

Major trends in the evolution of Towns and Cities of in a post communist competitive environment

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1. Introduction

"Dominant cities are not dominant *in aeternum*: they take their place one another. This is true for the top as for any level of the urban hierarchy (Braudel, 1989)." The history of human civilisation is characterized by a competition of towns and cities at all territorial levels. As any competition it had winners and losers. Military force, economic power, religion were for centuries some of the most important driving forces that influenced this competition. Athens rose over Mycenae or Sparta, Rome has eliminated its Mediterranean competitor Carthage, Constantinople became the new Rome after the barbarian invasion of the 5th century and so on, but Rome lost even its regional / local supremacy for Milan or Ravenna.

During the 4.5 decades of communism and centralised economy, the Romanian urban system has been reshaped according to some principles inspired by the ideology of the time: fast industrialisation, egalitarian development, containment of the built-up areas and collective housing in high density residential areas, building of a new social class of industrial workers. The application of such principles on a very short period of time led to significant disturbances at territorial level and artificial developments, which did not consider the market forces, the social relations, the environmental issues or the role of history and cultural heritage.

The last two decades of transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one, Romanian produced once more important structural changes at urban and territorial levels. During this last interval the main forces that reshaped the Romanian urban network have been diverse, contradictory and sometime opposed to the previous period: from industrial restructuring to reversed migration, from shrinking to chaotic sprawl, accompanied by radical changes of the demographic and behavioural patterns and new forms of urban culture. In this timeframe some urban areas have decayed, others had an oscillatory evolution, whereas some - not many – developed. The European integration and the use of pre-accession and later on of Structural Funds have also played a certain role in the transformation of the Romanian urban landscape and could play an even more important one in the future. The paper is a short overview of these changed, stressing mainly upon the upper level of the urban system.

2. Methodology and data

The adopted methodology for the present paper is based on a comparative analysis of the increase /decrease of the urban population in Romania between 1990 and 2008. The data used are taken from the so-called LDB (local data base) of the National Institute for Statistics. The LBD provides data for over 3000 administrative units of LAU2 type¹, which in Romania are represented by cities / towns and communes. The cities and towns are urban units and their population represents, from statistical point of view, the urban population. The present number of urban units is 320, and it is worth to mention that 60, that is almost 20% were declared towns during the last two decades of transition².

The LBD includes over 180 indicators structured by fields of interest such as: demography and migration, physical and social infrastructure, housing, labour force, tourism. For the purpose of this brief overview it was considered that the evolution of the population is by far the most relevant indicator and the most reliable too, due to the fact that during the last 20 years the methodology for computing most of the other basic indicators has been changed. The evolution of the demographic volume of a town or city is also a very sensitive indicator to a large range of social and economic factors. In the end, the measurement of the population reflects with a quite good accuracy the level of attractiveness and development of a certain human settlement. For a more complex analysis of the urban evolutions, other indicators could be considered such as FDI³, access to public services, accessibility etc.

Different ranking systems have been also used in order to compare different categories of urban centres. At least three different systems can be used either analytical or normative. A traditional analytical one divides towns and cities into big, medium and small size according to population thresholds such as over 100,000 inhabitants (for big cities), between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants (for medium towns) and less than 20,000 inhabitants (for small ones). Another system is defined by the law approving the National Spatial Development Plan and set up 4 urban categories on 4 ranks, placing the capital city on the Rank 0, a number of 11 cities of regional importance on Rank 1, bigger towns (municipal centres) on Rank 2 and all the other towns on Rank 3. However, there are no major discrepancies between the two systems. A more recent normative classification⁴ refers to the so-called growth poles and identifies a number of 7 national growth poles (one for each of the development NUTS2 regions, except Bucharest region), 13 urban development poles (1-3 per development region) and a general category of urban centres having over 10,000 inhabitants.

Comparative analyses were done among categories and within categories in order to identify different types of "winners" or "losers" as well as at territorial level, either regional or county. Within the framework of the present paper, the focus is on the upper categories, whose evolution is more relevant and diverse, whereas the lower ones (small size towns) are characterised in general by a fast decay, unless they are not in the proximity of a large city, in a periurban or metropolitan area.

The 2011 census data were not used as they have not yet been published in a final format and on the other hand the results are still under evaluation. In general the last census shows a significant decrease of the total population, due to out – migration and a negative natural growth as well as to a reversed migration urban to rural. The preliminary data indicate a decrease by 1.0 millions people of the population of big cities only, up to 24-26% in some cases (Gheţău, 2012).

