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Article

# How Can Religious Fractionalization and Polarization Inform Us at the County Level in Post-Communist Romania?

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**Abstract:** This study explores religious diversity in Romania and how the trends of indices of religious fractionalization and polarization manifest at the county level in the post-communist period. The county is selected as the relevant level for analysis due to its spatial confessional dynamics being more clearly visible. Recent studies have revealed that erosion of diversity represents an important aspect for any country and needs to be considered as an important aspect of democracy. This paper highlights that religious polarization and fractionalization in Romania has been generally maintained, although the regions of Transylvania, Banat, Dobrogea and Western Moldova remain areas where there are different confessions. Besides the general aspect of religion diversity depending the ethnic trends, there is a rise of Pentecostals and Baptists at the county level. This aspect can inform policymakers to create new institutions for dialogue between majority Orthodox communities and Protestants so that potential conflicts do not appear between the Orthodox and emerging religious communities, but also to ensure objective, cultural, religious coherence.

**Keywords:** religious diversity; quantitative methodology; fractionalization; polarization; counties; Romania

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## 1. Introduction

There is growing interest among social science researchers in studying how cultural diversity plays an important role in shaping social, political and economic outcomes (Rotaru et al. 2023). Research related to this issue is of great importance and is also relevant to various public policies (Singh and vom Hau 2016). People frequently adapt to the diversity of confession in society, and therefore it is possible that an increase or decrease in this phenomenon could engender different consequences over time. For instance, in the case of dissolution of multi-confessional states or the collapse of a communist regime, ethnic and confessional diversity could rapidly decline, posing completely different challenges to new homogeneous societies. On the other hand, countries with increasing confessional diversity may be more willing to introduce institutions that effectively manage the problems of greater populational heterogeneity than countries with shorter histories of diverse ethnic and confessional societies and lower average rates of change in diversity (Easterly and Levine 1997). Failure to take account of these historical evolutions could hinder an understanding of the effects of ethnic and religious diversity of the population in a given region.

Since there might be a close correlation between confessional fragmentation and polarization of the population in a specific region and a risk that tensions or even conflicts in society could appear at certain times (Easterly 2001), the aims of this paper are to present an analysis of the confessional fragmentation and polarization of the population at county level in post-communist Romania. Since

ethnic and religious diversities, based on different social, economic and political backgrounds, may change over various layers of time and national and regional demographic patterns with multiple spatial, social, economic and cultural consequences, this paper aims to explore these aspects, considering post-socialist Romania as a fertile case study to examine the ethnic and religious implications on the current shape of the religious landscape in Romania. Religions and ethnicities remain the main cultural traits which under various political and economic systems continuously shape and (re)shape social relations on a spatial and temporal scale. Accordingly, we aim to better understand how these religious processes have been spatially developed in Romania and how they work in this post-communist country through the lens of religious polarization and fragmentation.

In recent decades in Romania, under the capitalist umbrella, multiple religious spatial patterns occurred which have to be carefully examined, not only to understand the cultural aspects of the national demographic dynamics, but also to foresee new paths and policies connecting changes in the national demographic in their cultural terms according to new spatial development policies. Furthermore, there is a need to connect the demographic situation to international agendas on regional, national and international development; demographic diversity can be used as a key and a critical tool for new avenues in establishing adequate policies in the economic progress of a place regardless of whether it is local, regional, national or spans the political borders of a certain area. The main questions for this study are as follows:

- 1) How was Romania spatially shaped from a demographic perspective through the lens of religious fragmentation and polarization indexes?
- 2) How do confessional changes generate new forms of social and cultural relations and human interactions?
- 3) What spatial changes occurred at the NUTS 3 level from the perspective of each religion and how have the confessional landscapes been altered or not? and
- 4) What can be learned from these post-socialist demographic dynamics to design new perspectives for regional and national social and economic development under the present globalization umbrella with its call for social diversity and international multiculturalism?

To answer these questions, first, the theoretical background is presented. Then, the authors draw attention to the various contexts of religions in Romania. The method and data section as well as some results and discussion are also presented, and finally, some conclusions are drawn.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The concept of religion represents belief in the divine or sacred, and in the supernatural, as well as the values and institutions associated with this belief, the moral code, dogmas and ritual practices (Paris and Bastarache 1995). Although there is great historical and geographical diversity of religious manifestations, the common feature is conferred by sacredness, the aspiration to human perfection—a value vector opposed to the profane, which signifies the degradation of human beings. Throughout its development, religion has taken a large number of forms in different cultures or peoples. Religion is a powerful tool for building and preserving the identity of various ethnic communities or even communities formed only by adherence to a particular religious faith. Therefore, religion is the bond of social life, as well as an instrument for increasing social cohesion (Zamfir and Vlăsceanu 1993).

Religion could be a starting point for examining issues of ethnic identity formation (Peach 2002). Geographers studying the negotiations of religious identity within different communities are often concerned with the overt articulation of religious identity, for example, how adherents from different locations establish their distinctive identities (religious and cultural) through their own understandings of religion and how they outwardly present their religious adherence (in terms of religious practice, ritual and behavior) (Chivallon and Belorgane 2001; Gale 2007).

As a general issue, the articulation of religious identity refers to the material aspects of symbolizing religious identity (such as architecture and establishing a physical presence), to negotiations and struggles in asserting religious identity in the face of persecution and exclusion, to practices of ritual and religious behavior that restore one's religious identity (Kong 2005). In addition,

migration processes have led to the development of religious and ethnic pluralism but also to tensions between migrants and native people (Author's own work 2023b). However, the landscape changes that accompany the movement and settlement of religiously defined communities are a key issue in the study of geography and religion (Kong 2010).

Geographers are less concerned with the religion per se, but are more sensitive to the ways in which religion—as a cultural feature—alters social, cultural, political and environmental systems. Their focus is not on the specifics of religious beliefs and practices, but on how religious beliefs and practices are internalized by adherents and how internalization processes influence and are influenced by social systems.

Traditional cultural geographical approaches related to the study of religion are mainly concerned with determining the impact of religion on the landscape. A more contemporary approach to the study of the intersections between geography and religion not only highlights the role of religion in affecting landscape change and in ascribing sacred meanings to specific places, but also recognizes how religious ideology and practice in specific spaces are guided and transformed by their location (Kong 1990).

