

## URBAN POLICY AND URBANISATION IN THE TRANSITION ROMANIA

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**ABSTRACT-** The main goal of this paper is to offer an analysis about the urban development strategies in Romania. The focus will be on the transition period (after 1989). Although we can not abstract the outcomes of the urban strategies from the previous period, when the communist state regulation had full control on the urban policy. Urbanisation was the main goal of communist developments based on the idea of modernisation of the society. Therefore we will offer a brief overview of the communist urban planning strategies. It has been resulted an unbalanced urban hierarchy dominated by the capital city of Bucharest and with a weak level of small cities both in terms of functions and infrastructure. The change of the political system in 1989 has established a new environment for the urban system in Romania, marked by the EU and NATO integration process, by the further globalisation of the romanian economy, privatisation and liberalisation of the urban land- and housing market, decentralisation and growth of the weight and importance of local level. Under this circumstances a new urban development strategy has evolved based on the following elements: a) development of a polycentric and balanced urban system, diminishing the overwhelming role of Bucharest and reinforcing the second level of urban centres and the level of small cities; b) a new urbanisation wave has started in 2002, where the main aim is the declaration of new towns. It relies on the fact, that in 1997 the dominant internal migration form became the urban-rural migration, without precedent in the modern history of Romania and therefore the urban population of the country is declining. As result the urbanisation level fo the EU candidate country Romania is well behind the EU level (52%), a situation which should be mastered by the new strategy of urbanisation.

**Key words:** urbanisation, transition, settlement network.

### INTRODUCTION

The basic goal of this study is to explore the main characteristics of the Romanian urbanisation. As methodology, the study is based on the synthesis of the results of existing publications and the evaluation of the official statistical data. On one hand, we approached the subject from network point of view, i.e. the analysis focused on the development of different levels of the network of urban settlements and the directions of movement of settlements within the network. On the other hand, the study is completed with a territorial approach, showing the territorial differences of urbanisation by historical regions and first-level administrative units. The changes in the internal structure of urban settlements are sketched only incidentally, mostly based on various observations, especially with regard to the period after the change of regime.

Three groups of factors had a decisive influence on the urban development of Romania: the historical background, the political situation and the economic situation. In my study I link the analysis of these three groups of factors to the evolution of urbanisation. Of course, a recurring theme is how the Romanian urbanisation fits into the general trends of urbanisation in Central and Eastern Europe, where and of what nature are the concurrence points, what are the particularities, and what causes them? A fundamental starting point for all this is that each society produces and reproduces its spaces, i.e. a specific spatial structure corresponds to each society.

### SOCIALIST URBANISATION (1948-1989)

In 1945 a new political and economic system, the socialism appeared, which created its specific spatial structure. It may seem odd, but the most intensive stage of urbanisation took place under socialism,

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and it was a very important part of the top-driven, centralised endeavour towards the modernisation of the society. Between 1948 and 1989 the proportion of urban population within the total population has risen from 23.4% to 53%. At the same time, this means that the socialism has created a very specific spatial structure, which is substantially different from the spatial structure of the western societies, especially through the dominance of state regulation processes. Its essence appears in the low intensity of the development of urban lifestyle, due to the fast pace and short period of the urbanisation and the low social integration capacity of large cities.

*Table 1. The urbanisation rate by historical regions.*

<b>Historical region</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1948</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2002</b>
Oltenia	13,1	13,3	33,7	43,8	43,8
Muntenia	16,6	15,6	35,4	43,1	39,6
Dobrogea	24,1	29,1	57,8	66,8	64,3
Moldova	24,9	19,5	37,5	45,7	42,5
Banat	17,8	21,4	51,9	49,9	56
Transilvania	16,1	19,5	52,4	61,4	60,3
Partium	19,8	18,3	44,7	58,4	47,3
Bucharest	100	97,7	100,0	100,0	100
Romania	21,4	23,4	47,5	54,5	52,7

Source: Trebici, Hristache (1986), census data (1992, 2002)

The most important processes of the period: the nationalisation in 1948; the collectivisation of the agriculture, which was carried out over a long time (1949-1962) and only on arable lands (the mountain areas were left out); the policy of industrial development, favouring the heavy industry and within this, the machine industry. Through these the state became the most important factor of the settlement network. Its primary role was amplified by the nationalisation of residential buildings and ground-plots, thus eliminating the market's role in the formation of the city structures. As Romania tried to compensate its underdevelopment in comparison with Western Europe mostly through industrialisation, the urbanisation reached its highest pace in the history of Romania (table 1). A cause of this is that the first phase of the socialist industrialisation (1948-1968) focused on the development of existing industrial centres, thus contributing to the further development of existing cities and especially the large industrial centres. Added to this is the new regional development concept of the 1970's, which considered the urban settlement category and lifestyle to be superior to the rural settlement category and lifestyle and envisaged the strong development of the first. The administrative classification had an important function distribution role, elevating the settlements that became definitive targets of state allocation. The three-tiered administrative system created in 1950 based on Soviet model: regions (28, later 18 and 16 regions), districts and towns, benefited the region centres, which were the most developed large cities. This is why in the first phase of socialist development, between 1950-1953, the fast industrial growth was concentrated in these centres, whose weight increased in the urban system (table 2). On the other hand, the towns that lost their role as chief towns of counties have been downgraded in the hierarchy of towns as a consequence (Ianoş, Tălângă 1994). As a result of this, in 1956, a strong concentration can be observed in large cities: half of the urban population was living in the top 20 towns (out of 172). The proportion of the population of large cities grew from 34.3% in 1948 to 42.9% in 1956, which can be explained by the growth of the number of towns, from 148 in 1948 to 171 in 1956. At the same time, the highest rate of socialist urbanisation (2.71%) was recorded in this short phase (Sandu 1984). In this period settlements with industrial and mining functions have received the rank of towns, as well as settlements with tourism functions and large villages in strongly rural areas. The first phase of socialist urbanisation was not a linear process. The emergence of new towns (33 between 1948 and 1956) was accompanied by a mild deurbanisation, by which 14 settlements have lost their status as towns, two thirds of them in Moldova. Most of them did not have an industrial function, they have only been market towns. 6 of these regained their town status in 1968, but the rest did not (Ianoş, Tălângă 1994).