3. A brief overview on urbanization in Romania

During the last one hundred years, Romania went through a fast urbanisation process, due to a rapid modernization and industrialization of the country, which began after the 1st World War. During this interval, the number of urban settlements multiplied 3.2 times (from 100 to 320) and the urban population 6.0 times (from 2 to 12 millions people). The total weight of the urban population grew from 20% to 55% within the same interval. It should be noticed that this evolution was not linear and that a fast growth occurred during the 4 decades of communism regime (1947-1989), when more than 100 towns were declared and the urban population increased by 8.0 millions. Most of this growth was due in general to an important trend of rural to urban migration. Between the population censuses from 1966 and 1992, the urban population grew by 6.2 millions people, out of which, 3.2 (51.8%) were the result of rural – urban migration and only 2.15 millions (34.6%) were the result of the natural increase of the urban population (the difference belongs to population of new declared towns).

The fast urbanisation during the communism decades was mainly the consequence of the centralised development policy based on fast industrialisation and massive migration of rural population to towns. This policy was also accompanied by a demographic policy which encouraged births by strong restrictions on abortions. Although during communism spatial planning was based on rational distribution of production centres and on functionality principles, the evolution of the urban system was much disturbed, new towns being artificially promoted and sustained against some old, traditional ones. The reasons were mainly of ideological inspiration. During this stage, a number of new industrial towns increased 3 to 4 times and even more. While some urban centres won 50 to 80 places in the urban hierarchy, some others went down and decreased or stagnated. By the end of the communist period, the urban system was in a fake state of equilibrium: whereas some cities with a traditional and consolidated territorial role, with specific functions were artificially pulled back, the new ones that were developed along a period of 20 to 30 years only, had no time to develop the normal urban structures and strengthen the territorial relations (Pascariu, 2012).

At the dawns of the transition period, in 1990, the radical political, social and economic changes already suggested a certain vulnerability of some towns and cities especially of the mono-functional ones depending one single industrial sector (mining cities for instance). During the last two decades, Romania experienced a fast deindustrialisation process, which affected mainly exactly the small and medium towns developed during the communism on the basis of industrial sector. Besides the economic restructuring a dramatic demographic change occurred, as in most of the former communist countries: a negative natural growth of the population accompanied by a strong out-migration phenomenon. A few data are relevant in this respect:

- general decrease of the population 2008 /1990 – 1,7 mil. Inhab (7.3%)
- loss of urban population between 2008 and 1990 (in all 320 towns) – 773,516 inhab (6.1%)
- net loss of the initial 260 towns during the same period of time – 988,893 inhab (8.0%)
- urban index increased by 0.71pt. (from 54.33 to 55.04) between 1990 and 2008.

At the beginning of the transition the 260 existing towns and cities counted 12.35 mil. inhabitants. In 2008, the total urban population in 320 towns and cities was 12.61 millions, a growth of about 250,000 people, at an insignificant annual rate of 0.1% if compared to the one of over 2.5% of the previous 2.5 decades (1966-1990).

By categories the evolution of the initial 260 towns was rather different, the most affected being the medium and small sized ones (see table 1).

No. crt.	Categories	Loss 1990 / 2008	%	No. of cities /towns
1.	capital city	-101,553	-4.96	1
2.	big cities	-392,512	-7.74	25
3.	medium cities (1)	-165,146	-9.76	23
4.	medium cities (2)	-192,588	-10.05	62
5.	small towns (1)	-109,407	-9.53	82
6.	small towns (2)	-27,687	-5.76	67
Total		-988,893	-8.01	260

Table 1: Evolution of the urban population by categories^b

In spite of a slight general growth of the total urban population, due to a change of the administrative status of 60 communes, the real trend suggests a decrease of urban population in traditional urban centres, higher than average decrease of the general population. The decrease affected the smaller categories due to their specific vulnerabilities: mono-industrial dependency, unfavourable demographic structure, lack of urban services and consequently of attractiveness and competitiveness in a free market economy. Mostly affected were medium – sized cities which were the artificial product of the forced industrialization policy of the 7th and 8th decades of the XXth century.

3.1 The capital city

Bucharest is by far the biggest Romanian city and benefited a lot of its status of a capital city, especially after the setting up of the modern state firstly in 1859 and than after the 1st World War in 1918. During the last century Bucharest has constantly increased the gap in terms of population towards its main historic regional competitors, such as Iași, Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara. It kept an average yearly rate of 2% and grew by 6.06 times compared to an increase of 4.10 to 5.05 of the others⁶. Its relative growth was slightly diminished during the communism due to a policy of a balance repartition of investments in industry, infrastructures and housing and of some administrative restrictive measures during the '80s. The primacy report diminished as a consequence (see fig. 1). The decades of transition favoured the development of the capital in comparison to all of the other big Romanian cities. Although the population decreased following the general demographic trend, the capital city increased its primacy report and is an absolute winner in many fields of the social and economic development. It was by far the most important attractor of FDI, of residential sector, of tertiary development, during the last 20 years⁷.