Religious experiences and beliefs in religious meanings transform physical spaces into sacred spaces. These perceptions and imaginations influence the way in which such spaces are used and the personal spiritual meanings developed in the use of sacred spaces. These religiously significant spaces go beyond formal religious/spiritual spaces such as places of worship to include informal religious spaces such as homes and schools. Therefore, the focus is on both the material aspects of spaces (such as architectural features) and socially constructed spaces (such as rituals and the delineation of sacred spaces) to present religious importance and significance (Kong 2002).

A key focus in the study of sacred sites is identity politics, the belonging and meaning ascribed to sacred sites and the constant negotiations for power and legitimacy. In particular, in multicultural settings, contestation for legitimacy, public approval, and negotiations for the use of particular spaces are central to determining how communities understand, internalize, and struggle to compete for the right to practice their religious traditions in public spaces (Kong 1990). Another new avenue of interest in the study of geography and religion explores different sites of religious practices beyond the 'officially sacred space', such as sites, religious schools, media spaces, banking and financial practices, and home spaces (Kong 2010). Considering these theoretical insights, it is widely acknowledged that a close connection can be established between geography and religion and its related confessional aspects. This relationship has to be unpacked in order to depict their intricate and intimate involvements and implications on various spatial scales because they are responsible for shaping both various spatial patterns and different confessional landscapes. In this regard, religion seems to turn to a cultural trait which make sense to a place, to a community or to a nation (Morello et al. 2017), and multiple religions present in a place are responsible in framing both new spatial patterns and confessional landscapes with highly political relevance when it comes to social relations and cultural diversity (Hedges 2017; Moerman 2019; Willander 2019). This is the case because the ongoing changes in politics and policies allow new forms of confessional structures to be involved in regional and national cultural communities (Klingorová and Havlíček 2015).

Against such a background, mapping religious, spatial confessional attributes of a place and sacred issues represents an interesting step in understanding the most important implication of religion in regional and national contexts which are continually shaped by specific confessions. This argument referring to the mapping of religion highlights the geographical relevance of religion in recent studies (Scott and Simpson-Housley 2001; Park 2002, 2005), connecting it to specific concepts of space, place and identity which frame new landscapes and spatial patterns and which often relate to new paradigms for various problematizing dialogues on confessional background and religion from a geographic perspective (Stump 2008; Knott 2008; Tong et al. 2009; Yorgason and della Dora 2009; Yang and McPhail 2023). As regards religion and confessional geographies, Romania remains an interesting European spatial sample with certain dynamic confessional patterns framed both during past layers of time and in recent post-socialist decades with interesting, real diversity, which is briefly investigated in the next section.

### 3. Methods and Data

This study uses descriptive statistics as well as two indices of diversity—religious fractionalization and religious polarization applied to the territory of Romania. Statistical data was based on data supplied by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics for the post-communist period (1992, 2002, 2011). From these data we construct graphs, by means of which various spatialities of religions in Romania are critically presented and examined. These descriptive statistical data are useful because they can summarize population data (Dodge 2006). The software ArcMap 10.4 was helpful as a means of spatial representation with a geographic information system.

The study also makes use of two fundamental indices: the fractionalization index (FRAC) and the polarization index (Q) (Taylor and Hudson 1972; Esteban and Ray 1994; Reynal-Querol 2002; Vigdor 2002; Alesina et al. 2003; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005; Rotaru et al. 2023).

#### 3.1. Fragmentation or Fractionalization Index (FRAC)

The fragmentation or fractionalization index (FRAC) (Taylor and Hudson 1972) is determined as follows:

$$FRAC = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2$$

where:

$n$  = number of ethnic/confessional/etc. groups;

$p_i$  = the relative proportion/frequency/empirical ratio in the form of a coefficient of the confessional group 'i' in the total population, which is determined as the fraction between the number of inhabitants of the confessional group 'i' and the total number of inhabitants.

The confessional fractionalization index usually measures diversity as a steadily increasing function of the number of groups in a country. It is based on the probability that two individuals drawn randomly from a country belong to two different confessional groups. The FRAC index takes values between 0 and 1, where 0 is a perfectly homogeneous population from a confessional point of view. If the number of confessional groups increases, the value of this index will also increase.

#### 3.2. Polarization Index (Q)

The polarization index (Q) measures the probability of a potential conflict that may occur between two equal groups and it is determined as follows:

$$Q = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{0,5 - p_i}{0,5} \right)^2 * p_i$$

where:

$n$  = number of ethnic/confessional groups;

$p_i$  = the relative proportion/frequency/empirical ratio in the form of a coefficient of the confessional group 'i' in the total population, which is determined as the ratio between the number of inhabitants of the confessional group 'i' and the total number of inhabitants.

The polarization index (Q) measures the standardized distance of a religious distribution and indicates the extent to which one group may perceive another group as a threat to its interests (Esteban and Ray 1994).

Simultaneous analysis of the spatial distribution of both FRAC and Q was made using binomial local indicators of spatial autocorrelation (LISA) implemented in GeoDa software for each year. LISA is a geostatistical method which identifies and assesses the presence of spatial clustering in a dataset (Anselin 1995). The local Moran's I statistic is a key component of LISA. It calculates a measure of spatial autocorrelation for each observation in the dataset by comparing the value of that observation with the values of its neighbors (Anselin 2019). The result is a local indicator that highlights the degree of spatial clustering at specific location and also identifies the presence of outliers.

A positive value on the LISA index indicates a clustered distribution of the data. It could be a high-high (HH) cluster (a high value surrounded by high value areas) or a low-low (LL) cluster (a low value area surrounded by low value areas). A negative value on the LISA index signals the presence of an outlier, which can be a high-low (HL) outlier (a high value area surrounded by low value areas) or a low-high (LH) outlier (a low value area surrounded by high value areas).

#### 4. The Context of Religious Dynamics in Post-Communist Romania

The international study conducted in March 2015 by the "Gallup International" Institute and entitled "Religiosity and Atheism Index" shows that Romania ranks seventh in the top ten most religious countries in the world. In 2012, 89% of the population declared themselves to be religious, up from 85% in 2005. Romania is the only country in the European Union that appears in this listing of the top religious countries (Aktual 2015).

Contemporary Romania is a homogeneous state in terms of the majority of population, whose religion is Orthodox. On the other hand, Romania is home to a large number of ethnic minorities with a religion other than Orthodox.

It should be noted that the "Declaration on Religious Tolerance" was adopted for the first time in Europe in 1568, in the Principality of Transylvania. On the other hand, during the communist regime in Romania, the interference of the statute on freedom of conscience and religion was allowed (Decree No. 177 of 1948). At present, the Romanian Constitution, according to the principle of freedom of religious belief, Article 29—Freedom of conscience—guarantees freedom of religious life (Romanian Constitution 2019).

