

SPACE DOSSIER. A BRIEF RADIOGRAPHY OF ROMANIANS LIVING IN ITALY

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Abstract: *This material presents some biological, cosmological, historical, psychological, cultural, and economic aspects related to the Romanian community in Italy, which numbered more than one million people at the beginning of 2024, according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics. The data were extracted from a larger space dossier that presents the state of the Romanian community in Italy and the state of the Italian community in Romania in a comparative manner. This article, however, is limited to presenting the method of data collection and analysis i.e., the space dossier and highlighting some of the most pressing issues facing Romanians in Italy. The spatial dossier is a research tool based on Dimitrie Gusti's law of sociological parallelism and is of national use: it helps researchers to collect, structure, analyze and present large masses of information in a comparative and synthetic manner, and it helps decision makers and interested actors to understand the specific problems faced by a community of interest.*

Keywords: *Romanians, Italy, Dimitrie Gusti, Dimitrie Gusti, space dossier, emigration*

1. Brief introduction

The Space Dossier is a new tool in the field of knowledge that was theorized by Radu Baltasiu, the director of the European Center for Ethnic Studies. Its applicability is particularly important, especially for Romanian communities outside Romania's borders, whether we are talking about the diaspora or historical communities. However, its usefulness for the country's ethnic minorities should not be neglected, as the inter-ethnic dynamics in Romania are constantly changing and are fundamentally influenced by the way in which the state negotiates the interests of its own citizens.

2. Method used–space dossier

2.1. Space dossier as an applied sociological knowledge method

The space dossier is a scientific tool aimed at the relationship between the Romanian state and the country's ethnic minorities, historical communities, and diaspora. The space dossier consists of the radiography of a space on its significant axes in relation to the interest of knowing the truth and governance. It is not only the main tool for rigorous data collection and analysis, but also for the synthetic presentation of a large mass of information, which lies at the interface between academic research, intelligence, and public administration. This tool is intended to assist politicians in their functional government administration. The problem is the link between research and governance. Last but not least, it represents how the world is seen from Bucharest. It is also a scientific process that provides the basis for national policies, can successfully guide negotiations with other countries, and sets out directions for national intervention and development (Baltasiu, 2023: 1).

2.2. Principles underlying the space dossier

The problem dossier proceeds on the basis of the three principles of systematic thinking, which is the starting point of any act of knowledge:

1. "Of fundamental, beginning, or doctrinal thought;
2. Of wholes, since at any moment of the analysis the integrity but also the individuality of the problem is respected;
3. Of continuity, which is part of the principle of identity, the link between today and yesterday, in the form of historical consciousness, which is the basic element of national consciousness.
4. These three principles 'spill over' into the fourth, the criterion of the civilized world, that of synthesis – which is the visible form of the problem dossier" (Baltasiu, 2023: 2).

2.3. Specifically, what purposes does it serve?

The problem dossier has three main purposes: the first is to know the surrounding states in terms of typology and level of functioning. The second aim is to identify the Romanian diaspora, historical

communities, and minorities in the country. The third approach is to map the internal components that make a country's development possible (Baltasiu, 2023: 1).

2.4. How useful is this knowledge tool?

Representing the description of a space of interest through problematization (Baltasiu, 2023: 4), the space dossier serves the public interest. It is a component of national sovereignty, vital especially today, because at the moment, we cannot speak of a Romanian state but of a state in Romania, which does not need its own knowledge because it has given up national politics (Baltasiu, 2023: 1).

2.5. Theoretical background

The theory that founded this method because it makes it possible to understand social logic is Dimitrie Gusti's law of sociological parallelism. The most accurate theory for the Romanian space in any Dossier can be found in the Gustian theory of frames and manifestations. It is the only theory that can cover all reality in real time. For Dimitrie Gusti, reality comprises frames and manifestations, and the relation between them is called "the law of sociological parallelism" (Baltasiu, 2023: 1). The manifestations are economic, spiritual, political, and legal, and the frames are cosmological, biological, psychological, and historical. Between these there is a complete parallelism: between frames, between manifestations, and between frames and manifestations (Gusti, 1934: 45-46).

