



Urbanization under Socialism

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Introduction

Many articles written by foreign or Romanian researchers (Cucu, 1973 and 1976, Lăzărescu 1977, Ianoş, Tălângă, 1994, Ronnas, 1979) consider the evolution of the settlement-network in the Socialist era. They all describe that phenomenon which is characterized by the intense growth of the cities and collaterally, the changes in the rural areas. An interesting question appears related to this, which is reckoned as classical in the geography and in the sociology of cities: is the Socialist development of the settlements, especially the cities, similar to the Western, capitalist part of the European continent? Or are there significant differences between these two, politically and socially discrepant territories? (see also Kovács, 2002).

The response to the question mentioned above formed two major sides in the Hungarian scientific literature: in György Enyedi's opinion the Socialist urbanization matches the global trends, Iván Szelényi highlights the fundamental distinctions between capitalist and Socialist urbanization. In the following study, we delineate both sides' arguments (by Kovács, 2002). György Enyedi claims that in Central-Eastern Europe city-development registered the same processes and stages as those characteristic for Western countries, adequated to the local political and historical peculiarities. In the first period, the mass-migration of the population from rural areas to cities can be described, but with time, the city development was transposed to the small and medium size towns. Iván Szelényi defines differences in the origins of city development resources: in the Socialist block the land ownership was controlled by the state, thus the politics was ruling the development, almost exclusive and so the spontaneous actions were not emphasized.

The present study makes an attempt to sketch the Romanian urbanization under the Socialist era, to accentuate the characteristics mentioned by the two sides. The paper's methodology is a synthesis of the published articles in this field and an analysis of the statistical data. In introduction we also consider important to explain the keyword notions which have often presence in our study. Primarily the definition of 'urbanization' in our interpretation is just the quantitative growth of cities (and so the divided village – city classes) and not a qualitative change¹.

The political and economical system after 1945

After World War II, Romania, like the other Central-Eastern European countries was under the domination of the Communist Party. After accession to power, their priority became the reformation of the economic and social conditions in the country. Primarily, the secularization of the productive agents took place (1948), followed by the organization in collective farmlands of the agriculture (1949–1962) and the launch of huge industrialization projects (starting with 1945). The main goal was the elimination of the lagging behind status of the county, and the moderation of territorial disparities and the achievement of a harmonious development, respectively (Nicolae, 2002, p. 280). In the Socialist planned economy the state had the exclusive function concerning development; the tasks were laid down in five-year plans.

¹ Sociology interprets under the notion 'urbanization' the acquirement of urban standards, urban behavior forms and values as social change.

Every plan had a well outlined task: the first, referring to the period between 1951 and 1955, was meant to attain the capitalist features of the economic sectors; the second (1956–1960) to realize the uniform Socialist economy; the third (1961–1965) to achieve the technical and financial conditions of the Socialist economy. The objective between 1965 and 1970 was the initiation and expansion of a versatile developed Socialist society (Lăzărescu, 1977, p. 9).

The supreme factor with impact on city-evolution process was industrialization. In 1965 the amount of investments raised up to 74 times of the 1950 year's level; and most part of this was drifted to the secondary sector (Nicolae, 2002, p. 281), especially engine-construction and chemical industry were on the first positions. Initially the investments were concentrated in the already industrialized counties (Timiș, Cluj, Prahova, Brașov and naturally the capital city, Bucharest), followed by counties traditionally agricultural (Sălaj, Gorj, Vaslui, Bistrița-Năsăud, Covasna etc.)

Urbanization at the beginning of Socialism

The first census after the initiation of the new political system took place in 1948, reflecting the postwar structure of the population and showing the substratum for the Socialist urbanization. The operative administrative act (promoted in 1938, with small revision in 1940) reveals the administrative-territorial organization and levels: commune (village and town), county. The settlements were organized in communes, out of which 152 settlements had city status. Accordingly, the proportion of urban population was 23,4%; this meant 2% growth since the previous census (1930). The increase of the urban population had a slow rhythm; however we have to consider the war-casualties, too.