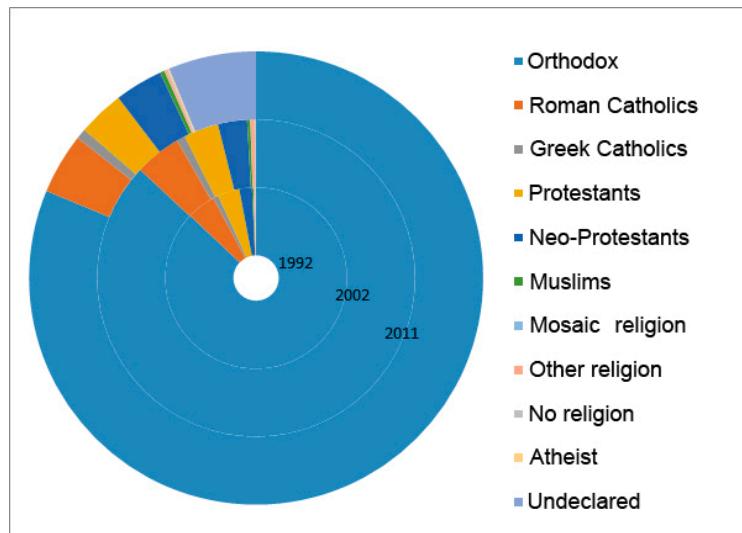
There are 18 religions and religious cults registered in Romania, predominantly Orthodox Christians, followed by Roman Catholic Christians and other religious groups, as shown in Table 1. The data were obtained by collecting and recording the absolute values corresponding to population censuses carried out after 1990, as well as by determining them in percentages (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 1992, 2002, 2011).

**Table 1.** Dynamics of the denominational structure of the Post-Communist Romanian population.

Religious denomination	Year					
	1992		2002		2011	
	Number of persons	Percentage	Number of persons	Percentage	Number of persons	Percentage
Orthodox	19862758	87.08%	18856122	86.97%	16353947	81.28%
Roman Catholics	1161942	5.09%	1026429	4.73%	870774	4.33%
Greek Catholics	223327	0.98%	191556	0.88%	150593	0.75%
Protestants	879162	3.85%	768021	3.54%	658618	3.27%
Neo-Protestants	518135	2.27%	643253	2.97%	689504	3.43%
Muslim	55928	0.25%	67257	0.31%	64337	0.32%
Mosaic religion	9670	0.04%	6057	0.03%	3519	0.02%
Other religion	56329	0.25%	89196	0.41%	30950	0.15%
No religion	24314	0.11%	12825	0.06%	18917	0.09%
Atheist	10331	0.05%	8524	0.04%	20743	0.10%
Undeclared	8139	0.04%	11734	0.05%	1259739	6.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22810035</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>21680974</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>20121641</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

(Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 1992, 2002, 2011).

Following the analysis of the data presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, it appears that the main religion in Romania is Orthodox Christian with a share of over 80%; the next most important denominations in terms of numbers are Roman Catholics with a share of 4–5% and then Protestants and neo-Protestants, each with a share of between 2% and 4% of the stable population in Romania. Other denominations found each have a share of less than 1%.



**Figure 1.** Dynamics of the religious structure of the post-communist Romanian population.

An important point to note is that in the 2011 Population Census, a high percentage (over 6%) of the population did not declare their religion, compared to about 0.05% in the 2002 Population Census and about 0.04% in the 1992 Population Census. This shows that the number of people who are either afraid to declare their religion or are embarrassed to say they belong to a particular religious denomination is starting to increase.

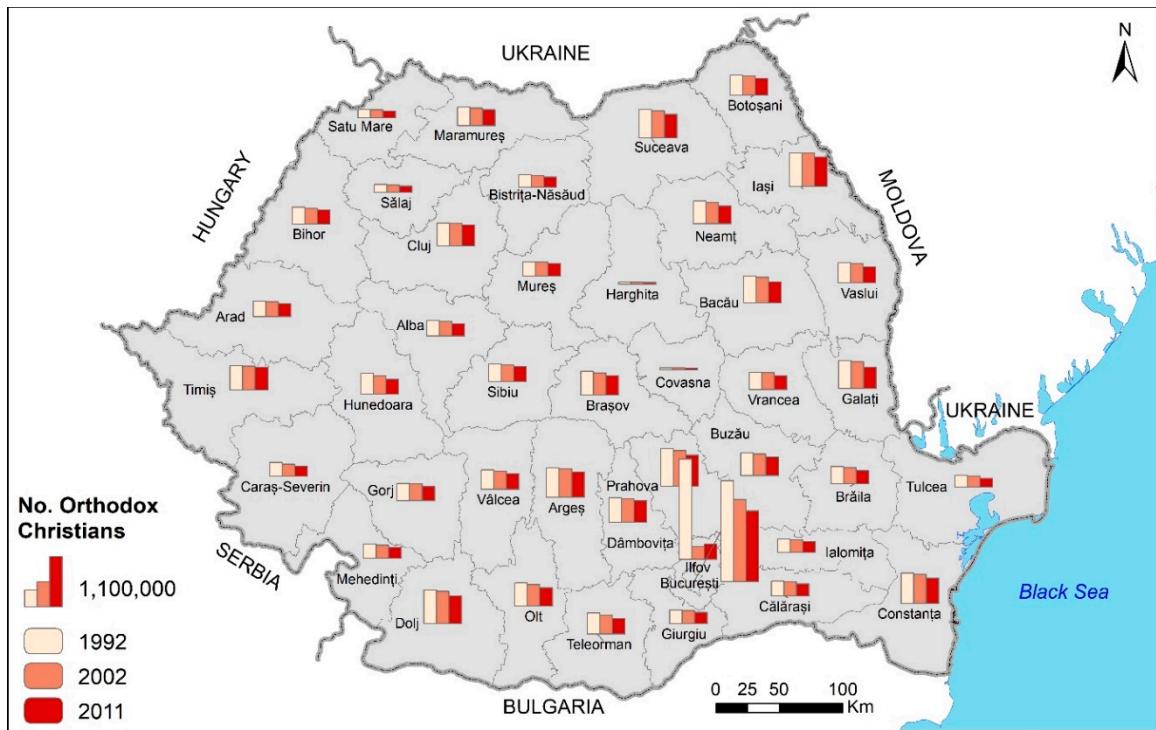
The number of Orthodox Christians in Romania started to decrease relatively slowly in the first years of the post-communist period, and then the decrease was significant. This situation was due to the decrease in population after the December 1989 Revolution, after almost half a century of communist rule, led Romania to change towards true democracy.

