

CHANGES IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC SIZE AND FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ROMANIA'S TOWNS (1966-2002)

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Like in the other Central-European countries, Romania's industrial development model over 1950-1989, focused on the accelerated and extensive socialist-type industrialisation, explosive urbanisation and the implementation of urban and rural planning schemes. It was a stage in which the national urban system expanded and consolidated.

It might be said that the aim of post-war industrialisation and urbanisation was largely attained by a gradual transition from the traditional rural-agrarian society to the urban-industrial society of the 1990s. It was a stagewise evolution that took on different forms, had a dynamics of its own, and developed socio-cultural particularities in the course of urbanisation.

After 1989, reflected the urban system underwent a deep-going restructuring process that the country's socio-political changes; urbanisation itself acquiring new scope and breadth. This new stage of transition from the industrial to the services town-type mirrored the country's socio-political transition. The industrial function preserved its importance even more than in the economically developed West European states, modern industry and technology being expected to provide the Romanian urban system a development that would enable it to integrate into the town system of Europe. The urban system is undergoing a process of restructuring now, the urban phenomenon acquiring new characteristics and dimensions. The industrial city – the representative type of urban settlement, is to be gradually replaced by the polifunctional and services town, as part of the country's economic and social-political development targets for the beginning of the third millennium.

Key –words: *urban system, industrial city, functional structure, transition stage*

Introduction

A. Changes in the Demographic Size

In the second half of the 20th century, Romania's towns experienced different demographic growth rates in terms of urban category and period. This process was the direct reflection of the level of economic and social development and it was largely influenced by the tendency of reaching a balanced county urban network ratio through the preferential numerical increase of new towns and the creation of new urban structures in keeping with the goals set by the central power.

The studied interval featured two periods in the evolution of the urban network:

The Socialist Period Based on Centralised Planning

That was the time when the political factor played a major role in the distribution of towns by size-category, in their balanced diffusion within the territory and in shaping an urban network.

Between 1966-1992, the number of towns surged spectacularly, from 183 to 260 through the following measures:

- in 1968, the administrative-territorial reorganisation granted in town status to 9 new localities;
- in 1989, 23 localities were declared towns.

The main characteristic feature is represented by the the numerical increase of small and medium-sized towns: 54 towns (20% of the total) were

promoted to a higher demographic category and no town was demoted to a lower rank (Fig. 1).

The urban population upsurge was the result of natural increase, the village-to-town migration, the

promotion of some communes to urban status and the inclusion of some villages into the administrative boundaries of towns.

