

MANAGEMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS: DEFINING FACTORS AND STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The structural and socio-demographic transformations of the Romanian rural space, accentuated by complex phenomena such as rural-urban migration, demographic ageing, persistent economic disparities, and unequal access to resources, necessitate a profound reevaluation of traditional paradigms of community development. This requires a reconsideration of traditional models of local development. In this context, community development management transcends its traditional administrative and punctual character goes beyond traditional administrative and punctual approaches, requiring a strategic, integrated, and participatory approach focused on the sustainable valorization of local resources and the strengthening of social cohesion. This study aims to provide a theoretical and practical analysis of the defining factors shaping rural communities, considering both traditional and emerging elements, and exploring their role in the dynamics of local development. The stages of rural economic development are identified, and the necessity of adopting a managerial approach based on principles such as active community participation, authentic local leadership, decision-making transparency, and multidimensional sustainability is argued. The research adopts a mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative analysis), identifying the stages of rural economic development and arguing for a managerial approach based on active participation, authentic local leadership, transparent decision-making, and multidimensional sustainability. The study contributes to consolidating a robust conceptual and operational framework intended to guide the formulation and implementation of public policies and intervention strategies in rural environments, with the fundamental objective of promoting resilient, adaptable, and development-oriented communities. This approach aims to provide a clear conceptual and operational framework to support public policies and interventions, promoting resilient, adaptable, and sustainably oriented rural communities.

Keywords

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sustainable rural development, community management, active community participation, Local leadership, rural–urban migration, socio-demographic change

JEL Classification

R11, O18, Q01, H70, D70

Introduction

The Romanian rural space is currently undergoing an extensive process of structural and socio-demographic transformation, driven by factors such as rural-to-urban migration, population ageing, persistent economic disparities, and unequal access to basic opportunities and services. These transformations affect not only the economic dimension but also social cohesion, human capital, and local innovation potential. These profound changes generate significant challenges for rural communities and necessitate a fundamental rethinking of traditional models of local development (Lowe & Ward, 2020; Eurostat, 2023).

The specialised literature indicates a shift from punctual, predominantly administrative interventions toward strategic, integrated, and participatory approaches, where the community plays a central role in decision-making processes. Within this emerging paradigm, the emphasis is placed on the sustainable use of local resources, the strengthening of social capital, and the development of leadership adapted to the specific characteristics of each community, capable of mobilising local actors and supporting innovative rural development projects (Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021). Increasingly, attention is directed toward sustainable valorization of local potential, consolidation of social cohesion, and promotion of authentic leadership tailored to each community's specific needs (Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021; Lowe & Ward, 2020).

Sustainable development of the rural environment has become a priority at both national and European levels, being integrated into strategic policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the United Nations 2030 Agenda. This integration of policies at the European and national levels reflects the concern for reducing inequalities, combating poverty, and promoting social inclusion, objectives that directly depend on rural communities' ability to organize effectively, utilize local resources, and adapt rapidly to demographic and economic changes (Blanco & Alberti, 2018; UN, 2015).

Nevertheless, the reality on the ground often reveals deficits in administrative capacity, low civic participation, and a lack of coherent strategic vision at the local level. These structural deficiencies significantly reduce the ability of communities to implement innovative and sustainable solutions, highlighting the need for integrated interventions grounded in both managerial and policy perspectives (World Bank, 2021). These dysfunctions considerably limit communities' capacity to formulate and implement innovative, sustainable, and inclusive solutions.

In this context, a key research gap emerges, namely the lack of integrated managerial frameworks that combine socio-demographic analysis, economic development stages, and participatory governance mechanisms in a coherent and applicable manner for rural

communities. Addressing this gap is essential to improving both the design and implementation of rural development policies.

The present paper aims not only to analyse the defining factors shaping the current dynamics of rural communities in Romania, but also to operationalise these factors within a managerial perspective.

Specifically, the study pursues the following objectives:

- to identify the key socio-demographic and economic factors influencing rural community development;
- to examine the stages of rural economic development in the Romanian context;
- to assess the role of participatory management, local leadership, and decision-making transparency in enhancing community resilience and multidimensional sustainability.

