



The Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț Axis of Communication.

Quantity and Quality Changes of the Professional Structures between 1992 and 2002

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The Moldavian Sub-Carpathians, just like the entire Sub-Carpathian ensemble that borders the Carpathians in the East, South-East and South, have quite a modest width that generally does not go over 40 kilometres. This feature cannot give this region a significant territorial unity; therefore the binding was possible only as an alveolar shape inside the depressions, where the natural, social and historical conditions have allowed the appearance and development of urban centres. This leads to the creation of a longitudinal connection axis in the Sub-Carpathians, even though it always had less importance than the transversal ones.

To this category it also belongs the Sub-Carpathian axis of communication that connects Piatra Neamț and Târgu Neamț, axis that has been active mainly in the 18th century, due to the quick development of today's main town here. If both towns (with similar positioning) were already landmarks of trans-Carpathian roads one following the Valley of the Bistrița River and the other one the Valley of Ozana, at the same time there was a connection along the Sub-Carpathians going up North till Baia and Suceava and South to the Oituz Passing¹.

Logically, in a place where traditions are quite well preserved, the existence of this way of communication brings dynamism and modernity, be it demographic or economic that is expected to be channelled mainly here.

One has to identify from 1992 to 2002 the dynamic features of the main echelon of this structural type – the active population. From this point of view, the data and the graphic representation based on them (figure 1 and figure 2) show us – on the background of a general decrease of 6%, from 50,1% to 44,1% - quite an even situation, the minuses being always explained by the differences that come with the territory.

Actually, the two towns follow the general tendency, but each on its own pace, while Târgu Neamț is over the average (-8,6%) the decrease is visibly less for Piatra Neamț (of only -3,7%). Thus, on the background of the general demographic ageing, the most affected were the villages where, before 1998, the economy was based on the winning of timber, whether they belonged to the axis in question or not: Crăcăoani (-23,3%) Filioara (-19,2%) Mitocu Bălan (29%) as opposed to the dynamic villages more attractive due to the agro-tourism (Agapia 0,6%) the balneal tourism – Bălțătești (-1,1%) or the closeness to a nearby town (Văleni with only 0,4%) Exceptions to this negative tendency are the villages with little population (both total and active one) such as Almaș (+1,2%) but mostly Cășăria (+11,2%). However one thing is for sure though, during time this rural area has registered negative values as the active population regards, but the decrease has taken place at a different speed for each of these villages.

As the structure of the active population is regarded, the changes that have appeared from 1992 and 2002 are the same with the ones that can be noticed at a larger scale (provinces or even at the national scale) and they lie in the decrease in the percentage of the active population (from 95,6% to 83,5%) at the same time with the increase in the number of the unemployed population (from 4,4% to 16,5%).

¹ One should not forget that these axes have their own dynamics, in our case, a century ago the road that connects Piatra Neamț and Târgu Neamț passed through Bodești, Ghindăoani and Grumăzești over the Corni Hill. Only later, especially because of its insecurity the axis took today's road, through Bălțătești over the passing that bears the same name.

Even in this case the dynamics of the changes is quite different: in 1992 there were places where the active population was of 100% - a fact worth mentioning – even though it was only specific to the very small villages (Doamna, Poiana Crăcăoani and Cășăria) or to the ones made up mostly of monastic population (Văratec).

Later on though, the evolution of the number of active population was a generally descending one due to these villages' marginal position, their small dimensions and the demographic ageing, all this leading to significant decrease as it happened with Doamna (-32,6% between the two censuses) or Blebea (-24,8%). One thing that draws attention is that on the same evolution line one could find another series of villages positioned near Târgu Neamț or Piatra Neamț, but, this time, along the axis we are analyzing such as Săcălușești (-17,7%), Humuleștii Noi (-17%) or, a little more South, Văleni (-27%). Here, close to the towns, the significant increase in the number of the unemployed population (in both relative and absolute values) is due mainly to the coming back of the urban workers that had been formerly engaged in the industry, resorting to this social strategy led to a disorder within a structure based on less significant echelons. Besides, even though the size of these villages is not impressive, it is perfectly logical that the population here to be attracted by the industrial activity in town, the daily commutation being easy to be done.