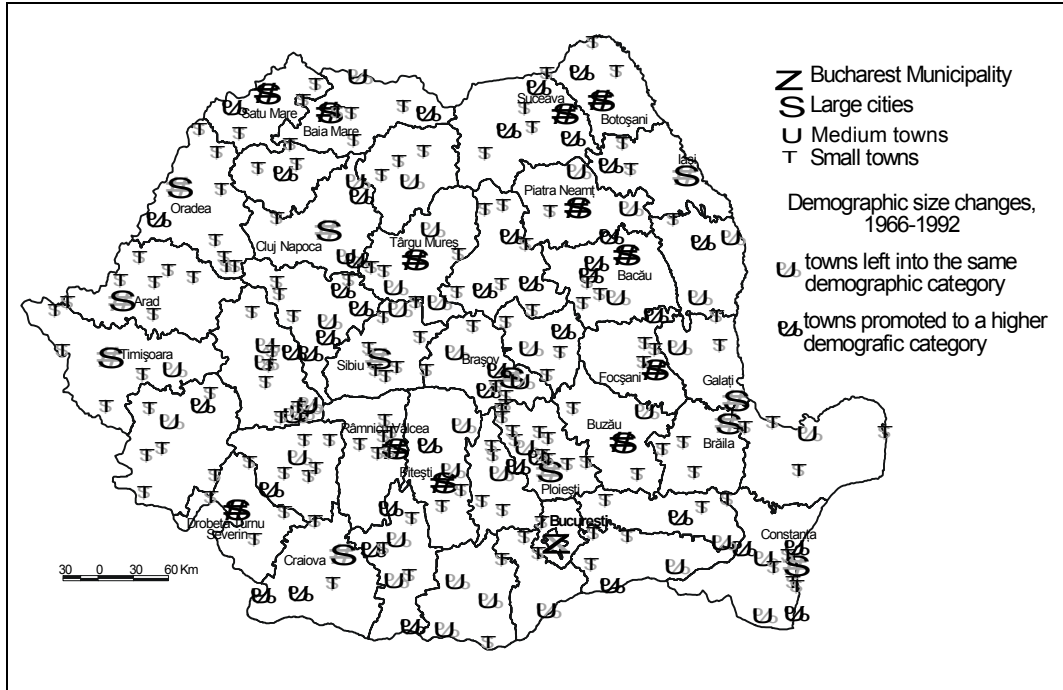


Fig. 1. The demographic size of Romania's towns – 1992

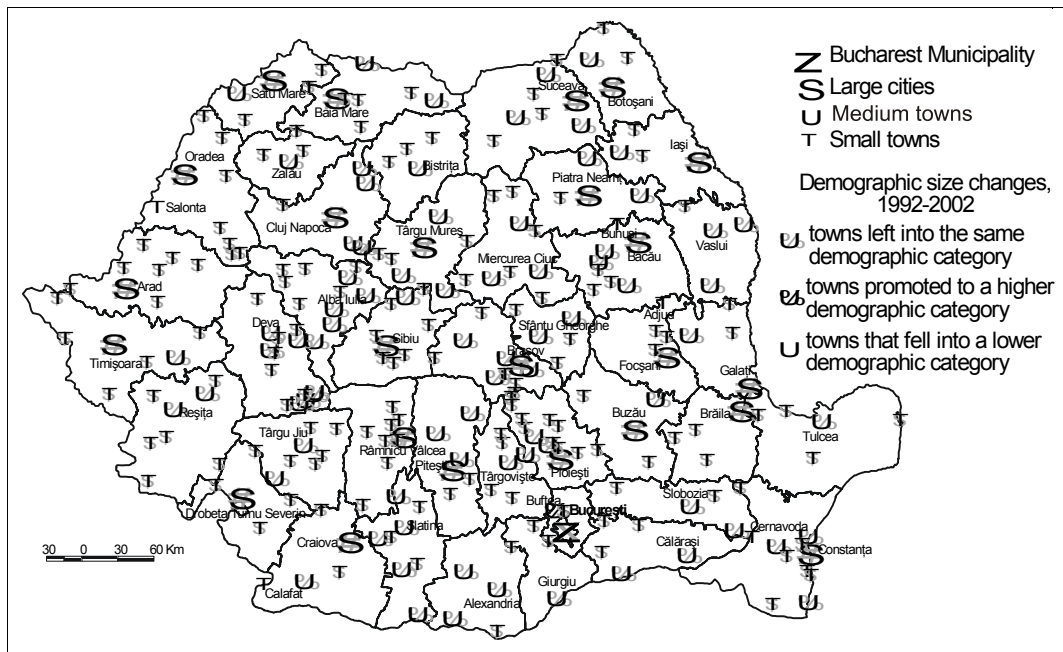


Fig. 2. The demographic size of Romania's towns – 2002

The Transition Period

The transition period from communism to democracy witnessed also demographic changes. Political and economic factors lie behind increased external migration and the change in internal migration which shifted from town to village. One town was promoted to a higher demographic-size category and five towns fell into a lower category (Fig. 2).

1992-2002 featured a slow increase in the number of towns (by only 7); in 2002, the urban system numbered 267 towns

Romania's urban network included a mainly small and medium-sized town (under 100,000 inhabitants) that is 9/10th of the total town number, with more than half this group having fewer than 20,000 inhabitants (Table 1).