By adopting a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study seeks to highlight the relationship between social structures, economic dynamics, and managerial interventions in rural development.

The article is structured into four main sections: the first section reviews the specialised literature, the second outlines the research methodology, the third presents and discusses the empirical results, and the final section formulates conclusions and policy-oriented recommendations for sustainable rural development. This clear structure aims to provide logical continuity between the theoretical context, empirical analysis, and practical recommendations, thereby facilitating understanding of the complex challenges facing Romanian rural areas.

1. Review of the scientific literature

The complex transformations of the Romanian rural space have been intensely analyzed in the specialized literature, highlighting the impact of socio-economic and demographic factors that shape the dynamics of rural communities and influence the process of sustainable development.

1.1. Structural and demographic transformations in the rural environment

The Romanian rural space is characterized by demographic phenomena such as rural-to-urban migration and population ageing, which have profound effects on the social and economic balance of communities. According to Popescu (2022), the migration of young people to cities or abroad leads to a decrease in the active population, affecting the communities' capacity to sustain their local development. This trend is confirmed by data provided by Eurostat (2023), which indicates a continuous reduction in the young rural population in Romania, in line with general trends in Central and Eastern Europe.

At the same time, demographic ageing is an accentuated phenomenon, with a negative impact on the local service system and, in the long term, on the labor force available for agricultural and non-agricultural activities (Lowe and Ward, 2020). These changes contribute to the economic decline of many rural communities and require strategic adaptations to ensure their sustainability.

1.2. Economic disparities and access to resources

Economic disparities between the rural and urban environments remain a major challenge. Studies conducted by Gavrilă and Drăghicescu (2021) reveal that limited access to infrastructure, education, and health services restricts opportunities for

economic and social development in rural areas. Average incomes in the rural environment are significantly lower than urban ones, and the standard of living reflects these inequalities.

Furthermore, limited access to funding and external resources, including European funds, affects the capacity of communities to implement sustainable development projects (World Bank, 2021). This often leads to a lack of economic diversification, maintaining dependence on traditional agriculture with low productivity (Blanco and Alberti, 2018).

1.3. Models of community development and rural management

Recent literature shows a significant shift in how rural development is approached, moving from punctual and centralized interventions to participatory and strategic models (Smith and Johnson, 2017).

Rural Community Development Management (CDM) thus becomes an essential component for the success of the development process, promoting active citizen involvement and authentic local leadership (Gavrilă and Drăghicescu, 2021).

Modern approaches support integrated planning, which capitalizes on local resources and stimulates social cohesion – essential aspects for increasing the resilience of rural communities in the face of economic and social challenges (Ilie and Vlăsceanu, 2019). These models involve close collaboration between local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and citizens.

1.4. Sustainable development and community participation

Sustainability, as a fundamental principle, has been increasingly integrated into European policies on rural development, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the United Nations 2030 Agenda (Blanco and Alberti, 2018; World Bank, 2021).

Sustainable development implies a balance between the economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and its success largely depends on the active involvement of the community in decision-making processes.

Community participation increases transparency and accountability in resource management, contributing to the creation of a climate favorable to innovation and adaptability (Ilie and Vlăsceanu, 2019). Likewise, authentic local leadership plays a central role in mobilizing resources and consolidating the strategic vision of rural communities.

2. Research methodology

To address the objectives proposed in this paper, a comprehensive, mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative analysis of statistical data with qualitative assessment of management practices and models in Romanian rural communities. This approach ensures a holistic understanding of the structural and socio-demographic transformations affecting rural areas and evaluates managerial responses aimed at fostering sustainable development (Eurostat, 2023; INS, 2024; Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021).

2.1. Data Sources

For the quantitative analysis, official, up-to-date, and validated data were used, drawn from the following databases and reports:

- Eurostat (2023) – provides comprehensive statistical data on rural population, rural-to-urban migration, demographic composition, employment and unemployment rates, and socio-economic indicators at regional and national levels. Eurostat enables a comparative analysis of Romania within the European context, emphasizing specific trends, challenges, and positions of rural areas.
- National Institute of Statistics (INS, 2024) – provides detailed and updated data by county and commune regarding economic structure, educational level, access to health services and infrastructure, living conditions, and income level. INS also offers insights into civic engagement, including the participation of the rural population in local decision-making and community initiatives.
- World Bank (2021) – thematic reports on rural development, economic diversification, and the effects of public policies in Central and Eastern Europe, including Romania. These reports provide insights into the macroeconomic context and help identify best practices and strategies implemented at the regional level.
- Academic literature and public policy documents – theoretical and practical sources that complement statistical data, offering robust conceptual frameworks for interpreting results and supporting recommendations (Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021; Blanco & Alberti, 2018; Popescu, 2022).