3. Let's come back as the radiography of the Romanian community in Italy

3.1. However, some general facts about emigrating from Romania

Romania's emigration has become a major social and economic phenomenon with an upward trend. The remarkable size of the Romanian diaspora placed Romania fifth worldwide in 2019 (Pirtea, 2020). According to official data, 9.7 million people lived outside Romania's borders in 2019. Of these, 5.6 million were in the diaspora, i.e., about 58% (Radio Free Europe, 2019). Unofficially, the PMP MP Constantin Codreanu claimed as early as 2017 that the real number of Romanians living abroad exceeded 12 million (Codreanu, 2017). Italy, together with Spain, was one of the main countries to which Romanians emigrated. In 2019, 1,206,938 Romanians lived in Italy (Italian National Institute of Statistics, no year, a), indicating that out of the approximately 9.7 million people who left, 12.% were in Italy (Iriciuc, 2019).

3.2. How should this phenomenon be observed?

This phenomenon can be analyzed from multiple perspectives:

1. The size of the phenomenon (how many?): the number of Romanians who emigrated reached an unprecedented number in Romania's history: around 10 million people were living abroad in 2020.
2. The profile of those who emigrated (who?) corresponds to the following categories of people:
 - employability: the most affected segment being the 25-29 age group (Badea, 2018).
 - fertility: the people who emigrate the most are young and therefore most fertile. This led to the result that in 2016, more children were born in the diaspora than in Romania (Pastirnac, 2017). From the figures of children born to Romanian emigrants in countries such as Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it was estimated that at least 630,000 descendants were born abroad between 2000 and 2018. In short, in less than 20 years, more than half a million children were born abroad (Digi 24, 2019).
 - specialized: beyond the Romanians who emigrated in the first years after Romania's accession to the E.U. in 2007, working in services, industry, and construction in Italy, the last years have revealed a migration of specialized people, the so-called "brain-drain" phenomenon (Iacob-Bâra, 2018) (the main fields affected by this phenomenon are: IT, engineering, medicine). Romania has thus become a "machine" of specialized labor force, working for the economies of other countries. Between 1990 and 2017, Romania recorded the highest increase in the migrant population of all EU countries – 287% (The World Bank, 2018). The impulse of the migration phenomenon has been driven by significant changes, including in the profile of migrants, in terms of their level of education; therefore, the loss of human capital represented by highly skilled Romanians is already impacting key sectors of the Romanian economy (Iacob-Bâra, 2018: 53). Since the 2000s, Romania has been among the top 30 countries with the highest emigration of highly skilled individuals (Lăzărescu, Hamberger, Șerbănică and Prisacariu, 2017). This is also explained by/not only by the fact that the Romanian state does not benefit from the finality of the "investment" in Romanians' education, as they take all the added value of their labor to the destination country.

3. The soul dimension of the problem: when we talk about the phenomenon of emigration, a double fracture must be considered: on the one hand, the one felt by Romanians in the country, as a result of a poor quality of life: “After a certain age, you are no longer willing to wait. You want a qualitative change in your life as soon as possible. These changes involve good administrative services, equal opportunities before the law, i.e., less corruption, a cleaner business environment, free justice, efficient government, politicians who talk more about what they have done and less about the impotence of others. More action, less talking.” (Tapalaga, 2012); and, on the other hand, that of Romanians living abroad, which is caused by the phenomenon of labeling (individual or collective), which has direct implications on the decrease of self-esteem and implicitly on physical and/or mental health (“Italy syndrome”: statistics show that in Romania in 2018, 5% of admissions in psychiatric units in the country were women diagnosed with Italy syndrome. Psychiatrist Cozmin Mihai from the Institute of Psychiatry in Iași defined this syndrome as: “(...) a form of social depression that is primarily found in people who do not have a medical background, but who care for a long period of time for people with severe illness” (Tapalaga, 2012). We point out on this occasion that according to the data of the Italian National Institute for Social Protection, Romanians were the most numerous foreign caregivers (domestic workers) in Italy in 2024: approx. 123,000 Romanians (21.3% of all foreigners) worked in this field (Nuță-Stoica, 2024).