The unemployment is less significant for the villages close to the main axis of communication and demographic ageing does not always motivate it, this time the social de-structuring induced by the communist industrialization was not that strong so that the post communist shock had less impact (in Valea Seacă, for instance, where from 1992 to 2002 the number of the unemployed people increased only by 1,1%, Bodeștii de Sus (0,5%), Cuejdiu (1,7%) and Filioara (1,2%).

On the other hand, both towns have evolutions very similar to the local average, the bankruptcy and the re-organizing of some of the industrial units leading to an increase in the number of the unemployed persons by 13% in Piatra Neamț and 13.8% in Târgu Neamț. This temporal dynamics of the active population has had an impact not only quantitatively, but the qualitatively as well, namely on the structures. Just like the tendencies that have been noticed in the entire country and in all provinces, for the area under discussion, the three most important activity sectors have been subject, in the last four decades, to a series of changes brought about firstly by a forced economy and more recently by today's free economy (figure 5 and figure 6).

In comparison with the other areas, in this case, the decrease in the percentage of the population engaged in industry (from 58% to 38,5%) is due to the more people engaged in the third sector (from 31,4% to 50,4%) and to a slight increase of the population working in the primary sector (from 10,6% to 11,1%).

But this evolution is not necessarily the result of a free choice from a larger range of options; it was rather imposed by the changes in the Romanian economic system. Agriculture has always been the last on the list of preferences, the least attractive, because of the great effort it implies, of its isolation from the town and, therefore, from the modern and the poor and unsure results one could obtain in the end no matter the time we are talking about. Being an agricultural worker has been a refuge for those who, from one reason or another, have not made it as an industrial worker or as a clerk, but also for those who had but who lost it after 1989. Since this type of structure has the feature of a compensatory sum, it is compulsory that the analysis should take into account the differences in terms of attractiveness or repulsiveness of a certain sector or another. Consequently, when referring to Piatra Neamț and Târgu Neamț, the decrease in the primary sector (by -1,6% and respectively, -0,2%, in comparison with 1992) is due to the disappearance of the collective agricultural units: this is even more obvious in the case of villages that are very close to towns (Săcălușești by 13,8%, Ciritei by -6,4%) or those villages made up mainly of monastic population (Văratec - 29,7%) or because of the recent appearance of industrial units dealing mainly with timber winning (Dobreni by -20,8%).

On the other hand, the most significant increase of the active population engaged in the primary sector can be noticed in the villages where the people coming back from towns have sided with those there were left unemployed after the disappearance of the local industrial units (Cracăul Negru with no less than 56,7% or Cuejdiu 28,4%) just like some other villages in the South of the Neamț Depression, close to our axis of communication (Bălțătești 18,3%, Valea Arini 17,3% and Valea Seacă 21,7%).