In virtue of the urbanization rate we can declare, that Romania was far behind in this regard from other Eastern-European countries. Nevertheless, the urbanization level was increased artificially by the impoundment of a transitory status (suburban communes, suburbs, laborer centers) namely those space-formations which constituted towns in administration, but practically belonged to villages (Benedek, 2006).

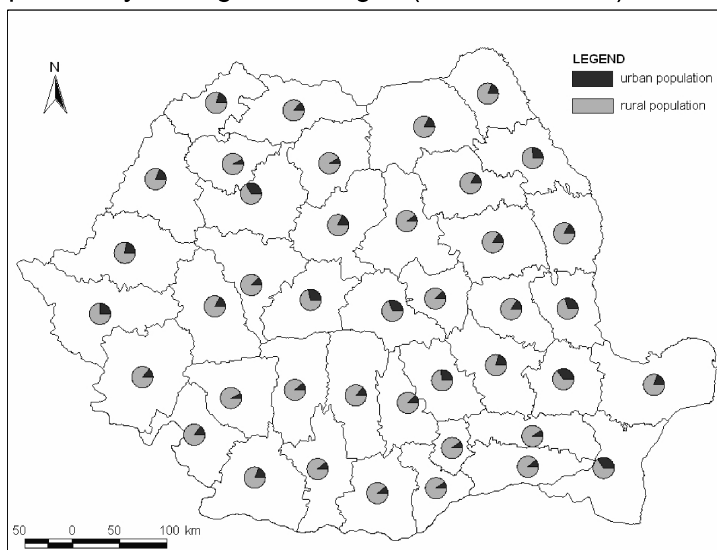


Figure 1. Urban and rural population in 1948.

Urbanization between 1948–1968

In 1948, there were 152 towns in Romania. In 1950, the political regime implemented an administrative reform and as consequence the territory was organized into Soviet three-levelled model: regions, districts called “raions” and cities. The urban settlements were also organized in a three-hierarchy: republican subordinate (7 in number: Cluj, Constanța, Galați, Iași, Ploiești, Brașov, Timișoara) regional

subordinate (34 in all, especially the centurms of regions, and other major cities) and country-subordinated (104). Afterwards, the law was modified; the number of regions was reduced to 16. These changes had great effect on the urban network: the former country centers descended in hierarchy (Ianoș, Tălângă, 1994, p. 27) outstanding examples being Alexandria, Dorohoi and Husi.

In this period, the first turbulent postwar action was registered (Ianoș, Tălângă 1994: 28) characterized by the declaration of large number of towns (the settlements that gained urban status were the following: Agnita, Anina, Azuga, Băicoi, Băile Herculane, Băile Govora, Băile Olănești, Borsec, Breaza, Buziaș, Câmpia Turzii, Codlea, Comănești, Covasna, Cristuru Secuiesc, Petru Groza, Onești, Jimbolia, Lupeni, Moldova Nouă, Nucet, Petrila, Râșnov, Rupea, Săcele, Simeria, Sovata, Toplița, Vașcău, Victoria, Vișeu de Sus, Vulcan, Zărnești); and

and , in parallel, some of the towns have their urbane status revoked, being reintegrated in the rural administrative category abreast the revocation of this status to the rural category from a few towns (Baia de Aramă, Darabani, Filipești de Târg, Huedin, Hârlău, Fălcu, Mihăileni, Ostrov, Plenița, Răcari, Săveni, Ștefănești Târg, Târgu Frumos, Vama, of which some redeem their urban rights in 1968).

