employment size on age group, is added a structure in which almost half were CFW. Though on notable expansion for the last years, *the invisible hand* of the free market did not lead, still, as regards the weight of waged employment for youths to the expansion it had by the beginning of the post-communist period (–19 p.p. for the age group 19 to 24 y.a., respectively –12 p.p. for those aged 25 to 34 y.a.).

A study regarding youths' employment in the rural area (16 to 34 y. a., qualitatively and quantitatively) carried out in the most severe year of the financial crisis documented the tendency and motivation of youths for leaving it. The study identifies 47% of the employed youths as having jobs in the urban area, while

residing in the rural one. Yet others, respectively just a bit more than 20% from the youths, have personal experience working abroad, and in some instances the first such experience occurred before reaching the age of 20 (Cace *et al.*, 2012; 57–59, 119). Asked about the potential employers from their area, youths mentioned *food and beverages shops*, one pastry shop, a constructions' materials warehouse, a *ballast pit for sewage*, a herbicide shop, terraces, pools, gas station, aviation factory, car cleaning, specifying more frequently that jobs *are not actually there* (in consensus with the voice of local authorities), and that most likely is the informal-type employment (*ibid*: 104–106).

Figure 4

Employment trends: age groups and occupational status, %



Source: 1992 Census T09; Tempo, AMG1102.

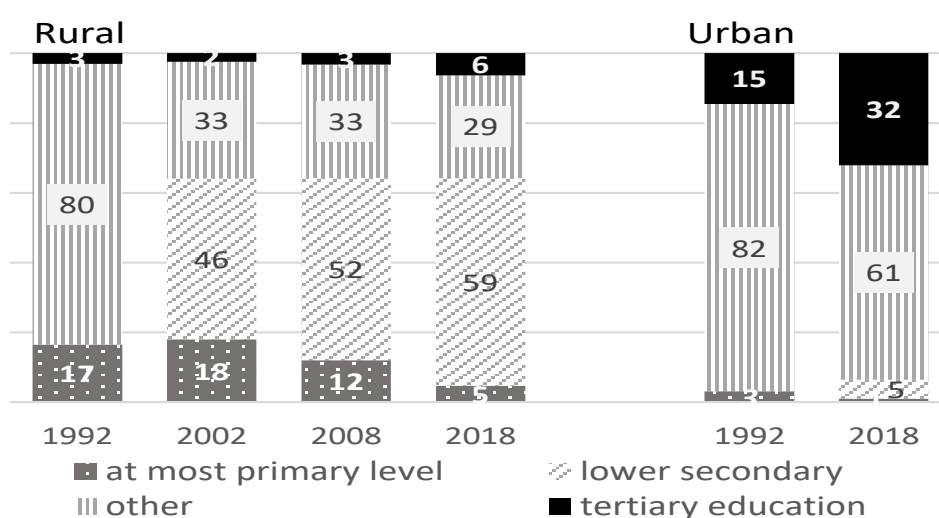
To the above, the authorities and potential employers of the respective location add the decoupling of vocational training/ education from the labor market demand, and from giving guidance on trades, in general, as well as the youths' discontent related to the wage level possible to be obtained, or to the time schedule requirements (*ibid*: 94–95).

In particular for youths, the participation to education and vocational training might be an additional factor (to the demographic and economic ones) of remaining steady outside the labor market. However, *Figure 5* proves that it is rather the contrary.

Though the weight of those with higher education doubled against the post-communist beginnings, the gap to the urban was maintained, and it is currently still five times lower. Additionally, rural employment did not tend towards professionalization: the weight of those without studies decreases, and grows for the ones with lower secondary level, respectively, close to the inferior limit of the active age on labor market.

Figure 5

Employment by educational level: rural vs urban, %



Sources: processing after Tempo, AMG110J.

Note: for 1992, the category "other", includes also lower secondary education

Differences against the urban emerge also in relationship to other facets of employment. Even if at shares that are amongst the lowest European ones (Eurostat, lfsi_pt_a), and that continued decreasing for the last 20 years (from 7 to 3.1%, respectively from 22 to 14%), 80% to 90% of the active population that had also a secondary activity, was from the rural, while about 97% from national contracts with time fractions are owed to the SEW and CFW predominant in the rural (Tempo, AMG115F, AMG119D). Moreover, in the positive context of 2008, 46% had only non-monetary type incomes, from agricultural works in the household, which kept for own consumption over half of the output. To these were added another 19% who had also informal monetary incomes from employment. By comparison, in the urban, these segments were of 6%, respectively 7% from total employment for those above 15 years of age (Stănculescu, Marin & Homms, 2009: 20).