Regarding the evolution of the Orthodox population in Romania and their spatial distribution at NUTS 3 level in the post-communist period, it can be seen that the Orthodox Church is present in all counties but, in some counties, numbers are much lower than in other counties (Figure 2). Harghita and Covasna have the lowest number of Orthodox Christians in the whole country, and in the post-communist period, their evolution has followed a decreasing trend in all counties, all this being the result of historical events that Romania has gone through over time (Figure 2).

In addition to the Orthodox religion, there are other 17 religions and religious cults that are officially registered in Romania.

*Roman Catholics* are the second largest religious denomination in Romania, with their share of the total stable population varying between 4% and 5% (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 1992, 2002, 2011). In 1054, the rupture between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, known as the Great Schism or East-West Schism, occurred due to the theological and political differences between Eastern and Western Christianity that had developed over the previous centuries (Angle 2007). Despite the efforts of Catholic popes and Orthodox patriarchs, only limited progress has been made towards reconciliation in recent decades (Johnstone 2011).

The Roman Catholic Church in Romania is a Latin Rite Christian Church, part of the Catholic Church worldwide, under the spiritual leadership of the Pope and the Curia of Rome, with its administration in Bucharest (Gherca 2013). The earliest traces of Catholicism in the present territory of Romania were recorded in Transylvania, as a result of the expansion of Hungarian rule and, respectively, the integration of this Romanian province into the Kingdom of Hungary (Prodan 2002). Inaugurated by the early presence of the Benedictines, the Roman Catholic churches in the present territory of Romania had been strengthened by the colonization of the Transylvanian Saxons, by missionary activities among the local Romanian population and strong conversions (Ştefănescu 1991).



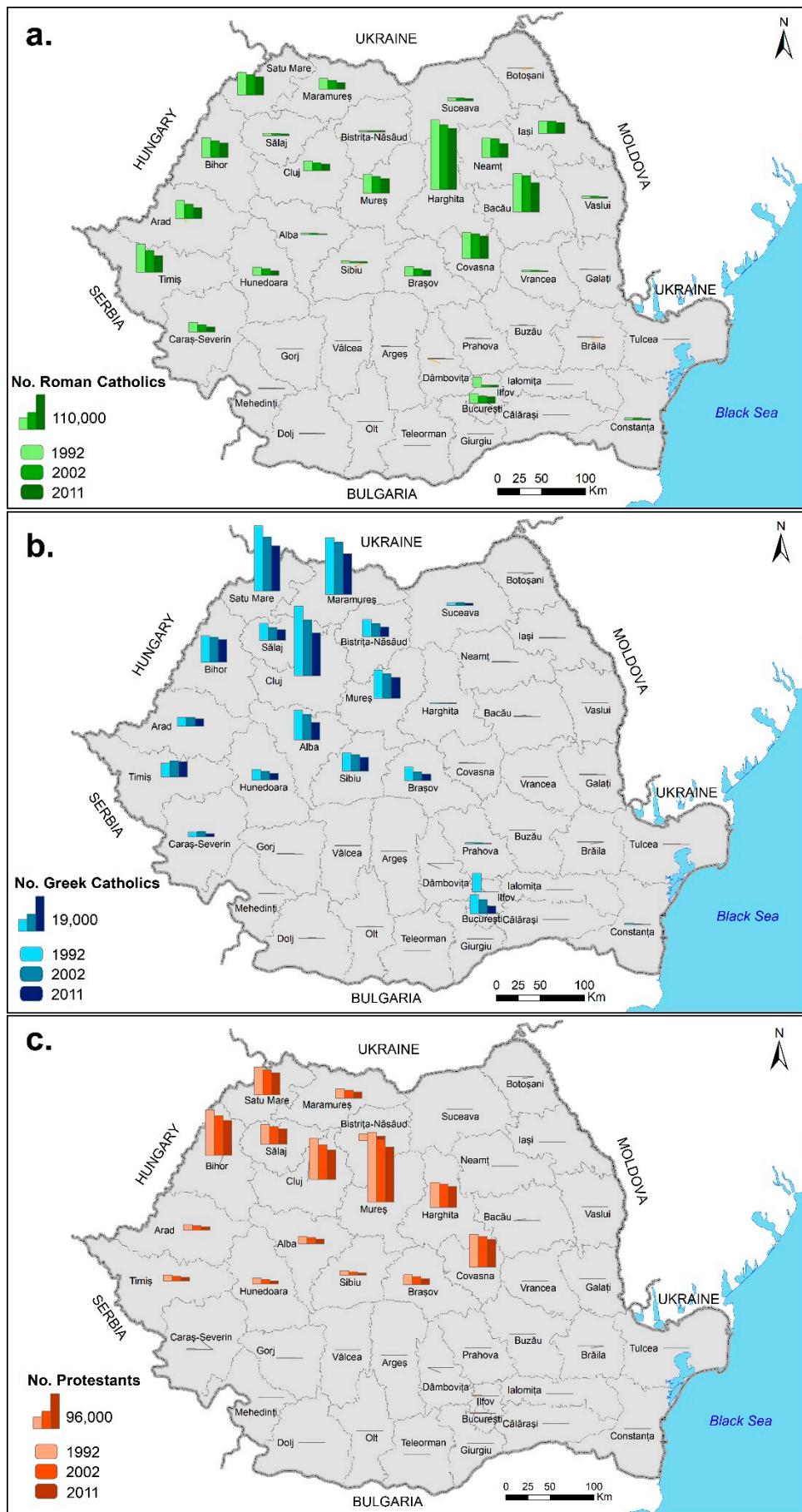
**Figure 2.** The numerical evolution of Orthodox Christians according to the censuses of 1992, 2002, and 2011 at NUTS 3 level (i.e., county level).