3.3. Radiography of a community using the Gustian theory of frames and manifestations

a. Biological framework

The Romanian community in Italy counts 1,206,938 members, representing 2% of Italy’s population (Italian National Institute of Statistics, no year, b), but the figure becomes significant when we look at the percentage of Romanians in the immigrant population: 23% (out of 5,255,503 immigrants) (Italian National Institute of Statistics, no year, c), Romanians becoming since 2003 the largest immigrant community in Italy (Belea, 2011).

As far as nuptiality is concerned, we observe an active dynamic of ethnic Romanians in Italy, because out of the total number of marriages concluded in 2018 (195,778) (ISTAT, no year, d), 18.6% are between an Italian and a foreign citizen, and 12.7% are couples formed by an Italian and a Romanian spouse (ISTAT, 2018), which means that about 70% of mixed marriages are concluded between a Romanian and an Italian.

In terms of birth rate, 144,983 Romanian citizens were born in Italy between 2007 and 2018, the equivalent of a city the size of Pitești (Stănculescu, 2019). We note that these figures are official, which explains why we expect the real figures to be higher than those presented. In 2018, 78% of children born in Italy had both Italian parents; however, in that year, the number of Italian children born was the lowest in the last 10 years. While the birth rate of Italians was falling, the percentage of children born to Romanian parents was on the rise, reaching 3%, making them the most fertile foreign population in Italy; followed by Moroccans 2.09% (9,193), Albanians 1.57% (6,944) and Chinese 0.76% (3,362). These four communities account for half of all foreign births. In 2018, Romanian-born children were in first place among foreign children registered in the Italian register (Ansa, 2019), but in Romania in the same year, the fewest children were born in the last half century (since the decree issued by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1966) (Peticilă, 2019). These aspects are worth considering, especially because since 2016, more children have been born in the diaspora than in Romania (Gazeta Românească, 2017).

b. Cosmic framework

From a geographical perspective, in 2019, the top three regions in Italy most populated by Romanians were Lazio, where Romanians represented 4% of the total population – 233,469 (Romanian Embassy in the Italian Republic, 2019), out of the total population of the region, which amounted to 5,879,082 people (Tuttitalia, 2019), Piemonte where Romanians represented 3.3%, namely 147,961 (Embassy of Romania in the Italian Republic, 2019) out of 4,356,406 (Tuttitalia, 2019) and Lombardy where Romanians amounted to 1.7%, namely 176,582 (Embassy of Romania in the Italian Republic, 2019) out of 10,060,574 (Tuttitalia, 2019).

c. Historical framework

From a historical viewpoint, in the Romanian migratory flow to Italy, although continuous, there are two stages determined by international political decisions: the 2002 moment, with the abolition of the residence visa for periods shorter than three months, and the 2007 moment, with Romania’s entry into the EU (Bratu-Elian, 2018).

d. Psychological framework

Sexual abuse by Romanian women working in Italy is a concern. According to the Italian migrant rights organization Proxyma Association, more than half of Romanian women working in greenhouses in the south of the peninsula are forced to have sexual relations with their employers, and almost all of them work in conditions of forced labor and severe exploitation (Ziare, 2017). The statistics are shocking: Two years after reporting extensively on the plight of Romanian women in Sicily, exploited and sexually abused by their employers, L'Espresso reporters returned to Vittoria in the province of Ragusa and found that the situation has only gotten worse. In Ragusa (Sicily) (Rizea, 2017), which is also the most affected area, approx. 7,500 (Ziare, 2017) women were abused, and the number of children aborted in just 2 years has reached 230 lives taken (2 years-2015/2016), representing 19% of the province's total. The data is underestimated, however, because some women are using empirical methods, or going to Romania to have abortions. These figures provide proof of an emergency that never ended (Rizea, 2017). Exacerbation of criminality: Romanians represent 2% of Italy's population, the crime rate is somewhere between 8-9% and the share in prisons is 0.4%, hence, although they are the largest foreign community in Italy, they have the lowest crime/prison rate: of the total crimes committed by immigrants it is shown that Romanians committed 16%, compared to 15.5% for Moroccans and 9% for Albanians, without any reference to the fact that Romanian immigrants are 2/3 more than other immigrants. Of real relevance, however, although much more difficult to estimate, would be the percentage in which the crimes highlighted above were committed by Romanian citizens of Roma/Gypsy ethnicity, inhabitants of the nomad camps that have horrified the inhabitants of the big Italian cities (Mocuța and Bica, no year).