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Table 2. The distribution of urban population by size categories in 1956, 1969 and 1977.

Population size categories	The share of population (%)			
	1956	1969	1977	1992
< 10 000	9,3	8,1	5,7	3,7
10 000-19 999	18,5	14,6	10,0	9,6
20 000-49 999	15,5	20	17,6	15,6
50 000-99 999	13,8	10,6	12,5	13,9
100 000-299 999	18,1	26,8	34,3	41,0
> 300 000	24,8	22,0	19,9	16,2
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 7 ianuarie 1992. Vol. 1. București. Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 15 martie 1966. Vol. 1. București.

The industrialisation phase between 1950-1953 was enough to trigger rural emigration (9,6‰) (Sandu 1984). After this period the pace of the industrialisation relapsed and we enter into the second phase of socialist development, the main goal of which is the cooperativisation of agriculture (1954-1962). This has already started in 1949, but the growth of investments in the agricultural sector exceeded the developments in industry only after 1954. As a consequence, the rate of rural emigration decreased, reaching its lowest value in the socialist era (an average of 5‰). The rate of urbanisation also reaches its lowest level (1,24% between 1954-1962).

Between 1963 and 1970 a transition period follows, when the public administration system and the management principles of the economy are reorganised (rural emigration of 6.7‰, eb.). Until 1966 there is a small increase in the number of towns, reaching 184. 238 suburban villages are added to this, which raises the urbanisation rate to 38.2%. A number of small towns are risen to town status between 1966-68. However, the concentration of the urban population in medium-sized and large cities could not be stopped. The most significant changes came with the reorganisation of public administration in 1968. The county system was reintroduced, which boosted the development of medium-sized chief towns of counties. The pace of the urbanisation is slowly increasing (1.5% between 1963-1970), then suddenly rises in the next intensive development phase of socialism: 2.28% between 1971-1980 (Sandu 1984). In this phase the urban development becomes more balanced territorially, through the more balanced distribution of new production units. In fact, a new, longer and stronger, fast industrial growth occurs between 1965-1978. This was followed by an increase in rural emigration (11‰, Sandu 1984). As a result of the measures taken in 1968 the proportion of urban population increased considerably. In this year all mining settlements and settlements with significant role in tourism received the town status (a total of 49), as well as a number of agricultural settlements, aiming to strengthen the lower levels of the network of towns. Following the concentration on small and medium-sized towns of the urbanisation after 1968, the weight of large cities within the town network decreased: from 50.5% in 1966 to 41% in 1989. The weight of Bucharest as primary city also decreased, from 24.8% in 1956 to 17.4% in 1985. In fact, after 1966, the weight of Bucharest in the Romanian town network did not change considerably: in 18.7% of the urban population lived in the capital city in 1966. In this period a large-scale migration of the population from rural to urban settlements took place. After 1950, the most important form of internal migration was from village to town, instead of the village-to-village migration before the war (Sandu 1984). By this, the village-to-town migration became the most important factor in the increase of urban population (73% between 1948-1977, including the villages turned into towns). Its contribution changed over time, but was always primary: 81% between 1948-1956, 78% between 1956-1966 and 64% between 1966-1977 (Sandu 1984).

The socialist urbanisation produced few new towns, namely two: one of them is the new centre of defence industry, Victoria (Brașov county), the other the "citadel" of chemical industry: Onești (1960), known as Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej during the socialist era (it is true that a small village by that name existed before, but the industrial area and the residential areas were new developments. A new Stalin City or Lenin City was not built, however Brașov was renamed Stalin City for a few years.

The industrialisation of rural areas remained low, as after 1968 the development focused on county chief towns and medium-sized towns. Especially the new county centres were developed, their population

quadrupled or tripled between 1966-1990. The newly established industrial enterprises could only function through the attraction of workforce from rural areas, but for this the appropriate pace of home building had to be ensured. Since the second half of the 1970's this was ensured solely through buildings from prefabricated elements in housing estates. The development of infrastructure and household services could not keep up with this, a fact illustrated by the indicators of the quality of life. For instance, a direct correlation cannot be ascertained - with the exception of extreme cases - between the level of urbanisation and the infant mortality (Trebici, Hristache 1986), which is clearly the effect of underdeveloped infrastructure. The development of the service infrastructure and of housing facilities could not keep up with the increased immigration of the population and the creation of new industrial jobs, especially in large cities. The collectivisation of the agriculture and the development of state-own agricultural enterprises released a large workforce in rural areas. Additionally, the fast growth rate of the population, particularly in Moldova, resulted in a strong internal village-to-town and inter-regional migration (from Moldova and Oltenia to Banat and Southern Transylvania, from Muntenia to Bucharest). The 1980's are the years of stagnation and crisis, shown by the slow-down of the urbanisation, as well. The only settlement to receive the town status is Rovinari (1983), a mining centre in Oltenia.

The leading principles and strategy of regional and settlement development were laid down in law no. 58 of 1974. This envisaged the rational utilisation of building grounds, the creation of modern settlements with a high level of urbanisation (Cucu 1977). The creation of 300-400 new towns was forecasted until 1990-2000 (eb.). The principle of agricultural-industrial "transition" centres has been elaborated, which should strengthen the lower level of the town network. These should have 5000 inhabitants, an area of attraction of 15-20 sqkm and provide services for 4-5 nearby communities (Cucu 1977). Between 1971-75, 340 settlements have been selected to be developed into towns through the introduction of processing industries, co-operative units and social, cultural and commercial institutions (eb.). 120 of these, i.e. 2-4 in each county, were already intended to become towns between 1976-1980. This was meant to develop a more balanced town network, as well as to prevent migration and the high concentration of the urban population (the inconvenience of agglomeration).