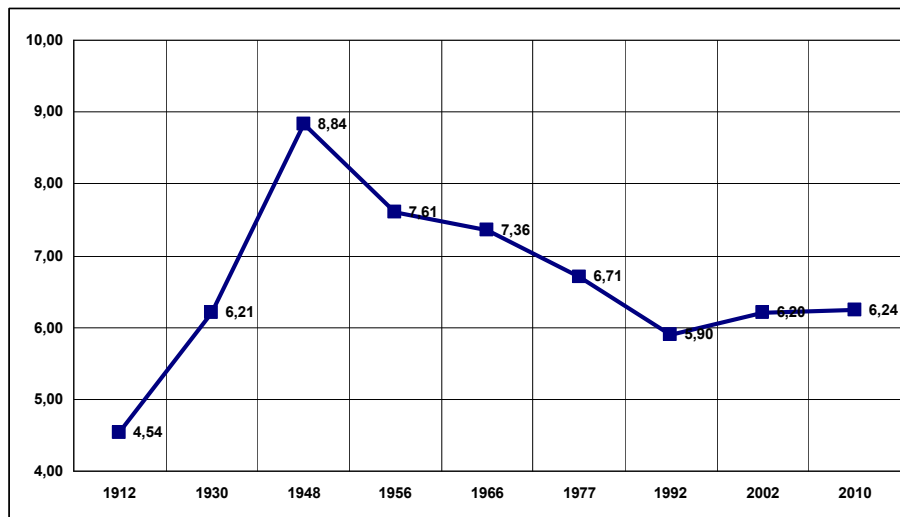


Figure 1: Evolution of the primacy report for Bucharest (data from National Institute of Statistics and personal computations)

The evolution of the capital city is in strong connection to its surroundings, to its metropolitan area, which according to various studies includes between 20 and 60 small towns and communes. In some cases the metropolitan area is similar to the one of the metropolitan region Bucharest – Ilfov. Due to its size and concentration of functions, the capital city has no internal competitor and its evolution should be analysed at a macro-regional level (see fig. 2). At this level, its evolution can be compared to the one of other neighbouring capitals from Central and South-Eastern Europe. Some data presented below are relevant for its dynamic in relation to other regional competitors.

The capital-region of Bucharest (Bucharest – Ilfov) registered the highest growth in terms of GDP /inhab. between 1997 and 2008. At the beginning of the interval the region ranked 5th

among the 6 Eastern capital-regions, whereas by the end of the interval ranked 3rd before Budapest and Warsaw regions and reduced the gap towards Praha region from 0,33 to 0,66. It doubled its GDP from 1997 to 2004 and then doubled it again in 2008.

Capital regions	GDP 1997	GDP 2008	ranks 1997	ranks 2008
Praha	21100	43200	1	1
Bratislavský kraj	17900	41800	2	2
Közép-Magyarország	12700	26800	3	4
Mazowieckie	10800	22200	4	5
Bucuresti - Ilfov	7100	28300	5	3
Yugozapaden	5200	18200	6	6
report to rank 1	0,34	0,66		

Table 2: Evolution of the GDP of main capital regions from Central / Eastern Europe (Eurostat and personal computations)

The reasons for the positive evolution of Bucharest can be related to a number of factors: its initial size and good geographical position (it is the biggest city on a radius of more than 500 km), the development of the building sector and real estate markets and a fast development of the tertiary sector from financing and banking to retail and wholesale trade. It has to be considered too the development of the educational sector, the capital-city attracting in 2008 almost 45% of the total number of registered students in Romania⁸ (NIS, 2009).

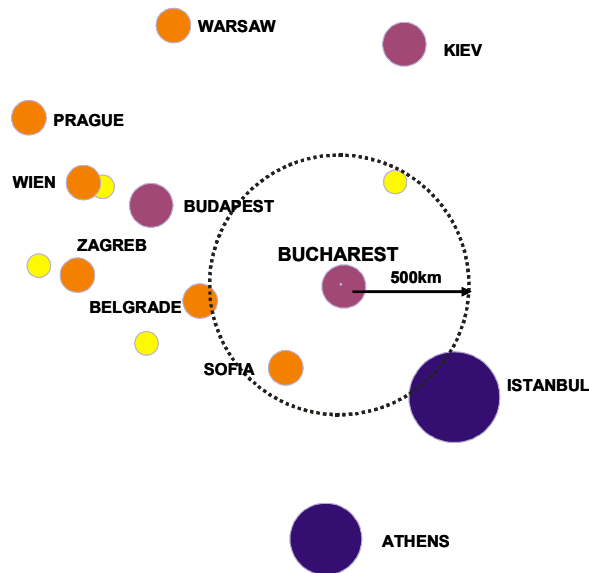


Figure 2: Bucharest and some of its major macro-regional competitors

Its position at the EU Eastern border, entitles Bucharest to play a potential nodal role in the future, supported by the foreseen development of pan-European transport corridors. One challenge for the city will be to find the right balance between the internal and external needs and relationships.