Employment on branches

Rural employment has diversified in the last years (*Table no. 1*).

Table no. 1

Characteristics of rural employment

Economic branch	sectorial weight in total rural employment				Rural, 2018, %		Net average wage on branch, % from national average			
	1992	2002	2008	2018	* from total	** employees	1992	2002	2008	2018
agriculture, forestry, fishing	50.2	68.3	60.0	45.0	90.	8.0	86	75	70	81
Extractive industry	3.6	1.6	1.2	0.7	42.	99.7	157	177	175	143
electric, thermal power, and gas industry	1.3	0.9	1.1	1.3	27.	97.7	154	173	183	144
Manufacturing industry	22.9	10.8	12.5	16.6	38.	96.7	93	89	80	89
constructions	4.5	2.7	6.5	8.7	50.	66.1	106	86	89	73
trade	2.9	3.9	5.9	9.0	28.	90.7	90	71	80	84
hotels and catering activities	0.9	0.5	0.6	1.7	30.	93.0	73	64	59	59
Education, health	4	4.0	3.9	4.7	23.	98.7	95	93	108	118
public administration, defense, social insurances	2.5	3.2	2.7	2.8	26.	100.0	104	135	184	167
IT and communications	---	---	0.2	0.7	15.	75.5	---	223	162	197
Finances, banks, insurances	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	9.3	99.8	148	262	245	172
Other sectors	7.0	3.8	5.1	8.6	---	---	---	---	---	---

Source: processing after the 1992 Census T14; Tempo: POP106A, POP108B, AMG110T, FOM105G FOM106A.

* rural employment in total branch"; **employees in total employment in the rural.

After its expansion on the background of other opportunities' shrinking over the first decade, the agricultural field dropped currently to less than half of total rural employment, to a level that is even lower than at the beginnings. Similar to the first period, agricultural employment is expanded somewhat more to the urban (about 10% of the employment in agriculture), probably as result of diversifying by research, or niche activities (as already seen), that do not require the immediate closeness of the land resource.

On downsizing trend was also the extractive industry, on restructuring at world level. By developing on sub-fields (for instance wind, solar energy, air conditioning services), the production and distribution of energy returns to the expansion from the post-communist beginnings. Also, on recovery, the processing industry does not reach its beginning level in total rural employment. However, a higher weight over the time have trade, constructions and hotels and the catering field. For constructions, the rural provides half of the employment opportunities in the branch, and for trade and hotels' sector about 30%. At the same time, these are more imbalanced towards the rural than education and health taken together.

Though a positive fact, the diversification of rural employment was favoring the fields with the lowest wages. Once at the top of the wage hierarchy, wages in the extractive industry and in the electric, thermal energy, and water industry and distribution, while still above the national average, are no longer at the maximum waging; superior to them are wages in fields represented minimally in the rural area and in the economy (finances, ITC, public administration). More than the financial field, ITC was on expansion, as those from the rural employed in the field represent 15.6% from total in the branch, against only 9.3% for those in the banking sector.

On the other hand, in constructions and in HORECA, the average wage no longer reaches the level from the beginnings of the post-communist period.

The study on youths' employment signaled indirectly the expansion of the same fields, underscoring them as fields of interest in gaining some skills: in constructions (17%), trade and agro-forestry (15–14%), and in the HORECA field (8%) (Cace *et al.*, 2012: 103, 128).

Other particularities of employment in the agricultural field

In agriculture, waged employment remains at very low levels (8%), though it almost doubled against 2002 (4.3%), and still being the lowest at European level (Tempo: AMG110T; Eurostat, Ifsa_egan2, Ifsa_eegan2). Agricultural seasonality creates the premises for day workers' employment, which is largely informal though on decrease for the last years, and still exceeds waged employment in some non-agricultural branches. The data of the Labor Territorial Inspector Offices' indicate, for the period 2012–2019 an average number of day laborers registered in the agricultural-forestry and livestock-fishery field of about 165 thousand persons. Certainly, the day labor of agricultural type covers only a couple of months per year, but it is significant and worrying at the same time that this level exceeds the average one corresponding to the same period for the employees in the extractive industry (72.3 thousands), the one of those in the banking sector (114.3 thousands), is equal to the one of those in the field of information and communications (165.6 thousands) at national level, and higher than the one of employees in education and health in the rural area (160.2 thousands) (TEMPO, AMG110T).