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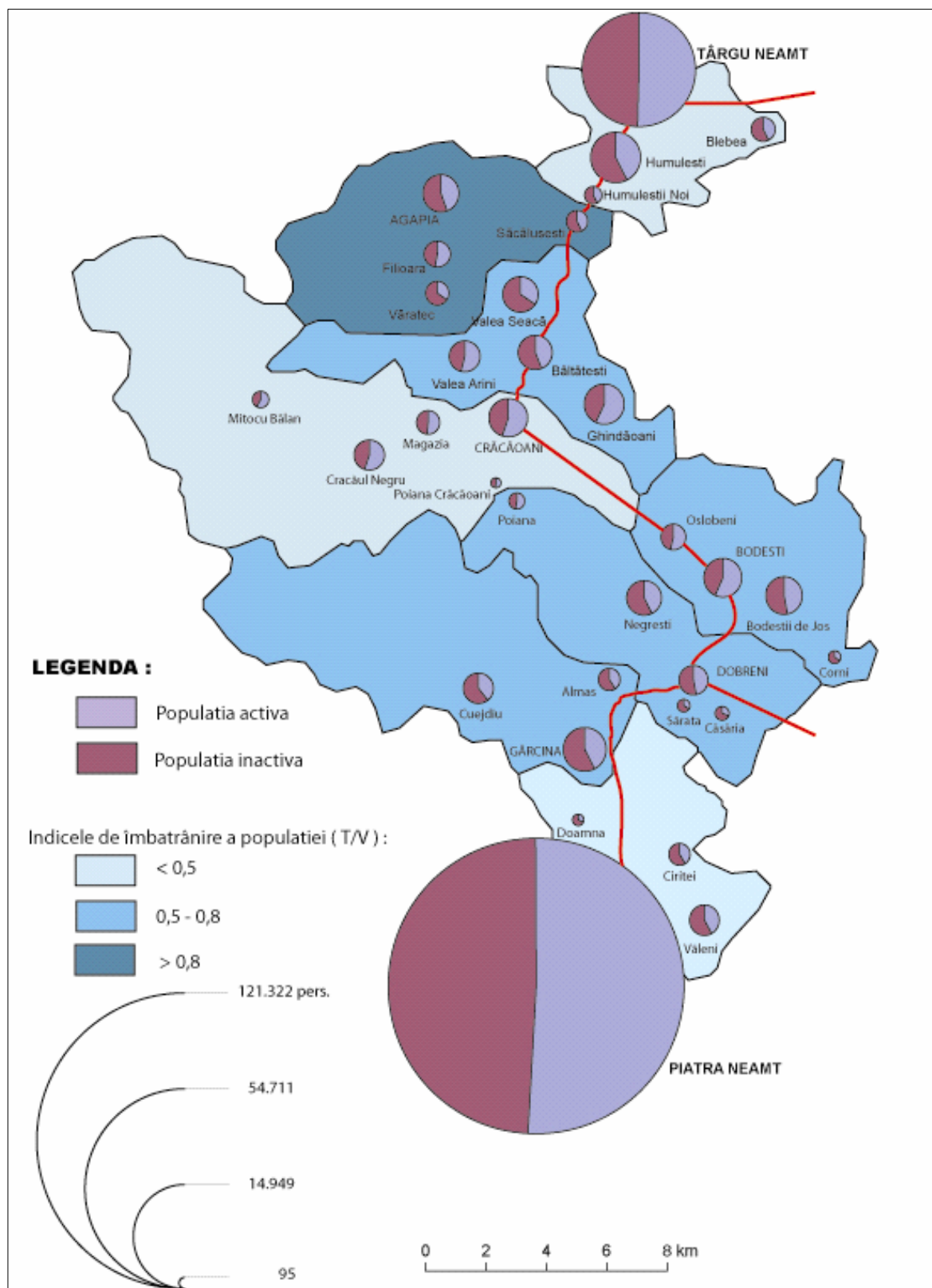


Figure 1. The Sub-Carpathian Axis of Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț. The ratio of the active population from the total population in 2002.