3.2 Regional Poles

The second level of urban centres has a number of big cities of regional importance due to their size, historic role and also to the complexity of their functions. According to the National Spatial Development Plan there are 11 cities which are placed at this level and have around or over 200.000 inhabitants: Bacău, Braşov, Brăila, Constanţa, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Galaţi,

Iași, Oradea, Ploiești, Timișoara. In 2008, by Government Decree⁹ 7 of them were declared national growth poles (with bold in table 3). They lost 7.1% of the population during the interval 1990-2008, but the loss was very differently distributed (see table3).

No. crt.	City	Inahb. 1990	Inhab. 2008	Total loss	Relative loss (%)	Rank 1990	Rank 2008
1.	BRASOV	352260	279728	-72532	-20,59	1	7
2.	BRAILA	238516	214045	-24471	-10,26	9	9
3.	ORADEA	228258	205327	-22931	-10,05	10	10
4.	BACAU	195763	178135	-17628	-9,00	11	11
5.	IASI	334371	306561	-27810	-8,32	2	3
6.	PLOIESTI	248739	230640	-18099	-7,28	8	8
7.	GALATI	305065	292898	-12167	-3,99	6	6
8.	TIMISOARA	324651	312362	-12289	-3,79	3	1
9.	CLUJ-NAPOCA	318975	309338	-9637	-3,02	4	2
10.	CONSTANTA	312504	303712	-8792	-2,81	5	4
11.	CRAIOVA	297585	299559	1974	0,66	7	5
Total		3156687	2932305	-224382			

Table 3: Evolution of the population of Rank 1 cities (NIS and personal computations)

If there are no significant changes in the second half of the hierarchy, the first one witnessed some important ones. Most important were the losses of the top places by Brașov and Iași in favour of two Western cities like Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara. Two other cities from the Southern part of the country, Craiova and Constanța gained 1 or 2 places. The most spectacular fall belongs to Brașov, which lost 6 positions within the interval. In terms of absolute loss in population Brașov and Iași suffered the most as well as the smaller cities. A similar situation is for the relative loss. Craiova is the only one with a positive trend (fig. 3).

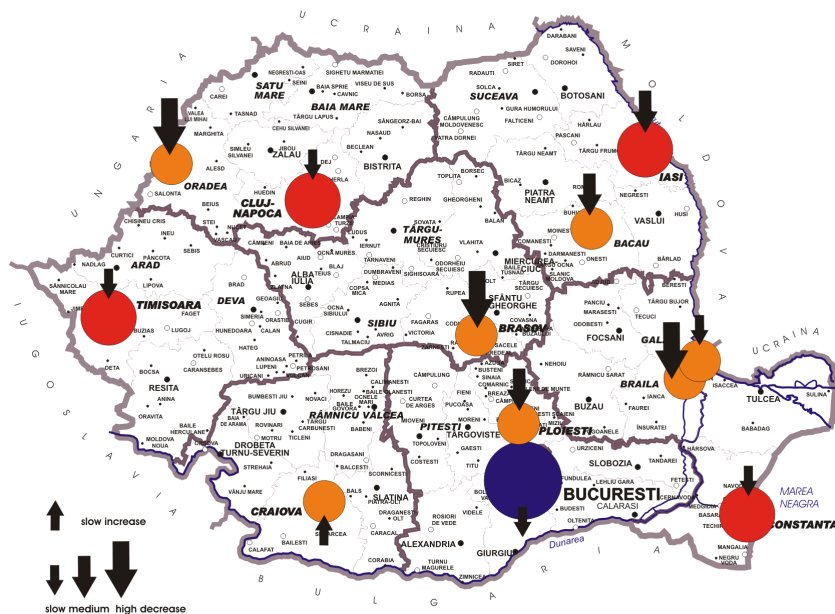


Figure 3: Evolution of Bucharest and the 11 Rank 1 cities (the red ones are major regional competitors)

During the two decades interval the evolution was not linear. Most of the big cities increased in population in 1990-1991, due to the abolition of the previous administrative restrictions of the communist regime, which were forbidding the people to become residents of the big cities in Romania (Ianoş, 1994). Most of them continued to grow for the first half of the '90s except Braşov and Oradea who had a negative growth. The main reasons for their fast decrease can be related to the phenomenon of out-migration of the inhabitants of German and Hungarian origin. If one looks at the first 20 cities with the most severe loss of population during the first years of the transition more than half are from areas which had a significant percentage of inhabitants of German and Hungarian origin. In the case of Braşov another factor was the closure of some industries and the return migration of some of the labour force coming mainly from the North-eastern part of the country (Braşov was one of the main attractor during the communism age for the exceeding labour force coming from Moldova). It also ranks 1st in terms of loss of salaried peoples between 1990 and 2008.