2.2. Applied Research Methods

- Descriptive Quantitative Analysis – statistical data were systematically analyzed to describe the demographic, social, and economic trends in the Romanian rural space, employing key indicators such as active population, migration rates, rural unemployment, income levels, and access to public services. This approach facilitates an objective assessment of rural realities and the identification of principal developmental challenges (Eurostat, 2023; INS, 2024).
- Regional Comparative Analysis – data were disaggregated by regions and counties to emphasize differences and similarities across rural communities, thereby identifying areas with development potential or experiencing decline. This method enables a nuanced understanding and supports the adaptation of development strategies to local contexts (World Bank, 2021)
- Qualitative Analysis – through a critical review of specialized literature, public policy reports, and documented case studies, key managerial models and sustainable development strategies implemented in rural communities were identified. This analysis allowed the extraction of essential principles of participatory and sustainable management, which inform the formulation of evidence-based recommendations (Ilie & Vlăsceanu, 2019; Smith & Johnson, 2017; Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021).

2.3. Tools Used in Data Processing

Statistical processing and data analysis were performed using specialized software such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel, which enabled the generation of detailed tables, diagrams, and graphs to ensure a clear and comprehensive presentation of the results (INS, 2024; Eurostat, 2023). For the qualitative data interpretation and the integration of statistical results into the theoretical context, the thematic analysis method was used, providing a coherent connection between empirical evidence and the conceptual perspectives derived from the specialized literature (Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021; Blanco & Alberti, 2018). To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, rigorous procedures for cross-checking data and comparing multiple sources were applied to enhance the validity and reliability of the analysis, minimising the risk of errors or subjective interpretation, and supporting a reproducible and scientifically robust study of the socio-demographic and managerial dynamics in Romanian rural communities (Popescu, 2022; World Bank, 2021).

2.4. Methodological Limitations

- Certain statistical datasets may suffer from a temporal lag (e.g., 2022 being the most recent for some indicators), potentially limiting the full contemporaneity and applicability of the analysis to the current rural context (INS, 2024; Eurostat, 2023).
- Restricted access to granular data on active citizen participation and local leadership constrains the possibility of conducting a fully exhaustive micro-level analysis, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of conclusions regarding community dynamics (Gavrilă & Drăghicescu, 2021; Popescu, 2022).
- The reliability of qualitative findings is inherently linked to the availability and quality of specialised literature and institutional reports, which may vary across regions and thematic domains, introducing potential variability in interpretive insights (Blanco & Alberti, 2018; World Bank, 2021).

3. Results and discussions

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data highlights a series of major trends and challenges that characterise the Romanian rural space in recent years, confirming observations from the specialised literature and emphasising the critical importance of strategic and integrated interventions.

3.1. Demographic and socio-economic trends

According to data provided by Eurostat (2023) and INS (2024), the population in Romania's rural environment has recorded a downward trend, decreasing from approximately 8.4 million in 2018 to about 8.2 million in 2022. This decrease is associated with an increase in migration from villages to cities, reaching 3.9% in 2022, a phenomenon indicating the departure of youth and the labor force to urban areas or abroad (Popescu, 2022). This demographic dynamic has negative effects on the social and economic balance of rural communities, accentuating the phenomenon of population ageing and reducing local development capacity (Lowe and Ward, 2020).

In the analyzed interval, the unemployment rate in the rural environment recorded fluctuations, peaking at 7.5% in 2021, followed by a slight decrease to 7.2% in 2022 (INS, 2024). These figures reflect a vulnerable economic situation, especially in less developed regions, where access to resources and economic opportunities remains restricted (Gavrilă and Drăghicescu, 2021).