Table 1. Towns in Romania Grouped by Demographic size

Town group	No. of towns in 1966	No. of towns in 1992	No. of towns in 2002
Total towns in Romania of which	183	260	267
Small towns with:	119	150	162
Under 5,000 inh.	12	11	14
5,000 – 10,000 inh.	48	53	66
10,000 – 20,000 inh.	59	86	82
Medium towns with:	51	85	80
20,000 – 50,000 inh.	43	62	59
50,000 – 100,000 inh.	8	23	21
Large cities with:	12	24	24
100,000 – 200,000 inh.	12	13	14
200,000 – 300,000 inh.	-	4	5
300,000 – 400,000 inh.	-	7	5
Very large cities:	1	1	1
Over one million inh.			

Bucharest – Romania's Capital

Bucharest is the largest and most important political, economic, financial-banking, commercial, cultural-scientific, educational, transport, informational, sporting and tourist centre.

Bucharest occupied an outstanding position among Romania's large cities, being over five times the size of Iași, the second city in the hierarchy. Throughout the 20th century this ratio was fluctuating, reaching a peak (8.83/1) right after the Second World War. As from 1948, the distance between the Capital and the 2nd-rank town was gradually shrinking to a minimum of 5.7/1 in 1985.

Afterwards the gap would widen slightly. From 1989 on, as Bucharest offered better economic opportunities, the disparity increased again. However, in terms of the theoretical adjustment line and the country's urban population, the city holds an inferior position. This reality is emphasized also by the rank-size analysis, according to which only over three million inhabitants and a better representation of the large 2nd-rank cities could balance the situation.

The year 1992 registered a record high figure of 2,067,545 inhabitants followed by a slow decrease as part of the country's general demographic regression (1,926,334 inhabitants in 2002). What

caused that situation was the sharp fall in birth rates associated with the migration of young people generally.

Large cities (over 100,000 inhabitants). The role of large cities over the last 50 years has consolidated. Between 1966-2002, the number of large cities doubled (from 12 to 25) and their demographic size increased.

Half the cities had a population of 200,000 – 400,000 inhabitants, a figure unknown in any town in 1966. In the post-war period they represented a distinct size-category within the national urban system. Every second town-dweller and every fourth inhabitant of Romania lived in a large city.

Large cities are true first-rank growth poles exerting a strong influence on spatial organisation, on the modernisation of localities and the dynamics of urbanisation, also balancing disparities between residential environments.

This urban category numbers many multiseccular or millenary towns with an outstanding territorial and functional evolution at both regional and national levels.

Medium-sized towns (20,000 – 100,000 inhabitants). The number of medium-sized towns rose from 51 in 1966 to 85 in 1992 due largely to promotions into higher demographic categories. Between 1992 and 2002, this category of towns registered a period of stagnation.

They play a major role in the structure of the national urban network, given that 17 towns act as county-seats assigned the administrative coordination of the territory. The concentration of gigantic industrial units and the lack of functional flexibility makes this category of towns highly vulnerable, future evolutions depending on their

ability to correlate industrial restructuring with the development of the tertiary sector.

Small towns (under 20,000 inhabitants). This category (162 towns) represents 60% of the urban network. It was the most stable one in time and space, and registered a spectacular numerical increase under communism from 119 in 1966 to 150 in 1992.

Small towns are generally of recent date, in the socialist period alone 108 rural settlements were granted town status. The small towns, inhabited by every seventh town-dweller, hold a special place within the urban hierarchy, forming the base of the urban pyramid and discharging organisational functions within the national economy.

B. Changes in the Functional Structure

Among the main elements defining the urban system (demographic size, economic and socio-cultural activities, urban endowment, etc.), town functions (lying at the origin of the urban system and shaping urban development) have the greatest significance.

The easiest and most reliable method to determine town functions and establish town typologies and hierarchies in Romania in the latter half of the 20th century is to analyse the size and structure of the active population (periodically registered by population censuses).

The evolution of towns (like their demographic size changes) featured two periods:

- 1. Extensive industrialisation** in the 7th, 8th and 9th decades, when nearly all the towns developed into economic centres. Towns used to concentrate some 95% of the volume and value of Romania's industrial

production, with over 45% of the active urban population working in industry.

2. The functional destructuring of towns in the 10th decade brought up into discussion the utility of the services-based functional model.