In spite of all this, the urbanisation slowed down in the 1980's (47.5% in 1977, 51.5% in 1982), and the plan to eliminate half of the rural settlements (about 6000 settlements), the so-called "systematisation" was not carried out either, because the necessary resources were missing, due to the priorities in that period of the Ceausescu regime: the repayment of foreign debts (partially through the export of agricultural products) and the accomplishment of large investment projects (Danube-Black Sea channel, Cernavoda nuclear power plant, the "People's House" in Bucharest etc.). At the same time, the focus is shifted to small towns, respectively the lower levels of the town network. This is meant to be strengthened and balanced when 23 new towns appear in 1989.

The particular feature of the previous urbanisation phase is maintained in socialism, as well: villages of various statuses are often added to the towns, in order to improve urbanisation indicators and aiming for a faster territorial diffusion of urbanisation. The general denomination of these settlements is "urban type settlements" (*localităţi de tip urban*). Three groups of these settlements are known in 1956:

- workers' centres (*centre muncitoreşti*) with at least 1000 inhabitants, 50% of them not employed in agriculture,
- communities adjacent to industrial centres (*comune limitrofe*), within max. 10 kms and min. 35% of the population not employed in agriculture,
- balneo-climatic resorts (*staţiuni balneo-climaterice*).

These are legally villages, but their population are counted as urban population. 183 urban type settlements appear in the census of 1956, their population is 13.3% of all urban population. The new towns appeared at the beginning of the 1960's originate from this category: Cugir, Luduş, Călan, Copşa Mică, Ferdinand, Becaş etc. (Nicolae 2002). Towns appear later, as well: Boldeşti-Scăeni, Valea Călugărească, Ţicleni, Căvnic (workers' centres in 1956), while some of the resorts are risen to the status of towns in 1968 (Băile Tuşnad, Ocna Sibiului, Borşa). In the last wave of socialist urbanisation, in 1989, further towns emerge from the list of 1956: Teiuş, Tâlmăciu, Dărmăneşti, Nehoiu, Bumbuşti-Jiu, Colibaşi (now: Mioveni), Aninoasa, Piatra Olt. Another part of them were industrialised and urbanised without receiving town status: Işalniţa (next to Craiova, thermal power plant), Brazi (next to Ploieşti, oil refinery), Ghimbav (next to Braşov, aeronautics), Albeşti (next to Sighişoara, textile industry), Săvineşti (next to Piatra Neamţ, chemical industry), Chişcani (next to Brăila, chemical industry) etc. At the 1966 census their number is significantly

higher than in 1956: 238 communities included in towns (*comune incluse/asmilate urbanului*) appear. In 1968 the category of villages belonging to towns was created (*sate aparținătoare*) with 232 such villages. This was meant to increase the demographic weight of small and medium-size towns. These are independent settlements, but they belong to the towns from administrative point of view. Beside these, the category of suburban communities (*comune suburbane*) is maintained, with 145 such settlements. Their number changes significantly only in 1981 (2 new suburban communities appear in 1973), when, with the creation of the Ilfov Agricultural District (by uniting the town of Buftea, 19 communities of Ilfov county and 12 suburban communities of Bucharest), the suburban community status of 12 communities around Bucharest is cancelled. By this time the population of suburban communities has reached 700,000, i.e. 6% of the urban population (Ianoș, Tălângă 1994). This situation (135 suburban communities with 543 settlements) is maintained until 1989 when this category is eliminated. By now only the category of component settlements (*localități componente*) is still in existence, with 363 such settlements, which in some cases have already ceased to exist as independent entities (Bistrița) and were transformed into town districts.

### THE TOWN NETWORK AFTER 1989

The collapse of socialism marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of the town network. After the change of regime in 1989, as in all Central and Eastern Europe, the conditions of urban development in Romania changed considerably (Kovács Z. 2002). Radical social and economical changes have occurred over a very short period of time. In the 1990's the direction and intensity of territorial reorganisation and urban development were determined by processes like the political democratisation (local initiatives and a stronger local power over the development path), the increased globalisation of the economy, the privatisation of the enterprises and of the real estate market (the prominence of market forces in the formation of the urban space structure), European integration, deindustrialisation, structural transformation of the industry, a drastical decrease of employment rate. The transformation of the society followed the changes in the economy: the surge of unemployment, pauperisation of certain social categories (retired, Roma), development of a new middle and upper class. The ensemble of these significant processes lead to the transformation of the settlement network and a significant change in the spatial structure of towns in a very short time.

The different towns reacted in different ways to the new situation, according to their capabilities, competitiveness and the development level of their institutional network. The country is characterised by a strong territorial concentration of foreign investments. The role of the geographical location has increased, the foreign working capital is concentrated in Bucharest, the large cities in the West of the country (Timișoara, Arad, Oradea, Satu Mare, Cluj, Sibiu) and a few large cities concentrating innovative and attractive large industrial enterprises (Galați, Ploiești, Pitești, Craiova). As a result of this, a strong differentiation of the settlement hierarchy has started, especially through the explosive development of Bucharest and the large cities. In fact, in the transition period the development and the investments were captured by the settlements at the top level of the hierarchy. The concentration of the institutions of the non-profit sphere (high-level public services: public administration, education, healthcare) in large cities played an important role in this process.