Olt County, part of the South-West Oltenia region, has a predominantly rural population, with approximately 70% of inhabitants living in the rural environment (INS, 2023). Between 2015 and 2023, the county experienced a significant demographic decline, mainly caused by migration to cities and outside the country, as well as the accentuated ageing of the population. According to INS data, the population of Olt County decreased from approximately 430,000 inhabitants in 2015 to about 390,000 in 2023, of which around 270,000 live in the rural environment. In 2022, the birth rate was low, at 8.2‰, and the mortality rate was high, at 13.5‰, which generated a negative natural balance (INS, 2023).

Rural-to-urban migration particularly affects the young population, causing a demographic imbalance with direct effects on the available labor force and the sustainability of rural communities. Eurostat data indicate a reduction in the young population under 35 by approximately 15% in the last 8 years in the South-West Oltenia region, which includes Olt County (Eurostat, 2024).

3.2. Economic disparities and access to resources

According to data provided by Eurostat (2023) and INS (2024), the population in Romania's rural environment has exhibited a downward trend, decreasing from approximately 8.4 million in 2018 to about 8.2 million in 2022. This decline is closely linked to an increase in migration from villages to cities, reaching 3.9% in 2022, a phenomenon reflecting the departure of youth and the labor force to urban areas or abroad (Popescu, 2022). This demographic dynamic has adverse implications for the social and economic balance of rural communities, accentuating population aging and diminishing local development capacity (Lowe and Ward, 2020).

During the analyzed period, the unemployment rate in rural areas fluctuated, peaking at 7.5% in 2021, followed by a slight decrease to 7.2% in 2022 (INS, 2024). These figures underscore a vulnerable economic situation, particularly in less developed regions, where access to resources and economic opportunities remains limited (Gavrilă and Drăghicescu, 2021).

Olt County, part of the South-West Oltenia region, retains a predominantly rural population, with approximately 70% of inhabitants living in rural areas (INS, 2023). Between 2015 and 2023, the county experienced a significant demographic decline, primarily caused by migration to cities and abroad, alongside accentuated population aging. According to INS data, the population of Olt County decreased from approximately 430,000 inhabitants in 2015 to about 390,000 in 2023, of which around 270,000 reside in rural areas. In 2022, the birth rate was low, at 8.2‰, and the mortality rate was high, at 13.5‰, resulting in a negative natural balance (INS, 2023).

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population under 35 by approximately 15% over the last 8 years in the South-West Oltenia region, which includes Olt County (Eurostat, 2024).

3.3. Management and community development models

The research results underscore the essential role of participatory community development management in fostering social cohesion and enhancing the resilience of rural communities. Case studies and qualitative analyses demonstrate that active citizen involvement in decision-making processes, authentic local leadership, and effective collaboration among local stakeholders constitute critical determinants for the successful implementation of sustainable development projects (Smith & Johnson, 2017; Ilie & Vlăsceanu, 2019).

Consequently, integrated and participatory approaches facilitate the strategic capitalization of local resources, encourage innovation, and enable adaptation to complex economic and social challenges, which is paramount for promoting sustainable rural development.

3.4. Case Study: Optași-Măgura Commune, Olt County

Optași-Măgura Commune has a population of approximately 3,800 inhabitants (INS, 2023), predominantly rural, and represents one of the localities with a distinctly agricultural profile in the county. Agriculture constitutes the primary source of income, and a significant number of households engage in subsistence farming.

Identified Challenges

- **High migration:** A population decrease of approximately 12% was recorded between 2015 and 2023, primarily due to the migration of young people to urban areas or abroad (INS, 2023).
- **Population aging:** The proportion of inhabitants over 60 years old increased to 28% (Eurostat, 2024), placing additional pressure on local social services.
- **Limited infrastructure:** Only 60% of households have access to the sewage network, and the paved road network remains insufficient, hindering access to markets and essential services
- **Limited economic diversification:** The local economy is almost entirely dependent on agriculture, with minimal development of non-agricultural sectors, which restricts sustainable socio-economic growth.