The large cities continued to develop as first rank economic and social centres of the urban national system. The 1966 - 1992 period marked the steady industrial growth of large cities. In 1966, ten cities had under 50% of their active population working in industry, the other towns listing over 50% of the industrial workforce (Fig. 3). After the lapse of 25 years over 50% of the population of all large cities (with the exception of Constanța) worked in the secondary sector. The industry of large cities was represented in principal by the processing and building branches.

Over the past few decades Romania's large cities formed a homogeneous group in terms of active population structure and dynamics:

- more than 50% of the active population worked in industry;
- one-third of the workforce was employed in the services sector which indicates insufficient tertiarisation;
- the agricultural function lost its relevance (under 3%), which is a positive trend.

The deep-going changes recorded in the functional dynamics of **medium-sized towns** were the consequence of specific urbanisation and industrialisation processes across the country, administrative transformations, geographical location and accessibility.

In 1966 medium-sized towns had a well-developed industrial profile (drawing over 50% of the active population to the primary sector). The largest industrial workforce recorded the centres with a specialised industrial profile. The active population of the tertiary and the secondary sectors accounted for 38% and 11%, respectively (Fig. 5).

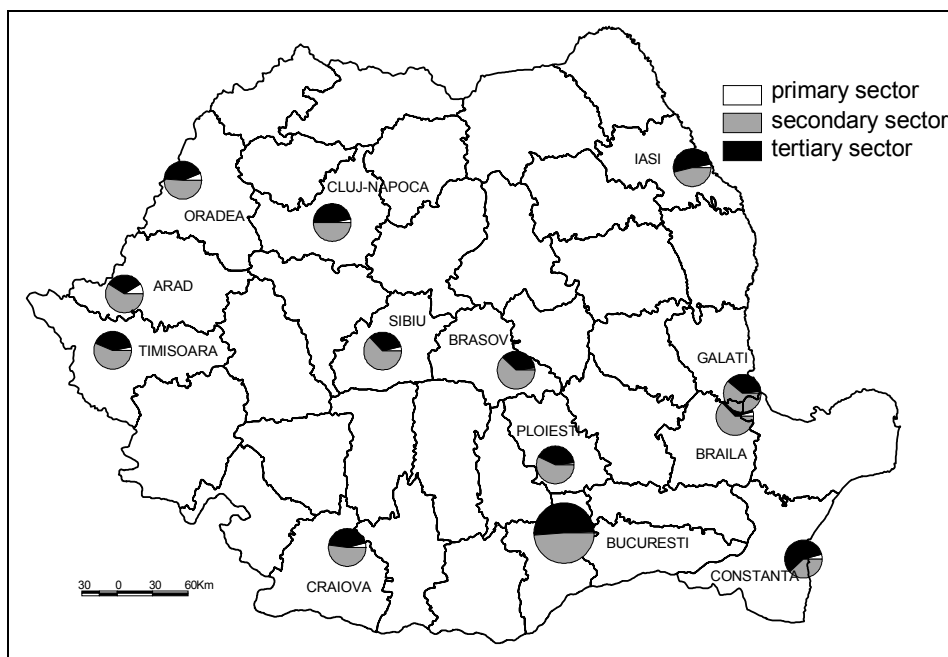


Fig. 3. Large Cities – Active Population Structure by Sector of Activity (1966)