The large cities (especially Bucharest, but also Timișoara, Cluj, Ploiești, Bacău) with developing services are in a favourable position and can be considered the winners of the transition period, as well as the towns where the manufacturing industries producing a high added value are dominant (Pitești, Sibiu, Târgu Mureș, Alba Iulia etc.), the seaside urban agglomeration (Constanța-Năvodari-Mangalia) and the urban regions at the western border (Satu Mare, Oradea, Arad). On the other hand, the small and medium-sized towns, the declining industrial centres (Hunedoara, Reșița, Copșa Mică), the mining towns (the towns in the Jiu valley, Motru, Baraolt, Bălan etc.) and the county centres with artificially inflated population, with no local resources (Alexandria, Deva, Vaslui etc.) are in an unfavourable position. This is shown by the evolution of the population of towns between 1992 and 2002, when the population of the towns affected by the crisis decreased considerably through emigration. In this period the largest decline (about -20%) occurred in case of small and medium-size towns specialised on one branch of heavy industry or on mining: Făgăraș (chemical industry), Cugir (defence industry), Orșova (machine industry), Sinaia (machine

industry), Predeal, Dr. Petru Groza, Anina, Moldova Nouă, Uricani and Bălan (the last five are mining towns).

It has to be added that after the change of regime, the town network evolved under unfavourable demographic circumstances: the natural growth of the population decreased, and since 1995 became negative (-0,2‰ - -0,6‰), mainly due to the decrease of the birth rate (under 9‰) and of the fertility. However, the slow increase of the mortality rate also contributed to this, reaching values over 9‰ since 1995. The operation of the socialist closed city system produces an unusual statistical and demographical phenomenon in 1990: the urban population suddenly increased, namely by 139,000. In fact the people with temporary residence permit changed their status to permanent residents in towns. The dominant form of internal migration since 1997 has been the town-to-village migration, a situation never before encountered in the modern history of Romania. As a result, most towns have lost a part of their population between 1992 and 2002. The statistics show only a few exceptions: only Focșani (0,5%) among medium-size towns, two medium-small towns (25-50,000 inhabitants): Mioveni (5,6%), where the Dacia-Renault company is based (Argeș county) and Năvodari (2%), home of the largest capacity oil refinery (Constanța county) and several small towns (under 25,000 inhabitants). Some of these are located in areas that still have a positive natural growth (the towns of counties Vrancea, Argeș, Botoșani, Maramureș and Vaslui still have values above 1‰ in 2001), another group of them benefits from suburbanisation in the agglomerations of Bucharest and Constanța. The population of the remaining 246 towns decreased with various intensities. The large cities lost 6.9% of their populations between 1992 and 2002. The largest decrease was recorded in case of three large cities: Brașov (-12.1%), Constanța (-11.4%) and Galați (-8.4%). As a result, the population of Brașov and Galați is now under 300,000. The population decrease of the other large cities has been under the average, but only the situation of Craiova can be regarded as relatively stable with a decrease of -0,4%, which can be attributed to its positive natural growth and its regional polarisation role. The decrease of population in medium-sized towns (100-200,000 inhabitants) was more intensive than in the previous category (-8.6%). Piatra Neamț (-14.9%), Bacău (-14.4%) and Satu Mare (-12.7%) stand out with high negative values. In case of the latter, besides the deindustrialisation, the emigration of Germans and Hungarians was an important factor of the decrease of population. The decrease of population in small towns was the same as in case of medium-size towns (-8.6%), but this category includes the settlement with the largest population growth. However, this town category contains the settlements with the most intensive population decrease, i.e. this category has the lowest adaptiveness. The largest decrease (more than -15%) affected the heavy industry and mining centres in Transylvania, the small towns of the Prahova valley and a few peripheral and monostructured settlements. The concentration of the non-profit institutions has an effect on this level, as well: in the group of towns with 50-100,000 inhabitants the county centres had a lower rate of population decrease (under -10%) than other towns. Another general phenomenon is that the population of towns shows an increasing stability towards the top and bottom level of the town hierarchy from the central levels. This means that the highest stability is recorded on the two bottom levels of the hierarchy - 10-25,000 inhabitants, but especially towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants (-4.8%), with several examples of growing population as well -, respectively the top level, while the largest rate of decrease appears at the medium levels, especially the towns with 50-100,000 inhabitants (-9.6%).

The increase of the number of towns in the transition period is moderated, from 260 in 1990 to 266 in 2002. The six new towns: Făget (Timiș county), Teiuș (Alba), Baia de Arieș (Alba), Otopeni (Ilfov), Geoagiu-Băi (Hunedoara) and Bălcești (Vâlcea) are located in economically developed counties with a high level of urbanisation, and all of them have significant tertiary functions, as well: Otopeni is the home of the largest international airport in Romania, Teiuș is an important railway junction, and Geoagiu-Băi is a tourism centre. In spite of this, and as a result of the general deurbanisation trend, the proportion of urban population has decreased: the urbanisation level in 2002 was only 52.7%. Besides the deurbanisation process, the suburbanisation also contributed to the decrease, but to various degrees in different regions and only as a secondary factor. Basically the decrease of urban population in Romania in the post-socialist era is due primarily to the migration from towns back to villages, and secondly to a number of other processes (suburbanisation, decreasing and negative natural growth of the population, international migration). Although certain authors (Kovács Z. 2002) differentiate between welfare suburbanisation and migration due to necessity, and link these to certain regional models (the first in the northern states of Central and Eastern Europe, the latter in the southern states), both are present in Romania due to its transitional character. While welfare suburbanisation can be noticed in the more developed regions (Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, Târgu

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Mureş), the town-to-village migration due to deindustrialisation is dominant in the case of industrial and mining centres, as well as small and medium-size towns. By the way, as a result of the higher intensity economical rationalisation and privatisation programs started in 1997, the town-to-village migration became the dominant form of internal migration, respectively the number of people leaving the towns surpassed for the first time the number of people moving into towns (table 3). This phenomenon has been repeated every year since 1996, therefore we can speak about a real trend.

Table 3. The structure of rural and urban inner migration (mille).