Starting with the 2nd half of the '90s population of most of the big cities decreased due to several factors: general trend of a negative natural increase, out-migration due to the deindustrialisation process by the end of the '90s and later on due to external migration to EU countries (especially in the case of Eastern cities). The main winners in terms of attracting population and investments were Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara, Constanţa and Craiova. The attractiveness of the two Western cities was based mainly on the development of the educational sector, of the financial and banking sector and on their good position and relation to the West. Yet, due to out-migration and a rather aged population the general balance is negative. Constanţa has the advantage of the development of the harbour activities and its position in an area of high touristic interest whereas Craiova remained the most and single major urban centre for the South-western Oltenia region and benefited from important recent investments in the car industry¹⁰. The cities mostly affected by the transition were mainly those from the Eastern and South-eastern regions (Constanţa exempted), due to a much higher dependency on the industrial sector and to a slower development of the tertiary one.

The main city of the Moldavian region, Iaşi, which was challenging in the past the 2nd position after the capital city seems to have lost the dispute in favour of Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara, Constanţa. A special case is Braşov, which although lost 20% of its 1990 population has increased more than twice its "intravilan" (built-up territory) and is doing well from the economical point of view, due to its good position in an area of high cultural and touristic attraction.

3.3 Urban agglomerations

It is worth to look to some cases of urban systems which developed around some of the big cities and acting as metropolitan areas or urban agglomerations. Besides the capital city metropolitan area the most important are urban agglomerations are: the urban system Brăila-Galaţi, Braşov and Constanţa periurban systems that are challenging the second position after the capital city. Of the three areas, only Constanţa had a positive growth getting closer to the Braşov area, which lost more than 80 thou. people. However, it should be noticed that in all cases the loss of population is smaller than in the case of the core city, which indicates a certain attractiveness of the small towns around the big city.

The phenomenon is characteristic for the last two decades and is due to several factors: the development of the new residential areas outside the big cities and the movement of population from collective communist buildings to individual houses on plot, the localisation of new investments in secondary and tertiary sectors in the surroundings of the big cities due to lower land prices and reduced bureaucracy for getting different permits, easier accessibility by roads or rails (and sometimes airport vicinity). Some of the cities which had a network of small towns already developed, used it as a good opportunity and competitive advantage against other areas. Such are the cases of the capital city, but also of Braşov¹¹ or

Constanța. It can be noticed that the total loss of urban population in these urban agglomerations is by 2.0 points smaller than the loss of urban population of big cities.

Urban systems	Inhab. 1990	Inhab. 2008	Total loss	Relative loss (%)
București metrop.area	2150936	2070257	-80,679	-3,75
Brăila – Galați	543581	506943	-36,638	-6,74
Brașov periurban area	472779	388808	-83,971	-17,76
Cluj-Napoca periurban area	412609	393244	-19,365	-4,69
Constanța periurban area	369794	370125	331	0,09
Total	3949699	3729377	-220,322	-5.58

Table 4: Evolution of the population of major urban agglomerations (NIS and personal computations)

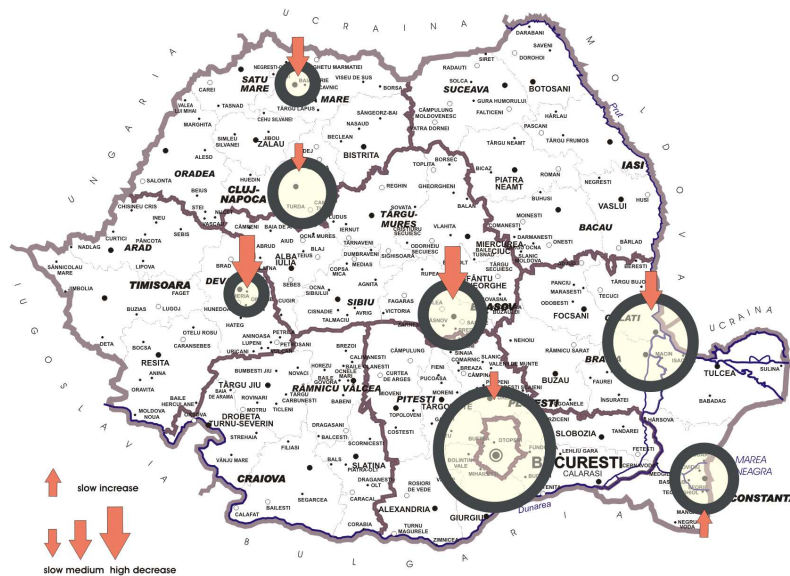


Figure 4: Location and evolution of some main urban agglomerations (the size of the circle is proportional to the size of population)

3.4 Regional evolutions and county capital cities

At regional level the most significant loss in population was in the Western and Central part of the country, due to demographic characteristics but also to the out-migration of the German and Hungarian ethnic population, especially during the first half of the '90s. The Southern and Eastern regions, București-Ilfov included, lost less than the national average.

