

# Chapter 6

## Migration Dynamics in Romania and the Counter-Urbanisation Process: A Case Study of Bucharest's Rural-Urban Fringe

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### 6.1 Introduction

During the past two decades, Romania has undergone a complete metamorphosis, a major transformation that has led to a complete modification of the political, social and economic systems. As a result, the rural areas of Romania have been undergoing tremendous economic, social and environmental changes. These changes have been fed by intense population mobility, into and out of the rural settlements. Due to the fact that agriculture is no longer the sole economic base of rural areas, rural communities are changing in social and economic terms, changes which are far more noticeable in the rural-urban fringe (RUF), where the dominance of productive usage is giving way to a mixture of production and consumption-led activities. This rural-urban fringe is losing its traditional image as a farming space by partly turning into middle-class suburbs, inhabited by urban migrants who move in search of quality lifestyles. The outcomes are new land-use patterns, designed for residential, commercial and leisure activities, which proliferate in this zone.

This chapter aims to describe and explain the internal migration patterns and their outcomes that have taken place in the rural areas of Romania and particularly in the rural-urban fringe by focusing on Bucharest RUF. The reason for this choice is that the capital city is the most dynamic core of social and economic changes and its RUF has undergone significant changes through steadily losing some of its traditional features.

The discussion is based on synthesising available data and information in the Romanian literature and also on an analysis of the latest available published data sources. An additional source of information is a survey conducted in a number of rural settlements that offers a perspective on the local actors' (the in-comers and the natives) motivations to migrate. The spatial analysis embedded in this study

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offers a better knowledge of the regional differences in migration tendencies, and the differences in the triggers for population movement.

The chapter begins with a short background summary of the economic transformation of the Romanian economy and its impact on the population. This is followed by a description of the spatial dimension of the recent migratory movements in Romania. The third section deals with migration patterns in the rural-urban fringe of the major metropolitan areas, leading to a discussion of the migration patterns within the Bucharest RUF and focusing on two communities, Voluntari and Brănești, as case studies. Finally, the current and future implications for migration trends are discussed.

## 6.2 Background

In the past two decades, the dynamics of the society and the economy had a significant impact on the population movement in Romania. In order to understand the mechanisms that triggered this process, we need to reflect back upon the previous period, namely the second half of the twentieth century. The migration then was generated by major political, social and economic events that Romania had experienced, such as the Second World War, the famine that followed it, the deportations by the Communist regime, the enforcement of farmers to be organised within farming cooperatives, and the rapid industrialisation process based on the expansion of the urban system. All these events shaped a specific migration pattern, which perfectly matches the eastern European post-war model.

Since the 1989 transition from a centralised to a market economy, the entire socio-economic system has been transformed through the implementation of structural reforms, leading to new migration trends. Alongside the privatisation and restructuring of industrial corporations, there was a significant reform in the agricultural sector, including the restitution of farmland to former owners (Guran-Nica, 2004). The combined effect of these changes triggered important social transformations, in both the urban and the rural spaces. In the latter, as a result of the extreme fragmentation of farmland and diminishing employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector, many households were engaged in semi-subsistence production, leading to a sharp decline in their living standard, or they used coping strategies based on pluriactivity (Sofer & Bordanc, 1998).

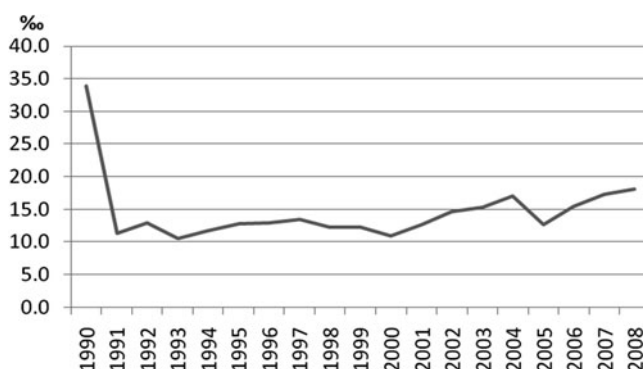
The difficult economic conditions of the rural space compared to the urban one are not new for Romania. The entire post-war period has been economically difficult, despite attempts by the Communist regime to improve it, somehow, through erratic industrial investments. This impacted on all the elements of the demographic structure. The consequences were a vulnerable natural balance and an intensified exodus towards the cities, which led to a constant decline in the numbers of inhabitants and an increase of the ageing population, features which persisted and even grew in importance, in some instances, after 1989 (Table 6.1).