The majority of the newly declared towns had a dominant industrial function, particularly extractive-industry and mining (Comănești, Lupeni, Nucet, Petrița, Vașcău, Vulcan etc.) or a processing type of industry (Câmpia Turzii, Băicoi, Săcele, Victoria etc.). Some had a significant touristy characteristic as a therapy-centre (Băile Herculane, Băile Govora, Băile Olănești, Borsec, Buziaș, Sovata etc.), and a few appeared in a predominantly rural area, later turning into the scene of industrialization (Codlea, Cristuru Secuiesc, Moldova Nouă).

Studying the number of inhabitants we can conclude, that these towns belonged to the small size category: most of them had less than 5.000 inhabitants, some between 5.000 and 10.000. Towns concentrating more than 10.000 persons at the census (1956) were: Breaza 11.122, Câmpia Turzii 11.514, Comănești 12.392, Onești 11.253, Jimbolia 11.281, Lupeni 21.188, Petrița 19.955, Săcele 18.365, Vulcan 14.859, Vișeu de Sus 13.956 inhabitants; especially the mining towns from Jiu Valley. The population is minimal in the tourist towns like: Băile Herculane 1.656, Băile Govora 1.590, and Borsec 2.318 – persons were registered in the census after they gained urban rights.

Between census 1956 and 1966 an additional 12 communes change their status, becoming towns (Bicaz, Bocșa, Călan, Câmpeni, Coșca Mică, Cugir, Huedin, Luduș, Negrești-Oaș, Oțelu Roșu, Sângeorz Băi and Uricani). These had, without exception, an industrial specialization that was broadened by a tourist role in case of Sângeorz Băi. Huedin regained his rights after a ten-year period of being commune-center.

In conclusion, with the appearance of these new towns, the rate of urbanization reaches 40,1%, indicating a 0,9 point percent growth per year, calculated for the period 1948–1968. The growth-rate is prominent among 1967–1968; with 1,4 point of percent increased the proportion of urban population.

The places of the cities in the hierarchy are changing and the concentration of the population changes also in the different-size cities:

Table 1. Concentration of population in city sizes.

Year	1948		1956		1966	
	(%)	(no)	(%)	(no)	(%)	(no)
Less than 5.000	3,3	34	1,5	20	0,6	12
5.000-9.999	11,8	45	7,8	49	7,5	48
10.000-19.999	18,5	39	18,5	60	14,6	55
20.000-49.999	14,1	21	15,5	25	20	42
50.000-99.999	25,2	10	13,8	8	10,6	7
100.000-299.999	7,1	2	18,1	7	26,8	12
300.000 and more	19,9	1	24,8	1	22	1

Source: *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 5 ianuarie 1977*, vol. I, pp. 9-13, CNS, București.

We can conclude from the above table, that the small size cities' importance has decreased by 1968. On the other hand, the role of medium size cities and of large towns is increasing (see Nicolae, 2002, p. 295, Benedek, 2006.)

The ground of urban population's numeric growth was determined not only by the nomination of new towns, but also by the inner increasing through the ascending birth rate of already existing towns and cities². But utmost growth was brought by the immigration of rural inhabitants to the cities. This was a definitive relocation, and constituted a remarkable percentage of the urban population. For example, in 1966, 62,1% of the inhabitants of Bucharest were born outside the capital city, coming from other counties. In the case of cities, 29,5% of the population was born in same county, but in small towns or villages, 28,3% of inhabitants settled down as consequence of interregional migration. The percentage of immigrants is reduced in direct proportion with the size of cities, accordingly in small towns only 44% of population was originated somewhere else.

² Decree 770/1966 had a great influence on the birth-rate; the prohibition of abortion deformed the conformation of natural growth.

The causes of intense growth (for example, migration which determines the numeric growth of the cities) was the industrialization program. Investments orientated toward industry exceeded the sums orientated to agriculture, excepting a short period (1954–1962) when the establishment of collective farmlands consumed a large amount of money. As a result the rural exodus smoothly diminished in this period (Benedek, 2006).