During the last decades but mainly after 2000 a large number of former communes have been declared towns, which raised the percentage of the urban population, but only by 0.7% as compared to 1990. Although a number of 60 communes were declared towns, their size did not influence much the general level of urbanisation at national or regional levels. If one considers only the demographic evolution of the 260 towns and cities already existing in 1990, the decrease is by 0.5% higher than the national average. Yet, the new declared towns made that the general urban decrease to be smaller than the national average. Although this increase in number was not the result of a national /regional policy it reduced some gaps between the regions. Due to the fact that the setting up of new towns was not a result of a coherent policy, the different analyses can be slightly altered but not essentially. The regions that benefited the most are the North – east (increased by 40%) and the capital region which increased from 2 to 9. Yet the Central region remains the most urbanised one (except the

capital one) and has the biggest number of towns, but North-east gained 4 positions in terms of number (from 7th to 3rd). The evolution of different towns and cities must be seen and can be better understood if referred to regional context and average figures rather than to national ones (see table 5).

Development region	1990	2008	diff.	%	No towns. 1990	No. towns 2010	Diff.
(1) NORTH-EAST	1591492	1489075	-102417	-6,44	32	46	14
(2) SOUTH-EAST	1622280	1546516	-75764	-4,67	33	35	2
(3) SOUTH	1424844	1330182	-94662	-6,64	43	48	5
(4) SOUTH-WEST	1044950	1022433	-22517	-2,15	32	40	8
(5) WEST	1350153	1160805	-189348	-14,02	35	42	7
(6) NORTH-WEST	1524888	1397931	-126957	-8,33	35	43	8
(7) CENTRE	1732452	1477498	-254954	-14,72	48	57	9
(8) BUCH.- ILFOV	2064814	1964955	-99859	-4,84	2	9	7
Urban population	12355873	11389395	-966478	-7,82	260	320	60

Table 5: Evolution of the urban population by development regions (NIS and personal computations)

The regional perspective allows a more accurate perspective upon the evolution of the county capitals, which is sometime contradictory and does not reveal a unique pattern. The 40 county capitals¹ population, which stands for about 50% of the total urban population decreased within the limits of the general national decrease. The population evolution follows closely the regional demographic pattern, so in general most of the cities in the Eastern and Southern regions registered a slight decrease or even a positive growth, whereas those from the Central and Western part registered a quite significant decrease. However in every region there are significant disparities between counties and county capitals, the most important being in regions 3, whereas the smallest were in regions 1, 2 and 7¹². The gap between the 1st and the last capital city in terms of growth can be seen in the table below.

Development region	reg. 1	reg. 2	reg. 3	reg. 4	reg. 5	reg. 6	reg. 7
Difference of %	-9,10	-11,35	-18,61	-15,65	-20,38	-14,76	-11,14

Table 6: Gaps of population growth by development regions (NIS and personal computations)

What is an obvious conclusion of the population analysis is that there are clear winners and losers in each of the 7 regions taken into consideration. Regions with clear winners are 3 and 5, where Pitești or Timișoara benefited from advantages of location, size, and industrial or tertiary sector development. These regions have also clear losers strongly affected by industrial restructuring and less favourable geographical position (Alexandria, Reșița). In some regions, such as 2 or 4 there is a more balanced situation with several winners and one or two clear losers. In both cases economic factors were the most important ones. In the other regions it is difficult to identify a clear winner or a clear loser as the situation is more complex. Only in the North-east (reg. 1) can still be identified one city as a winner, Suceava, mainly do to its dominant position in the county, the good connection to all types of communication networks and to a favourable demographic structure and a traditional good and attractive living environment. Most of the other cities in the region have suffered either from economic restructuring or / and from significant out-migration. The Central and North-western regions have no clear winners although both Cluj-Napoca and Alba-Iulia can compete for this position. This does not mean that those cities had badly evolved but it is due to more balanced urban regional systems and competition. On the other hand some figures here must be amended as there is a significant disturbance provoked by the initial flows of out-migrations for ethnical reasons.

¹ Ilfov county exempted as its capital is București.

A more comprehensive understanding to the evolution of the county capital cities can be given by an analysis of the changes at the inner level of the county. A certain perspective can be provided by the changes in the relation of the county capital to the secondary city / town of the county (primacy report) along the last two decades (1992-2010). Whereas in 10 counties the report increase by more than 5% (more than 15% in Gorj and Mehedinți), in 13 others it diminished by 2-5% (except Arad and Giurgiu where the report changed dramatically by more than 15%). As can be seen in figure 5, the increase of the primacy report occurred more in the Southern regions, whereas decreases are mostly located in West, Centre and East. In the first case the increase is due to the size and position of the main city, in most of the cases the primacy report being higher than 4.0. In the second case the situation is often due to the problems faced by the county capital either from industrial restructuring (cases of Reșița, Galați, Brăila, Vaslui) or of ethnic out-migration (Arad, Mureș, Harghita). In few cases the secondary city benefited from a good geographic position which provided better development opportunities (Medgidia in Constanța, Rm. Sărat in Buzău, Bolintin Vale in Giurgiu, Pașcani in Iași, Fetești on the A2 in Ialomița).