Economic growth during the 1990s led to the relocation of rural populations into urban areas (Fig. 6.1). However, the intensity of this phenomenon declined in the

**Table 6.1** Demographic characteristics of the rural population

Years	1966	1977	1992	2002	2007
Population (thousand persons)	11,797	12,164	10,418	10,245	9670
Population growth (percentage change from population in 1977)		100.0	85.6	84.2	79.4
Rural population as % of national population	61.8	56.4	45.7	47.3	44.8
Elderly rural population aged 60 and over (%)	12.2	16.4	22.1	24.3	23.8

Source: National Institute of Statistics, *Census of Population*, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 and *Statistical Yearbooks* 1981–2008.

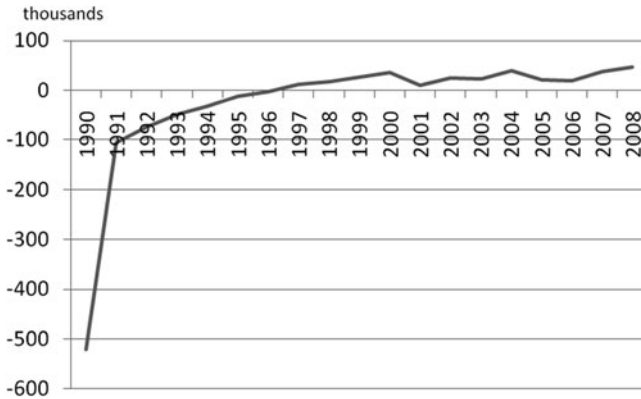
**Fig. 6.1** Migration trends in the rural space: gross migration rate (total internal migration)

Source: Anuarul statistic al României (2009)

following years, when a shift in the prevailing direction was observed, reflected in a positive migration balance in favour of the rural areas after 1997 (Fig. 6.2). Hence, the rural space has become a destination for migrants, and “the urban-rural component becomes, maybe for the first time in the modern-day history of Romania, the main direction for migration” (Rotariu & Mezei, 1999b, p. 16).

There are various reasons for the changing trend, yet the literature focuses on how the economic restructuring impacted on the urban population (Bălăceanu et al., 2005; Bolohan-Zamfirescu & Teodorescu, 1996; Rotariu & Mezei, 1997, 1999a, 1999b; Sandu, 1984).

Lost jobs or uncertain jobs, the increasing cost of living in a city, the difficulties faced by young married couples in finding a house (the famous “blocks of flats” – cheap and low-comfort apartments – one thing of many that the communist regime was so proud about, stopped being built after 1989, and were replaced by individual housing, a privilege of those advantaged by the new economic order), as well as the lack of professional prospects for the young people, all these have led to a re-orientation towards the rural environment (Rotariu & Mezei, 1999b, p. 16).



**Fig. 6.2** Migration trends in the rural space: migration balance  
*Source:* Anuarul statistic al României (2009)

Alongside the economic and social changes, there were also legal changes. All the more since the land law was passed (1991), which involved the reallocation and subdivision of state land (Bordanc, 1996), so many urban dwellers became owners of farming plots of land that, adding to houses owned or inherited from their parents, formed an economic base for the in-comers.

Since the early twenty-first century, the Romanian economy has experienced a fluctuating growth rate. Under the changing conditions, more and more urban inhabitants shifted to the rural areas with a desire to improve their quality of life, being attracted by both tangible benefits (beautiful landscapes) and intangible advantages (a secure and friendly environment) (Paquette & Domon, 2003; Mitchell, 2004). This shift has been supported by the increasing attractiveness of the rural way of life, and by the transformation in the form of capital accumulation in the rural space. A shift from the farming-oriented use of devalued land to a tertiary land uses re-values rural resources (Guran-Nica & Rusu, 2004).

### 6.3 The Spatial Dimension of the Migratory Movements in Romania

Spatially, population movement between regions in Romania has shown a number of different patterns over the years and its intensity varied under the impact of numerous economic, social, political and religious factors. After the 1918 unification, and especially after the Communist regime took power, the rural-to-urban flow became the most important one. This flow did not occur only on short distances, from rural spaces to neighbouring urban areas, but rather it covered longer distances as well. The most important motive was economic, reflected by the high correlation between development level and migration balance, where the highly developed counties served as the major destination areas (Guran-Nica, 2004; Rotariu & Mezei,

1997, 1999b). “The magnitude and orientation of migrations were determined by the industrialisation and urbanisation pace, by the differences in intensity of social and economic developments and the prevailing economic profile” (Cucu et al., 1984, p. 69). The main feature of these movements was expressed by the final relocation of rural population (mainly young people of working age – 20–29) to the urban areas, mostly from eastern and south-eastern areas towards urban centres in the west.