Local Strategies and Initiatives

- **Modernization of rural infrastructure** through the use of European funds (PNDR) for road paving and the expansion of utility networks.
- **Professional training programs** targeting young residents to develop skills in modern agriculture and rural entrepreneurship.
- **Promotion of rural tourism and local traditional products**, aiming to diversify household incomes and stimulate local economic activity
- **Enhanced community participation** in local governance through the organization of public consultations and initiatives that encourage active citizen engagement in decision-making.

Preliminary Results

- A 15% increase in access to essential infrastructure over the last five years, reflecting the impact of targeted development projects.
- Partial stabilization of the migration rate, achieved through the creation of local economic and educational opportunities.
- Growth and diversification of small agricultural and agri-food enterprises, facilitated and supported by the local administration's initiatives.

Table no.1. Evolution of the rural population and the rural-to-urban migration rate in Romania (2018-2022)

Indicator	UM	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 VS 2018 (%)
The rural population	thousand	8.400	8.350	8.300	8.250	8.200	97,6
The rural-to-urban migration rate	%	3,2	3,4	3,5	3,7	3,9	121,9
The rural unemployment rate	%	6,5	6,3	7	7,5	7,2	110,8
Average monthly income (RON)		1.800	1.850	1.900	1.950	2000	111,1

Source: Ins,2024; Eurostat,2023;World Bank,2021

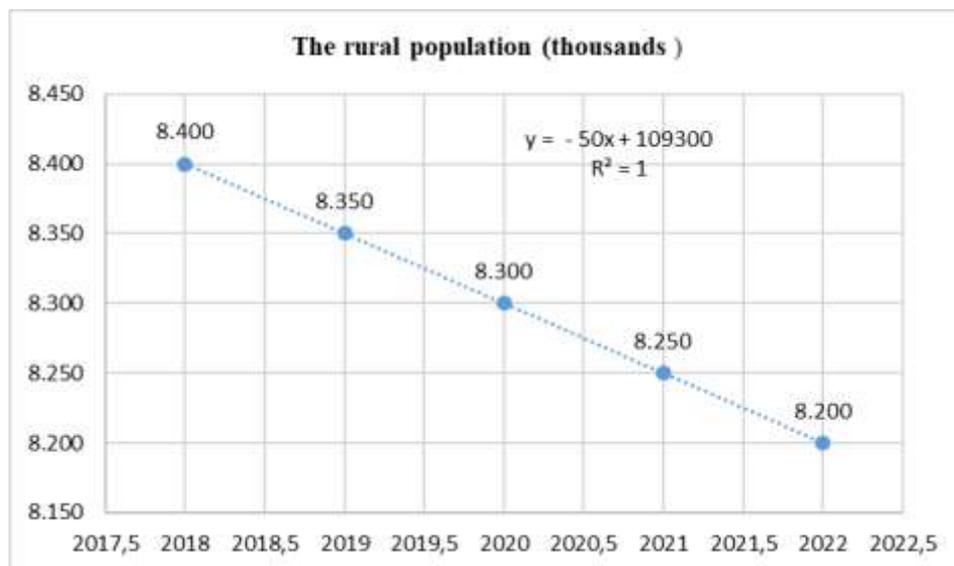


Figure no. 1: The rural population

Source: Eurostat,2023; Ins,2024

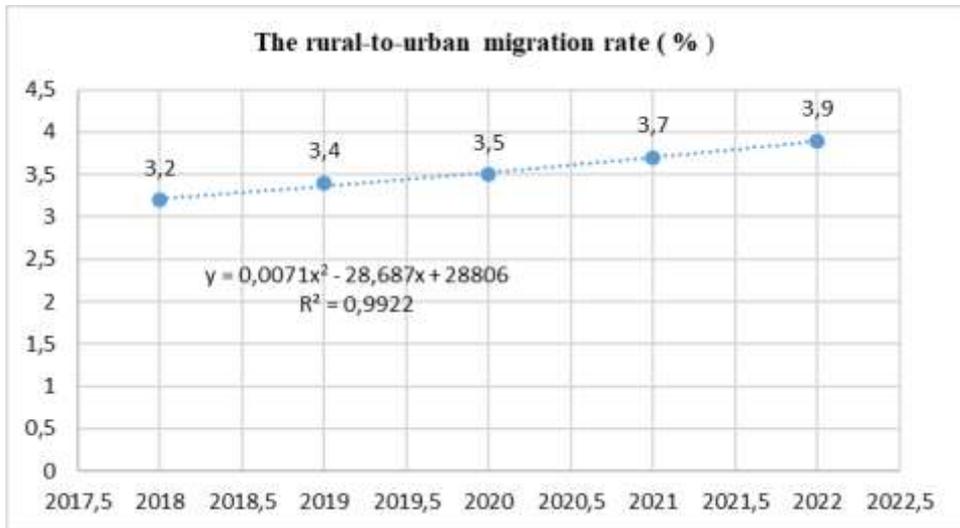


Figure no. 2: The rural-to-urban migration rate (%)

Source: Eurostat,2023; Ins,2024

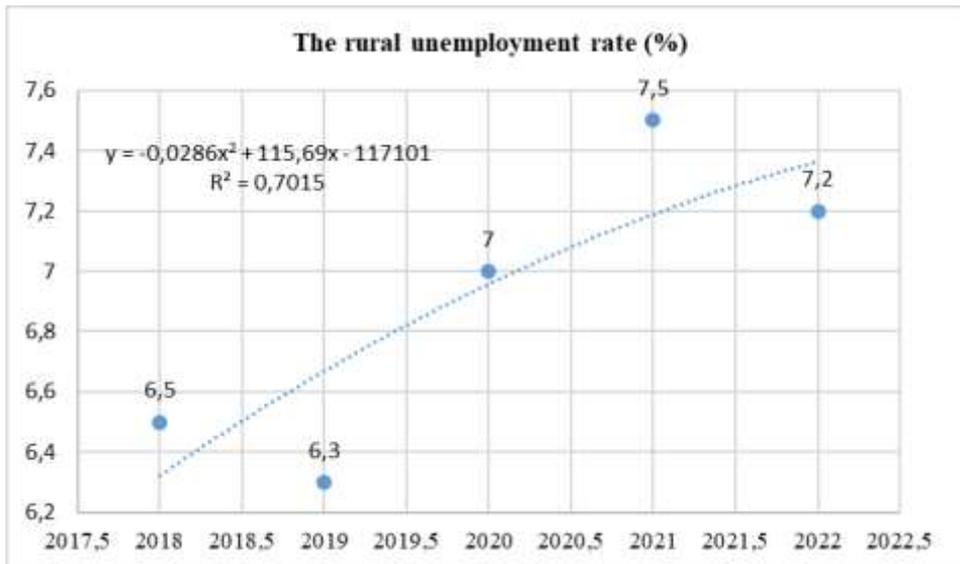


Figure no. 3: The rural unemployment rate (%)

Source: Eurostat,2023; Ins,2024

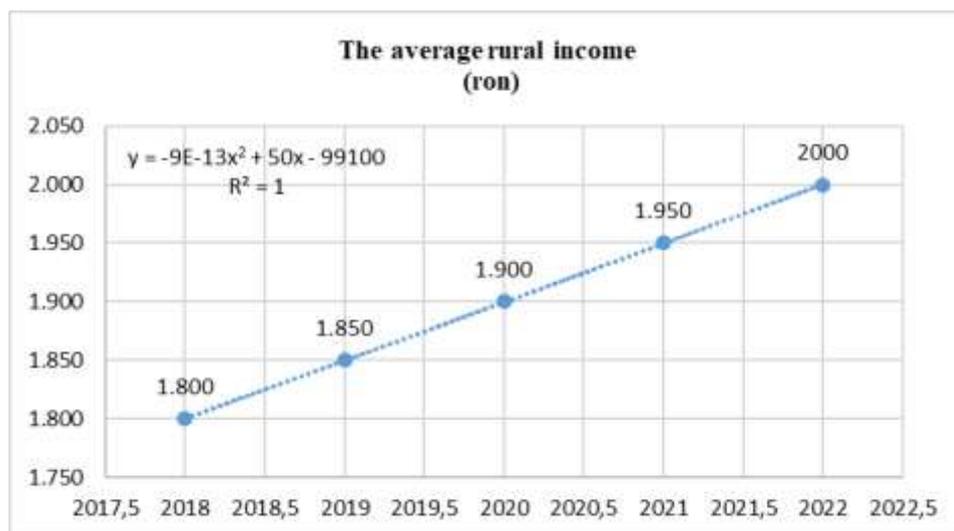


Figure no. 4: Average monthly income

Source: Ins,2024; World Bank, 2021

The charts below illustrate the dynamics of the four key indicators, each with its regression equation, which models the general trend.