In conclusion, we can declare that the localization of industrial plants, affecting especially the cities and the medium size cities, launched a massive rural emigration flow towards the cities. The latter might be daily regularity (commute) mainly in case of city-peripheral communes, but permanently resettlement as well, which concerned the immigration of youthful people.

Similarly to the pre-Socialist era the urban type of settlements were present between 1948 and 1968, too, 183 in all. They composed 13,3% of total urban population (Nicolae, 2002, p. 299). The centers for laborers, industrial centers' peripheral communes and the balneo-climateric holiday centers belong to this category.

Urbanization between 1968– 1989

The second part of the Socialist era begins from the administrative reform. From this point, the administrative upper-level was composed by counties. Along with the administrative reform in 1968, several communes were conferred urban status, so the number of urban settlements reaches 236 in 1977 when the census was done. In Ioan Ianoș's opinion, the first part (1968–1980) of this period is transitory, after that the evolution of the entire settlement system recorded turbulences again (Ianoș, Tălângă, 1994, p. 29).

Doubtless, the prime task in city-development was the restoration of harmonic distribution; since they took measures on stopping the migration towards the cities (settling down in cities was controlled by severe normative acts). Regarding the 52 newly aroused small town, they invigorated the base of city hierarchy. With the restitution of county-system the former or late centers of counties played a relevant role, their development became more demanding, in particular with the advancement of industrialization. For example Alexandria, Zalău, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Târgoviște, Slobozia and Miercurea Ciuc multiplied their population number in a few years (we can diagnose two, three even four-time raise).

The urbanization process – as quantity – can be seized upon the new towns' nominations. The 52 new small towns appeared after 1968 and they were distributed evenly (geographically) through the country and aroused the urban population number with 427.641 persons (the proportion of these small towns of the total urban population was 4,5%). Regarding their size, most of them belonged to the category 5.000-10.000 (65%), one third had inhabitants between 10.000-20.000, and in case of four new towns, population did not reach the threshold of 5.000. The most populous new town was Borșa, concentrating 24.406 persons. At the opposite side, there was Băile Tușnad with 1.880 inhabitants at the moment of changing status (this number is stationary since, only 1.728 inhabitants were registered at last census in 2002). But major functions in tourism and the extended area of influence led it to become urban settlement.

In case of the other towns, we can emphasize various functions, besides many industrial centers (Aleșd, Baia de Aramă, Brezoi, Baraolt, Cavnic, Horezu, Motru, Țicleni, Zlatna) or agrarian- and market-centers: Beclean, Berești, Cehu Silvaniei, Deta, Hârlău, Jibou, Pâncota, Săveni, Târgu Lăpuș, Vânju Mare, and Topoloveni. In addition, these towns got into the Socialist industrialization projects; the existing industrial parks were forth developed and new factories were established (manufacturing plants processing agrarian products). For the reason, that industrialization was seen as acceleration and promotion of urbanization, its relevance becomes more acute.

In 1975, the so-called systematization project was laid down, concerning the entire system of settlements. The objective was the economic development of settlements in the forthcoming 25 years. They emphasized the decrease of disparities and differences between village and town (with the development of rural areas) and the reconstruction and modernization of city physiognomy in the course of rational building operations, utility works and traffic-route build up.

The implement of the numerical growth of cities would mean the decreasing of the number of communes; precisely the establishment of a transitory category which would have become town in the 80's. According to the plan 300–400 village polarizer small towns were predicted until 1990, yet because of a financial deficiency it could not be put in practice. At the end of the Socialist era just a small fraction of the planned changes took place: in 1983, Rovinari was granted urban status and six years later, in the spring of 1989 other 23 communes were conferred urban status.