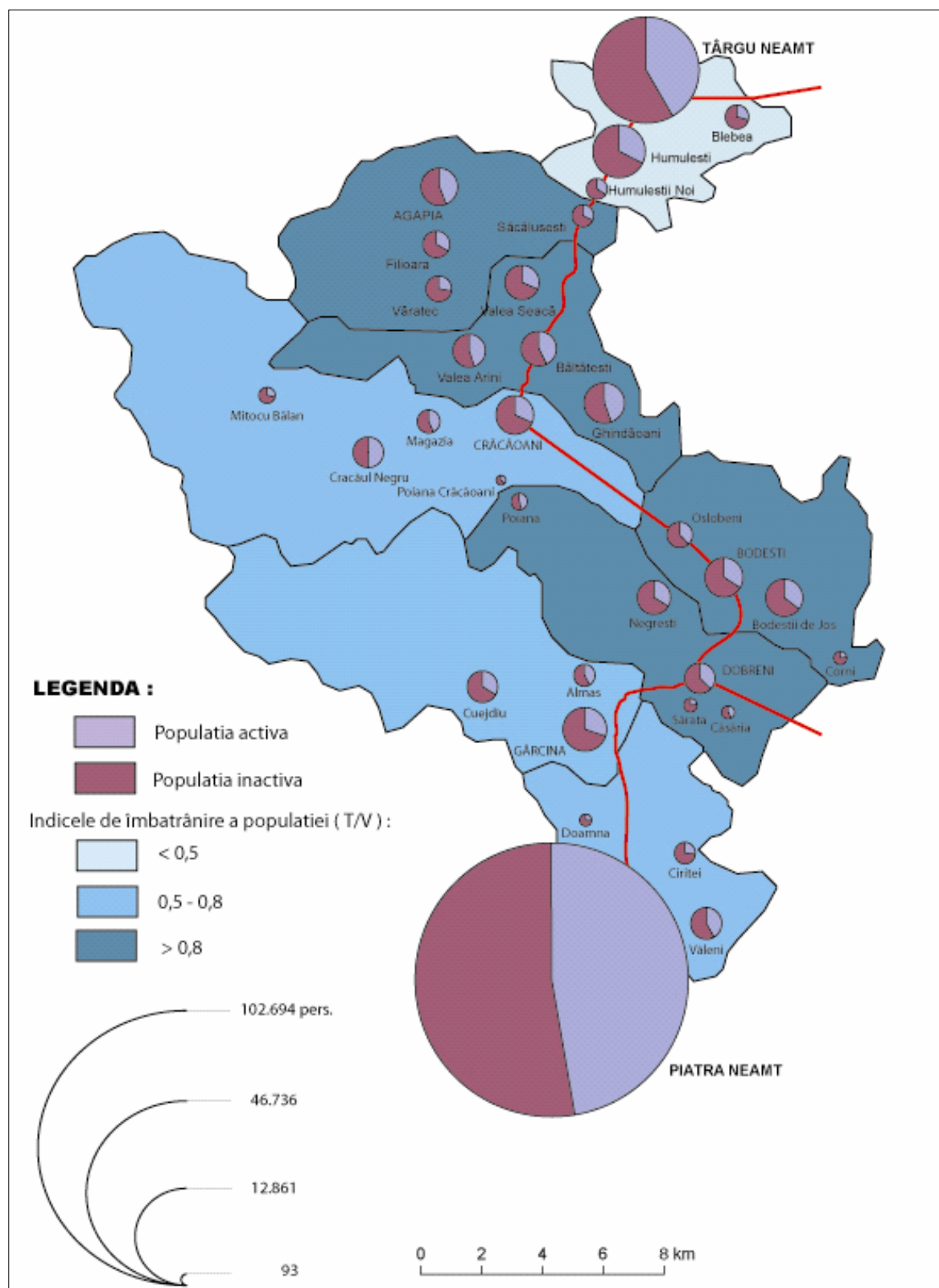


Figure 2. The Sub-Carpathian Axis of Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț. The ratio of the active population from the total population in 2002.