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	11,3	12,9	10,6	11,7	12,8	13	13,4	12,3	12,3	10,9	12,7	14,7
From rural to urban	10,7	9,4	6,9	6,6	5,9	5,9	5,6	4,9	4,7	3,9	5,7	6,2
From urban to rural	2,5	3,8	3,4	4,7	5,8	6,7	7,9	7,7	8,3	8,1	7,8	9,5
From urban to urban	4,3	5,8	5	5,6	6,1	6,5	6,1	5,9	6	4,7	6,4	7,2
From rural to rural	4,7	6,3	5,7	6,5	7,8	7	7,6	6,4	5,9	5,5	5,6	6,8

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 2000, 2002, 2003, Bucharest.

The migration back towards the places of origin is of selective nature, i.e. it concentrates on semi-peripheral villages situated close to towns, capable of fulfilling their basic function. The situation is directly linked to the disappearance of industrial jobs, which occurred on a large scale especially in medium-size and small towns. Interestingly, the large cities remained attractive and their migration balance is better. This means that the higher cost of living in large cities was not a problem, especially for those who could buy at a low price the homes in which they were living in 1989, therefore have a permanent home. The new employment possibilities appeared as a result of the segmentation of the labour market are added to this. The migration out of necessity has in fact two directions: part of it appears as international migration, the other part as town-to-country migration. In the latter case the household subsistence farming and the increase of the proportion of agricultural workers are relevant and are a specifically Romanian feature, but it is the result of a rational decision under the circumstances of a serious economical crisis rather than an exceptional process.

The suburbanisation manifested itself with regional differences, and regarding this I base my statements only on census statistics and empirical observations, because a systematic analysis and explanation of this phenomenon has not yet been carried out. Between 1992-2002, the population of 280 communities located in the immediate attraction region of town centres has increased by 6.6% (2,060,125 inhabitants). The strongest suburbanisation appeared in the largest urban agglomeration of Romania, in the suburban area of Bucharest, where the changes that occurred resulted in metropolis-type tendencies (Nicolae 2002). 50 communities are included in the suburban area of Bucharest, and only three of these are towns, therefore the urbanisation level is only 11%. Between 1992-2002, the population of the capital decreased by 6.7%. The population of the communities located at greater distances and of the towns within the agglomeration also decreased, while that of the communities situated in the vicinity of Bucharest increased, thus providing a statistical proof for the suburbanisation phenomenon. With the regress of the industrial function, commuting was reduced, but the residential and commercial function gained importance. For instance, new shopping centres appeared on the territory of nearby settlements, like "Prisma" (Corbeanca), "Metro" (with three sites: Otopeni, Militari, Voluntari), new production units like Tuborg in Pantelimon, as well as new housing estates, usually with luxury villas like the "Băneasa Residential Park" built on the eastern side of Băneasa forest (in Pipera). Incidentally, out of the 5400 building permits issued in Ilfov county until 2002 (the number of actual buildings is larger, because several buildings can be included in one permit), 61.5% were issued to residents of Bucharest (Nicolae 2002). 53.1% of these are concentrated in the 12 former suburban communities (Otopeni has become a town in the meantime), the rest is distributed in the other 26 communities (none were requested for Buftea). Especially the northern and north-eastern communities of the agglomeration are dynamic, they have better traffic and public services infrastructure and varied landscape (forests, lakes).

The suburbanisation appeared with different intensity and in different forms in the other regions of Romania. It has to be noted that this process is strongly influenced not only by the cultural/urbanisation

models developed, but also by economic factors. For instance, the population of the Pitești agglomeration (Argeș county), consisting of two towns – Mioveni and Ștefănești – and 14 communities, recorded a growth above the average, of 7.1%, which is not just the result of the suburbanisation but also of the Dacia-Renault investment and other business developments. A growth above the average was recorded in case of the Constanța, Sibiu, Cluj and Timișoara agglomerations, as well. In case of some Transylvanian towns it is likely that the high natural growth of the Roma contributed to the population growth, as in the case of Brașov (5.3%). At the same time, another specifically Transylvanian phenomenon is the growth of the agglomeration of several medium-size towns, as well: Dej, Turda, Mediaș, Bistrița, Alba Iulia, which can be explained by the effect cultural factors. The lack of suburbanisation can be noticed in case of towns in Oltenia (with the possible exception of the regional centre, Craiova), as well as in Moldova, where a possible suburbanisation is accompanied by high natural growth. In the absence of empirical analyses we can even assert that this is the primary cause for the high population growth in communities located near towns.

## CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion we can state that the basic features of the urbanisation in Romania are determined by the type of society. In the analysed period the ratio of rural and urban population has changed considerably, yet the urbanisation level is still below the values reached in Western Europe. All stages of modern town development were accompanied by the attempt to increase artificially the proportion of urban population by defining various legal space categories (suburban communities, communities included in towns, urban type settlements etc.). The settlement development policy started in the 1970's lead to the explosive development of medium-size towns, while in the 1980's the number of low-level small towns grew. All this resulted in a relatively balanced town hierarchy (fig. 1) in comparison with other East-European countries. The weight of Bucharest in the network decreased gradually (from 22% in 1996 to 16.2% in 2002), without losing its top position. The disproportion between the capital and regional centres is also maintained. The difference between the top of the town hierarchy (Bucharest) and the second level (regional centres) is large, but not as large as in the town system of Hungary, for instance. The ratio between the two levels was 6:1 in 2002, which indicates the persistence of the primate city phenomenon, but it is less than the 10:1 ratio of Hungary. A 4:1 ratio exists between the second (five towns) and the third (19 towns), respectively third and fourth (80 towns) levels (based on population), and the same ratio is valid at the level of medium-size towns (20,000-100,000 inhabitants) (table 4), therefore the structure is more balanced than in Hungary at this level of the hierarchy, as well. The economic situation of the towns of this level is a problem. As mentioned before, the towns of this level have the lowest adaptiveness to the new economic environment, which is mostly due to the fact that this town level developed especially as a result of the forced industrialisation after 1968, and its economic structure is often unilateral (mining towns, metallurgical centres). The lowest level comprises 161 small towns. the majority of these are agricultural, with rural features, same as the situation in Hungary.]