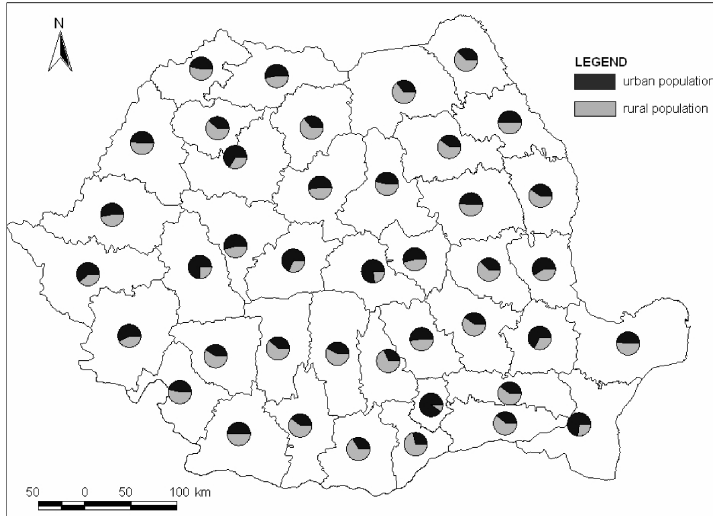


Figure 2. Urban and rural population in 1989.

These towns were mostly located in areas where there are no cities (Buzău, Călărași, Brăila and Giurgiu counties) with agro-industrial character and the population above 5.000 persons.

A forced industrialization and an accelerated urbanization took place in the second part of the Socialist system. Several communes were conferred the status of towns, nevertheless the small towns' role (with inhabitants up to 20.000) in the

city hierarchy gradually decreased (from 22,7% of the total urban population, to 12,5% in 1990) and the strength of medium and large towns increased: they concentrated 55% of the urban population in 1990 and the capital city contributed with 16,5%.

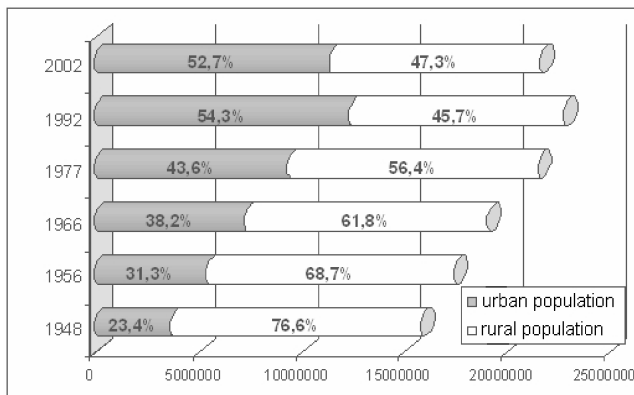


Figure 3. The percentages of urban and rural population between 1948 and 2002.

To determine the statistical urban population we must also consider the inhabitants of the suburban communes. This category was established with the 1968' administrative reform (147 in total) to broaden the area of influence of the cities in the rural areas. In many cases, the fundamental demographical base³ of the city proper was formed by the suburban population (see Nicolae, 2002, p. 308).

The contribution of the suburban communes to the rate of urbanization was substantial: at the end of the 80s, it represented 6% of the total urban population. A few of these settlements became urban settlements in 1989 (Mioveni and Aninoasa for example).

Conclusions

In 1989, the last year of the Socialist period, the urban population represented more than half of the global population. Between 1948 and 1989, the raise of the rate of urbanization was spectacular; almost a 30% growth was registered. This value is high among the Eastern-Central-European countries; however Romania started the development from a lower level, so the evolution is more dynamic⁴.

³ Nicolae Ion describes as extreme cases the new town of Beresti (nominated in 1968) the percentage of total population in the suburban commune - Beresti-Meria (with 10 adherent village) was 65%. Likewise, Întorsura Buzăului and Titu, the proportion of suburban population was very high. (Nicolae, 2002, p. 308).

⁴ According to Kovács Z., the lagging behind of the ex-Socialist countries as compared with the West-European countries was caused by the lateness of the industrial development and the different social and historical peculiarities. The differences were noticeable inside the Socialist block, too: we can highlight a Northwestern – Southeastern decrease in this region. As a result of this, the dynamics of urbanization was highest in south and in the east. (Kovács, 2002, p. 61).