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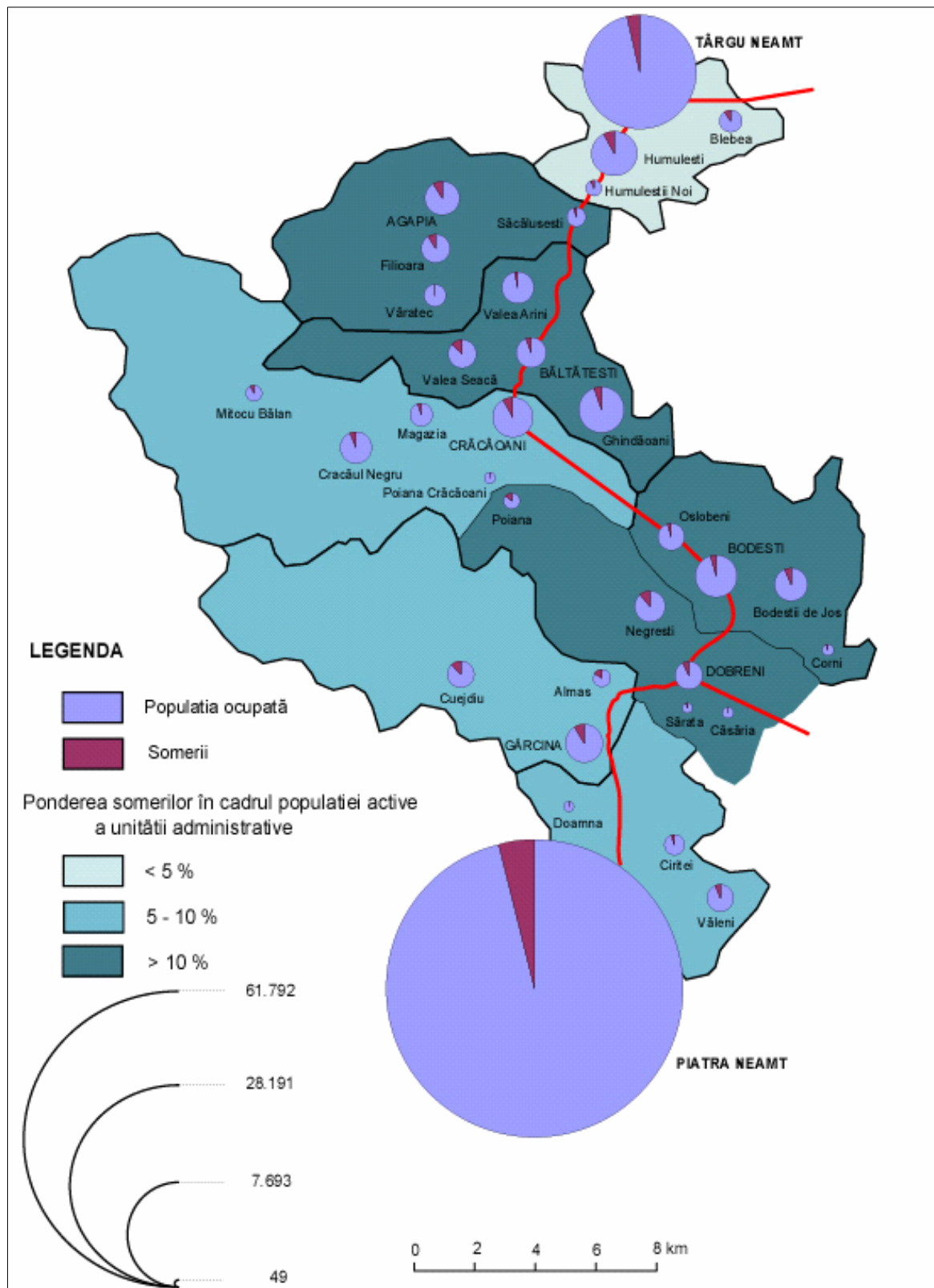


Figure 3. The Sub-Carpathian Axis of Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț. The structure of the active population in 1992.