Studies on internal migration trends in Romania before 1990 show that major movement took place in the period between 1970 and 1990, with Bucharest (the capital city) and other urban centres in the most developed counties being the most attractive destinations (Rotariu & Mezei, 1999b). Many of them are located in central and western Romania (Fig. 6.3). The areas of origin, especially the rural ones, were Moldavia, Oltenia and Muntenia (in the east and south-east) (Ştefănescu, 1974), but also the central Transylvanian plain. Generally, the main direction of migration was from the east and south towards the west.

Whereas rural-urban and urban-urban movement occurred over longer distances, the urban-rural movement, which was less significant during that period, happened in most cases in terms of shorter distances, mostly within the same county (Rotariu & Mezei, 1999a, 1999b). The attraction of rural areas was of an economic nature, based mainly on various activities in the mining industry and the food sector, and even the textile industry, which offered profitable jobs. In this context, location advantages of rural settlements were related to good road accessibility, and proximity to developed industrial centres.

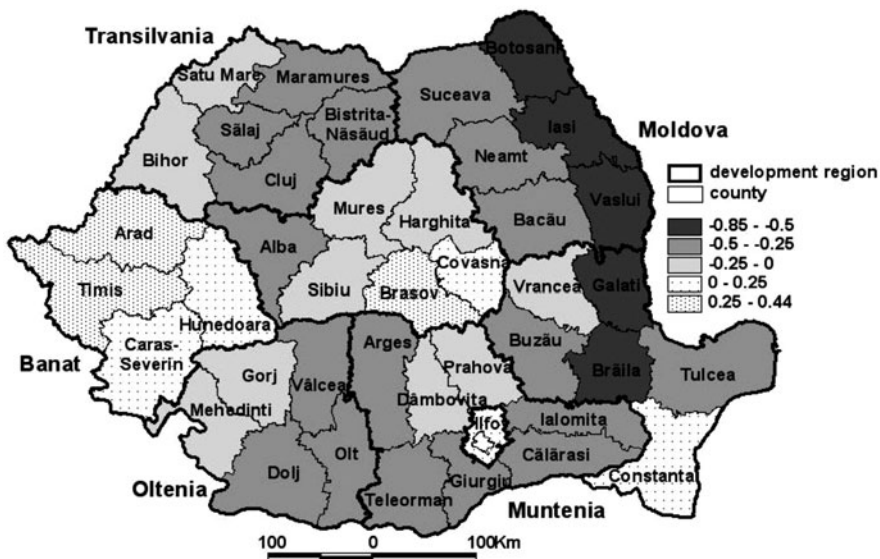


Fig. 6.3 Migration growth rate (%), 1990–2008

Whilst in the beginning of the post-Communist era the migration pattern persisted (Bălteanu et al., 2005; Rotariu & Mezei, 1999b), it gradually changed under the impact of the economic transformation. In order to understand the development of the internal migration over the past 20 years, a number of specific indicators were analysed, such as the gross and net migration rates as well as the migration growth rate. These three indicators show how the phenomenon evolved in time and how its general features have changed.

The analysis of the gross migration rate<sup>1</sup> reveals the relative magnitude of migration turnover in the rural space. Hence, eastern Romania (regions such as Moldova and Dobrogea) is characterised by a very mobile population where many rural settlements experienced a very high gross migration rate (over 700%). Similar values have been recorded for communes in counties in western and southern Romania. By comparison, rural settlements in the mountains and the southern plain, as well as in the centre and north-west of the country have experienced low magnitudes of migration. The motives that generate the differences are related to both push and pull factors, of which the most important are the social and economic ones. Whilst in the rural space there is limited availability of wage employment and many of the available jobs are underpaid, people can find better access to employment opportunities in the urban labour markets. In addition, the availability of social services in rural settlements, such as education and health, is insufficient. These difficulties arise mainly in the areas where the rate of natural increase is traditionally high (Moldavia). All these factors push the young population to migrate to urban agglomerations.

The spatial distribution of the net migration rate<sup>2</sup> highlights the traditional “origin” and “destination” areas. One easily notes that the east, Moldova, and also the south, Muntenia and Oltenia, remain – as in the second half of the twentieth century – areas of origin for internal migration. These areas have been characterised by rural settlements in poor economic conditions for long time. Moreover, their economic difficulties intensified during the transition period and failed to be solved, despite a period of recovery of the Romanian economy (2004–2008). Additionally, even the rural economy of the best developed counties (Cluj, Prahova, Argeş) has been negatively affected with a significant population loss by migration. These ideas are sustained by sociological studies concerning the migration trends in post-Communist Romania (Bălteanu et al., 2005; Bolohan-Zamfirescu & Teodorescu, 1996; Rotariu & Mezei, 1997, 1999a, 1999b; Sandu, 1984). They confirm the old patterns of migration, but underline some changes such as the decrease in the out-migration rate from some traditional areas of origin and the emergence of new ones.