Agricultural vocational training is no better than in the rural, all in all. European statistics show the unfavorable situation in Romania regarding the skilling of farmers, under the conditions of a poor absorption of European funds aiming at information and counseling, which is added to an unfavorable age structure profile of the farmers; in 2016, Romania had the highest share of farmers with professional skills gained only by practice (96%), with a minimum variation of the share in relation to the age of the farmers, and was almost singular in the situation of failing to improve this share after 2005 (Eurostat, ef_mptrainman, ef_mp_training).

On the other hand, media of the last years reflected the increasing difficulty of employers in agriculture, from various areas of the country, in identifying the required labor force for their activity, for both manual works, and manipulating agricultural machinery. This occurs despite the fact that, in the attempt of attracting labor force, the employer from the agricultural field provides (sometimes) also a meal per day, and even accommodation or other benefits for the employee and his/her family, while the wages that might be obtained in agriculture during the season have increased. Explicitly, however not singularly, are mentioned the migration of youths, the perception of the agricultural still as unskilled work, the difficulties and conditioning brought with the agricultural work during the season (extended working time daily), the alternative provided by the social benefit, and the illusion of possible higher benefits from temporary work abroad (calculated as monthly rate), as well as the inadequate opportunities of skilling in the field (Economica, 2012; Dobre, 2015; ARADON, 2018; FIR, 2019; Financial Intelligence, 2019; Dascălu, 2020). All these are added to the frequent changes in the consulting system in agriculture (Rusu, 2014: 16–18; Toderiță, 2019: 5–10). Technologization in the agricultural – livestock sector is not perceived at mass-level, the sector being largely associated to manual, unskilled work, an additional reason for the youths for failing to be tempted by the sector⁷.

Nonetheless, those who used to count on agricultural day labor notice the trend towards mechanization which diminished the manual work opportunities in agriculture (Preoteasa, 2015: 54).

INCOMES AND AT POVERTY RISK RATE: RURAL – URBAN DISPARITIES

For the entire period, the budget of the rural households was dominated by three sources of income: wages, pensions and the countervalue of human and livestock consumption from own production, or from cooperatives (CCOP). To the contrary, in the urban, wages represented continuously the central pillar of the household budget (*Table no. 2*).

⁷ Worldvision, „Românii și agricultura” [Romanians and agriculture], online study realized by iVox on request of World Vision Romania, in March 2019, <https://worldvision.ro/mandrusafiufermier/> (access: September 2020).

In the period of maximum austerity, by the end of the first decade, the budget of the rural household was constructed from almost equal parts consisting of monetary and non-monetary incomes, while wages and pensions did not equal together CCOP. The incomes from agriculture did not exceed, even in this period, 10% from the rural budget. All these speak about the general low living standard in the rural area, by the end of the first post-communist decade and about the work of the land as simultaneous resource and imperative, aspects underscored also in the qualitative studies. Meanwhile, non-monetary incomes turned marginal, as both outcome of expanding waged employment, and of increased wage incomes. The marked increase of the minimum wage for the last decade, and the linking of day labor tariffs with the level of the minimum wage (as of 2013) consolidated the income increase for rural households. Nevertheless, its ratio against the income of the urban household worsened: currently, the rural income represents just a bit above 60% from the urban one, against about 90% by the end of the '90s (*Figure 6*), and the present structure of the rural budget indicates a gap in development by about two decades against the urban.