*Table 4. The distribution of cities by their population size in 2002.*

Population	Cities		Population	
	Nr.	share (%)	Nr.	share (%)
< 10 000	78	29,3	534 130	4,7
10 000-19 999	83	31,2	1 127 090	9,7
20 000-49 999	59	22,2	1 808 819	15,6
50 000-99 999	21	7,9	1 512 034	13,0
100 000-299 999	19	7,1	3 087 884	26,7
> 300 000	6	2,3	3 495 907	30,3
Total	266	100,0	11 565 864	100,0

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 2003, București, data of the 2002 census.



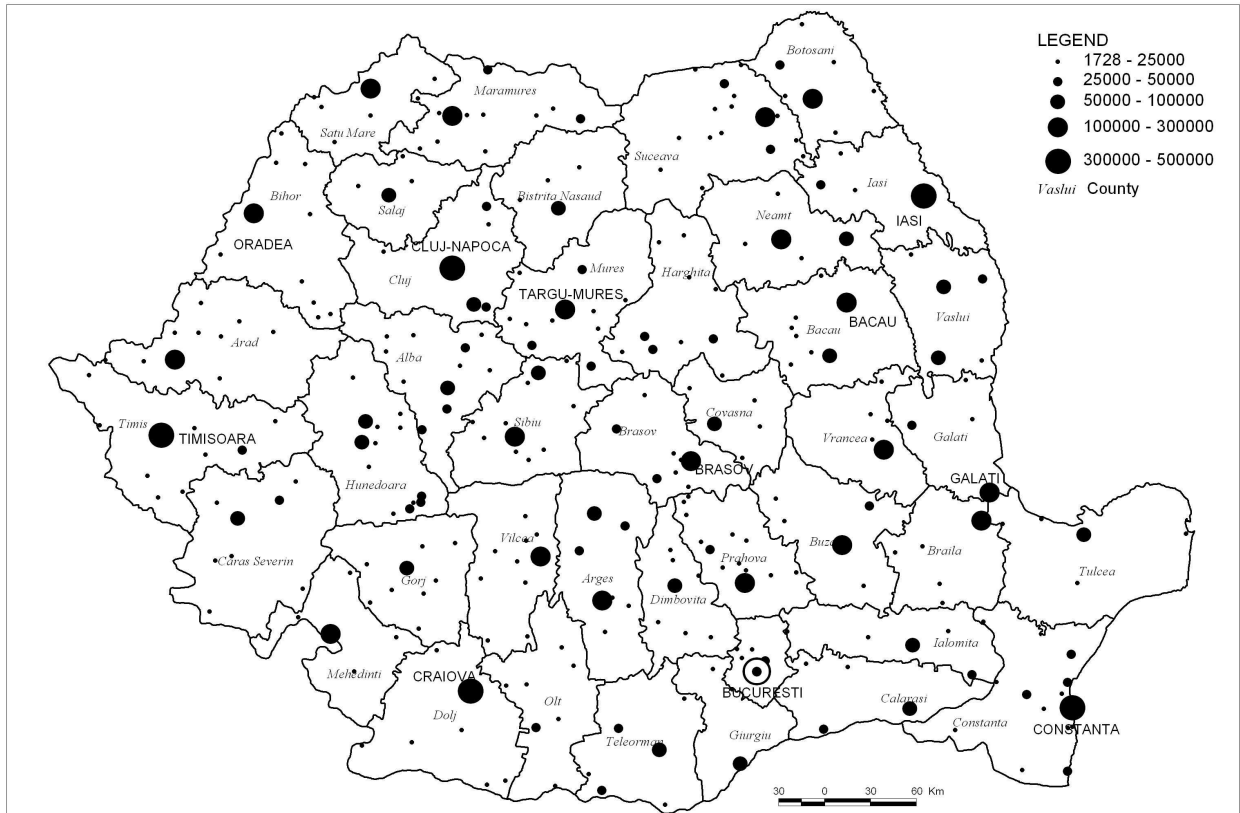


Fig.1. The Territorial Distribution and the Size of the Towns in Romania.

A further remark refers to the unbalanced territorial distribution of towns (fig. 1): on one hand, regions with a dense town network have developed or consolidated (the București-Prahova-Brașov axis, the seaside stripe, the Siret valley, the row of towns in Southern Transylvania, the West-Transylvanian line), on the other hand large areas without towns still exist (Mezőség, Eastern Moldova, Western Highlands, Getic plateau etc.). This situation is illustrated by the distribution of towns on counties, respectively the urbanisation level of counties, as well. Counties Bistrița-Năsăud, Sălaj, Satu Mare, Botoșani, Vaslui, Iași, Neamț, Ialomița, Galați, Buzău and Brăila had 4 towns each in 2002, most of these the result of the small town development strategy of the 1980's. The most highly urbanised counties (>60% urban population) are counties with old urban traditions (Hunedoara) or high economic development level (Timiș, Brașov, Sibiu, Cluj, Constanța etc.). (fig. 2). An important element of the post-communist change in spatial structure is the suburbanisation. So far a systematical and comprehensive survey of this has not been carried out. However, we can state that in the regions with a higher economic development a western-type suburbanisation has started, while in other regions, especially Moldova and Oltenia, a town-to-village migration driven by necessity and the high natural growth of village population had a more important role.

It is also noteworthy that the town hierarchy based on population has not changed materially between 1930 and 2002 (table 5). Only two new towns appear (Pitești and Baia Mare), while Focșani and Giurgiu disappeared from this list. This is also valid if 1910 is taken as reference base, with the exceptions that Constanța appears in the ranking in 1930, and on the lower positions of the hierarchy there are a number of towns before Bacău and Giurgiu (Bârlad, Huși, Piatra-Neamț, Roman, Tulcea and Turnu Severin). It can be noticed that the towns of the western lowland (Arad, Oradea, Satu Mare) have lost positions in the ranking, while Bacău gained positions. However, the first three positions seem to be very stable. Timișoara is constantly among the top cities, it was even third in 1966 (behind Bucharest and Cluj). Brașov used to be in a higher position (5th in 1966), its current position (8) is due to the problems related to the restructuring of the economy in the transition period. Comparing the current situation with 1966, the spectacular fall of two towns, Reșița and Hunedoara comes into view. Both are centres of heavy industry and metallurgy that were not considered a priority in the intensive industrialisation waves of the 1970's and had difficulties adjusting to the new economic environment after 1989.

