DISCUSSION PAPERS

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The Romanian Settlement
Policy During the Period
of State Socialism

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1 Introduction

The actual period of each country's development has relation both to its historical past – in some cases it reorganizes itself on other bases – and to its vision of future. Each longer historical period creates a structure which is in many aspects bounded to it, and mainly from that structure (or from its idealised form), it looks towards a future it considers a happy one. The triad of past, present and future gained particular role and significance in European thought and development.

The theoretical, historical, political and practical problems of state socialism (state capitalism) had essentially been the personal matter of the Soviet Union up to the end of World War II. After the Central European communist changes, the issue of the state socialist system turned up as essential and common characteristics of each small socialist country. Besides general and common features (which, considering the essential elements of the era, were similar to each other), each structure's national characters could appear and develop.[1]

The Romanian state socialist era (December 1947 – December 1989) and social, economic and settlement policy within it almost fully conformed to this historical "expectation". The acceptable processes of the previous period were incorporated into its own system, although without any direct or positive indication to them. However, the Romanian Workers' Party, then the Romanian Communist Party after 1965, in most cases opened a "clean page" and pretended as if it started Romanian history and that socialism was the only one possible perspective for Romania and for its people (referring sometimes exceptionally to the minorities living in the country).

Socialist regional policy was almost forced by the repeated border revision after 1945, the significant developmental differences between parts of the country and the ideological bases of the system. The new ideology of building a socialist society was given partly by the classics' works (Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin at the beginning of the era). The Soviet practice was formally available for the actual implementation.

The Romanian People's Republic was proclaimed on December 30, 1947. The change of the regime accelerated the establishment of subsystems of state socialist system and a party-state structure was created. The structures were developed according to Stalin's state-building principles and practices. National characteristics have gradually been involved in Roman foreign and domestic policy including regional policy and development.

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[1] Exploring the general and unique versions and structures of the state socialist social, economic and political system in different countries will likely to be a long process. This work has already started in both Hungarian social sciences and on the international level during the period of the existing system (in the West) and it has accelerated after the collapse of the system (in the East too).

Regional and settlement (urban and rural) policy was an integral part of Romanian state socialism. The party and the state intervened into the regional and local processes according to the changing political considerations. Privileged towns, especially Bucharest and county seats, were dominant in the era[2] but the developmental focuses changed from time to time.

Considering rural policy, significant changes can be observed, but regarding the whole period a kind of anti-farmer and anti-rural behaviour can be noticed. The real political challenge from the system's point of view was not against farmers, as they could cultivate land happily in the structures (state farms and cooperatives) determining the agriculture since the early 1960s. The enemy was the peasant, in fact the "autonomous man" who was able to produce his livelihood bases on his own work, on his own land, and thus acquired a relative autonomy.

Romania's population – due also to hard-line state population policy interventions by the state from time to time – increased from 15.8 to 23.2 million people between 1948 and 1990, which in itself raised the economic, social, settlement developmental and housing issues with overwhelming force. The significantly growing number of people needed 'habitable spaces', and the state undertook the tasks of housing and job provision, especially in cities.

The state socialist era is also intriguing from the point of view that the prevailing party leader always had a varying type and weight of position within his respective party and state; and that he had his own set of values regarding settlements and architecture. In this respect, Ceauşescu's era (1965–1989) is the most instructive, since he formulated an individual dictatorship within the party and the state gradually in this period. Compared to other socialist leaders, Ceauşescu was particularly interested in and emotionally attracted to architecture and urban planning.[3] (It is likely due to his origin, since when he came to Bucharest from his poor native village Scornicești at the age of 11, he faced with the adventure of the city which was expanded with ideological and class-struggle content later on.)

One of the basic issues of the state socialist era is modernisation, including the acceleration of economic and social development which sometimes manifested in psychoses of 'catching up to and leaving behind capitalism'. Romanian social, planned economic and settlement political processes were influenced primarily and in some respects were almost explicitly defined by Stalin's and Krushchev's

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[2] Due to the special spatial history of Romania, most settlements have several names (Romanian, Hungarian, German etc.). Except for Bucharest, we use the current Romanian names in this study so that the identification of settlements will be uniform.

[3] Ceauşescu's personality as 'the professional revolutionary' was formulated during his general carrier. The following site describes the dictator's life (it is not objective in every respect): http://www.ceauşescu.org.

theoretical and practical political aspirations in spite of individual efforts, independence policy and diverse international relationship-building.

If we look carefully at the regulations of the Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (hereinafter RCP), it can be stated that the aspirations of spatial planning and settlement systematisation4 are 'non-momentary products of imagination', since this issue appeared (with different weights) as the problem to be solved in degree X, XI, XII and XIII of the RCP. (Congress XIV was held between 20–24 November, 1989, but its degrees had no substantive effect due to the historic turn in December.) Building settlement centres and increasing their urbanisation level were almost under continuous decision making. (Many people in Romania and in Hungary might not have taken these degrees seriously, they considered them as phrases only).

The whole era was dominated by the party-state. Sectoral policies and science had only additional role. Settlement-related disciplines (architecture, urban geography, urban planning and urban sociology etc.) essentially confirmed the expectations of the authorities, and were forced to take part in shaping the era's processes. Scientific disciplines (apart from architecture) mostly did additional work and did not define the essential elements of these processes.

Romanian settlement policy – particularly the public analysis of the so-called village destruction process – has been studies in Hungary since 1987–1988. The transformation of the economic, social, political and administrative relations of villages was a permanent element of Romanian state socialism, and rural policy did not begin with the physical and technical liquidation of villages. The process was qualified and dealt primarily from an emotional and political point of view.

Settlement policy in Romania has in many ways become ripe for re-analysis. The Romanian state socialist period ended 20 years ago, and many of these previous processes could be analysed in a significant part from the historical perspective.

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4 'Systematisation' encompassed the entire spatial and urban development in the Romanian political, scientific and colloquial use. It appeared in sometimes narrower, sometimes broader conceptual sphere in various documents and analyses. This expression has been most frequently used in connection with administrative and rural network rearrangement. 'Sistematizarea teritoriului', 'sistematizarea urbana', 'sistematizarea satelor' and 'planificarea regionale', etc. have become the most commonly used categories of daily political vocabulary, and soon became the part of the Romanian public discourse and daily newspapers (*Cardaş,* 1983). Concepts appeared in Hungarian book publishing and Hungarian press in Romania in translated form from state language. Ceauşescu's 227 speeches, articles and books were published in Hungarian between 1960 and 1986. The concept of systematisation (urban, rural and spatial planning) meant the way of future building for a part of Hungarian intellectuals living in Romania (Keszi Harmath, 1972). The rural transformation process was named as 'Programm zur Systematisierung der Dörfer' in the Transylvanian German literature. Dozens of Ceauşescu's works considered important by his environment were also published in English translation in Romania. The original English and Romanian terminologies are not similar in every case.

Here, we are going to concentrate on the political and territorial–political correlation of processes, as to explore all of the correlations of this issue would be the task of a monograph. The analyses of contents of different kind of official publications (minutes of party congresses, government decisions etc.) and texts of the laws in this issue are considered as important, though political improvisation had also gained considerable position in the substantial period of the era.

2 Periods and turns in the history of Romanian state socialism

Romania was an agriculture-dominated country in both its economic and social structure, and thus in its settlement structure at the end of World War II. Industrialisation and urbanisation began as well but it did not transform the whole country (*Durandin,* 1998; *Hunya,* 1978, 1989a, 1989b; *Hunya–Réti–R. Süle–Tóth,* 1990; *Szász,* 1993). Romanian post-war political development is usually divided into three important stages:

− August 23, 1944 – December 30, 1947: multi-party and 'people's democratic' period in royal Romania
− 1948–1965, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's "democratic" communist government,
− 1965–1989, Nicolae Ceauşescu's personality cult, "a national and totalitarian" communist period.

According to the Romanian political conception, the period after August 23, 1944 was connected to the construction of socialism. Therefore, huge celebrations were held in August 1954[5] and political reviews emphasising continuity were born also in August 1964.