These equations offer a prediction of the evolution of the indicators based on historical data, where the independent variable (x) represents time (the year or temporal unit).

1. Evolution of the Rural Population (thousands)

$$y = -50x + 109300$$

An ideal R^2 of 1 shows a **constant and predictable decrease** in the rural population. The slope coefficient (-50) indicates that, on average, the rural population of Romania decreases by **50 thousand inhabitants each year** ($50x$ where x is the year or the time variable). This trend confirms the cumulative impact of migration and the negative natural growth rate and represents a major challenge for long-term sustainability.

2. Evolution of the Rural-to-Urban Migration Rate (%)

$$y = 0.0071x^2 - 28.687x + 28806$$

Although the equation is polynomial, the general positive slope indicates an **acceleration of the migration rate**. The increase from 3.2% to 3.9% in 5 years shows that the opportunity gaps are not diminishing, and migration rates are increasing. The $R^2=0.9922$ model indicates an **excellent fit** of the data to the growth model, suggesting that, if structural policies are not implemented, migration will continue to increase.

3. Evolution of the Rural Unemployment Rate (%)

$$y = -0.0286x^2 + 115.69x - 117101$$

This equation (with a lower R^2 of 0.7015, indicating greater data variability) describes a curve with a slight tendency to increase followed by a plateau/decrease, consistent with

the economic cycle. The peak of 7.5% in 2021 can be associated with post-pandemic economic uncertainties. In the short term, the model suggests that unemployment is less stable and more sensitive to external shocks, but fluctuates around a relatively constant average, indicating a structural vulnerability, not necessarily an acute crisis.

4. Evolution of the Average Monthly Income (lei)

$$y=50x-99100$$

The linear model (with an ideal R2 of 1) shows a **perfect and constant linear increase** in the average income. The slope coefficient (50) suggests that the average monthly income in the rural environment **grows by 50 ron each year** during the analyzed period. Although this is a positive increase, the model indicates that this pace (50 ron/year) is **not rapid enough to offset inflation** or to reduce the major disparities compared to the urban environment, which explains why the Migration Rate continues to rise (see the much steeper slope of migration growth).

Table no. 2. The main socio-economic indicators for Optași-Măgura commune

Indicator	UM	2015	2023	2023 vs 2015 (%)
Total population	thousand	4.300	3.780	87,9
Share of people over 60 years old	%	20%	28%	140,0
Access to sewage system	%	45%	60%	133,3
Paved roads	%	40%	60%	150,0
Number of small agricultural businesses	no	120	150	125,0

Source: Ins,2023;Eurostat,2024;National Trade Register Office(ONRC),2024

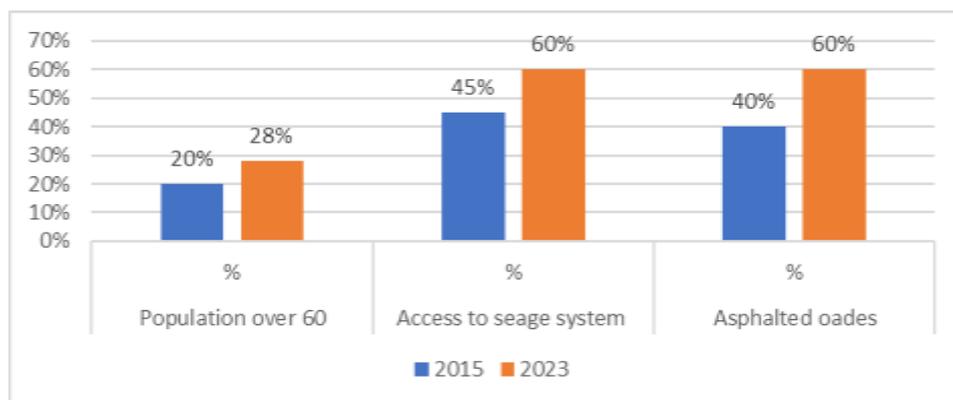


Figure no. 5: Socio-Economic Evolution of Optasi-Magura Commune (2015-2023)