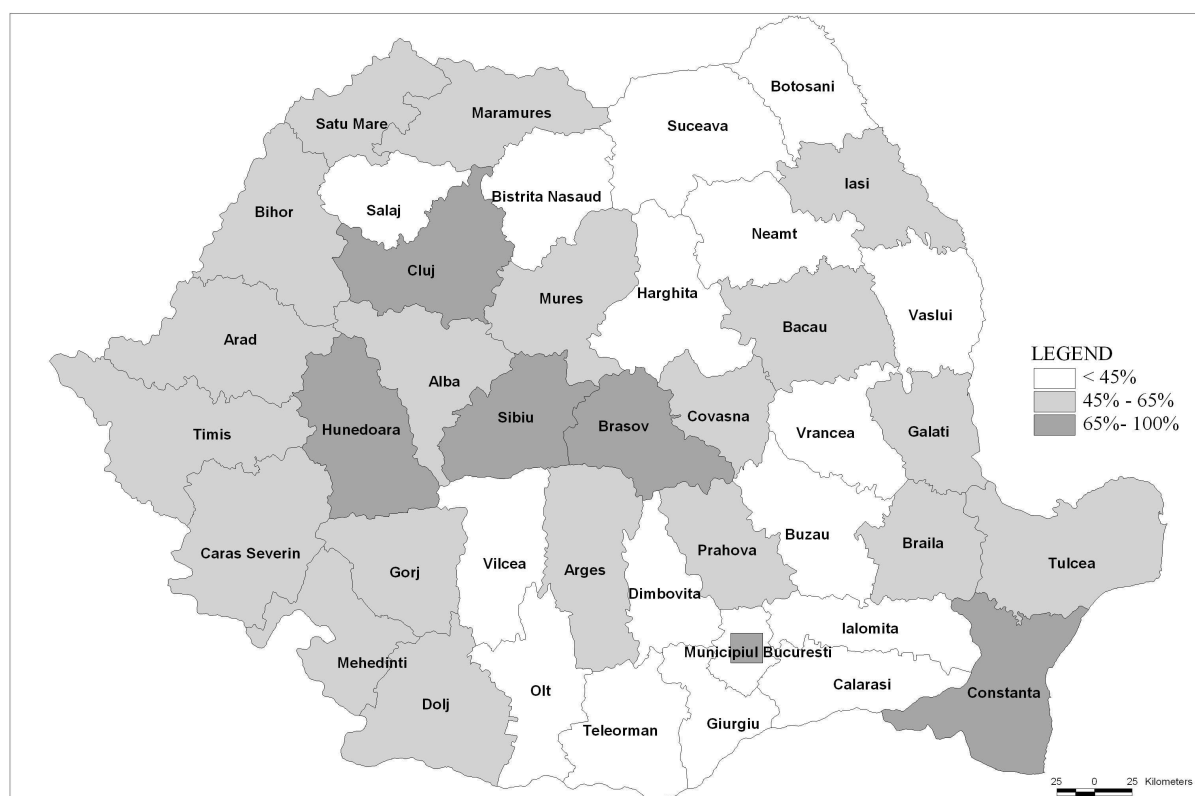


Fig. 2. The urbanisation rate of the counties.

Table 5. The rank of the towns by population in 1930 and 2002.

Rank	1930		2002	
	Town	Population	Town	Population
1	Bucharest	639.040	Bucharest	1.926.334
2	Iași	102.872	Iași	320.888
3	Cluj-Napoca	100.844	Cluj-Napoca	317.953
4	Galați	100.611	Timișoara	317.660
5	Timișoara	91.580	Constanța	310.471
6	Oradea	82.687	Craiova	302.601
7	Ploiești	79.149	Galați	298.861
8	Arad	77.181	Brașov	284.596
9	Brăila	68.347	Ploiești	232.527
10	Craiova	63.215	Brăila	216.292
11	Brașov	59.232	Oradea	206.614
12	Constanța	59.164	Bacău	175.500
13	Satu Mare	51.495	Arad	172.827
14	Sibiu	49.345	Pitești	168.458
15	Târgu-Mureș	38.517	Sibiu	154.892
16	Buzău	35.687	Târgu-Mureș	150.041
17	Focșani	32.481	Baia-Mare	137.921
18	Botoșani	32.355	Buzău	134.227
19	Bacău	31.138	Satu Mare	115.142
20	Giurgiu	31.016	Botoșani	115.070

Source: Census data from 1930 and 2002.

Analysing the longest period (1912-2002), the significant decrease in population of a couple of towns, respectively the century-long stagnation of another; Sulina, port-town in the Danube Delta (-37%) and Ocnele Mari, a salt-mining centre near Râmnicu Vâlcea (-30%), respectively Ocna Sibiului (Sibiu county), a former salt-mining centre that shows a very moderate growth (1.3%). The other towns that already had the town status in 1912 have grown, but to various extents. The largest growth was recorded in case of the new county chief towns created in 1968 (Miercurea Ciuc with a top figure of 1035%, then Râmnicu Vâlcea, Slobozia, Târgu Jiu, Suceava, Deva, Slatina, Zalău, Sfântu Gheorghe, Târgoviște, Vaslui, Bistrița, Alba Iulia), the heavy industry centres (Mangalia with a maximum value of 1980%, Hunedoara with 1476%, Constanța with 1041%, then Baia Mare, Bacău, Pitești, Medgidia, Brașov, Mediaș, Târnăveni, Craiova, Târgu Mureș). Bucharest follows only after these (with 464%), which also indicates that the agglomeration process is over its peak, and its population growth rate has slowed down in the past decades, and after 1992 it changed into a suburbanisation trend. The small towns situated near the northern, western and eastern border - Salonta, Carei, Sighetu Marmăției, Siret and Rădăuți (Suceava), Isaccea and Huși (Vaslui) -, as well as the small towns with agricultural and mining function - Slănic (Prahova), Odobești (Vrancea), Târgu Ocna (Bacău) and Dumbrăveni (Sibiu) - have a relatively low growth rate (under 100%). The lowest growth rates in the category of large cities were also recorded in case of the towns located near the border (mainly Arad and Oradea), clearly demonstrating the accumulation in time of the disadvantages coming from their peripheral position.