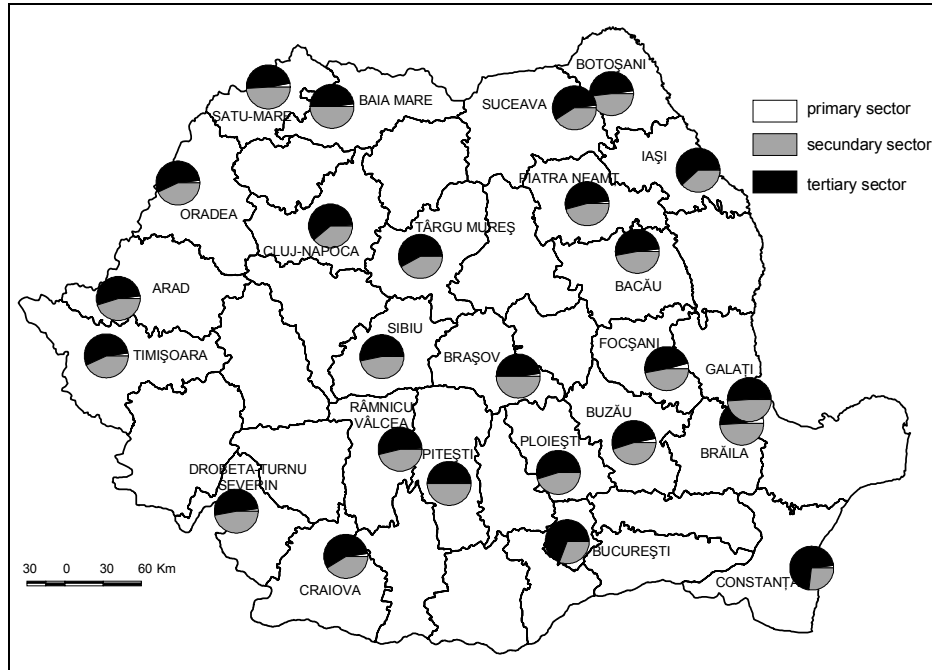


Fig. 4. Large Cities – Active Population Structure by Sector of Activity (2002)

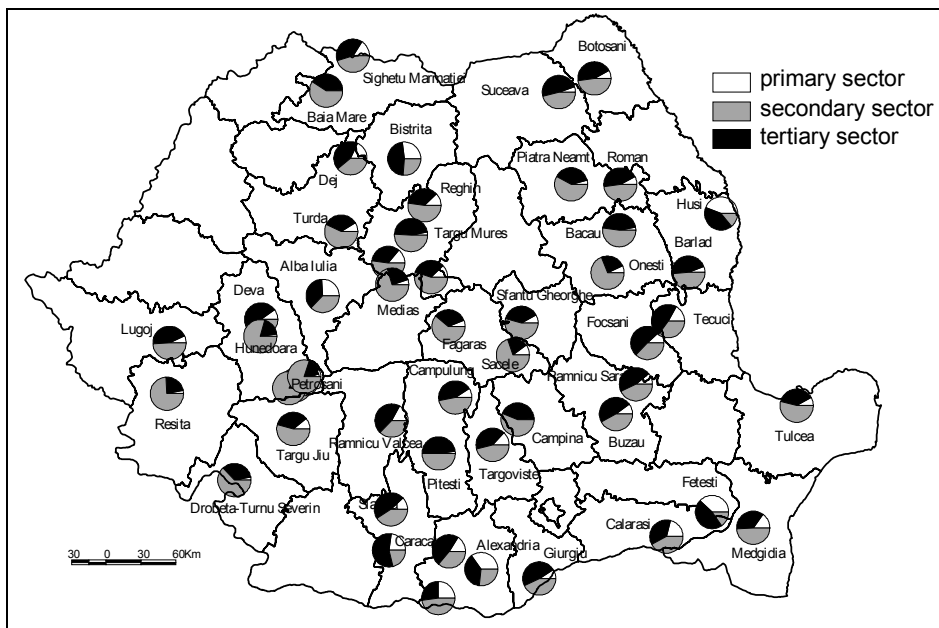


Fig. 5. Medium-Sized Towns – Active Population Structure by Sector of Activity (1966)

After 1968, medium-sized towns experienced intensive industrial diversification, so that by the end of the 1980s the number of specialist industrial centres halved.

In 1992, the secondary sector of this category was progressing (60%), while the primary sector was regressing (5%). Industrial restructuring and

numerous lay-offs during the period of transition account for the active population decrease in the secondary sector (50.1%), significant increases occurring in the tertiary sector which employed some of the people remitted from industry (45.1%). A decreasing trend was noted in the primary sector (4.8%), towns tending towards tertiarisation (Fig. 6).