The issue of political power in Romania was decided at the end of 1947. The communist revolutionary executive Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej – as head of the Romanian Workers' Party – transformed the economy and formed the new Soviet society according chiefly to Soviet guidelines between 1948 and 1965. In 1958, he succeeded in withdrawing Soviet troops from Romania, so that the Romanian leadership's power increased in both domestic and foreign policy.

The long-term ideological foundation of development processes of the state socialist era was laid down formally in the programme statement of the Romanian

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[5] The country has been free for ten years. (August 23, 1944 – August 23, 1954), Bucharest, 1954. This study was published by the Historical Institute of the Party working next to the Central Leadership of Romanian People's Party. The study which is large in volume with an annex rich in tables reports about the ten-year long successes including the leading and direction setting role of Romanian People's Party.

Workers' Party in 1948. The goal was to build socialism, to transform the society into a socialist one and to raise the workers' welfare level. The Romanian Workers' Party's programme statement and its successor party's (RCP) organisational regulation were amended many times: in 1955, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1974 and 1984. Centralism was steadily strengthened within the party. The party-state structure meant increasingly direct party control and monitoring. Following the end of the 1960s', personality cult had became dominant both within the party and the state.

In March 1965, Nicolae Ceauşescu came into power. He became Secretary-General of the RCP in 1965 and the President of the Council of State in 1967. As the president of the Socialist Republic of Romania, he led the country from 1974 to December 1989.

Between 1965 and 1968, Ceauşescu – partly in order to consolidate his power – introduced a kind of relief in the economic and social governance and aspired for substantial improvement in the population's living standards. This period entered the Romanian history as the 'happy 60s'. Party Congress IX, held in June 1965, was a compromise congress in both personal and political terms.

In December 1967 the National Party Conference adopted a kind of reform package that affected the direction of economy and the comprehensive public administrational reform. Each level of the party-state was established by appointing the party leaders to state leaders on the given level. From this date, Ceauşescu became the number one leader of both the party and the state and directed the two structures which depended on him. This was the basis of his unlimited power and personality cult.

The party conference made important decisions also from the settlement policy respect. It started spatial planning processes as well, conceptualising that 120 new cities needed to be established within a reasonable time, 558 agro-industrial centres should be created and about 6300 villages should be eliminated for the sake of modernisation. The most attractive reform among the decisions of meeting was the public administrative one since everybody was affected by it.

The village destruction efforts did not receive any substantive response in the contemporary socialist countries, nor capitalist ones. The era lived under the spell of urban development, and the village was considered to be anachronistic.[6]

Not only was the socialist transformation of society, economy and human nature conceived, but also the transformation (remaking) of nature. The construction of channels and large reservoir lakes (the last one connected to the electrifi-

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[6] The meeting of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning of the UNO was hold in Bucharest between 22 September and 7 October, 1969. The references to the meeting as the legitimating source of Romanian planning and development practice appeared later on. According to this, the plans of Western and socialist countries were also published as the international backgrounds of the Romanian practice.

cation of the country) appeared as 'the results' in the control of the forces of nature within Romanian nature transformation. Exploiting its surface features, Romania established dam and reservoir lakes with the highest rate throughout the country.

In 1968, Ceauşescu received a kind of Western political and partly internal national legitimacy since he stayed away from the occupation of Czechoslovakia. The concentration of power strengthened further on Party Congress X in August 1968. The internal and formal elements of 'national communism' rapidly grew stronger.

The theorem of "each socialist country determines its own development direction" became fundamental for the Romanian political leadership. This basic position enabled Romania to seek out newer foreign political ways, to deepen its Western and Chinese relations, but also included the possibility to follow its own path in domestic policy and in building a special dictatorship.

Congress X of the RCP in 1969 determined to deepen the developed socialist society as its primary objective. The issue of 'homogenising the society' emerged in the congressional report and debates. The political effort was gradually directed into ethno-linguistic homogenisation. The party's primary goal became the assimilation of ethnics. The congress can be considered as a sort of advent of a new age in the aspect of urban and village policy because the reinforcement of settlement political interventions has been apparent since then.

During the period when city planning and the spatial positioning of productive forces became a mass phenomenon, the county system executed by the administrative reform in 1968 turned into the primary frame *(Figure 1)*. The strong party-state executive body or apparatus was built in the counties.

The county and the county seat have become the most important level of territorial control of society since 1968. The party and state organisations as well as the forces of repression which contributed to maintain the system were formulated here. The county became the most important spatial frame for spatial planning and partly for spatial distribution as well.[7]

Ceauşescu's visit to China and North Korea in 1971 and strengthening Chinese relations gained a role in the establishment of the political system and even in settlement policy as well. Both the players of this era and historical analysis attach great importance to Ceauşescu's consideration that North Korea's rapid economic, social and architectural modernisation, the complete reconstruction of the capital city and the economic catching up which was evident for him were due to the dictatorship.

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[7] The spatial developmental plans and physical planning of counties were completed gradually. The Representative Review of the Country was published in 1982 (*Măciu,* 1982) also included the complete system of the developmental plans of counties.

Figure 1

*The public administrational positions of the counties of Romania
and county seats in 1968*

Congress IX held in 1974 accepted a new 25-year party programme deter-
mining the basic directions and in some relation specific contents of the long term
formation (up to1990) of economic, social and spatial processes – the vision of
multilaterally developed socialist society.

Despite great economic investments, the country's internal structural relations
had been gradually sharpened since 1974. Industrialisation, the newly started
nature transformation (Danube–Black Sea channel), the reconstruction of
Bucharest (i.e. the creation of a new centre, which was necessary due partly to the
earthquake in 1977) achieved an irrational dimension.

The elaborated economic and urban developmental plans were partially
implemented and exceeded the capacity of the country; thus, the quality level of
implementation was very low. The newly created towns and large urban area had
weaker and weaker technical content and design as a result of rapidly changing
planning specifications.

Party Congress XII, held in November 1979 can be named as 'congress of tensions'. Ceauşescu himself pointed out that there are severe tensions in the economy, especially in agriculture. Some older party leaders criticised Ceauşescu' policy, but delegates were quickly silenced.

Congress XIII (November 1984) stressed the policy of national self-sufficiency. It related to both energy and food supply. The country's total external debt was repaid by the middle of 1989, but its trade-off was the collapse of internal economic, social and human relations. After World War II, Romanian society was unprecedented in Europe by settling the country's external financial debts.

During Romanian national communism, built on a nationalist base from the beginning, racism (against Hungarians, Germans, Jews etc.) was almost open in politics.

In particular, the Saxons' position was special since they could leave Romania due to agreements with the German Federal Republic. Their architectural and cultural heritage was left in place, but their houses and settlements soon began to be destroyed by the new residents.

The spatial planning concept targeting the total transformation of the traditional system of villages was made public in 1988. During the economic and social crisis, and the transformation of external processes, the plan did not have practical reality. It turned both national minorities and Romanians against the dictatorship. At that time Western powers also began to totally re-evaluate their policies in connection with Romania.

3 Constitutional and Administrative Changes

The Romanian People's Republic was proclaimed on December 30, 1947 in order to clarify the communist revolution. In February 1948, the Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party, expecting its political victory, drafted the country's socialist architectural tasks. The left gained a landslide victory in Mach 1948. The new constitution, defining the basic institutions of the new structure, was adopted by the Romanian People's Republic in April 1948. Planning the economic tasks of the state socialist system was assigned to the Economic Supreme Council in the beginning, and afterwards to the State Planning Commission and its executive body, the Planning Office.

Chapter VI of Constitution drafts the structure of internal public administration. The country's public administrational base consisted of comune, plaşi, judete and region. People's councils were formulated on the different levels of public administration where they worked in hierarchical sub- and super-ordination (*Zakota,* 2000).

The socialist restructuring of public administration was carried out in September 1950, during which a three-level Soviet type commission system was created (region, district and village). Instead of the former 58 counties and within it 424 districts with 6276 urban and rural public administrational units and 28 regions, and within them 177 rayons and 148 urban and 4052 rural administrative units were formed. The number of spatial units on the highest level was reduced by 50% due to the reform and there was also a drastic cut in the case of districts. So strong district creation was accomplished on level of settlements.