Another fruit of the change of regime is the elaboration of a new settlement network development strategy in 2001, as part of the National Regional Development Plan, more specifically the fourth section of it (law no. 351 of 2001). In this the settlements are classified in six levels (ranks), based on five criteria (geographical position, population, accessibility, economical functions, as well as development level of the institution network and of the infrastructure).

- Rank 0: Bucharest;
- Rank I: 11 municipalities with national and European importance: Oradea, Timișoara, Cluj, Brașov, Craiova, Ploiești, Brăila, Galați, Bacău and Iași;
- Rank II: 81 municipalities with regional and county-level importance (Baia Mare, Târgu Mureș, Alba Iulia, Miercurea Ciuc, Suceava etc.). This group also includes a number of small towns, the attraction centres of rural microregions (Aiud, Târgu Secuiesc, Vatra Dornei etc.);
- Rank III: 172 towns with microregional attraction area;
- Rank IV: 2686 community centres;
- Rank V: 10,408 villages, comprised in communities, towns and municipalities.

The local taxes and fees are determined according to this ranking; these taxes are the highest in the top-ranked settlements and decrease proportionately towards lower ranks. From the urbanisation point of view it is important that the law reformulates the conditions required for the town, respectively municipality status (table 6).

This is the first law since 1945 that ties the granting of the town status to the fulfilment of very specific quantitative conditions. Based on the analysis of these we can formulate a few remarks:

- the “population” criterion sets low figures in comparison with the countries of Southern Europe (Spain, Italy) or the Netherlands, but relatively high in comparison with similar figures in Northern Europe. Still we can state that a relatively large number of rural settlements fulfil this criterion in Romania, the real difficulties arise in fulfilling of the further conditions;
- the above condition is rendered relative by the economic, social and infrastructure conditions, the fulfilment of which is the main difficulty in the accession to the town status. In fact, a number of existing towns do not meet the new conditions defined by the law;
- the conditions defined in table 6 are basically meant to ensure that the new urban centres become centres offering a relatively wide scale of services to their attraction areas, thus reducing the territorial distribution of public services and the related operating costs;
- the introduction of criteria related to the protection of the quality of environment gave an ecological dimension to the accession to the town status.

Table 6. Conditions of achieving the urban status.

Indicators	Municipiums	Towns
Population	25 000	5 000
Share of active people in off-farm activities	85	75
Share of households with water supply	80	70
Share of households with bathroom and WC instal	75	55
Number of hospital beds on 1000 inhabitants	10	7
Number of doctors in 1000 inhabitants	2,3	1,8
Education institutions	Post-liceum	Secondary schools
Cultural and sport institutions	theatre, musical institutions,	Public libraries, rooms for sport activities
	libraries, sport halls, stadium	
Number of beds in hotels	100	50
Share of modernised roads	60	50
Share of streets with gas instalations	70	60
Share of streets with canalisation	60	50
Sewage cleaning	Cleaning station with mechanical biological technologies	Cleaning station with mechanical technologies
Green areas (parks, public gardens) sm/inhabitant	15	10

Source: Monitorul Oficial nr. 408 (2001), with modifications.



Fig. 3. New Towns.

At the same time, law 351/2001 defined the regions with a shortage of towns and specified the development of these regions as a fundamental goal of regional development. These are rural microregions (a total of 17) where there are no towns within a distance of 25-30 km. The developments of the last three years point to the strengthening of the small town level, because in this short period 46 settlements received the town status (fig. 3), which represents the most intensive growth of the number of towns in Romania, surpassing all of the previous phases. Most of the settlements that received town status appeared in 2004, a smaller number of them in 2003 and in 2002. The total population of the new towns is 387,915, raising the urbanisation level of the country by two percentage points (54.53%), which thereby is again at the level from 1992, compensating for the effects of the town-to-village migration. Based on their population, mostly villages with a high average population received the town status, only three of the new towns has a population less than 5000, while a few of them exceed the population of existing small towns (the most populous is Voluntari, in the Bucharest agglomeration, with 30,000 inhabitants).

The majority of new towns do not fulfil the requirements set down in the 2001 settlement development law (table 6). It also has to be noted that many of the new towns do not belong to the regions with town shortage defined in law 351/2001, but to existing urbanisation core areas, thus enhancing the existing regional differences. The most spectacular change occurred in the urbanisation level of certain counties. More specifically, the urbanisation level of Suceava county grew by 10 percentage points, while that of Ilfov county by 15 percentage points. While Ilfov still has the lowest urbanisation level (25%), Suceava (43%) has left the group of counties with a low urbanisation level, along with Botoşani, Vaslui, Ialomiţa and Neamţ. Thereby the urbanisation map of Romania is practically redrawn, based on the aforementioned indicator.

Functionally the situation is different. In the new towns, with a few exceptions, the agricultural sector is still dominant, and the probability of a diversification of the local economical structure is slim. Additionally, the new towns created in the regions with town shortage have significant infrastructure deficiencies. The above tendencies confirm the appearance of political voluntarism as a town development factor, respectively the political elite uses the issue of the town status, for the first time since 1989, as an instrument to gain (and preserve) political power.

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