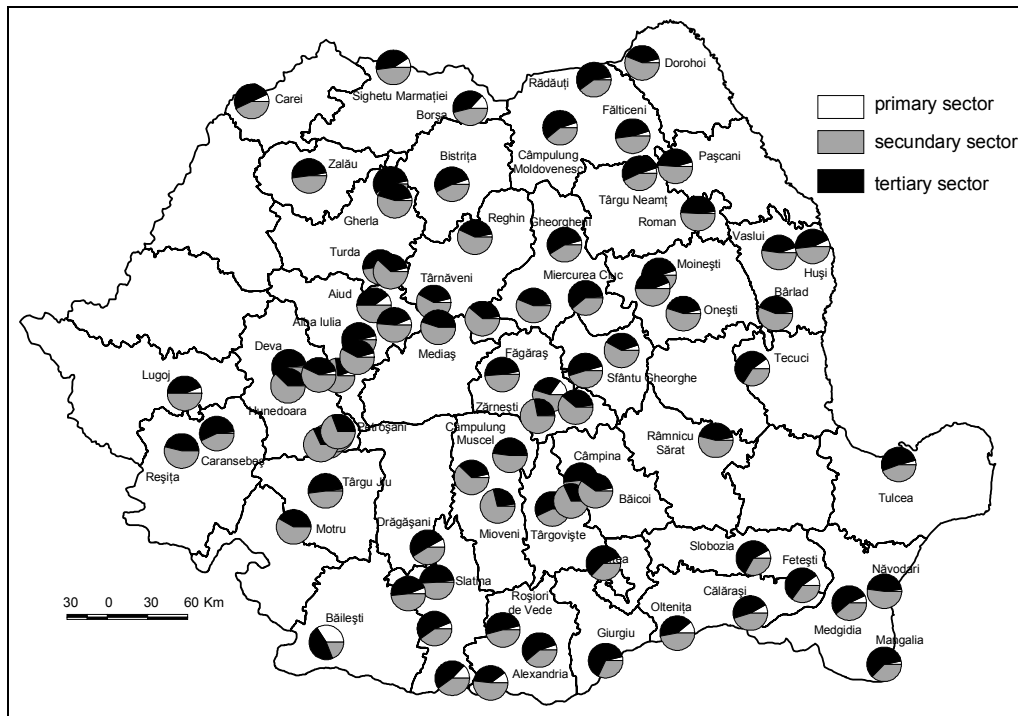


Fig. 6. Medium-Sized Towns – Active Population Structure by Sector of Activity (2002)

In 1966 in small towns, showed a fairly balanced sectoral structure. Subsequent census data (1992) revealed a situation similar to that of other town categories, namely, an increase of the secondary sector (56.3%) and a decrease of the primary sector (12%).

In 2002 the secondary sector decreased substantially (43.0%) in the wake of industrial restructuring, as did the primary sector (14.1%), while the tertiary sector recorded a spectacular increase (42.9%). Most small towns had an industrial and services profile.

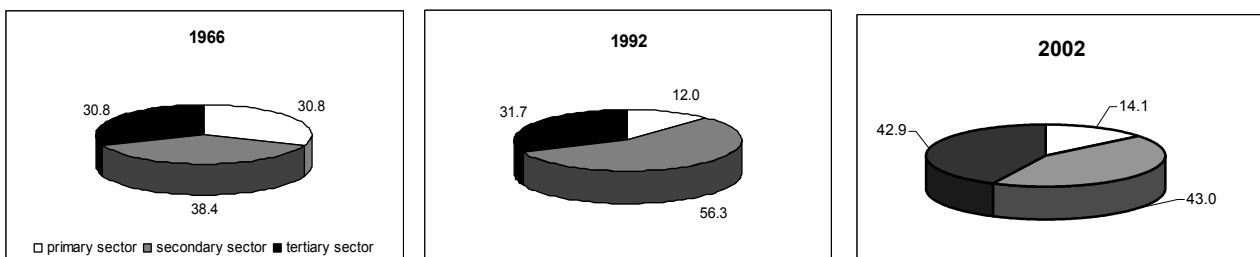


Fig. 7. Small Towns – Active Population by Sector of Activity

In order to get an insight into the changes experienced by the three economic sectors, a number of graphs were plotted based on the 1966, 1992 and 2002 census data correlating the demographic town size with the active population of the secondary and tertiary sectors.