Table no. 2

Structure of the household budget: rural vs. urban

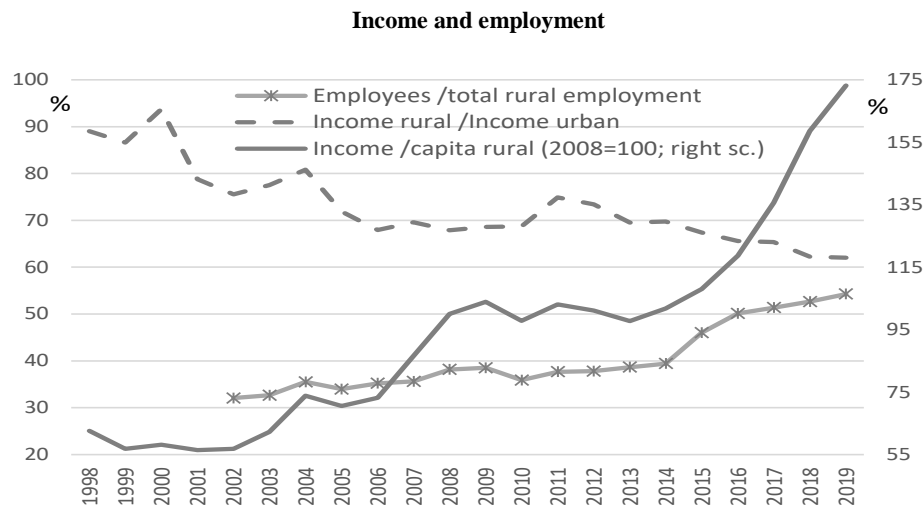
	Rural					Urban	
	1998	2000	2008	2014	2018	2000	2018
(Monetary incomes)	54.1	50.6	69.4	70.3	85.8	85.8	95.7
Gross wage rights	21.0	17.1	29.5	30.3	53.3	55.9	74.7
Incomes from agriculture	8.5	8.3	6.3	8.2	5.0	0.9	0.2
Social protection incomes	18.6	19.3	24.4	25.0	21.0	21.1	17.5
* Pensions (PAYG type)	14.5	16.2	19.9	21.4	17.6	17.7	15.2
Other monetary incomes	6.0	5.9	9.2	6.6	6.5	7.9	3.3
Countervalue of consumption from own production (CCOP)	45.0	48.7	28.5	28.7	13.0	13.3	2.9
Other non-monetary incomes	0.9	0.7	2.1	1.3	1.3	0.8	1.4

Source: processing after Tempo BUF_105G, BUF_105I.

The period of austerity by the end of the first decade is confirmed also by data of subjective nature, which captures the “boom” of the rural population segment for whom the available income does not allow for ensuring the basic necessities (*Figure 7*): from 19.6% to 45.4%. The situation improved in the period of economic growth preceding the financial crisis and depreciated after its outbreak. The data of this figure suggest also the fact that the population from the urban did not feel to the same intensity the negative economic dynamic in the privatization decade (though ROp was on decrease). The positive impact of economic growth before the year 2008 was more marked in the urban, and the social protection measures that accompanied the crisis neutralized the effects of the

financial crisis among the urban population. Additionally, the favorable pre-crisis context allowed for an increasing segment of up to 20% satisfying all consumption needs, against less than 10% among the rural population. *Figure 7* indicates the second half of the first decade as the incipient time of marked inequalities among the incomes from the two environments (see also Vociu, 2006: 8–10) which was tempered subsequently only by conjecture (*Figure 8*).

Figure 6



Source: processing after Tempo BUF105G, AMG1102.

The relative poverty risk, the risk of the household to be placed according to its incomes below an agreed threshold, and of identifying the poverty situation in relation to the general level within society⁸, was on increase. In the European approach, the measure does not take into account CCOP. This measure, available only post-accession, catches, even today, levels close to 40% from rural population in at-poverty-risk, and a considerable gap against cities. Living standard improvement was sensible in towns and suburbs until the full impact of the financial crises, and rose abruptly after that. Economic growth that followed was rather neutral for it, but with no positive echo in the rural areas. Taking account of CCOP diminishes significantly the at-poverty-risk level, thereby certifying the essential role of the small agricultural production for the general living standard in the rural area.

⁸ The threshold is by 60% from the median income calculated per equivalent adult. The equivalence determines a ratio between the members of an operational household depending on the specific needs of consumption, differing depending on gender and age.