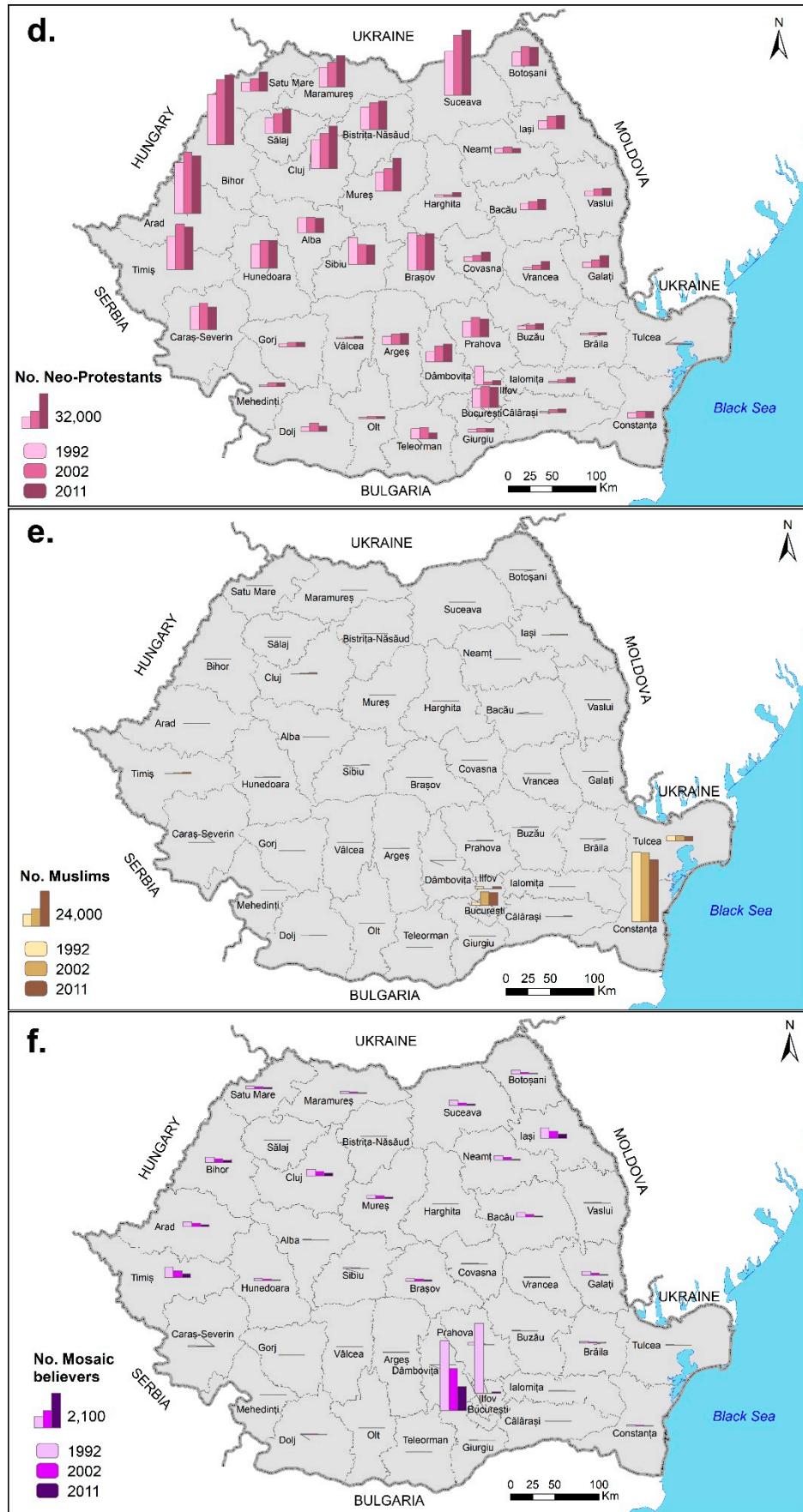
During the communist regime, Romania broke off all diplomatic contact with the Holy See. The communists had continually tried to persuade the Catholics to organize themselves into a national church and cease contacts with the Holy See, but without success (Cioroianu 2007).

Shortly after the December 1989 Revolution in Romania, the Romanian state allowed the resumption of Catholic Christian ties with the Holy See, making Romania the fourth country with Catholic people in the ex-socialist bloc, following Poland (majority-Catholic), Hungary and Czechoslovakia (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 1992).

More than half of the Romanian citizens of Roman Catholic denomination are Hungarians, about a third are Romanians, and the rest are mostly Germans and Slovaks. In smaller numbers there are also Bulgarians, Poles, Croats, Czechs and Italians (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 1992, 2002, 2011).

In the post-communist period, the number of Roman Catholic Christians decreased considerably (Figure 3a). This decrease, especially in the first decade, is due to new demographic policies and the emigration of ethnic Germans to the West. On the other hand, as far as the evolution of Roman Catholics at NUTS 3 level is concerned, they are found in all the counties, but mainly in Harghita, Covasna, Mures, Bacau, Neamt, Iasi, Timis, Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad, Sibiu, Bucharest (Figure 3a). The evolution of Roman Catholic Christians in Romania has followed a decreasing trend in all counties in the post-communist period. Greek Catholics are another important Christian religion in Romania, whose numerical share is very low, being less than 1% of the total stable population in the post-communist period (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 1992, 2002, 2011).





**Figure 3.** The numerical evolution of the main denominations, according to the censuses of 1992, 2002, and 2011 at NUTS 3 level (i.e., county level) in Romania (a. Roman Catholics; b. Greek-Catholics; c. Protestants; d. Neo-Protestants; e. Muslims; f. Mosaic believers).

The Romanian Church United with Rome (also called the Greek-Catholic Church of Romania) is traditionally considered together with the Romanian Orthodox Church as being part of the Romanian national church (Togan 2010).

The existence of Greek Catholics is due to the fact that, starting in the second half of the 17th century, the Habsburg Empire began to extend its influence in Transylvania. Towards the end of the century, at the Synod of Alba-Iulia, several clerics from Transylvania voluntarily joined the Roman Catholic Church, as the Transylvanian Christian Orthodox Romanians had switched to the Catholic Church. However, they kept the traditions and the rite of the Eastern Church (Ghitta 2001) and were granted similar advantages and rights as the believers whose confessions were accepted by the Habsburgs (Ghișa 2006).

During the communist regime (from 1948), the United Romanian Church was outlawed due to the strong Soviet influence, and many clergy and even ordinary Greek Catholic believers were subjected to harsh persecution. The banning of this church during the communist period led to its patrimony becoming the property of the Romanian Orthodox Church or the Romanian communist state (Vasile 2004; Bozgan 2005).

Shortly after the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, the decree by which the communist authorities banned the existence of the United Romanian Church was repealed and thus this church was again officially recognized by the new democratic authorities. The authorities even decided to return the properties confiscated by the communists (Damșa 1994), but this was difficult to achieve because there are still some legal disputes on this issue (Seiche 2010).