e. Cultural manifestations

From a cultural viewpoint, the Romanians are well anchored, as the Romanian Orthodox Church has proven over time to be an institution that has played a central and fundamental role in preserving the Romanian identity in Italy. The number of places of worship has progressively increased, reaching 383 Orthodox Churches, of which 256 are parishes and 127 are filii, while the number of Orthodox churches hosted by the Catholic Church reached 306 (Ioniță, 2019). On the other hand, in about 140 Orthodox Churches worship in Romanian (Italy-Romania, no year). In other words, approximately 80% of Orthodox Christian places of worship are hosted by the Catholic Church. In almost 37% of Orthodox places of worship in Italy, the service is conducted in Romania. As for schooling, as early as 2017, the number of Romanian students enrolled reached 750,000, while the number of those taking Romanian language classes in the same year ranged between 8,000 and 12,000, which means that, at best, only 1.6% of Romanian students in Italy were taking Romanian language classes. Romanians in Italy had only two Romanian-language TV stations (Stoica, 2018), one news portal (Romanian Embassy in Italy, 2018), and two radio stations in their mother tongue (Gazeta Românească, 2011).

Last but not least, Romanians in Italy have set up more than 100 cultural associations over the years, distributed by region as follows: two in Calabria, two in Campania, two in Emilia Romagna, two in Friuli Venezia Giulia, 37 in Lazio, one in Liguria, 13 in Lombardy, one in Marche, 11 in Piemonte, two in Puglia, three in Sardinia, three in Sardinia, 11 in Sicily, four in Tuscany, one in Trentino-Alto Adige, two in Umbria and four in Tuscany (Romanian Embassy in the Italian Republic, 2020).

f. Economic manifestations

Romanians in the diaspora were the biggest "foreign investors" in Romania in 2023, having sent more than €6.5 billion to the country, a record amount, more than twice as much as a decade ago – in 2014. This money is equivalent to 2% of GDP, just 1.2% less than the amount of foreign direct investment Romania made last year, according to data from the National Bank of Romania. Over the past decade, the total value of remittances from Romanian workers abroad has totaled more than 46.5 billion euros (Ștefan, 2024). The amount of money sent back home by Romanians living abroad has long been recorded. For example, Romanians in the diaspora sent more than €8.2 billion in 2021, according to World Bank data, setting a remittance record for the last 30 years. At the time, total remittances from the diaspora were equivalent to 3.2% of the country's GDP, placing Romania in third place in the EU in terms of remittances as a percentage of GDP. It should also be noted that the amount of money sent home by Romanians abroad was also in line with the amount of foreign direct investment. Moreover, more than 60% of remittances came from Spain, Italy, and Germany – the countries with the largest Romanian communities (Panorama, no year). However, the contribution of Romanians in the diaspora exceeds the GDP of the destination countries. In a single year, 2018 to be more precise, Romanians contributed 10 times more to Italy's GDP than to Romania's GDP, while to Italy's GDP they contributed €30 billion (Hot News, 2019) and to

Romania's GDP they contributed €3 billion (Digi 24, 2019). These figures show that Romanians continue to work for other countries' economies.

4. Conclusion

We have Romania outside our borders that we have a duty to take care of, and we cannot do this without getting to know about it first. An effective and applied tool for gaining knowledge of Romanian communities abroad is the space dossier. It has significant public utility as it presents large masses of data in a synthetic manner. Equally, the space dossier can, as long as it is given adequate attention, facilitate the act of governance because it keeps decision makers informed about the pressing problems facing Romanians, wherever they are. Romanians in Italy are one of the largest Romanian communities in the diaspora and face problems that require immediate state intervention. In this regard, both Romanians in Italy who face sexual exploitation, various phenomena of negative labeling or modern slavery, and Romanians who return home are overwhelmed by the burden of living in a foreign country and abandoned by the Romanian state (consider the case of Romanians who have been diagnosed by psychiatrists with Italy syndrome, an aspect that has not been sufficiently researched), should be taken into account. Last but not least, the families left behind, affected by the departure of one or both parents, must be supported in accordance with their needs, and particular attention must be given to children, who are the main victims of a family that has broken up as a result of emigration.

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