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<sup>1</sup> The gross migration rate was calculated as the sum of in-migrants and out-migrants of an area in a period of time, divided (usually) per 1000 inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> Net migration rate was calculated as the difference of in-migration and out-migration of an area in a period of time, divided (usually) per 1000 inhabitants.

The main destinations for rural migrants are the “traditional” ones – Banat and Southern Transylvania, as well as the metropolitan areas of the large urban centres – Bucharest, Constanța, Brașov, Cluj, Iași, etc. Among the attracting factors, the level of economic development is still ranked first, as these regions are relatively abundant in employment opportunities.

Altogether, the current situation is disturbing, taking into consideration the fact that the number of rural settlements with negative growth is higher compared to those with positive growth, as the official figures show (Voineagu, 2009). There are people leaving the underdeveloped rural areas in the eastern counties who are heading towards towns or better developed rural areas in the western regions or on the fringes of the metropolitan areas. Yet, we can also find migration trends consisting of population from places lately confronted by economic regression (small towns and some large villages), moving back to their localities of origin. There is also the urban-rural flow, with some city dwellers migrating in search of rural amenities or for less costly life conditions. This latest trend is developing especially in the rural-urban fringe of big cities as part of wider processes like peri-urbanisation development and suburbanisation.

#### **6.4 Metropolitan Areas in Romania and Migration Patterns in Their Rural-Urban Fringe**

The major spatial changes concerning the rural-urban migration process in Romania are most noticeable in the fringes of metropolitan areas. These areas are defined as being under the influence of larger urban centres with macro-regional functions (Erdeli et al., 1999). In Romania, the regional metropolitan areas other than Bucharest consist, in most cases, of less than 400,000 inhabitants, and including the satellite settlements, of not more than one million. Moreover, domestic legislation changed the meaning of metropolitan area, taking into consideration only the associative character of the metropolitan spaces. Thus, officially the metropolitan zone is “a built up area, based on a voluntary partnership, between the large urban centers and the neighboring urban and rural localities, within a distance of 30 km, and which developed cooperation on multiple levels”<sup>3</sup> (Săgeată, 2004).

There are currently eight metropolitan areas officially established in Romania, which vary a lot, in both the number of settlements (towns and communes) and the number of inhabitants (Table 6.2). However, the most important metropolitan area, though not officially constituted yet, has developed around Bucharest, the capital city. It covers not only Ilfov county but also parts of the neighbouring counties. Most of its administrative units are rural settlements, except for some towns located in the rural-urban fringe that developed a number of urban functions, such as a small industry, commercial and storing premises, and recreation activities. The

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<sup>3</sup> Law 351/2001 on the approval of the arrangement plan for the national territory – Section IV – Locality Network.

**Table 6.2** Characteristics of the metropolitan areas (2008)

Metropolitan area	Location	Setting-up date	No. of towns	No. of communes	Total population (2008)
Iași	North-east	2004	1	13	400,347
Oradea	North-west	2005	1	8	245,568
Târgu Mureș	Centre	2006	2	12	213,198
Constanța	South-east	2007	6	8	446,595
Bacău	North-east	2007	1	5	250,000
Brașov	Centre	2007	6	8	402,041
Cluj	North-west	2008	1	17	379,705
Craiova	South-west	2009	1	5	333,834

*Data source:* National Institute of Statistics

evolution of the metropolitan areas in Romania has been largely influenced by location advantages of the settlements located in the vicinity of large cities and by their development potential. The available studies on this issue deduce that their recent economic expansion is due to relatively higher investments in the secondary and tertiary sectors, mainly industry, services and real estate (Erdeli & Simion, 2006).

The changes discussed so far are closely related to the internal migration trends in Romania. It seems that there are significant differences in the migration growth rates for the major metropolitan areas as some tend to attract population, whilst others are losing a share of their inhabitants. A comparison of the migration growth rates for the eight metropolitan areas displayed in Table 6.2 for the period 1990–2008 reveals clear differences. Thus, Constanța and Oradea were poles of attraction for migrants, the values of the migration rates exceeding 10% (22.4 and 10.99%, respectively), whereas the respective values for Cluj and Craiova were negative (−6.63 and −2.47%). Two other metropolitan areas showed medium positive migration growth rates, 6.53% for Brașov and 5.13% for Iași.