Eleven counties from 22 were created in Transylvania. The counties of Csík, Udvarhely and Háromszék were included in the region of Braşov which was renamed as Oraşul Stalin. The regional and local spatial planning offices of planning departments were established on the regional level. The party structure was adjusted to the administrational reform since this was the only way to ensure the party's direct management and control.

A new constitution more precisely following the Soviet constitution of Stalin was adopted in September 1952. According to the new constitution a radical spatial administrational reform was again carried out in September 1952. The number of the regions was reduced to 18 and their internal classification was modified. The Hungarian Autonomic Province (HAP) was established by covering a large part of the historic territory of Transylvania with the centre of Tirgu Mureş [Marosvásárhely]. Hungarians in Transylvania attached considerable hope to the functioning of the HAP. (Section 18 of the Constitution denominated the administrative units; the Section 19–21 regulated the issues of the HAP.)

In 1956, only corrections were made to the territorial administration, and the number of regions was decreased to 16. Arad was one of the eliminated regions. Smaller spatial changes were implemented within the regions.

Administrative units were modified in 1960. The Hungarian Autonomous Province was renamed to Mures-Hungarian Autonomous Province. The changes indicated the limitation of the competency and autonomy. In many respects it can be considered as detachment from the Soviet system. (This assumption was seemed to be strengthened by the fact that Braşov received her historical name back.)

Besides the autonomous province, Bucharest and Constanţa and a further 15 provinces received priority status and provincial rights in the structure that was created in 1960. Then it was thought that besides the capital city the country's largest port was needed to be developed.

There were significant differences among the populations and development of provincial headquarters in the mid 1960s. The contemporary Hungarian comparative analyses were based on Romanian data. Towns were defined partly by theirs administrative areas and partly functionally with the inclusion of their suburbs *(Table 1)*.

Table 1

The population of administrative centres in Romania (1965)

	Inhabitant	Including suburbs
Piteşti	53,000	73,000
Bacău	66,000	77,000
Timişoara	153,000	171,000
Braşov	114,000	236,000
Cluj	168,000	207,000
Constanţa	134,000	174,000
Oradea	112,000	124,000
Galaţi	96,000	113,000
Deva	24,000	42,000
Iaşi	126,000	160,000
Baia Mare	51,000	95,000
Tirgu Mureş	77,000	95,000
Craiova	129,000	151,000
Ploieşti	137,000	177,000
Suceava	27,000	66,000

Source: International Almanac (1967).

Bucharest had 1.246–1.382 million inhabitants. The provinces with large areas and a high population had the possibility of strengthening the power of local party and council.

According to the new constitution approved in 1965, socialism was essentially built in the country, so the country was renamed the Socialist Republic of Romania. Since then the phrasing of 'socialism building and united Romanian nation' more and more frequently appeared in Romanian politics. (Chapter V of the Constitution regulates the internal public administrational system, but the spatial units were not categorised. So in the case of their modification, the Constitution did not have to be amended.)

The public administrational reform was placed on agenda by the Central Committee again in October 1967. It was considered that 40–45 counties were needed to be created in the country so that the developments would be spatially more proportional. In January 1968, the Romanian Communist Party published the spatial reform plan of public administration for public consultation, in which 35 counties were separated. After the debate, the new draft in a slightly modified form was adopted by the Grand National Assembly. 38 counties were created in January 1, 1968, one in January 17, and Bucharest became a 'municipium', a city with county rank. 236 settlements, of which 47 were designated as 'municipia'

were also given urban status. 13,149 villages were organised into 2706 communities of settlements.

The Mures-Hungarian Autonomous Region was abolished and new county borders were formulated in its place. In the almost uniform judgement of the Roman leadership the MHAR – of approximately 600 thousand mostly ethnic Hungarian inhabitants – was considered an obstacle to the social homogenising and Romanianisation ambitions. According to the contemporary Hungarian intellectuals living in Transylvania, the leadership called the area of autonomy only as 'the ethnic ghetto'.

The county seat matter of Harghita County become a quite serious issue for the administrational reform. The central leadership appointed Odorheiu Secuiesc as the centre but mass demonstrations started in Miercurea Ciuc. Eventually the latter town received the rights of seat due to a separate agreement between the demonstrators and Ceauşescu.

The public administrational changes are noteworthy because between 1948 and 1968, there was no really agreed spatial and central system. Consequently, it cannot be said that the stable administrational centres received priority developmental sources. Between 1968 and 1989, the spatial and central system did not change essentially – except of counties around Bucharest, where four counties (Giurgiu, Călăraşi, Ialomiţa and Ilfov) were formulated in 1982 by transforming Ilfov and Ialomita. State socialism was a highly administrative system; the formal processes were carried out within frames of state socialist counties. (Its significance is emphasised by the fact that the county's party secretary was also the president of the county's people's council.)

Significant amendments were made in the Constitution in 1974, but this was not considered as a new constitution. The political leadership decided on deepening and speeding up the building of socialism. The amendments pointed to Ceauşescu's personal dictatorship within the political leadership.

In 1989, there were 260 towns (including 56 municipiums) and 1688 communities of settlements. The community of settlement is an administrational and political formation and a bit more than 13 thousand villages belonged to them. Scattered settlements in the mountains and farms in plain areas (which are similar to 'homesteads') – whose number was estimated around 100 thousand in 1989 – made the settlement network more colourful.

4 Turning points of settlement policy

If the most rigorous approach is taken into account in connection with the settlement (town and village) policy the following significant milestones should be highlighted:

Following the Soviet example, the transformation process of the whole political system, economy and society started at the end of 1947. In addition, due to their overall consequences the transformation of settlement system also began at that time.

The Settlement Planning and Development Institute (ICSOR, renamed several times after 1990, and working as INCD URBANPROIECT since 2001) was established in 1949.

In 1952, the Romanian Workers's Party Cenral Leadership and the Committee of Ministers of the People's Republic of Romania made a joint decision on the construction and reconstruction of towns and the organisation of architectural activity. The development of Bucharest and within it the construction of the metropolitan subway of capital were the major matters in this decision.

The grandiose nature restructuring plan connected to economic restructuring meant not only to start the Danube-Black Sea Canal construction but the mass-construction of smaller and larger hydroelectric plants. Romania and Yugoslavia entered into a contract on constructing the Iron Gate system.

The restructuring of the economy was connected to the priority development of heavy industry. In its early period, the development of industry was the catalyst for the transformation of towns.

Congress IX of the RCP, held in 1965 has already dealt with the comprehensive issue of the development of settlements and elaborated upgrading directives.

'Comitetul de Stat pentru Construcţii, Architectură şi Sistematizare' was formulated in 1965. It received little attention at the beginning, although it played a prominent role in the implementation of tasks, even if not in the determination of goals.

In October 1967, the RCP Central Committee drafted and published the public administrational reform and its principles for spatial and urban development.

At the beginning of December 1967, they decided on a comprehensive reform programme including the reorganisation of public administration and the appointment of long-term tasks of spatial planning.

The wordings of 'single Romanian working class' and 'single Romanian nation' have became dominant since 1968. The preparation of practical steps of unified and homogenous national opinion begun. The homogenisation on the national level actually meant the creation of a single Romanian (and only Romanian-speaking) political nation.

The 'small cultural revolution', influenced by the Chinese and Korean experiences broke out on the party meeting in July, 1971.

The national conference of the RCP Central Committee, held in July 1972 adopted a decision on spatial planning directives, the regional concentration of villages, raising the density of built-up areas, accelerating economic and ethnical homogenisation and defined Romania as a 'developing socialist country'. The process of the so-called 'systematisation' essentially began on the high level of policy at this time. Its aim was 'to minimize the gap between village and town'.

Act No 58/1974 dealt with spatial, urban and rural settlement planning. According to the Act, the building of 300–350 new towns had to be started. The law gave the rights of towns for 40 settlements in the firs step. At that time it was drafted in various debates that 'about 3000 settlements should be destroyed physically'.

Congress XIII of the RCP in November 1984 made a decision on the formulation of small agro-industrial cities but the following phrasing that 'the spatial planning and organisational measures have to be completed in the actual five-year plan' did not receive enough attention within the country nor outside of it such as in Hungary.