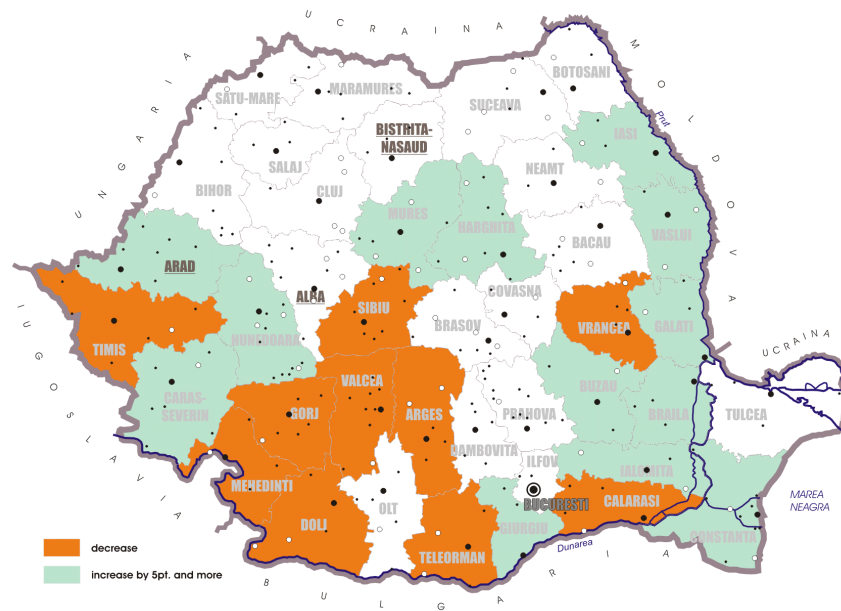


Figure 5 Evolution of the primacy report in the interval 1992 – 2010 (NIS and personal computations)

4. Conclusions

From the above analyses and from evaluation of other indicators certain conclusions can be reached:

- bigger cities are doing better in the Southern part of the country, which in fact reveals a weakness of the local urban systems, as the secondary cities are quite small in general;
- smaller and medium towns are doing better in the Western and Central part, as a result of much more balanced local urban systems;
- small towns are doing better if closer to a big growing city (see agglomerations and metropolitan areas);
- position close to main transport axis is a favourable factor in general (specially in the southern and eastern part of the country);
- the correlation with the industrial decline is not so strong as could have been imagined and is much weaker in general in the case of bigger cities;

- there is a stronger correlation between evolution of the population in general and the in /out migration (including reversed urban – rural migration).

An overview of other indicators shows that in terms of investments in street modernization, the medium and bigger cities were doing better, that there is no direct correlation between evolution of the population and housing construction, which varies significantly (between 225 and 500 units to 1000 inhab.) and also that there is no relationship between evolution of population and the changes of the limits of the “intravilan” (built-up area), which in most situations is quite paradoxically.

Obviously deindustrialisation affected mostly the towns and cities that were over-industrialised during communism. The process led to a loss of around 2 millions salaried people during the 2 decades interval, of which almost 25% belongs to the first major 12 big cities. Together with out-migration and general demographic decline, these were the most important factors that hampered urban development.

Although it is difficult to define a clear pattern of a winner city it can be noticed that cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, located along major communication routes, with higher education centres, cultural assets and competitive industrial branches survived better during the transition. Also smaller towns located in the proximity of bigger cities or in nodal communication points evolved positively (this is the case of more than 55 smaller towns with a general growth of population). In spite of some survivors the general picture indicates a general urban decay as more than 240 towns and cities shrank, out of which more than 120 lost more 10% of their population during the last two decades

Finally it has to be noticed that at this moment there is no urban policy meant to counteract these tendencies, some with unfavourable consequences on the long term, able to produce irreversible negative changes at the level of local, regional or national systems. A list of Growth Poles and Development Poles has been approved in 1998, defining the cities which will benefit from the European Funds. According to an algorithm, the poles can get more funding if they are in a less developed region and vice versa. As a result of the algorithm the cities from the Eastern and Southern regions will get more money than those from the Western and Central part of the country. Whether this policy will balance the development of the major cities it will also create higher unbalances at regional and local levels. The so-called “growth poles” policies did not consider the complex urban processes and the complexity of the situations generated by the transition.