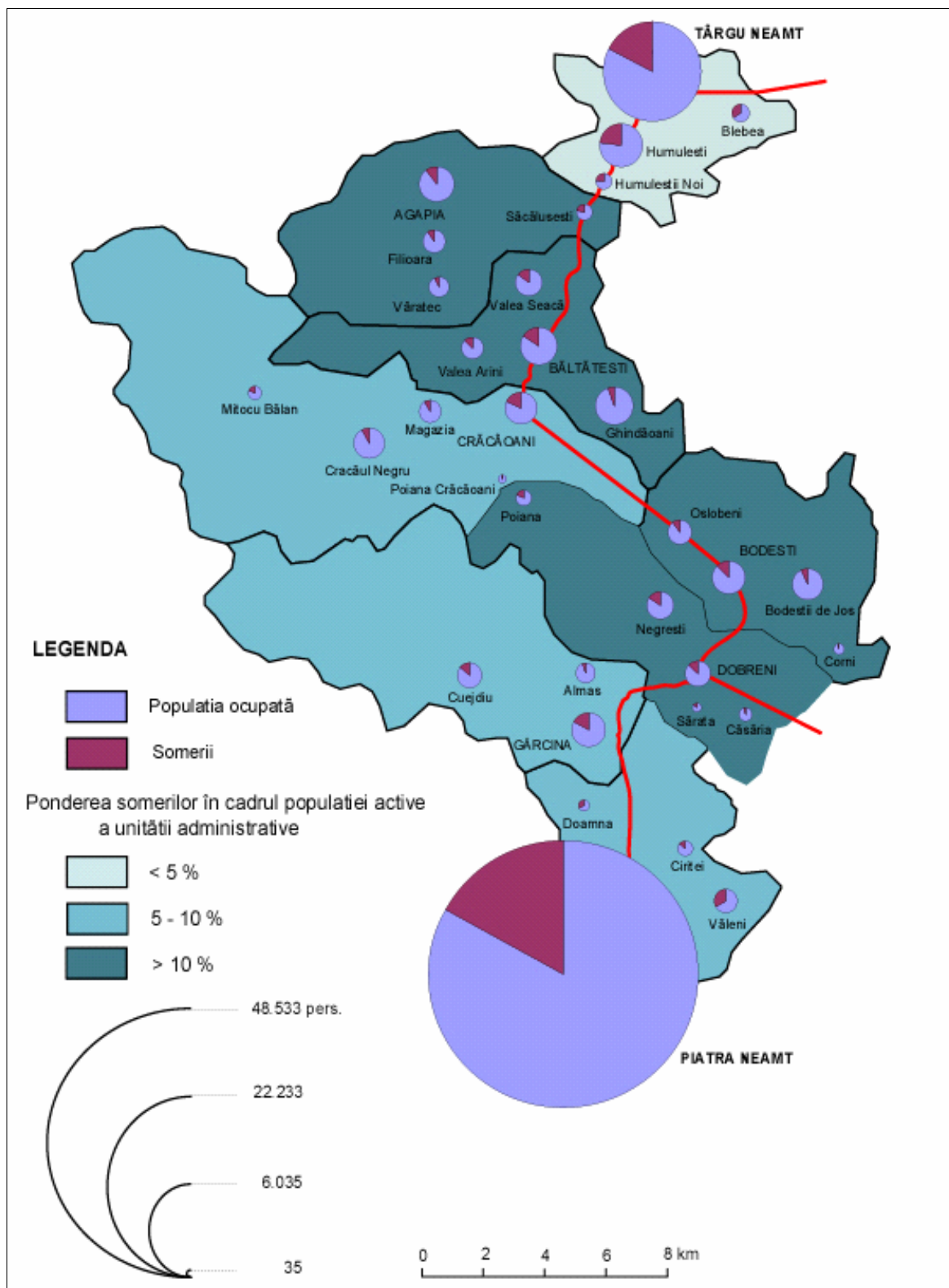


Figure 4. The Sub-Carpathian Axis of Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț. The