It can be seen that in post-communist Romania there was a significant increase in the number of Greek-Catholic believers in the years immediately following the anti-communist revolution of December 1989 (see Figure 3b). This was due to the fact that Greek Catholics regained their pre-communist rights. Analyzing the numerical evolution of Greek Catholics at NUTS 3 level, it is evident that they are predominantly dispersed in the regions of Transylvania, Maramureș, Crișana and Banat (see Figure 3b).

*Protestants* are another important group of Christian believers in Romania. Protestant denominations are religious cults with their own ecclesiastical structures, historically rooted in Martin Luther's Reformation against the Catholic Church, but based on Christian ideologies (Blond 1976; Ryrie 2018). Protestantism is diverse and divided into various confessions, without forming a single structure (Hillerbrand 2004). At the same time, non-denominational, charismatic and independent churches are growing and constitute a significant part of Protestantism (Heussi 1991; Juergensmeyer 2005).

In Romania, Protestants are considered the Reformed (made up mostly of ethnic Hungarians), Unitarians (ethnic Hungarians), and Lutherans (ethnic German Saxons, Hungarians, Slovaks). Consequently, it can be seen that in the post-communist period, there is a relative increase in the number of Protestants (see Figure 3c). Analyzing the numerical evolution of Protestants at NUTS 3 level, it is evident that they are predominantly dispersed in Transylvania, Crișana and Maramureș (see Figure 3c).

*The neo-Protestants* are another important group of Christian believers in Romania who have been detached from the Protestants as a result of a new protest against Catholicism and its teachings. Neo-Protestant cults had originally been religious streams within Protestant cults and then became cults in their own right (Cowan and Bromley 2007). In Romania they appeared in the 19th century, coming from Western Europe and the United States (Ramat 1991). Neo-Protestant cults in Romania are Baptism, Pentecostalism, Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelicals, and the Gospel Christians Church (Petraru 2006).

During the communist regime, the number of neo-Protestants was intensely supervised and kept under strict control by the state authorities, due to the atheism promoted by the regime. The mobility of the believers was determined by the evangelization missions, but, above all, the links and contacts of the neo-Protestants with Western countries, from which these denominations originated (Petcu 2005).

It can be seen that in the post-communist period there is a significant increase in the number of neo-Protestants and they are widespread in all counties of Romania, with their numbers increasing (see Figure 3d).

*Muslims* are also an officially recognized group of believers in Romania. Their religion is Islam, one of the three great monotheistic religions. Dobrogea is the first Romanian province whose territory was inhabited by Turks, who founded the Muslim city of Babadag about 750 years ago (Anghelescu 2014; Ekrem 1994; Mehmed 1976). The Islamic presence in northern Dobrogea expanded under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, with several successive waves of migration of Turks to these lands, but began to decline steadily from the late 19th century (Rădulescu and Bitoleanu 1979).

During the communist regime, Muslims in Romania were subjected to surveillance measures by the state (Ionescu 1994). However, after the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, the Muslim group began to emancipate itself.

It can be seen that in the post-communist period, there is a significant decrease in the number of Muslims (see Figure 3e) in Romania due to the immigration of ethnic Turks as well as the demographic policies of the new Romanian state authorities. Analyzing the numerical evolution of Muslims at NUTS 3 level, it is evident that they are predominantly dispersed in the counties of Dobrogea (Constanța and Tulcea), where the trend was downward, as well as in Bucharest, where there was significant increasing trend in the first post-communist decade and then a slight decrease (see Figure 3e).

The adepts of the *Mosaic religion* are another group of officially recognized believers in Romania whose religion is the original Hebrew religion of the Israelite prophet Moses, an eminently ethnic religion also known as Judaism (Cohn-Sherbok and Cohn-Sherbok 2000).

The first presence of Jews in Romania is lost in the mists of history. During the Reconquista in the 16th century, the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula were expelled. Therefore, large groups of Jews also arrived in the current Romanian territory (Eskenasy 1986).

The history of Jewish communities in present-day Romania has been sinusoidal. During the interwar period, Jews in Romania had the opportunity to assert themselves in economic, social, political and cultural life (Iancu 2009). However, the fascist and anti-Semitic ideology in Europe also reached Romania. The Iron Guard or the Romanian fascists assumed the promotion of anti-Semitic ideas, which even led to the physical elimination of ethnic Jews, causing the Holocaust during the Antonescian regime (Eskenasy 1986).

The establishment of the communist regime in Romania and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 led to the immigration of Jews from Romania to their new homeland, which led to a massive decrease in their numbers (Constantiniu 2010). Moreover, during the communist regime, the Jews were subjected to surveillance measures by the state (Ionescu 1994).

From the analysis of the data presented for the post-communist period in Romania (Figure 3f), it can be seen that there is a significant decrease in the number of the Mosaic believers, which is largely due to the immigration of ethnic Jews in communist times. Analyzing the numerical evolution of Mosaic believers at NUTS 3 level, it is evident that they live in all counties, especially in large cities such as Bucharest, Timișoara and Iași, with their numbers having decreased continuously in the post-communist years (see Figure 3f).

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1. Confessional Fractionalization and Polarization of the Population in Post-Communist Romania

Changes in the confessional diversity within countries are of particular importance. Some studies have concluded that confessional diversity could have a negative impact on economic development, macroeconomic stability, social trust, participation in government, quality of governance, democracy, and other socioeconomic outcomes (Fum and Hodler 2010; Singh and von Hau 2016). Some researchers believe that religious fragmentation could also impact the distribution of consumption, with independent negative consequences, and with denominational heterogeneity in the population negatively affecting the provision of public goods (Miguel and Gugerty 2005).

Given the redistributive nature of public goods, reduced provision could lead to a negative impact of confessional fragmentation on social inequality (Banerjee et al. 2005; Banerjee and Somanathan 2007). High levels of religious inequality can lead to conflict and crime (Murshed and Gates 2005), inefficient redistribution (Lee 2017) and lower rates of economic growth (Persson and Tabellini 1992).

However, some researchers argue that it may be useful to rethink the assumption that confessional diversity is relatively invariant over time, as changes in the confessional heterogeneity of a population may play a role in affecting the relationship between confessional diversity and socioeconomic outcomes (Baldwin and Huber 2010).

Analyzing the long-run effects and time-varying changes (fast or slow) of a population's confessional diversity could help advance our knowledge of peaceful coexistence in confessionally diverse societies.

### 5.1.1. Confessional Fractionalization

On the basis of post-communist population census data and using the formula for calculating the fractionality index (FRAC), we obtained data on fractionalization/fragmentation (see Table 2). The values obtained shows that the confessional fragmentation of the population in Romania has undergone some changes during the post-revolutionary years, in the sense that it has reduced in some counties and has remained at a very low or low level in other counties, which means that the risk of interconfessional conflict throughout the country has also decreased.