The analysis of the migration growth rates for the rural settlements of the same metropolitan areas presented even higher values, particularly for two areas – Constanța and Oradea (27.87 and 12.8%, respectively). A similar propensity, but with lower values, can be seen in the Brașov rural area (7.14%) and for the rural settlements of Iași (4.8%). By comparison, the rural settlements of the areas of Cluj (−7.63%) and Craiova (−5.45%) were losing population. Generally, and this is the focus of the rest of the chapter, the rural-urban fringe of the metropolitan areas attracts more migrants than the urban cores in recent times.

## 6.5 Migration Patterns in Bucharest Rural-Urban Fringe

The metropolitan area of Bucharest municipality (MAB) is far larger than all other metropolitan areas, more diversified in terms of social and economic activities, and different in its nature in regard to the rural-urban fringe. Geographically, it is located



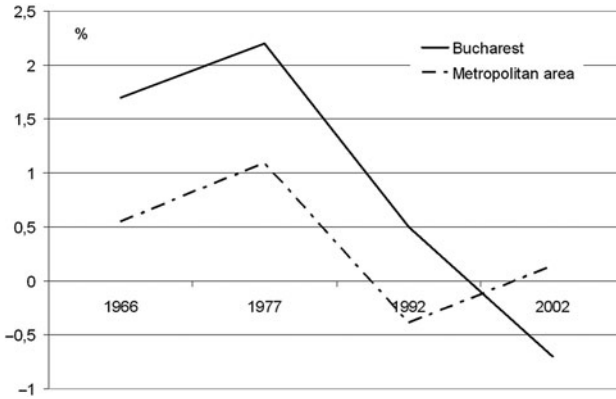
in a highly accessible place, and the nature of the lowland allows its rural settlements to extend with almost no limitation. In addition, the surrounding features of the landscapes, such as the hydrographical network, and the availability of lakes and forests in the rural-urban fringe, provide, in their turn, favourable factors in attracting new migrants who are in search of a pleasant residential environment.

There have been a number of propositions for the organisation of Bucharest's metropolitan area. The first took into account 94 administrative units (communes and towns) covering five counties (Ianoş, 1998–1999). The second, proposed by the city council, suggested that the metropolitan area had to be a distinct administrative unit with the status of a county, and that it include Bucharest and 62 other localities, of which ten are towns, organised in two different parts: the metropolitan core of Bucharest (MCB) and the peri-metropolitan area of Bucharest (PBA). The latter is formed by the rural belt around the core. A third proposition referred to Bucharest "district" that should include the city together with nine suburbs, eight towns and 30 communes (Jordan, 2003). The fourth considered the existing spatial order based on the linkages between the settlements, and suggested a much larger metropolitan area compared to all the other propositions (Săgeată, 2005). In this study, we followed the second proposition, which actually turned into a law proposal submitted to the Parliament.