In 1986, the RCP updated its policies concerning the 'new settlement order' and made specific decisions.

In December 1987, it was decided on the national conference of RCP that the systematisation process should be finished by the millennium.

On the National Conference of Presidents of Councils held on March 3, 1988, Ceauşescu announced that the settlement systematisation plan should be accomplished in three phases (up to 1990, 1990–1995, 1995–2000), during which 7–8 thousand villages should be eliminated (this number was duplicated in comparison with the original idea in 1974) and the inhabitants should be resettled to central urban settlements.

On the meeting of the Political Executive Committee of the RCP, held on April 29, 1989, the overall aims were confirmed but there was no question of specific timetable and on the contrary, several of the members presumed that more time was needed for the transformation.

5 Romanian spatial and regional planning system in the state socialist era

Similarly to other socialist countries, the national economic planning and five-year plans were the basis of socio-economic development management. Planning was basically formed by the practice established in Russia, although the national needs, characteristics and opportunities were also constantly taken into account. Romanian economic planning considered the Yugoslav and to a certain extent French planning processes and methods continuously.

The real challenge for spatial and urban planning was the fact that according to Romanian economic statisticians, Romania with its economic growth of 12–14% between 1950 and 1970 possessed the second place in the economic growth in the world after Japan (*Enache*, 1973). The dominant driver of economic expansion was industrial growth. In the long-term plans concerning the period between 1970 and 1990, a small drop in annual economic growth was taken into account with its still outstanding level of 9–10%.

The primary level and goal of spatial (regional) planning was the country. The pursuit of integrated and harmonic development of the country and thus the balanced planning of economic, social and cultural functions of the country (as a whole) dominated in the process of spatial planning. Spatial planning meant a complex and comprehensive process including the local aspects of industrial, agricultural, transport, communicational, social and other branches.[8]

The task of spatial planning was to localize short- and long-term developmental processes determined in the comprehensive national economic plan and to ensure the rational regional localisation of productive forces.

The next level of spatial planning after 1968 was the county. In the county's planning process the leading role was given to the development of backward areas, the rational utilisation of local economic opportunities and the reduction of economic, social and cultural differences. The development of settlements appeared in the county's planning process.

Besides the level of the county, complex regional plans were elaborated for certain specific areas:

The professional institute (ICSOR) established in 1949, dealing with issues of urban planning and developments was the Romanian basic institute of spatial development and physical planning. This institute elaborated the national and in most cases the counties' spatial developmental plans and physical planning. Its local departments operated in the counties. They had significant role primarily in the collection and processing of data and managing relationships http://www.incdurban.ro/Istoric.html.

- The first such planning work was connected to the construction of the Danube-Black Sea Canal. Work started in 1949, and after immense human sacrifices, it was suspended in 1954.
- The Jiu Valley mining complex, including the idea of establishing urban areas of 200 thousand inhabitants,
- The coastal zone of the Black Sea, inhabited by 250 thousand people, where port developments, the industrial development of Constanța and the development of tourism had to be coordinated;
- The Danube delta, where transport, fisheries, tourism and environmental protection came to the fore during the preparation of regional plan;
- The valley of Prahova, the priority development plan of tourism;
- The Iron Gate – development of transport and energy.

The construction of the Danube-Black Sea Canal restarted in modified form in 1973. It was considered as the largest investment of the country. It was almost complete by 1984 but it did not live up to the expectations that were attached to it.

The problem of urban planning was divided institutionally into city and county planning. The determining works were born in connection with urban planning and development. The development plan for each of the 236 towns existing at that time was prepared by 1970. It was expected that each town would develop significantly during the next 3–4 decades.

The perspective categories of population of towns were defined as follows:

- Bucharest, 2 million inhabitants;
- 12 towns between 100 and 200 thousand inhabitants;
- 8 towns between 100 and 50 thousand inhabitants;
- 43 towns between 50 and 20 thousand inhabitants;
- 172 towns will be under 20 thousand inhabitants.

Bucharest received a prominent place in urban planning and development. Besides it the plans of Braşov, Reşiţa, Ploieşti, Botosani, Craiova gained larger reaction at the end of the '60s and the beginning of '70s. The authors of the monograph related to the Romanian urbanisation, edited by Professor *Lăzărescu* (1977) had already pointed out in the foreword that 70–75% of the Romanian population has to live in modern cities by 2000.

Regarding rural development, the starting point was that collectivised agriculture was facing significant development prospects. Although the majority of population still lives in the county, their number and proportion is decreasing progressively in the process of building socialism. Peasants allied with the working class have already enjoyed the benefits of socialist development since villages were supplied with electricity. (Public electricity was supplied only in 483 villages in the whole country in 1944. During 20 years of building socialism,

another 10 thousand villages were supplied by 1964, and the completion of the electricity supply of villages was planned by 1973.)

Between 1960 and 1968, 721254 homes were built in the rural areas; thus, the composition of villages altered significantly. A part of the home-building of the era in rural areas was official residences designed by standard plans. One can hardly find a settlement in Romania where there is not a typical – usually a two-story – building from this era.

The concentration on rural development began in fact after collectivisation. Rural planning and development work started en masse in 1964. The economic issue of the size and sustainability of rural settlements arose in the mid 1960s. The number of villages was 14,989 at the census in March 1966. There were substantial differences in the size, function and development level of villages. Romanian historical regions possessed different networks of villages. Transylvania and the Carpathian Mountains represented the world of small villages while villages with medium and large population were located in Wallachia and Moldavia.

It was drafted at the beginning of village planning and published in studies at home and in the USA that many of old traditional villages would disappear due to urbanisation, modernisation, and the development of agriculture. As a result of the general process of modernisation a new system of villages differing greatly from the historically developed system of villages would emerge (*Enache*, 1973).

Romanian urban planning counted on 13,149 villages in 1970, which is a significantly lower number compared to the 1966 Census. (The decline was the consequence of administrative unification and not the physical disappearance of villages.) Two third of more than 13 thousand villages had had less than one thousand inhabitants.

It was considered in the planning process that the industrialisation of villages was inevitable but the local production plants could only be established in sufficiently large settlements. In 1973, the planning hypothesis was that villages with more than 500–600 people were suitable for that purpose and in the future they could become towns.

6 The socialist transformation process of network of settlements

Without being immersed in the general conceptual analysis or Romanian aspects of so-called socialist settlements (communist model city, socialist model capital, socialist town and socialist village) I would like to briefly refer to a summary and quote an article published in a Transylvanian Hungarian Journal titled 'Korunk' ('Our Age') in January 1931. In this article 'N' describes the socialist urban construction in Soviet Union. It is important to present this article since the

thoughts written down here 'have come back' almost like a ghost in the state socialist Romania (*A szociális városépítés,* 1931):

- 'We must ask ourselves: Which kind of new needs are demanded by the changed life in connection with the residence? And in which aspect is it different to live in a socialist town? If we can find answers to these questions then the question of 'How should a socialist town look like?' will be answered as well.'
- 'The basic element of current social life is the family – the basic element of today's town is the family flat.'
- 'The task of the socialist city architect is to design suitable buildings for socialist life.'
- 'The socialist town is created in parallel with the planned development of the whole country. Its growth is controlled by plans and goes up to the point where the growth of the city does not turn into negative way.'
- 'The layout of the socialist city will also be different than the current city's....'
- 'The collectivisation of agriculture....created the basis for dissolving this conflict (between the town and village) and opened new opportunities for the building of towns.'
- 'The first agricultural town Novokhopyorsk is already under construction.'
- 'The socialist city is no longer socialist theory and fantasy. The first ones are already under construction.'
- 'And what will happen with today's cities? They will remain temporary but their time is limited since the wealthy socialist society will certainly not remain in holes without light and air which were inherited from capitalism. Where it is possible the existing town will be reconstructed socialistically and enormous centres will be dissolved. Cities with more then a million inhabitants are not ideals of socialism. The historically important buildings have to be kept but the others will be destroyed or rebuilt or implanted with trees.'

We believe that the concepts should be thought over again and understood from the aspect of whole Romanian urban developmental process. The reason for that particularly is that this article was published in Transylvanian in a Hungarian journal and between the two world wars.