The three graphs show numerical increases and decreases of the industrial workforce over the 1966-1992 and 1992-2002 intervals, respectively.

Under socialism, industry played a major role in changing the Romanian economy, it becoming the dominant branch by producing goods for other

fields of activity. The modernisation of industry was due largely to such branches as electrotechnics, machine-building, electrical and thermal energy

production and chemicals. The industrial town became the representative type of progressive urban settlement

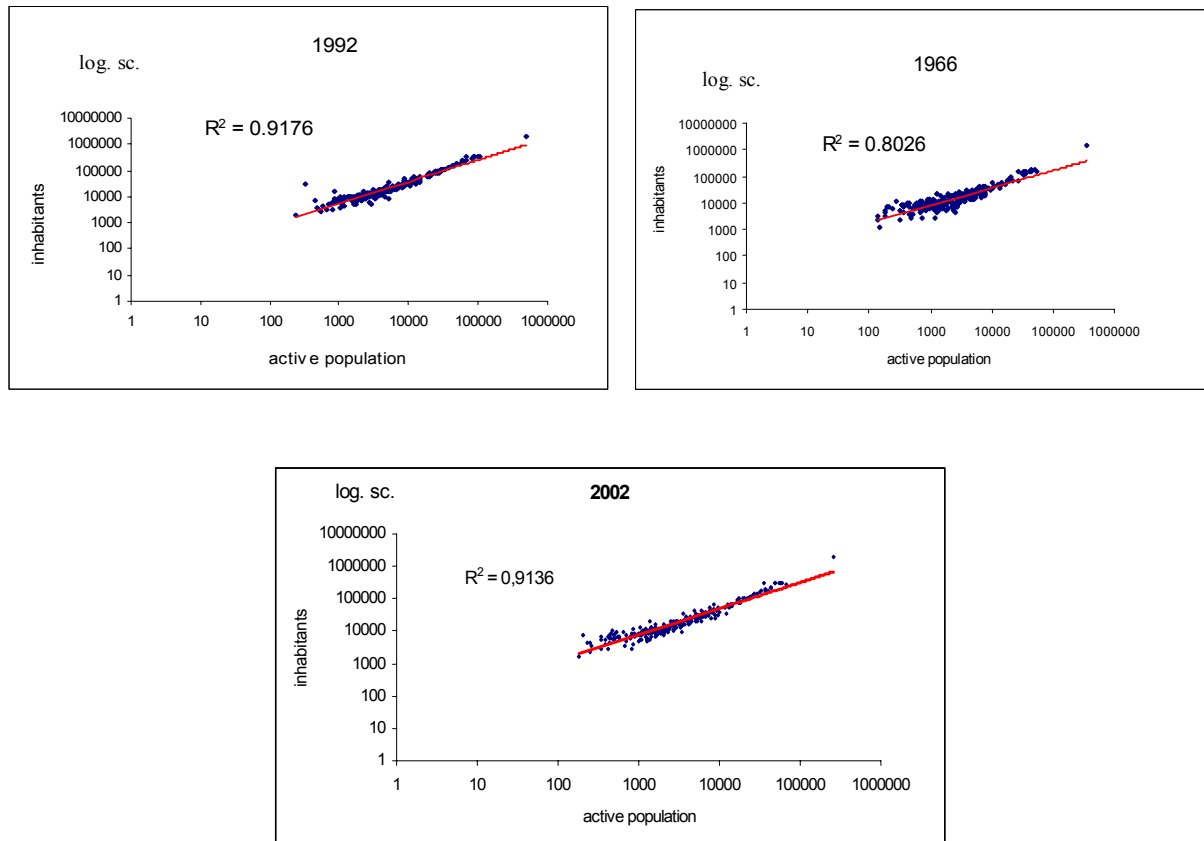


Fig. 8. Correlation between Demographic Size and Active Population in the Secondary Sector

After 1989 a new legislation was put in place and industry was restructured (beginning with Law No. 15/1990). The industrial sector declined even faster as the big combine-works lost power and control; a new competition framework emerged, internal demand decreased, the COMECON was dismantled, some foreign markets were lost, and financial dysfunctions set in.