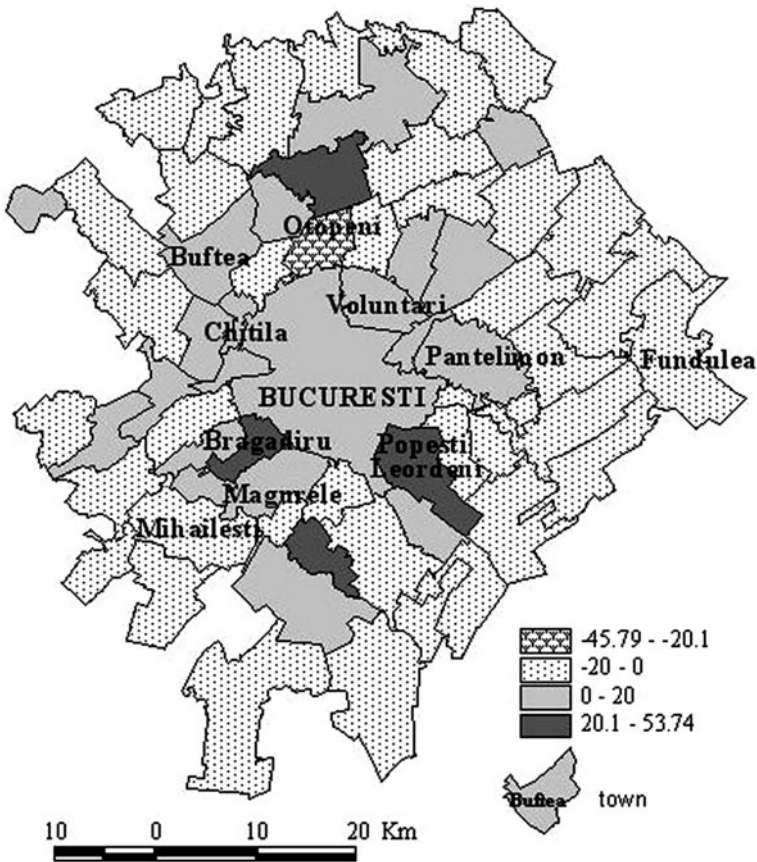
Bucharest city, which ranks first in all the social and economic hierarchies in Romania, has always been a strong attraction pole for migrants. Being the largest economic centre of the country, it accounts for about 19% of the country's gross domestic product. It also serves as the main hub for all means of transport, with a high number of routes connecting the city to the entire country and to neighbouring countries as well. By the early 1990s, Bucharest had reached the size of 2 million inhabitants, with adjacent settlements, although administratively it belonged to neighbouring regions, becoming part of its economic hinterland. By then, a number of communes located in Bucharest's rural-urban fringe grew, exceeding by far the demographic size of a common rural settlement. Communes such as Voluntari, Pantelimon, Popeşti-Leordeni and Chitila grew to have over 10,000 inhabitants, a fact that allowed some of them to be declared towns in recent years, thus changing to some degree the administrative organisation of the rural-urban fringe.

A larger time perspective shows that the development of the larger metropolitan area (including the current rural-urban fringe) is directly linked to the development of Bucharest city (Fig. 6.4). Hence, by the beginning of the 1960s, as a result of the rapid industrialisation process, the metropolitan area experienced a demographic growth on a pace similar to the capital city. Subsequently, as a result of a policy of preventing migration to big cities in the 1980s, the population growth rate declined in both zones. Yet, since the early 1990s, the trend has changed into two different directions, indicating changes in the migration flow to the metropolitan area. This flow has been affected by an increasing number of migrants leaving Bucharest city to settle in its rural-urban fringe.

From a spatial perspective, this is an unbalanced process (Fig. 6.5). The migration between the city and its rural-urban fringe is subject to various factors, of which



**Fig. 6.4** Migration growth rates (%) in Bucharest metropolitan area, 1966–2002  
 Source: National Institute of Statistics



**Fig. 6.5** Migration growth rates (%) in Bucharest metropolitan area, 1990–2008  
 Source: National Institute of Statistics

the settlement distance from the capital city and the degree of accessibility ranked high. Thus, settlements within the belt located closer to Bucharest are characterised by higher migration growth rates and have experienced a rapid population growth compared with those located further out. This pattern has been supported by the presence of major connecting roads and railway lines that enable population growth even in more distant villages. A good example is the communes located to the north of the capital. By comparison, the settlements in the south of Bucharest, particularly those further out from the city, have experienced negative population growth due to a relatively poor accessibility. The differences between the areas to the north and south of the metropolitan perimeter can be also explained by the fact that they are in the vicinity of regions characterised by different economic development potentials. Whilst the northern zone is on the main road linking to the more economically developed Prahova valley, the southern zone serves as a link to a less developed and less attractive peripheral area, the Giurgiu county.

## 6.6 Voluntari and Brăneşti – Two Case Studies

The settlements discussed in this section are considered two typical case studies of the rural-urban fringe which may be regarded as a transition zone where urban and rural land uses mix and often clash. This area expresses metropolitan expansion, which has occurred as a result of two opposite flows: rural people moving off the farms and residents of the densely urbanised areas shifting to the surrounding rural belt. Economic growth and preferences for housing and lifestyles, enabled by available transportation and communications technologies, prompt new housing development and new land-use patterns (Clouser, 2005). The landscape of this specific belt is the product of the interaction of urban and rural land uses. The form of interaction between the urban economy and the rural space, and the resulting changes in land use, are the end results of various forces that drive farmers, urban dwellers, homeowners and institutions (Heimlich & Anderson, 2001). Mechanisms contributing to the urbanisation of this belt include, among others, increased population mobility, changing location advantages of the fringe rural communities, differences in costs of land, changes in the desired lifestyle, housing availability, employment opportunities locally and in the surrounding area and public policy. The major resulting processes that have shaped the rural-urban fringe include: the declining role of farming and its derived income; the loss of prime agricultural land; the diversification of the economic base; the changing nature of rural communities and their socio-demographic structure due to in- and out-migration; increasing social inequalities between the farmers and higher income newcomers; the appearance of environmental issues and nuisances unknown before; and even increasing income gap inside and between communities (Sofer & Applebaum, 2006). Altogether, the in-migration of population into this belt has had a significant impact on the rural (now ex-rural) communities in economic, social, cultural and physical terms.