structure of the active population in 2002.

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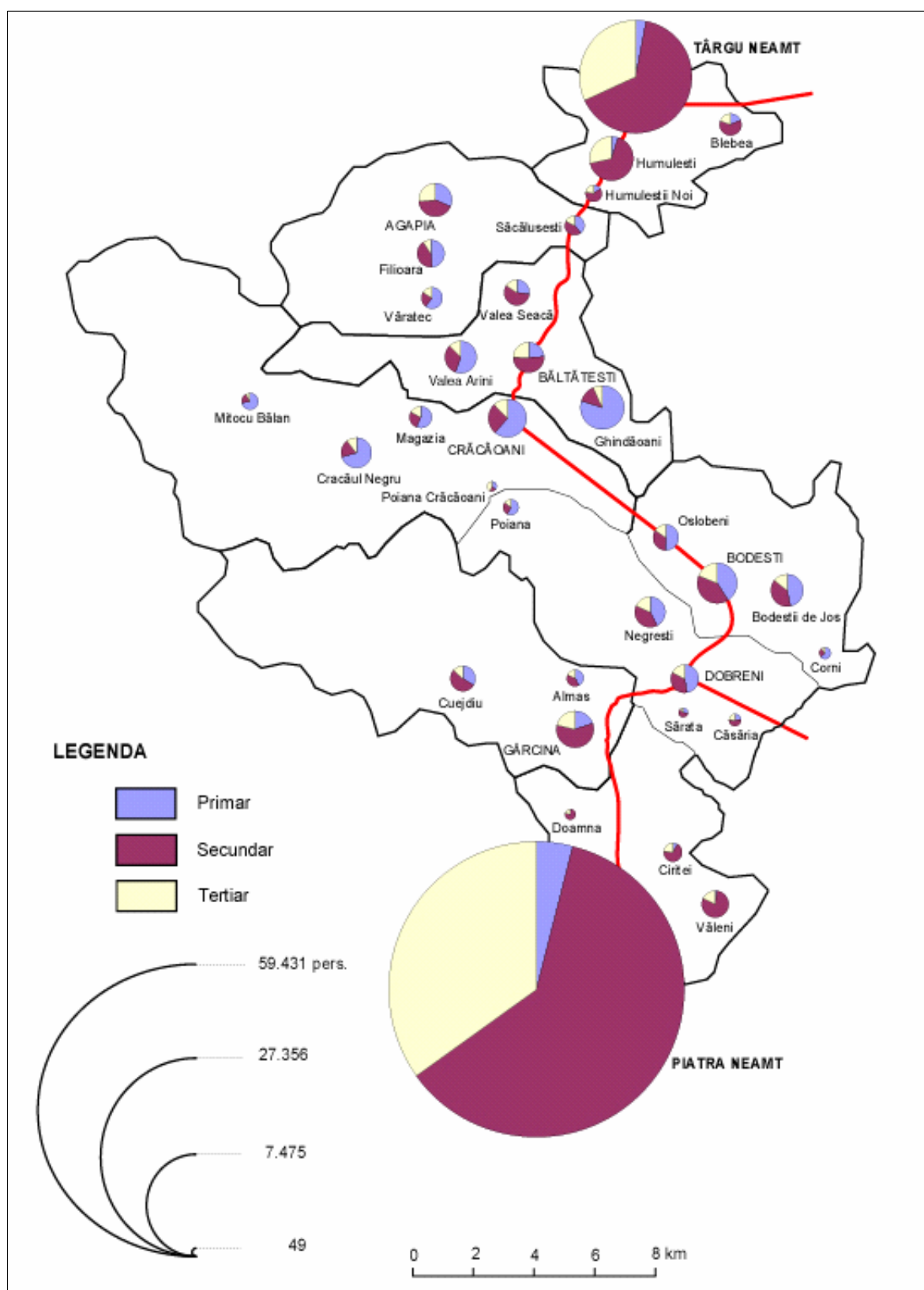