**Table 2.** Confessional Fractionalization Index and Polarization Index at the NUTS 3 (i.e., county) level in Romania.

COUNTY	Fractionalization Index			Polarization Index		
	1992	2002	2011	1992	2002	2011
ALBA	0.2615	0.2524	0.3141	0.4413	0.4287	0.5065
ARGEŞ	0.0284	0.0354	0.1115	0.0563	0.0702	0.2138
ARAD	0.4345	0.4384	0.4914	0.6618	0.6672	0.6848
BUCUREŞTI	0.6264	0.0762	0.2736	0.8274	0.1454	0.4949
BACĂU	0.2998	0.3059	0.3845	0.5821	0.5863	0.6461
BIHOR	0.5822	0.5915	0.6376	0.7588	0.7512	0.7254
BISTRITĂ-NĂSĂUD	0.2954	0.3008	0.3602	0.4896	0.5018	0.5680
BRĂILA	0.2875	0.0234	0.1284	0.4777	0.0463	0.2489
BOTOŞANI	0.0630	0.0854	0.1697	0.1243	0.1684	0.3155
BRAŞOV	0.0193	0.2645	0.3499	0.0382	0.4478	0.5486
BUZĂU	0.0165	0.0215	0.1164	0.0328	0.0427	0.2248
CLUJ	0.4806	0.4538	0.5076	0.6914	0.6634	0.6752
CĂLĂRAŞI	0.2830	0.0232	0.1712	0.4897	0.0461	0.3286
CARAŞ-SEVERIN	0.0148	0.2906	0.3783	0.0295	0.4985	0.5916
CONSTANȚA	0.1566	0.1623	0.2915	0.2983	0.3087	0.5025
COVASNA	0.6668	0.6756	0.6991	0.8597	0.8478	0.8024
DAMBOVIȚA	0.0388	0.0573	0.1339	0.0770	0.1136	0.2527
DOLJ	0.0194	0.0333	0.1176	0.0385	0.0656	0.2291
GORJ	0.0216	0.0289	0.1029	0.0427	0.0572	0.1985
GALATI	0.0280	0.0334	0.1695	0.0552	0.0660	0.3194
GIURGIU	0.0220	0.0286	0.1466	0.0437	0.0568	0.2821
HUNEDOARA	0.2514	0.2572	0.3388	0.4292	0.4376	0.5378
HARGHITA	0.5115	0.5172	0.5331	0.7786	0.7787	0.7588
ILFOV	0.6264	0.0663	0.2005	0.8274	0.1289	0.3672
IALOMIȚA	0.0142	0.0266	0.1538	0.0282	0.0528	0.2942
IAȘI	0.1176	0.1308	0.2469	0.2275	0.2498	0.4335
MEHEDINTI	0.0273	0.0395	0.1542	0.0539	0.0777	0.2926

<b>MARAMUREŞ</b>	0.3875	0.3810	0.4273	0.5831	0.5753	0.6120
<b>MUREŞ</b>	0.2089	0.6182	0.6514	0.4070	0.8163	0.7765
<b>NEAMT</b>	0.0077	0.2339	0.2810	0.0154	0.4404	0.4936
<b>OLT</b>	0.0443	0.0129	0.1258	0.0871	0.0256	0.2473
<b>PRAHOVA</b>	0.6716	0.0541	0.1287	0.7612	0.1066	0.2437
<b>SIBIU</b>	0.1501	0.1955	0.2877	0.2843	0.3472	0.4778
<b>ŞALAJ</b>	0.5050	0.5116	0.5730	0.7429	0.7415	0.7450
<b>SATU MARE</b>	0.2309	0.6687	0.7100	0.4010	0.7544	0.7073
<b>SUCEAVA</b>	0.0438	0.2045	0.2771	0.0870	0.3785	0.4837
<b>TULCEA</b>	0.0491	0.0471	0.1662	0.0964	0.0922	0.3146
<b>TIMIŞ</b>	0.0429	0.3601	0.4168	0.0841	0.5814	0.6182
<b>TELEORMAN</b>	0.3680	0.0528	0.1558	0.6046	0.1047	0.2997
<b>VLCEA</b>	0.0120	0.0159	0.1018	0.0239	0.0317	0.1989
<b>VRANCEA</b>	0.0671	0.0495	0.1774	0.1290	0.0970	0.3274
<b>VASLUI</b>	0.0381	0.0582	0.1766	0.0751	0.1135	0.3283

### 5.1.2. Confessional Polarization

In the present day, everyone fears the polarization that is happening in all societies, at all levels, because it is not a country-specific phenomenon. Under these conditions, polarization indices (Q) are used to measure the standardized distance of an ethnic/denominational/etc. distribution from a bimodal distribution (bimodal distribution is found when there are two perfectly equal groups in a community, i.e. each group represents 50% of the community). In addition to measuring a particular aspect of population structure, Q also indicates the extent to which one group may perceive another group as a threat to its interests, validating the hypothesis that the most conflict-prone ethnic/confessional/etc. configuration would be one in which a majority coexists with a sizable minority, which in game theory may be the natural tendency of the two groups to represent their situation as a zero-sum game (Esteban and Ray 1994).

Based on the population census data from the post-communist period and using the formula for calculating the polarization index (Q) we obtained data about confessional polarization (see Table 2). The values show that the religious polarization of the population in Romania has undergone some changes in the last three decades, in the sense that it has undergone fluctuations of all kinds.