Located in the north-eastern part of the capital city (Fig. 6.5), no further than 8 km from the capital, the town of Voluntari has for long time been under Bucharest's influence. This fact enabled a hasty and continuous development process compared to Brănești commune, which is further out (18 km), to the east. Both settlements are characterised by a picturesque environment with numerous lakes and well-known forests, elements that always attracted the inhabitants of the big city. Beside, the short distances and the good links offered by major roads and railway lines provided developmental infrastructure for the two settlements.

From the administrative point of view, the two settlements are located in Ilfov county<sup>4</sup> and consist of two or more units. The town of Voluntari contains two residential districts, which were former villages of the commune, Voluntari and Pipera, and Brănești has four villages, Pasărea, Izlaz, Vadu Anei and Brănești, the last being the largest one. The two settlements (town and commune) are spread over relatively large area: Voluntari over 3740 ha, and Brănești over 5326 ha. Their land-use structures differ by their relative shares: in Voluntari, the residential area, the agricultural area and the forests have almost equal shares (35, 35, and 30%, respectively), whilst in the commune of Brănești, the agricultural land covers 63% of the territory, the woods cover 24%, and the built-up area only 13%. These differences indicate the major functions of each settlement. Voluntari developed mainly as a residential and commercial settlement compared to Brănești, which remained up to now a dominantly agricultural settlement.

In terms of population size and density, Voluntari is much larger (30,484 inhabitants) and densely populated (815 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>). It was officially declared a town in 2004, but before turning into a town, it was considered the largest rural commune in Romania. By comparison, the commune of Brănești, with 8176 inhabitants, is less densely populated (153 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>), though it is one of the biggest rural settlements in Romania (2007).<sup>5</sup>

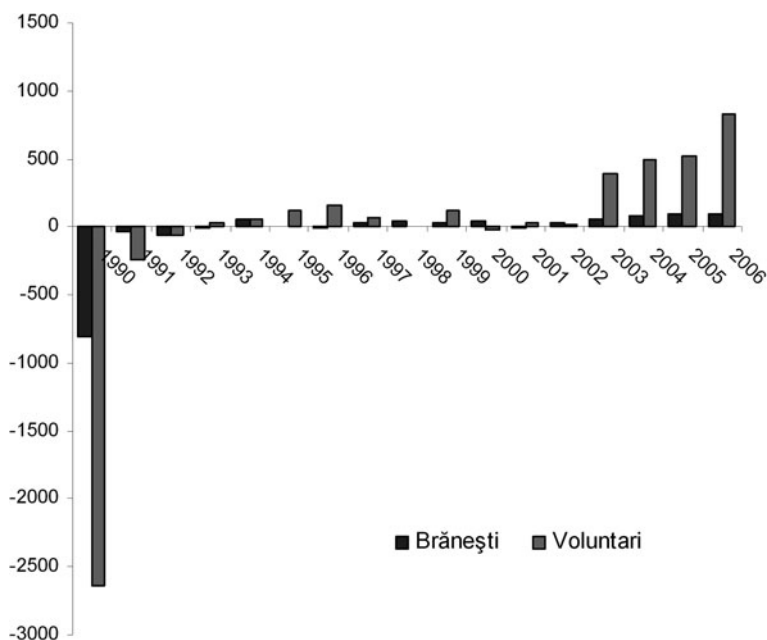
The present pattern of change in both settlements is determined mainly by the migration flow and its rate. Being located much closer to Bucharest, better accessible, relatively far less densely built, offering lower land and rent prices compared to those in the city and having a status of commercial settlement, Voluntari has been an attractive destination for migrants for a long time. People migrating from different regions of the country in search of employment in Bucharest considered the then-commune a "sleeping settlement". By comparison, considered a relatively less accessible commune, Brănești has attracted fewer migrants and has maintained its agricultural functions even today.

Taking into consideration the changes in the migration rates, we can observe in both localities three distinct stages of development. In the first 3 years after 1989, a period when the former Communist state policy of preventing migration (and therefore residential change) to the big cities was abolished, the two settlements lost population as a significant number of people moved out to Bucharest (Fig. 6.6).

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<sup>4</sup> Ilfov county is the NUTS 3 unit organised around Bucharest city.

<sup>5</sup> Data source: National Institute of Statistics.