Under communism, the number of employees in the services sector increased slowly, being revived during the transition period. The positive trend of the first period was part of the

general development of society. After 1989, the economic and urban crisis, the functional destructuring of towns made tertiarisation a topical urban model; after 1990 services were boosted. The depleted value of the correlation index in 2002 was due to the decrease of population in the majority of towns. A notable growth was seen in such sectors as finances-banks, insurance, commerce, and public administration, with slow increases in the education and telecommunication area. Transports and transactions registered a slowdown.

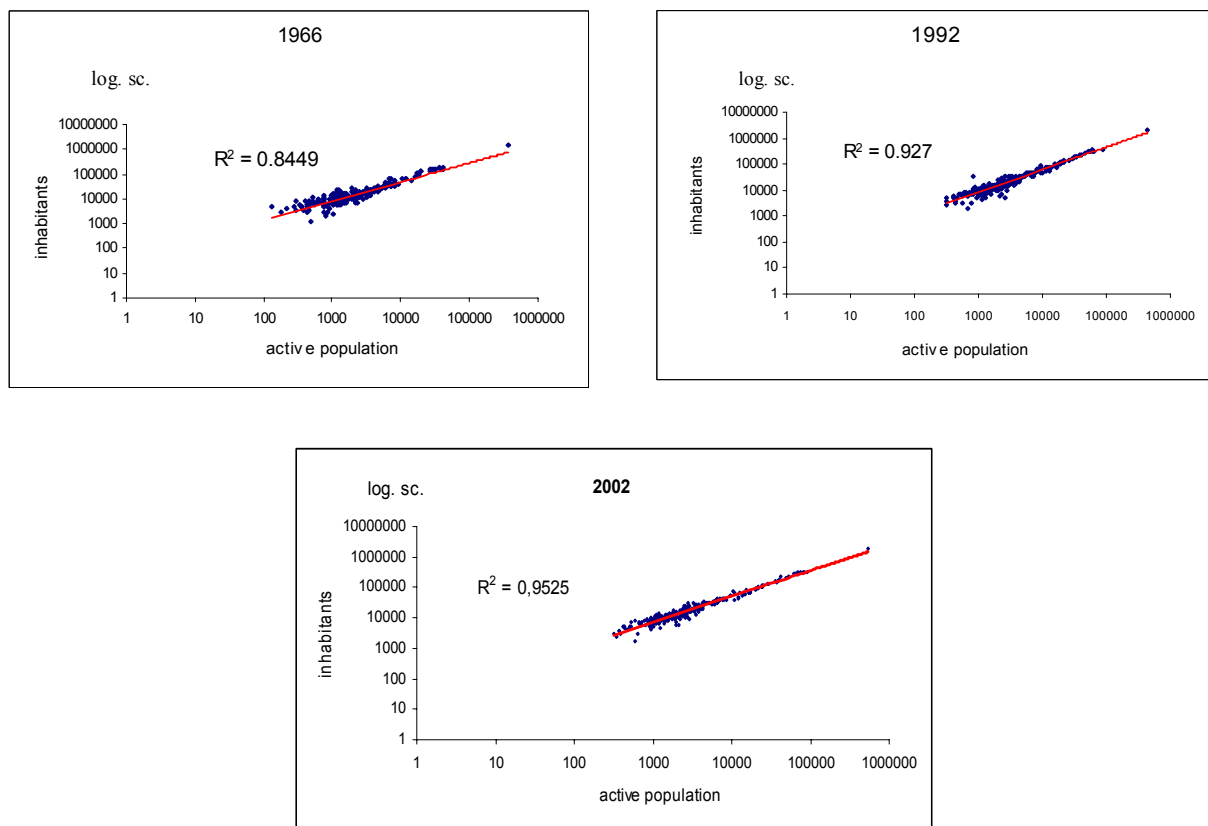


Fig. 9. Correlation between Demographic Size and Active Population in the Tertiary Sector

Summing up we would say that the analysed interval features two periods: the communist period marked by important demographic-size changes and major growths of the secondary sector and the

transition period characterised by demographic-size stagnation, the decrease of the industrial workforce and the increase of tertiary sector employees.

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