6.1 The characteristics of the network of Romanian settlements at the beginning of the state socialist era

At the census held in 1948 – when the forced movements of large populations had already almost finished (deportation, resettlement, carrying off into captivity etc.) – the number of inhabitants in the country was 15.97 million, of which 23.4% lived in 152 towns and 76.6% in villages. Considering urbanisation, there were significant differences between the traditional macro-regions of the country. Apart from Bucharest, the most developed regions in the country were the Transylvanian areas acquired from Hungary in 1920.

At the beginning of state socialist era, Romania inherited highly different settlement networks of settlement from region to region. The characteristics of networks in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia had been formed in historically different social, economical and cultural processes. The political leadership announced an economic developmental and 'homogenisation' social restructuring programme based on a kind of class struggle (started at the beginning of building socialism).

The socialist system was itself based on centralisation processes. 'Democratic centralism' had further increased the already heavy burden of restructuring. Collectivisation, implemented forcefully in several waves, and the building of a repressive apparatus of councils gained a particularly important role from the villages' point of view.

Cities have enjoyed a kind of benefit from the 'class struggle' since the beginning. At the same time, the industrial workers who had found jobs due to nationalisation lived in rather poor living conditions. Industrialisation and urban construction had already been used as ethno-political tools in the hands of political leadership in Transylvania since the earliest period.

In 1948, Bucharest as the capital was also the most populous city (with its 1 million people including outskirts also). In the country there were only two towns (Cluj and Timişoara) whose population exceeded 100 thousand *(Table 2)*. The other towns belonged rather to the medium-sized category. The proportion of small towns to other cities was high. The total urban population included 3.7 million people.

At the beginning of the state socialist era, the majority of Romanian population lived in villages, and in fact most of these were backward ones. The average size of villages was small and most of them were poorly supplied by infrastructure. Between the two world wars, Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955) described the research on Romanian villages and the internal structures and the orders of diversity of them in many ways in his rural sociological work. Gusti, not only as a scientist but as politician, minister as well as the president of the Academy of Sciences, was committed to solve the problems of villages. The determining representative

of Romanian rural sociology presented the backwardness of the network of Romanian villages as well as that the network of villages in the Regat (the Romanian Old Kingdom) lagged very much behind the villages in Transylvania.

Table 2

Romanian cities categorised by size between 1930 and 1977

Category	1930	1948	1956	1966	1973	1974	1975	1977	Growth relative to 1930, in %
300,000 –	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–
200,000 – 299,000	–	–	–	–	3	3	3	7	–
100,000 – 199,999	3	2	7	12	11	11	11	10	267
50,000 – 99,999	9	10	8	9	11	13	16		78
20,000 – 49,999	16	21	24	43	52	56	55	218	244
10,000 – 19,999	39	38	61	76	79	72	72		85
– 9,999	74	80	70	95	79	80	78		5
Total	142	152	171	236	236	236	236	236	67

Source: Lăzărescu, C. ed. 1977: Urbanismul ĭn Romănia, p. 13.

6.2 Demographic trends

After the war Romania's population had grown rapidly: The population of the country was 15.87 million at the census held in January 1948. In 1950 it was estimated that 15.87 million inhabitants lived in the country. According to the census conducted in February 1956 the number of population was 17.4, million of whom 31.3% lived in towns. The estimated population was 18.41 million in 1960. The census in March 1966 found 19.1 million inhabitants, of whom 38.2% lived in cities. The population of the country was 20.25 million in 1970, 22.2 million in 1980, and 23.21 million in 1990. The demographical growth in itself required that comprehensive settlement political relations appeared on higher political level.

In 1966, drastic bans on birth control were introduced. The new demographic policy can in fact be interpreted as Nicolae Ceauşescu's 'national political' intro-duction. The party's leadership (within the frame of propaganda) believed that the building of socialism makes people happier so their propensity to have children will grow likewise. The high natural increase will create the newer human resources for socialist construction.

One of the consequences of the economical, social and regional policy of the state socialist era was the high level of internal migration. Due to the intensifica-tion of internal migration, 1/3 of the population of the country and half of its urban inhabitants lived in a different settlement than where they had been born.

As a result of the conscious settling of Romanian population, the migration processes were formed more specifically in the towns of Transylvania than in the national average.

The migration process was influenced consciously by the state itself. It desired to employ Hungarian graduates from Transylvania beyond the Carpathians and Romanian graduates rather in Transylvania inhabited by Hungarians. The industrial development promoted completely to the forced migration. A great number of professional intellectuals and blue-collar workers were settled in the towns of Transylvania.

The evacuation of Saxons to the Federal Republic of Germany was based on the frame of inter-state agreement. In the 1980s, about 200 thousand Saxons emigrated from Romania, thus leaving behind their centuries-old places of living. The emigration of Romanian Jews created less stir than the Saxons', but the political leadership wanted to gain material and moral advantages by permitting mass emigration to Israel.

The aspiration for controlling the society was being present continuously in the Romanian state socialist system and its overall aims hardly changed, but its methods (tightening or easing) changed several times. Tightening raised specific questions in particular after the middle of the 1980s, since it was the easing period elsewhere (even the Soviet Union).

Between 1968 and 1973, two million people moved to another settlement. Two thirds of the migration took place from villages to cities. The party leadership considered the intensified internal migration movements as a success.

The population projections made at the begging of the 1970s counted on a very dynamic growth of population in the country: twenty-two million inhabitants by 1980 (it was realistic); 25 million by 1990 and 30 million inhabitants by 2000 (this proved to be unrealistic). It was considered that 70–75% of total population of the country would be city dwellers by 2000.

6.3 Urban developmental processes

The urbanisation ideas during the Romanian state socialism were built on several resources:

- The elements of the English 'Garden City' theory appeared in it and rooted in Romania between the two world wars.[9] This relation was especially important in the elaboration of the urban planning of Bucharest and its surroundings.

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[9] In Romanian urban planning and physical planning, strong modernisation tendencies emerged between 1920 and 1940. These are presented in the richly illustrated monograph by Manchedon, L. – Schoffham, E. published in 1999.

- The architectural monumentalism and the comprehensive transparency of spatial and settlement structures of North Korea.
- The Romanian classical and historical architectural traditions were preferred on several buildings.
- Stalin's socio-realistic or 'socialistic baroque' dominated during almost a decade.
- Le Corbusier's concept of city planning has come to the fore since the 1960s.
- Scandinavian, especially Swedish architectural, urban developmental and urban planning designs have affected strongly since the early 1970s.
- Western European (French) and American metropolitan designs have also made their influence felt.

These appeared in Ceauşescu's personal architectural view, but his aspect was rather eclectic than any particular synthesis. This is important because he was present personally, formulated directions, drafted direct expectations and controlled the implementation in urban planning and settlement political processes since the beginning of his regime.

The political leadership hypothesised that the success of socialism is in direct ratio to the success of construction of towns. Between 1945 and 1989, the number of settlements gaining the rights of cities was growing steadily – by different rates in different intervals though *(Figure 2)*. The ratio of urban population rose to 34.2% by 1960. It was 40.3% in 1970, 46.1% in 1980 and 53.2% at the collapse of the system. If the process was considered from that point of view, then it could be seen as an absolute success.

In 1952, the Central Committee of the RCP discussed the issues of architecture and construction, and made a decision on the architectural implementation of socio-realism, the highlighted development of Bucharest and starting the construction of the subway system. The party and state leadership considered the development of towns, mass housing construction and the modernisation of the economy of the country important already at that time. In the presentation of the first socialist era of Romanian urban development, an architectural historian, Margiean (2008) descended to the preliminary events – but he mainly summarised the settlement policy considerations of 'the pure Stalinist era', focusing specifically on the city of Hunedoara. He demonstrated how a town with seven thousand inhabitants became an industrial (metallurgical) kind of settlement with more than 60 thousand inhabitants in 1948 on the base of the Stalinist heavy industrial policy and socialist urban migration.