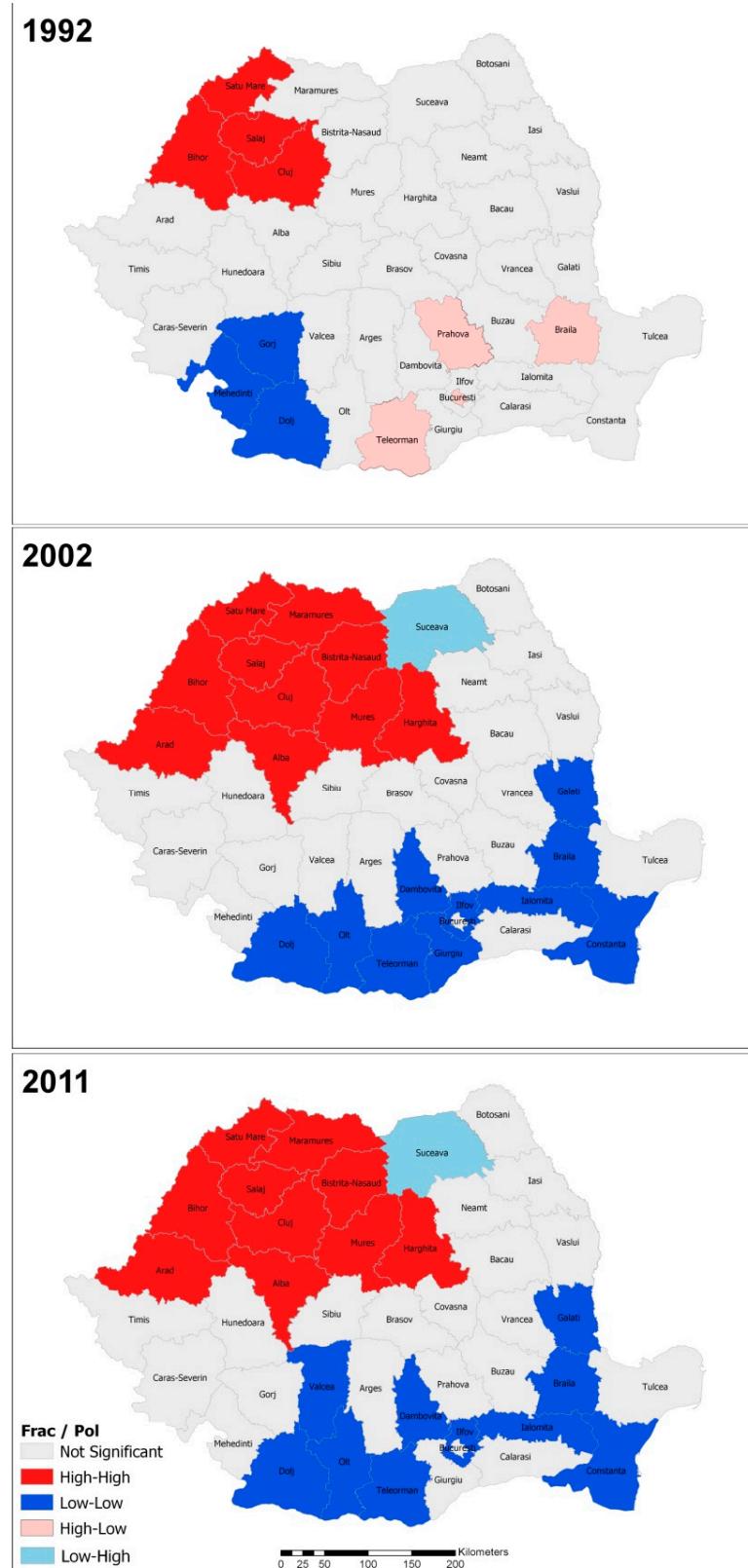
### 5.1.3. Correlation between Confessional Fragmentation and Polarization

Following the bivariate LISA spatial autocorrelation analysis of the FRAC and Q indicators, a map was obtained for each analyzed year (see Figure 4).

The value of the local Moran index (Moran's I) for the year 1992 is 0.111 ( $p > 0.05$ ) and indicates that the distribution of the data is more random than clustered. There is an HH cluster, containing four counties in Transylvania, and an LL cluster, grouping three counties in the south of the country in Oltenia. Four HL outliers, including Bucharest, were also identified in the south of Romania. There are no LH outliers.

The distribution pattern of the two indicators changed considerably in 2002. The value of the Moran's index is high (Moran's I = 0.628,  $p < 0.0001$ ) which proves that the spatial distribution pattern is clustered. There are two big clusters of equal size (10 counties each): one HH cluster which overlaps almost all of Transylvania and Crisana, and one LL cluster, which groups counties located in the south and southeast of the country. Suceava County stands out as an LH outlier. There are no HL outliers.

The map for the year 2011 is similar to the one from 2002. The Moran's I value is 0.588 ( $p < 0.0001$ ); although high, it is still a little lower than in 2002. The HH cluster is unchanged, but the LL cluster, although it is still formed from 10 counties, underwent a series of changes. Thus, this cluster now includes Valcea County, which was not statistically significant in previous years, while Giurgiu County becomes statistically not significant.



**Figure 4.** Bivariate LISA maps.

Summing up, we demonstrate the importance of such analysis to depict the correlation between confessional fragmentation and polarization indices. The analysis of the Moran's index values during the analyzed period shows a clustering trend between 1990 and 2011. However, after 2002 there is a small fragmentation trend of low-low clusters in the southern part of Romania.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper dealt with important geographical questions of demographic diversity and confessional landscape in Romania in order to portray the main implications of religious spatialities at both regional and national scales. Over time, Romania has constructed a certain demographic background with confessional diversity being one of the features which has best ensured specific models of inter- and multiculturality. This diversity has continuously shaped Romanian space and territory both in communist and post-communist times with different forms of fragmentation and polarization which are visible at the regional scale. The present analysis highlights that the confessional diversity of Romania preserved its initial patterns even though traditional religions such as Mosaic and German Evangelical underwent a decrease in their numbers due to Jews and Germans migrating to different countries, especially Germany, Austria and Hungary. On the other hand, an increasing number of neo-Protestants can be noted.

Confessional polarization and fragmentation is more evident in the historical regions of Romania as Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, Maramureș, Bucovina and Western Moldavia, where Catholic and neo-Protestant minorities are still well represented in the demographical background and religious landscape of these regions. These visible and functional patterns are mandatory to consider in national political agendas to (re)frame adequate strategies for fertile dialogue and human and cultural interactions on the general confessional background. This should be based on mutual recognition and reciprocal respect, thus framing a continuous cultural environment based on inter- and multiconfessionalism.

The appearance of new, strong interconfessional and cultural institutions which could enhance a fertile dialogue on recognition of confessions with respect to other confessional minorities represents a key aspect for policymakers; it has the power for mutual recognition of all confessional minorities in order to eliminate all potential tensions which could alter the religious peace at the local and regional scales. Policymakers should create new tools or institutions for permanent, constructive dialogue between the majority Orthodox population and religious minorities in different spatial contexts.

The case of Romania and its historical regions generally follows the Eastern European confessional paths and could be further explored in order to provide both new critical insights into the post-socialist religious background. This could be viewed through the lens of fragmentation and polarization and new social, cultural and demographic policies to sustain national religious diversity in a global dynamic world where religion and confessions tend to be spatially more fluid than ever.

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