Figure 5. The Sub-Carpathian Axis of Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț. The structure of the active population on sectors of activity in 1992.

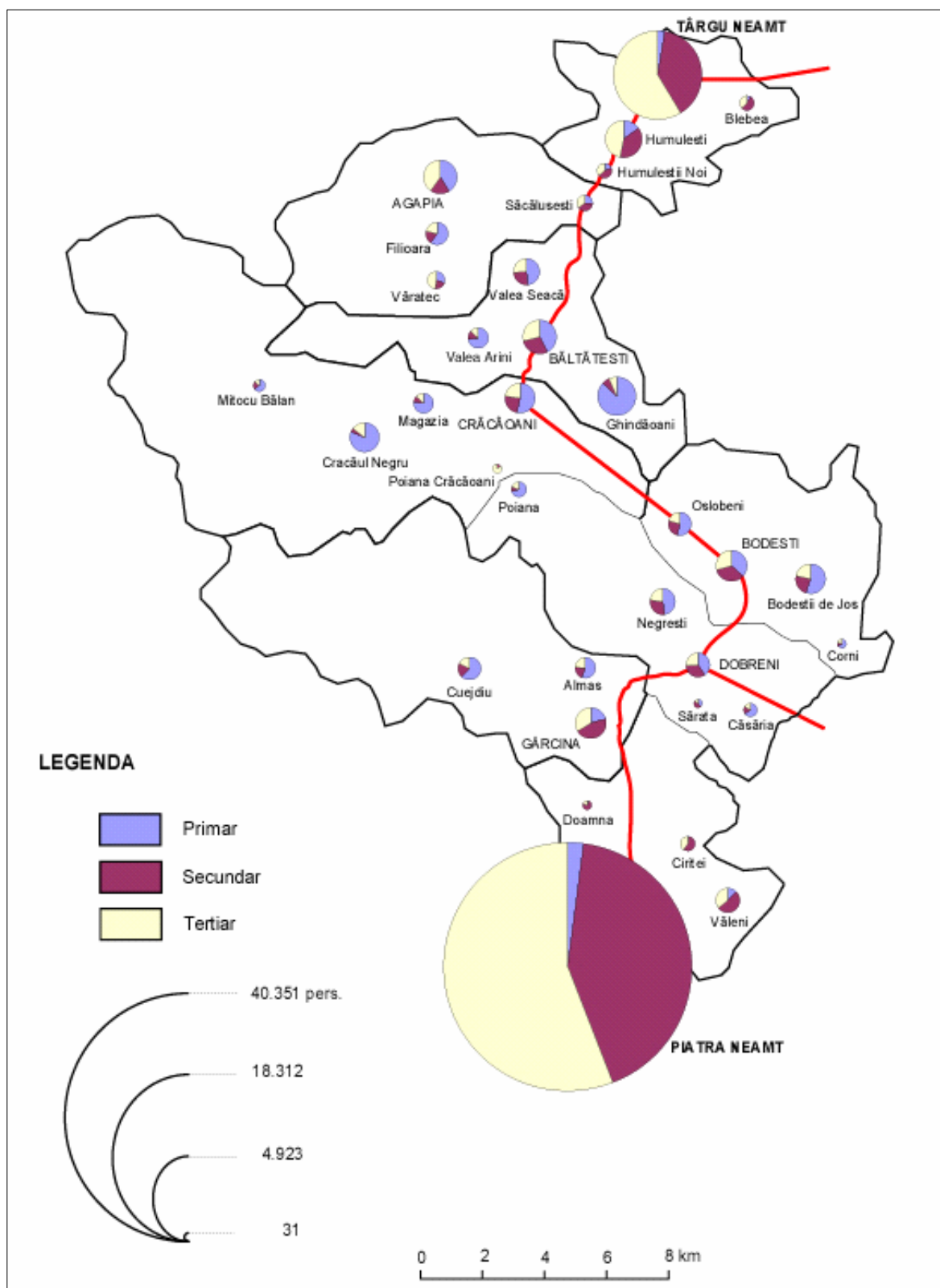


Figure 6. The Sub-Carpathian Axis of Piatra Neamț – Târgu Neamț. The structure of the active population on sectors of activity in 2002.

This time, a slight increase in the percent of the population engaged in the secondary sector is purely accidental, as well, considering the small amount of active population, and except for the already given example of Dobreni 7,2%, to this professional category one could add two more villages belonging to the same county: Sărata 27 % and Negrești 2,6 % but in both cases this evolution is characteristic to insignificant echelons of population.

Just like we have foreseen, the one that mostly benefits from this decrease is the third sector with an over average development in Piatra Neamț (with a plus of 20,8% in comparison with 1992), Târgu Neamț (26,6%) and Văratec (32,1%) that developed its tourism function during last years, and Poiana Crăcăoani 73,8 %, a real record due to the small number of active people, of 34% in 2002.

For the rest of the territory, the prevailing of the third sector mostly affected that main villages in the county (Agapia 13,8%, Dobreni 13,6% or Gârcina 12,4%) but this process is different even along the main axis, especially in the case of the villages that already benefited from an acceptable level of services (Bălătești 4,2% or Crăcăoani 5,1%). It can be easily noticed that in the case of some small villages, with no administrative function, and quite close to a more important village, this process is significantly less intense (Valea Arini 0,4%) or it can simply not exist (Sărata – 29,7%, Magazia - 5,4%).

On their turn, the villages positioned quite far from the main axis, have their own behaviour, with a faster dynamic, as in the case of Valea Seacă (10,1%), Corni (10,9%) and Poiana (11,3%). In spite of all that, when one adds a significant demographic ageing to the above mentioned qualities, the post Communist orientation towards the third sector almost does not exist – as in the case of Ghindăoani, with a plus of only 0,1% from 1992 to 2002.

As a conclusion, at least for the North part of the Moldavian Sub-Carpathians the presence of functional longitudinal axis is a reality with obvious implications in the territorial spreading of modern elements, whether social, demographic or economic. Even though, between the two ends of the axis, there is a considerable difference of potential, this is not that obvious from our analysis point of view, mainly because of the main town's preferential usage of the Bistrița axis, more dynamic and more developed especially after the Second World War, so that the North part has better preserved its traditions. Even if being engulfed by the superior centres led to significant changes (the communist industrialization, for instance), coming back to the free economy has produced some adjustments to the new conditions regarding both the number of people engaged in the three sectors and the territorial spreading of the manpower.

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