The category of 'socialist industrial town' has also appeared in Romania. In fact Victory, Comăneşti, Uricani, Dr. Petru Groza, Motru, Rovinari and Oneţşti (between 1965 and 1990 Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej) were created as new

industrial settlements after 1947. They were a kind of socialist model towns considered to be given priority to develop. (These 'socialist towns' were built with a housing stock of very low quality.) Both the planning of the city centre and of housing estates anticipated the latter developments of towns.

Figure 2

The process of acquiring city status in Romania between 1945 and 1989 within the framework of the system of counties in 1968

A professional institutional system was formulated for the state-level implementation of settlement policy and urban development. The National Spatial Planning Office and Regional Spatial Planning Office were established in the Ministry of Construction between 1949 and 1952. New institutions: Construction and Demographic Research Institute, Architectural Institute of Ethnography and Folk etc. were created. The magazine called 'Buletinul Societatii Architectilor din Romania' became the determinant professional-political forum of planning and developmental debates. 'Institutul National de Cercetare Dezvoltare pentru Urbanism si amenajarea teritoriuliu' and its predecessor institutes ensured the

professional-scientific background. (In the late 1970s, about 400–700 designers, spatial planners and architects worked there. Working for the goals determined by Ceauşescu, they were controlled and guided by him on an almost daily basis.)

In the census held in 1966, the number of population in Bucharest was 1.457 million. Besides that, only the population of 12 towns (Arad, Braila, Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Galaţi, Iaşi, Oradea, Ploieşti, Sibiu, Timişoara) exceeded 100 thousand.

It had already been drafted in 1973 that there were three components to accelerate Romanian urbanisation: 1) the highlighted development of the already existing cities; 2) the development of larger villages into cities and 3) building completely new industrial cities.

By the 1970s, significant changes were carried out in the number and size of cities. In 1970, the population of 13 towns was already higher than 100 thousand and the number of inhabitants in Bucharest (now without suburbs) exceeded one million. The total urban population rate grew to 43.6% by 1977, 45.8% by 1980, 50.0% by 1985 and 54.3% by 1990.

Considering the absolute numbers in the 1970s it was thought that the number of urban population would increase from 6.4 million in 1970 to 12 million by 1980 and 19.6 million during the period of 1990–2000. Without this goal (backed by strong political will and demographic policy) it cannot be understood what happened in the settlement policy of Romania particularly in the area of urban development.

In 1972 – following the decision of the congress of the RCP – the government adopted to create the urban background of the 'comprehensively developed socialist society' and with regard not only to cities but to villages too. The number of cities developed by the same way was intended to be doubled by 1990. They listed 550 towns receiving priority financial and planning aids in order to become highly developed urban centres. 365 new cities were to be built by 1980. Another 500 cities were planned to be constructed by 1985. It was intended to have 25 million inhabitants in Romania by 1985, and to have 65% of the population living in towns by that time. The number of inhabitants in Bucharest was wished to be increased up to 2 million people. It was considered that it would be favourable that about 10% of the population of the country and 20% of urban population would live in the capital.

The development of towns in Transylvania did not receive too much attention until the end of the 1960s, although some big industrial projects were executed there. The purpose of the priority industrialisation of Hungarian towns or cities with a Hungarian majority was to move significant Romanian inhabitants into the towns, thus to accelerate and then to finish homogenisation. The population of towns with a Hungarian majority (Tirgu Mureş, Miercurea Ciuc, St. Gheorghe, Gheorgheni, Tirgu Seclesc etc.) increased progressively after 1968. Industrialisa-

tion became the essential element of their economic structures whilst there was a significant decrease in the proportion of Hungarian inhabitants – as an 'incidental result'.

The resettlement of Romanian inhabitants from the Regat area to Transylvania was supported. According to Tirgu Mureş's (partly classified) systematisation plan approved personally by Ceauşescu, only 20% of urban buildings would remain after the full implementation of the plan.

The regime has been effective from its own point of view in Transylvania and Romanian areas. It was especially evident in Bucharest and its surroundings, where the mass construction of flats had begun in the 1950s, but the reconstruction became really destructive since 1977. Historical areas (although partly they were really slums) and underdeveloped areas in the Regat were destroyed within a short time while settlements with new blockhouses were constructed.

'Ceaushima', the great leader carried out a Hiroshima-type reorganisation and destruction in Bucharest and in almost all cities in the country. The systematisation process primarily affected the cities, and in many respects very seriously. Giurescu (2006), Romanian architecture historian concludes that 85-90% of 29 historic inner city areas were destroyed and redesigned by 1989, essentially amounting to almost full reconstruction. In addition, significant rebuilding started and was partly executed in a further 37 cities. The highest degree of transformation and destruction was carried out as 'development' in county seats and industrial towns.

The number of urban population was increasing steadily between 1948 and 1992 *(Table 3)* but there are some differences in its rate among cities and categories of cities. Cities had some unique development politicy features and so their development relied also on their individual decisions. The size of towns changed significantly. Large-population cities which could operate as regional centres were created. The problem lies and have lain in many respects in the one-sided economic, social and partly institutional structure of these cities. In addition, the technical conditions of the newly constructed buildings were already too weak at the time of their establishment. Currently, almost all houses and public buildings are in need of reconstruction.

One of the early decisions of Romanian state socialism was the priority development of the capital city. During the four-year capital town creation period Bucharest, instead of the idea of 'the Paris of the East' or 'Little Paris' or 'bourgeois city' was developed according to the concept of the 'socialist model capital town' into a city with more than two million inhabitants at the end of the era.

At the beginning, the essential element of the development of the city was housing construction for workers, then the total transformation of the suburbs into residential areas and at last the reconstruction of the inner areas in the 1980s. The

official district created in the downtown reflected the 'value system' of the secretary-general of the party.

Table 3

The population of villages and their categories by size in 1992

Size-Category	Total population	Proportion of population (%)	Average population (people)	The number of villages
– 20	2,069	0.0	11.2	186
21 – 100	64,518	0.6	60.0	1,075
101 – 500	1,420,557	13.7	284.4	4,995
501 – 1000	2,255,187	21.8	711.0	3,172
1001 – 2000	2,973,959	28.7	1,379.4	2,156
2001 – 3000	1,489,010	14.4	2,413.3	617
3001 –	2,157,949	20.8	4,477.1	482
Total	10,363,249	100.0	817.2	12,682

Source: Sandu, D. 1999: Sociologie Românească, p. 118.

The largest internal and partly international attention was given to the rebuilding of Bucharest, where total transformation took place within a 5 km^2 area of the inner city. The earthquake in 1977 played a tragic part in the process. The new version of the grandiose rebuilding plan was adopted in 1978. Ceauşescu personally supervised the design and construction work, requested reports at least once a week, and gave directions at the beginning. 400–700 architects and 20 thousand workers worked continuously on the reconstruction of Bucharest.

The most inhumane part of historical destruction of Bucharest was in 1984, when the population of each area was given only 24 hours to clear their former houses and homes. During the largest evacuation action, a total of 40 thousand people had to leave their homes in 24 hours.

Larger cities with a regional importance and role (Constanţa, Iaşi, Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara, Craiova, Galaţi, Braşov) provided high-level socialist living conditions for 300 thousand people. Different considerations appeared also behind their developments but the regional role was basically the dominants motive behind the scene.

The urban development of Constanţa, the largest seaport of the country, started already before 1945. (The town suffered the most serious damages in the country by air raids during World War II.) In the state socialist era, it was developed with priority under the slogans of 'the Gateway of the Country' and 'the Gateway of the East'. The population of the town almost quadrupled in this era.

Iasi, the capital of historical Moldavia had significant urban traditions. (It was the capital city of Romania between 1916 and 1918 since Bucharest was occupied

by Germans.) Its economic, cultural, educational etc. functions were traditionally regional ones. Its industrial structure was significantly transformed by the state socialist era. The modernisation reached the major part of the inner city but there was no total restructuring. The population of the city was increased by the zone of traditional socialist housing estates.

Galaţi was developed as a commercial and transportation centre on the coast of Danube. The city grew bigger as a socialist industrial town due to the construction of the steel complex. The development of heavy industry attracted the establishment of higher educational institutions and the new university in 1951.

Craiova was established as the administrational, commercial and manufacturing centre of historical Oltenia. Its socialist industrial development started in the beginning of the 1960s. Almost the whole town was rebuilt according to a socialist character except the narrow historical downtown.