Source: Ins, 2023; Eurostat, 2024; Trade Register Office (ONRC), 2024; Optasi-Magura Town Hall, 2024

The case study of Optași-Măgura commune highlights the gap between local efforts and the structural demographic forces:

- **Impact of Age and Migration:** The commune experienced a population loss of approximately 12.1%, while the proportion of elderly people (over 60 years old) rose by 40% (from 20% to 28%). This demographic shift represents a crisis of human capital that cannot be addressed solely through infrastructure improvements like road paving.
- **Managerial Successes:** The local administration made notable progress in modernization efforts, such as improving access to the sewage system (a 33% increase) and expanding the paved road network (a 50% increase).
- **Management Conclusion:** Despite successful infrastructure initiatives, these improvements were insufficient to reverse the negative demographic trends. This underscores the need for a more comprehensive managerial approach that not only addresses "hard" infrastructure (such as roads and utilities) but also focuses on "soft" infrastructure, including education, healthcare, and the development of non-agricultural employment opportunities, to combat the ongoing youth exodus.

4. Conclusions

The structural and socio-demographic transformations in the rural environment of Olt County, exemplified by the case of Optași-Măgura commune, highlight the major challenges faced by rural communities in Romania: pronounced migration, population aging, limited access to infrastructure, and high economic dependence on agriculture, all of which significantly constrain the potential for sustainable development.

Main conclusions of the study:

- Demographic decline and aging are exerting increasing pressure on local social and economic services, requiring tailored policies to support the elderly and maintain a balanced demographic structure.
- Underdeveloped infrastructure continues to be a major barrier to accessing markets, public services, and achieving a decent standard of living. Continued investment, especially in utility networks and transport infrastructure, is essential.
- Community participation and local leadership are crucial to the success of rural development initiatives. Encouraging active citizen engagement in decision-making can drive innovation and strengthen community capacity.
- Economic diversification should be prioritized to reduce dependency on agriculture, fostering modern farming practices, rural entrepreneurship, and sustainable tourism.

Theoretical Implications: This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural challenges rural communities face in Romania. Future research could build on these findings by exploring the impact of migration and aging on rural economies and the effectiveness of participatory development models in addressing these issues.

Practical Implications: Local authorities must adopt more holistic strategies for rural development that address infrastructure needs while also fostering economic diversification and strengthening local human capital. Educational and healthcare investments, as well as support for rural entrepreneurship, are essential for creating sustainable rural futures.

Directions for Future Research: Future studies should focus on the economic and social factors influencing youth migration from rural areas, and the effects of this on local economic regeneration. Additionally, examining the post-pandemic impact on rural economies, both in Romania and across Europe, would be an important area for further research

Recommendations for future policies and interventions:

- **Consolidation of rural infrastructure development**, including the use of European and national funds for modernization of utilities (water, sewage, electricity, digitalization) and transport infrastructure.
- **Implementation of strategies to diversify local economies**, encouraging rural entrepreneurship, modern agriculture, and sustainable rural tourism.
- **Strengthening local administrative capacity**, through continuous professional training, digitalization, and inter-institutional collaboration.
- **Promotion of public participation mechanisms**, including consultations, debates, and online platforms, to enhance citizen involvement and transparency in decision-making processes.
- **Development of tailored social policies**, supporting the elderly population while also focusing on strategies to retain and attract youth in rural areas.

- **Continuous monitoring of socio-economic indicators**, ensuring policies can be dynamically adjusted to current challenges and evaluate their long-term impact.

In conclusion, an integrated approach, centered on community involvement and sustainability, represents the key to revitalizing the Romanian rural space and ensuring a prosperous and equitable future for its inhabitants.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CDM – community development management

LD – local development

RRS – Romanian rural space

RUM – rural-urban migration

DA – demographic aging

EC – economy

PED – persistent economic disparities

CDI – community development intervention

RED – rural economic development