Annex

Evolution of the county capitals population between 1990 and 2008

Region	County capital city	County	Pop. 1990	Pop. 2008	Difference	%
reg. 1	Suceava	SUCEAVA	106905	107010	105	0,10
	Botoșani	BOTOSANI	121351	116669	-4682	-3,86
	Vaslui	VASLUI	74710	70841	-3869	-5,18
	Piatra Neamț	NEAMT	117325	108229	-9096	-7,75
	Iași	IASI	334371	306561	-27810	-8,32
	Bacău	BACAU	195763	178135	-17628	-9,00
	Total		950425	887445	-62980	-6,63
reg. 2	Focșani	VRANCEA	98203	99274	1071	1,09
	Constanța	CONSTANTA	312504	303712	-8792	-2,81
	Tulcea	TULCEA	94774	91841	-2933	-3,09
	Galați	GALATI	305065	292898	-12167	-3,99
	Buzău	BUZAU	146224	133317	-12907	-8,83
	Brăila	BRAILA	238516	214045	-24471	-10,26
	Total		1195286	1135087	-60199	-5,04
reg.3	Pitești	ARGES	162802	168774	5972	3,67
	Slobozia	IALOMITA	51780	52207	427	0,82
	Călărași	CALARASI	76792	73237	-3555	-4,63
	Giurgiu	GIURGIU	73416	68506	-4910	-6,69
	Ploiești	PRAHOVA	248739	230640	-18099	-7,28
	Târgoviște	DIMBOVITA	101332	89225	-12107	-11,95
	Alexandria	TELEORMAN	59033	50210	-8823	-14,95
	Total		773894	732799	-41095	-5,31
reg.4	Râmnicu Vâlcea	VALCEA	105810	111242	5432	5,13
	Târgu Jiu	GORJ	94126	95614	1488	1,58
	Craiova	DOLJ	297585	299559	1974	0,66
	Drobeta - Turnu Severin	MEHEDINTI	107982	107279	-703	-0,65
	Slatina	OLT	87377	78184	-9193	-10,52
	Total		692880	691878	-1002	-0,14
reg. 5	Timișoara	TIMIS	324651	312362	-12289	-3,79
	Arad	ARAD	193766	166633	-27133	-14,00
	Deva	HUNEDOARA	80797	67095	-13702	-16,96
	Reșița	CARAS	110902	84107	-26795	-24,16
	Total		710116	630197	-79919	-11,25
reg. 6	Cluj-Napoca	CLUJ	318975	309338	-9637	-3,02
	Bistrița	BISTRITA	86880	83434	-3446	-3,97
	Zalău	SALAJ	66612	63860	-2752	-4,13
	Baia Mare	MARAMURES	152129	139731	-12398	-8,15
	Oradea	BIHOR	228258	205327	-22931	-10,05
	Satu Mare	SATUMARE	137936	113415	-24521	-17,78
	Total		990790	915105	-75685	-7,64
reg. 7	Alba Iulia	ALBA	73743	66775	-6968	-9,45
	Târgu Mureș	MURES	166029	145470	-20559	-12,38
	Sfântu Gheorghe	COVASNA	72820	62037	-10783	-14,81
	Miercurea Ciuc	HARGHITA	49304	41819	-7485	-15,18
	Sibiu	SIBIU	182580	153842	-28738	-15,74
	Brașov	BRASOV	352260	279728	-72532	-20,59
	Total		822993	682896	-140097	-17,02
Total			6210127	5742182	-467945	-7,54

(NIS and personal computations)

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¹ According to NUTS classification of the Eurostat.

² In Romania, the administrative status of a territory is set up by law. There are however, specific criteria to be fulfilled by a territorial unit in order to become a commune, a town or a city. These criteria are defined by law 100 /2007, which refer to the national settlements network.

³ Foreign Direct Investments.

⁴ Set up in 2008 by a Gov. Decree, in view of benefiting from the EU Structural Funds. A so-called growth pole policy was initiated within the framework of the Regional Operational Plan – REGIO 2007-2013, priority one "Sustainable Urban Development".

⁵ Big cities: over 100,000, Medium 1: 50-99,999, Medium 2: 20-49,999, Small 1: 10-19,999, Small 2: under 10,000; last 12 towns under 5,000 inhab. lost 10.5% of the population.

⁶ Except the city of Constanța, this had a much faster evolution, but under specific circumstances.

⁷ Statistical figures about FDI indicate a weight of over 60% of the country total, for 2010 (constantly around 50-60% during the last 10 years), for the Bucharest-Ilfov development region, which is more or less the capital-city and its metropolitan area.

⁸ The number of students in the capital doubled between 2003 and 2008 from 190 to over 380 thousands according to NIS data.

⁹ GDs no. 998 and 1149 from 2008.

¹⁰ Car industry developed in the 80s and Craiova become a second car producer at national level after Pitești, with Renault. After 1989, the Koreans from Daewoo invested in the car industry and recently the society was taken by Ford, which started to produce new models of various sizes.

¹¹ Although the core city lost population and jobs, its surroundings developed fast and attracted population and investors, due to availability of land and localisation advantages.

¹² The capital – city region was not analysed as the situation is specific for a metropolitan area. Most of the towns are in the proximity of the big city and had a positive growth due to location advantages (close to airports, major access roads, proximity to centre etc.). In this region the main losers are to be found at rural level in the less accessible and remote areas.