Ploieşti changed its function historically many times. It has been formulated since the mid of XIX century. It is a classical oil town enjoying the constant proximity of Bucharest. The city has been the citadel of Romanian hydrocarbon industry for decades. The economic restructuring has been successful only partially in this town.

The urban development processes in Transylvania are different in their aims and timing comparing to the Regat's. Cluj-Napoca as the regional, economic, educational and cultural centre of Transylvania was given historically important positions. The ethnic aspect played a dominant role in the development of Cluj-Napoca in the state socialist era. It was essentially a Hungarian majority town until 1960. The ethnic composition of the town was completely transformed by the large-scale socialist industrialisation. In the case of Cluj-Napoca, the downtown was not rebuilt. The Romanian and partly Hungarian workers moved into the 'residential area's belt'.

Braşov developed as the dominant economic, commercial and cultural centre of Southern Transylvania. The town basically retained its Saxon character in every respect. The strategic industrialisation of the town had already started between the two World Wars (airplane factory) and expanded after 1945. Braşov became one of the centres of Romanian machine industry in the state socialist era. The industrialisation was combined with the 'usual' restructuring of ethnicities. The inner core of the city remained and the socialist residential area was constructed on the outskirts. The town became the centre of universities.

Oradea could be defined as the most significant city of the Partium. The city kept its Hungarian majority (52%) until 1966 but after rapid industrialisation and population growth Romanians dominated. The inner city was not rebuilt to a large extent. The outskirt absorbed the immigrants.

Timişoara developed as the traditional centre of the Banat. Its real development to a metropolis started in two ways (according to local ideas and national

development plans). Its urban physical planning was prepared in 1947 which calculated with significant industrialisation and increase in population and thus the housing was forecasted accordingly to these factors. The plan was amended in 1951 so that the city could develop further. In 1955, a new developmental version was elaborated in which it was drafted that the then 140 thousand inhabitants should increase to 180 thousand by 1975, taking into account that it could increase up to even 200 thousand people. In 1959, it was expected that the population of the city would exceed 250 thousand inhabitants in 1980. The urban physical and development plan was finalised in 1964.

In 1978, the urban physical and developmental plan was amended according to the national expectation and the instructions of CSCAS. Large-scale industrial development goals were included in the local plan. (The population reached 287,543 inhabitants in 1980 and 354,354 in 1990.)

If we get a nearer view of the transformation process of Miercurea Ciuc becoming the county seat in 1968, then we could obtain an insight into the more general process of modernisation on one hand complicated with ethnic issues on the other hand. Ceauşescu visited Transylvania to inspect the development for the first time at the end of August 1968. He announced that the industrialisation of national significance would start and that five national key enterprises would be given to the cities of that region.

In October 1976, Ceauşescu also visited the town and announced that Miercurea Ciuc would also benefit from the blessings of modernisation in the new five-year plan. He 'gave news' about the construction of a tractor factory and six thousand flats. The developments would affect the 'out-of-date city centre' so the town would receive a modern one. The major part of the promises of the secretary-general materialised, but in questionable quality. These developments were accompanied with the large-scale inflow of Romanian population and the shift of ethnic composition. (In 1966, only 807 Romanians lived in the city and after the first years of development it increased to 4818 people in 1977.)

On his visit in June 1978, the secretary-general of the party 'inspected' the earlier developments, gave departments into use and confirmed that the economic development of Transylvania would be unclouded in the future.

Table 4 shows that there are some similarities in the developments of the population of 'non-metropolitan county seats'. The majority of county seats are in the category of towns with a population between 50 and 100 thousand people. The population of cities with the status of municipium (essentially cities with county rights) generally exceeds 40 thousand inhabitants. Almost ten inner cities were completely rebuilt in the state socialist era.

Table 4

The number of inhabitants of Romanian counties and county seats according to the public administration in 2002

County	County Seat	Population (thousand people)				
		25 January 1948	21 February 1956	15 Marc 1966	5 January 1977	7 January 1992
mun. Bucureşti		1 025	1 178	1 367	1 807	2 068
	Bucureşti	1 042	1 178	1 367	1 807	2 068
	% of county	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Alba		361	371	383	410	414
	Alba Iulia	14	15	22	41	71
	% of county	0.4	4.0	5.7	10.0	17.1
Arad		476	476	481	512	488
	Arad	87	106	126	171	190
	% of county	18.3	22.2	26.2	33.4	38.9
Argeş		449	484	530	632	681
	Piteşti	29	38	60	124	179
	% of county	6.5	7.8	11.3	19.6	26.3
Bacău		415	508	598	668	738
	Bacău	34	54	73	127	205
	% of county	8.2	10.6	12.2	19.0	27.8
Bihor		536	574	586	633	639
	Oradea	82	99	123	171	223
	% of county	15.3	17.2	20.9	27.0	34.9
Bistriţa-Năsăud		234	256	270	287	327
	Bistriţa	16	20	26	44	88
	% of county	6.8	7.8	9.6	15.3	26.9
Botoşani		385	428	452	451	461
	Botoşani	29	30	35	63	126
	% of county	7.5	7.0	7.7	13.9	27.3
Brăila		271	297	340	378	392
	Brăila	96	103	139	196	234
	% of county	35.4	34.7	40.9	51.9	60.0
Braşov		301	374	443	583	643
	Braşov	83	124	163	256	324
	% of county	27.6	33.2	36.8	43.9	50.4
Buzău		430	466	481	508	517
	Buzău	43	48	56	98	148
	% of county	10.0	10.3	11.6	19.3	28.6
Călăraşi		288	319	337	339	339
	Călăraşi	24	26	36	50	77
	% of county	8.3	8.1	10.7	14.7	22.7

Cont. Table 4

County	County Seat	Population (thousand people)				
		25 January 1948	21 February 1956	15 Marc 1966	5 January 1977	7 January 1992
Caraș-Severin		302	328	359	386	376
	Reșița	25	41	57	85	97
	% of county	8.3	12.5	15.9	22.0	25.8
Cluj		520	580	630	716	736
	Cluj-Napoca	118	155	186	263	329
	% of county	22.7	26.7	29.5	36.7	44.7
Constanța		311	370	466	609	749
	Constanța	79	100	150	257	351
	% of county	25.4	27.0	32.2	42.2	46.9
Covasna		157	173	177	199	233
	Sfântu Gheorghe	14	18	21	41	68
	% of county	8.9	10.4	11.9	20.6	29.2
Dâmbovița		409	439	453	528	562
	Târgoviște	26	24	30	61	98
	% of county	6.4	5.5	6.6	11.5	17.4
Dolj		615	642	691	750	762
	Craiova	85	97	149	221	304
	% of county	13.8	15.1	21.6	29.5	39.9
Galați		342	396	474	582	641
	Galați	80	96	151	238	326
	% of county	23.4	24.2	31.9	40.9	50.9
Giurgiu		314	325	320	327	313
	Giurgiu	30	33	39	52	74
	% of county	9.5	10.1	12.2	15.9	23.6
Gorj		281	293	298	349	401
	Târgu Jiu	18	20	31	64	98
	% of county	6.4	6.8	10.4	18.3	24.4
Harghita		258	274	282	326	348
	Miercurea Ciuc	6	12	15	30	46
	% of county	2.3	4.4	5.3	9.2	13.2
Hunedoara		307	382	475	514	548
	Deva	13	17	27	60	78
	% of county	4.2	4.4	5.7	11.7	14.2
Ialomița		245	275	291	296	306
	Slobozia	8	10	12	30	56
	% of county	3.3	3.6	4.1	10.1	18.3
Iași		432	517	619	729	811
	Iași	94	113	161	265	344
	% of county	21.8	21.9	26.0	36.3	42.4