Figure 7

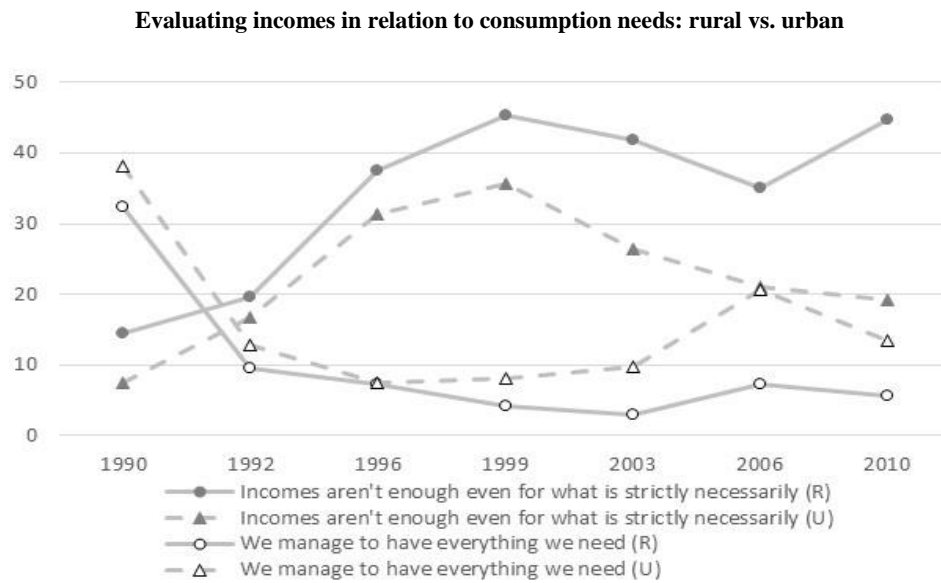
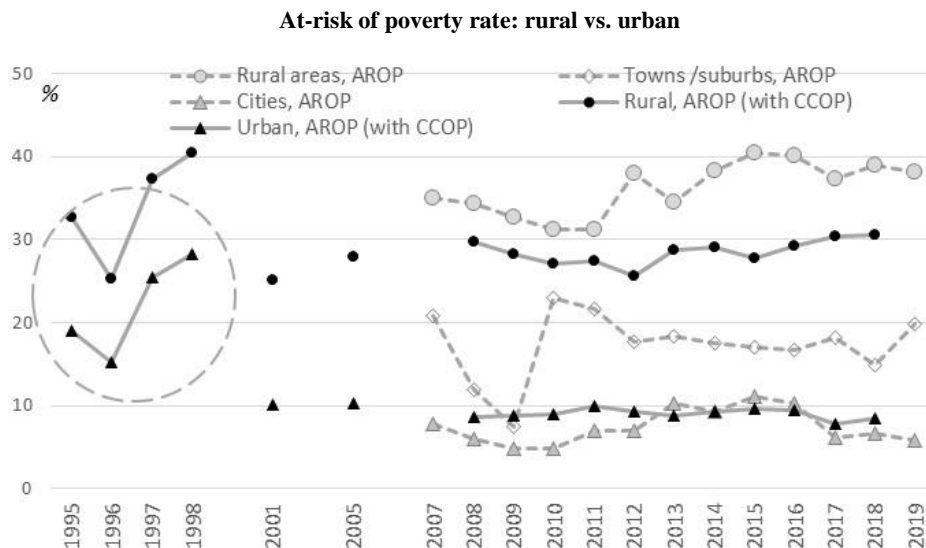


Figure 8



Source: Teşliuc, Cornelia, Pop, Lucian and Teşliuc, Emil, 2001: 48; NIS, 2008; MMPS, 2019; Eurostat ilc_peps13.

Note: for the years 1995–1997 the data are not comparable with the subsequent ones, the at-poverty-risk being calculated as 60% from the average consumption expenditure with CCOP.

This dynamic tends to indicate a development from the center (cities) to the periphery (rural), and not an own, strong vector of rural development. It might be stated that there is a rural area where the economic development of the last two decades did not reach yet, waged employment or other highly-sensitive factors to economic growth are not present, and where CCOP, social benefits, next to possible opportunity incomes represent the sources of existence.

CONCLUSIONS

Employment in the rural area remains intrinsically linked with the valorization of natural resources, which provides for diversity and, theoretically, for an own dynamic element. Its largely constitution from employment in agriculture, an essential field for the economy, had a positive impact on the its dimension and stability over the period of in-depth changes that Romania crossed for the last three decades. Up to the last years, rural employment was superior to the urban one. Moreover, ROp in the urban tended to vary positively and more promptly in relation to the general dynamic within the economy, as opposed to the rural, where it had a dropping trend.

The higher level of rural employment came, however, with *costs* regarding the quality of employment and the living standard. A series of trends noticed in previous studies regarding rural area are found also in the Romanian post-communist time: the over-estimation of resorting to individual forms of employment that hide informal employment, unstable or even lacking real opportunities for employment, or higher exposure to poverty. The trend in the employment rates for the two areas, the dynamic of income and of the rural households' budget structure reaffirm the buffer role had by employment in agriculture during the in-depth reforms of the first transition period.