**Fig. 6.6** Net migration rates: Voluntari and Brănești

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The second stage, the next 10 years, was a period of economic transition and slow growth associated with low incomes, and is characterised by low positive migration rates. The third stage, since 2002, has shown a significant change. As a result of accelerated economic growth, an increasing number of city dwellers shifted to the rural space, purchased land and constructed new houses, a trend expressed by significant growth in the migration rates (Fig. 6.6). Naturally, Voluntari is characterised by a larger number of out-migrants and in-migrants for most of the period since 1989.

Similar development trends can be seen by the changes in the land-use pattern expressed by the expansion of the built-up areas. There is a clear process of extension of the residential space into the agricultural land uses after 1990. A good example is Pipera residential district (a former village and today a residential quarter of Voluntari), which was developed adjacent to a forest reserve that offers natural amenities and has been considered a luxury area. It has been a tradition for well-off families to construct houses in this area and its current attractiveness brought about a spectacular development in the last 10 years. The presence of some natural and anthropic elements based on the local environment (forest, river, roads) transformed this village into a most coveted place for the newly wealthy people in the very beginning of the transition period. Consequently, today 50% of the residential buildings of Voluntari town are relatively new, whilst in the commune of Brănești the number is about 30%, the rest of them dating from the 1970s and 1980s.

## 6.7 Conclusion

The continuous process of post-Socialist transformation, which is reshaping and redefining the rural-urban fringe in Romania in general and in Bucharest in particular, raises reservations about an area's ability to retain its identity as a unique rural space and its future course. Several trends may already be discerned at this stage. Others can only be speculated upon.

First, it is clear that the transition from dependence on farming to a more diversified economic base has changed the nature of this belt from a space of production to a space of mixed production and consumption. Besides a declining volume of agricultural products, the rural-urban fringe provides the urban areas with residential and commercial products, diversified non-agricultural activities and leisure facilities. The newly shaped belt is also spreading into the labour markets by becoming an integral part of the urban employment field, supplying labour inputs to urban areas and local employment opportunities for urban dwellers. There is a clear penetration of urban-type elements to the former rural landscape, which increases its appeal to in-migrants.

Second, the current internal migration trend is generally similar to those encountered in other advanced economies. The differences are linked to a number of new mechanisms; the major ones are freedom of movement, inside and outside Romania, and the new economic conditions translated into a higher economic ability of the population. In addition, the search for better living conditions under the influence of living standards introduced from abroad, and sometimes the longing for the idyllic rural life, are also main motivators, among many others, for higher migration rates experienced by the metropolitan rural-urban fringes.

Third, the increase in the migration rates experienced by the rural-urban fringe is only one face of the changes in the migration pattern, as the directions of the population flows have also changed. In the past, the migrants to the rural-urban fringe originated from the smaller urban settlements and villages in the vicinity or further out of the metropolitan zone. At present, the urban-rural flow of people from the inner parts of the metropolitan area is a dominant flow, where the upper and middle class of urban dwellers is in search of new life idylls and enhanced amenities that are available at the fringe.

Fourth, there is an increasing heterogeneity within the rural-urban fringe in economic and social terms. This belt is no longer dominated by the agricultural population but comprises a mixture of different interest groups, such as active farmers, part-timers who practice pluriactivity and particularly new non-farming residents. The in-migration of newcomers is also changing the power structure by weakening the position of farmers and their control over the use of land. Another type of pressure on the land comes from development interest groups, which include among their ranks both external urban groups and internal groups of farm owners, all of whom wish to re-designate farm land for residential, industrial or commercial uses. Another interest is represented by the environmental protection groups, which might be concerned by the penetration of new activities and derived environmental

nuisances into the rural space. All these groups contest the control of the rural-urban fringe resources.

There are indications that this heterogeneity also is leading to growing internal inequalities across this belt, but there is very little hard data to show the scope and nature of this phenomenon. The increasing tendency of uneven development may be deduced from an analysis of the employment structure and the shape of the residential landscape. It may be assumed that in many cases farmers' non-farm income serves to reduce inequality but this has not yet been proven by hard data, and requires further research.

The overall transformation leads to a general process of counter-urbanisation combined with rural gentrification, which was unknown in Romania before 1990. There is also the permanent and sometimes total change of the rural settlements confronted with it. The new landscape reflects the social and economic transformation seen in other parts of the rural space. The different social structure is translated in modified residential land-use and its related demand for goods and services that induced the development of new functions. Consequently, urban life patterns are cascading further out and reshaping the rural-urban fringe and even further belts.

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