Many factors contributed to this growth of urban inhabitants: the natural and emigrational increment, the administrative measures and interventions, respectively. The natural way of growth was completed with an artificial boost of growth; nevertheless the sociological urbanization was far behind from the statistical urbanization. Moreover, a process of ruralization took place inside cities⁵. In the last half of century, administrative modulates were frequent and in many waves and the supervisor was always the state power. As a result of the settlements developing programs and the economic-social evolution programs the country could be described in the late 80s as the place of accelerated industrialization and urbanization. It's interesting that Suceava county was left out from the administrative measures: not a single town was declared here, despite the low urban population⁶.

Most new towns were in Hunedoara (7, all mining centers), Sibiu, Arad, Bihor (5), Prahova, Brasov, Alba (4) accentuating the existing regional differences.

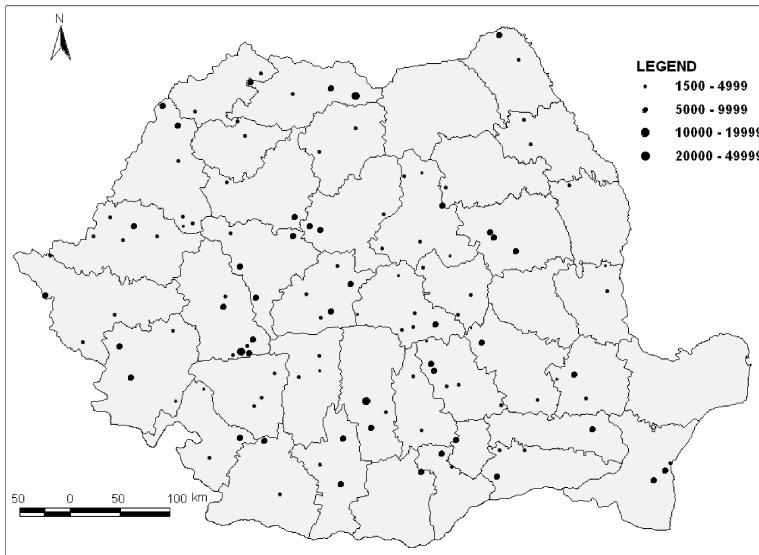


Figure 4. New towns nominated between 1948-1989, after size.

Analyzing the urbanization configuration, we can conclude that the highest proportion of urban population in 1989 was registered in Brasov, Sibiu, Hunedoara, Cluj, Timis, Braila and Constanta counties⁷ and of course in Bucharest. A conspicuous case is the one concerning the evolution Hunedoara that, in a short time, raised the initial 17% to 75% at the end of the communist era.



Figure 5. New towns nominated between 1948 – 1989, after year of nominee.

Naturally the mining-centers had an important role in this, furthermore the county is constituted mostly from highlands where the density of settlements is lower. On the other side, there are the under-urbanized areas in the South and in the Eastern part of the country (Oltenia, South-Muntenia and Moldova). In 1990, a new political system was outlining in Romania. The conversion to a capitalist market ruling economy made the country face a great transformation, and these conditions influenced the

urbanization processes as well.

The new conditions were beneficial, but the Socialist inheritance influenced the development and the evolution city.

⁵ The concept of 'ruralization' is from sociology. Pavel Starosta describes this phenomenon from Eastern-Europe, where, as a consequence of industrialization masses that migrated towards the cities from the rural areas they have brought rural values, behavioral forms and traditional cultural elements; shaping a 'rural zone' inside the city. (Starosta, 1994, p. 72).

⁶ After 2000, this gap was compensated by a late political system. 8 communes are nominated towns.

⁷ In the counties from South-Transylvania and Banat, the Saxons and Krauts were always more civilian, and so was their urbanized lifestyle. This tradition continued in the 20th century. Braila and Constanta are important as large industrial towns because of the maritime tourism, respectively.

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