An overlap of motivations – necessity, competences, habit, emotional considerations – resulted in the presence in the current rural employment of a considerable segment of the population above the superior limit of the active age on the labor market. Nevertheless, the employment of elderly was on decrease for the last two decades. Encouraging for the past years is that youths' employment halted its decrease. Even so, almost 40% of the youths aged between 15 and 24 years had the CFW status, which means that their economic role is resumed to the help given in the productive activity of the household, overwhelmingly of agricultural type, and of poor efficiency. The continuing negative migration balance of the age group 25 to 29 years, the drop in youth employment, in general, the „resistance” to professionalizing education are a series of involution aspects as regards employment in the rural area, in relation to the post-communist beginnings. Moreover, the educational structure of rural employment contrary to the development conditions, and the polarization against the urban, provide clear reasons for the divergence in employment.

The positive signs in rural employment emerge in the last five to six years, when the rural economic landscape diversified. As result, waged employment exceeded half of the total employment for all age groups, though as level it did not reach the post-communist beginnings. The one to exceed the beginnings as regards employment level, simultaneously with a comparable good occupational structure is the age group 35 to 49 years.

Against the end of the economic restructurings' decade, when over two out of three employed persons were active in agriculture, currently less than one out of two individuals are in this situation. The ITC field, more then the banking one enters in the rural. More than ITC, tourism (masked in the HORECA industry) expands to the rural employment. At levels above the ones by the beginnings, constructions and trade indicates a rural on the move (dynamic). Though an expected change, the economic diversification of the rural occurred to poor waged fields, or even with a low presence of waged employment. Under these conditions, the marked inequality against the urban income grew even stronger.

The incomes of the rural population increased also as result of diversifying the rural economic landscape, and of the incomes' policy, in particular the one regarding minimum wage. Though of notoriety and significant as expansion to the rural, day labor incomes were regulated legislatively only in 2011. As opposed, the MGI had a relatively early regulation, salutary in the difficult economic context by the end of the first decade. Its seasonality and the alternance with day labor, in country or abroad, tend to indicate a social protection path parallel to the classic one of wage-unemployment benefit. For the Romanian rural area of the recent decade, the withdrawal from activity does not seem to occur when the human physical limits determine it (a time that, otherwise, tends to increase compared with the urban), but constantly according to an archaic and vulnerable pattern given by the seasonality of agricultural work. The day labor income seems to have taken over the role of the wage, and MGI the one of the unemployment benefits (or of the pensions). Different from wages, day labor incomes do not bear health insurances, as opposed to MGI, which consolidated their symbiosis. As of 2019, they carry the taxes corresponding to the pension contributions, which ascertains their status of a wage income type. but it remains to be seen whether this measure will not lead only to diminished accounting for day laborers, without an actual increase in (agricultural) paid employment.

Even though turned marginal in the budget of the household, the countervalue of consumption from own resources proves to be still significant in diminishing the at-poverty-risk of the rural population, which is an indirect indicator of the homogeneity of resources in the inferior area of incomes' distribution. Neither informal activities, nor barter are reasonably to be expected to vanish completely from the rural, but within an efficient and modern economy these are reduced to the level of a hobby.

The financial support addressed to the rural, available by CAP, indicated the trend of a new scope in rural employment. They did not have notable echo towards

accelerating association, information, and agricultural vocational training. Not even the tourism domain did not valorize the financing potential. A slight diversification of agricultural production is visible, as financing the modernization of the rural infrastructure pressured upwards the initial allocations. The rhythm and the preferred financing directions, revealed by the ultra-brief (and incomplete) summary of evaluating the financing by CAP, might point towards a priority of the objectives to be achieved, intrinsic to the rural development as a whole (irrespective various financing directions are simultaneously available).

Slowly, the Romanian rural environment headed towards modernity, towards a more attractive framework for employment and an improved living standard.

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Articolul urmărește schimbările apărute în ocuparea și nivelul de trai al gospodăriei rurale românești de-a lungul perioadei post-comuniste. Având ca fundal principalele schimbări ale contextului socio-economic, tendințele ocupării rurale sunt raportate la situația de la debutul tranziției, respectiv la specificul urban al acestora. Utilizând analiza secundară de date, au fost identificate o piață a muncii și structură educațională rurală defavorabile din perspectiva dezvoltării, dar și îmbunătățirea caracteristicilor ocupării în ultima decadă, creșterea generală a veniturilor și accentuarea inegalității față de urban.

Cuvinte-cheie: ocupare; dezvoltare rurală; inegalitate; rural – urban.

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