County	County Seat	Population (thousand people)				
		25 January 1948	21 February 1956	15 Marc 1966	5 January 1977	7 January 1992
Ilfov		168	196	230	288	287
	Buftea	…	…	…	15	19
					5.2	6.6
Maramureş		321	367	428	493	540
	Baia Mare	21	36	63	101	149
	% of county	6.5	9.8	14.7	20.5	27.6
Mehedinţi		305	304	310	322	333
	Drobeta-Turnu Severin	31	32	45	77	115
	% of county	10.2	10.5	14.5	23.9	34.5
Mureş		461	513	562	605	610
	Târgu Mureş	47	65	86	130	164
	% of county	10.2	12.7	15.3	21.5	26.9
Neamţ		357	420	470	532	578
	Piatra Neamţ	26	33	46	78	123
	% of county	7.3	7.8	9.8	14.7	21.3
Olt		442	459	477	519	523
	Slatina	13	13	19	45	85
	% of county	2.9	2.8	4.0	8.6	16.2
Prahova		558	624	701	817	874
	Ploieşti	96	115	147	200	253
	% of county	17.2	18.4	20.9	24.5	28.9
Sălaj		263	272	263	265	267
	Zalău	12	13	15	32	68
	% of county	4.6	4.8	5.7	12.0	25.4
Satu Mare		313	337	359	394	401
	Satu Mare	47	52	68	104	132
	% of county	15.0	15.4	18.9	26.4	32.9
Sibiu		335	373	415	482	453
	Sibiu	61	90	110	151	170
	% of county	18.2	24.1	26.5	31.3	37.5
Suceava		440	508	573	634	702
	Suceava	10	21	38	63	114
	% of county	2.2	4.1	6.6	9.9	16.2
Teleorman		487	510	516	519	484
	Alexandria	18	19	22	37	58
	% of county	3.7	3.7	4.3	7.1	12.0
Timiş		589	569	608	697	700
	Timişoara	112	142	174	269	334
	% of county	19.0	24.9	28.6	38.6	47.7

Cont. Table 4

County	County Seat	Population (thousand people)				
		25 January 1948	21 February 1956	15 Marc 1966	5 January 1977	7 January 1992
Tulcea		192	224	237	255	271
	Tulcea	22	25	36	62	98
	% of county	11.5	11.6	15.2	24.3	36.2
Vâlcea		342	362	369	414	438
	Râmnicu Vâlcea	17	19	24	66	114
	% of county	5.0	5.2	6.5	15.9	26.0
Vaslui		345	402	432	437	461
	Vaslui	14	15	18	39	81
	% of county	4.0	3.7	4.2	8.9	17.6
Vrancea		290	327	351	370	393
	Focşani	28	28	35	56	101
	% of county	9.6	8.6	9.9	15.1	25.7
	Romania	15 873	17 489	19 103	21 560	22 810
	Population of county seats (%)	17.2	18.8	22.0	29.3	36.7

Source: Recensământul populaţiei şi al locuinţelor din martie 2002.

Small cities (4–15 in each county) belong to strongly differentiated groups. The official residences were constructed in most of them, so the local representatives of the power lived in 'socialist living form'. The infrastructure was improved and they stated to follow a sort of track which was perhaps more suited to local conditions.

According to the census in 1992, the number of residential buildings was 4.491 million, of which 1.052 million were in towns. The distribution of dwellings, of course, differed significantly: 4.076 million dwellings from 7.659 million were located in towns.

The country's population was 22.36 million people, of whom 12.01 million lived in towns (54.3%) and 10.35 million in villages (47.3%). The average household size was 3.07 people. Small families became absolute dominant in the cities.

The housing conditions of urban population – if only the raw statistics and no other relations are taken into consideration – were improved in the state socialist era. The quality of houses and dwellings was the greatest problem since mass reconstruction had to be started and the defective stock destroyed.

6.4 Rural policy and plans of destruction of villages

In the professional issues of state socialist regional development and settlement problems as well as its political mediation, Gustav Gusti received a significant role. He outlined it clearly that considering settlement issues, the state should think within the unity of research, politically determined planning, and then directed implementation.

The spatial and settlement processes within Romanian spatial planning and development were influenced by a 'multi-stage system'. The wider social, economic and political context of rural policy and rural systematisation (destruction of villages) are worth to be highlighted:

The constitution and its amendments constituted the determination of the public and social values and goals which could be known and followed easily by the residents of the country and external observers. One of the characteristics of the Romanian dictatorship was that it did not comply with its own constitution in many issues and situations. This was especially true for human and minority rights.

The programme statements of RCP and decisions made in the Congresses could be followed publicly and even locally by the representatives of sister parties.

After 1965, Nicolae Ceauşescu's speeches and press releases had included only partly followable settlement political direction.

The laws and regulations referring to the systematisation of settlements were made public.

The concrete process of the implementation was hardly clear for society and even for the political leadership as well.

In 1968, the Romanian regional-political processes received significantly newer and more extended content than the previous ones. Controlling the smaller, local urban units and direction of its leadership and inhabitants could be more intensive during the process of the formulation of the 'unitary socialist nation'.

The transformation of administrative structure of 14,205 settlements started during the administrational reform in 1968. (Little more than 10 thousand settlements had less then 1000 inhabitants, within which 7 thousand had less than 500 inhabitants. The population of 989 settlements did not even reach 100 people. The formulation of 'equal living standards' started by the administrative mergers and radical creation of districts.)

The 'viable', 'economic' and 'efficient' size of settlement was increasingly conceptualised around 3000 inhabitants. A Swedish writer, journalist and television specialist, Ekström played part in this conceptualisation.[10]

In the five-year planning process between 1966 and 1970, industrialisation acted as the dominant goal and the development of the rural network was mentioned only generally. Although in the planning period between 1971 and 1975, the aspiration for the top-priority of the development of industry remained, the issue of systematisation also appeared (especially in the amendments). In March 1971, Nicolae Ceauşescu summarised its comprehensive architectural and planning requirements on the Congress III of the Association of Romanian Architects. Here he analysed in detail that the settlements occupy too large areas and it is uneconomical and the area of towns is also relatively large.

In June 1972, the RCP organised a national conference on the issues of spatial planning and settlement development. According to the decisions made on this conference systematisation became part of the planning process of the state.

The size-based classification of villages has always affected aspects of spatial planning. Villages with more than 4000 inhabitants were considered 'very large', with 1500–4000 inhabitants large, with 500–1500 inhabitants medium-sized and with less than 500 inhabitants, small villages. The accepted 'healthy limit' of 3000 shifted towards 4000 inhabitants towards the end of the era. The outskirt areas with farms and mountains were further obstacles to the planners. In these cases, only the economic aspect was to be considered before decision-making.

The systematisation plan was prepared for 13 thousand settlements. The goal of this plan was to drive the people together in the centres with at least 3000 population, and to eliminate 'unnecessary villages' and other outlying rural settlements.

No construction-related nor renovation permissions were issued in the villages selected to be eliminated. The system of housing or residential area construction and flat allocation aimed at the regulation of the ethnic assimilation process in Transylvania. (After 1973, the party became responsible for the system of flat

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[10] I have to thank a Hungarian architect, Zoltán Thurman born in Romania (in Baia Mare, 1944), who has been living in Sweden since 1987. He as university student was 'trained and educated' by the architectural education of the era, then as the chief architect of Tirgu Mureş, protested against the 'bulldozer policy'. His family became one of the victims of rebuilding inner city areas when their house in Baia Mare was destroyed in 1983. According to Thurman, 'in Romania we cannot talk about the destruction of villages, rather a bulldozer policy following the Swedish model'. He drew my attention to the 'Swedish connection': the activity of Per Olof Ekström (1926–1981, writer and reporter) and his effects on the Romanian leadership. Thurman believed that the intellectual author of this unreasonable cruelty, i.e. the bulldozer policy could be ascribed to Ceauşescu's spiritual friend and professional advisor, Per Olof Ekström. The Swedish man got married to a Romanian woman and spent a long time in Romania. He published a book about Ceauşescu and Romania in Sweden, and died in Bucharest.

allocation.) The main goal was merely to give the 'right direction' to social processes in the area of Regat.

Housing construction in villages was not able to follow the drafted political and urban developmental goals. Housing construction was the highest in the 1960s, but after that time it gradually decreased.

Collective investments took place only in the rural centres selected to be developed. These served political goals by educational, infrastructural and other institutional developments. In Transylvania the Orthodox Church appeared in the selected centres as it recognised the significance of Romanianisation in these settlements.

The studies in connection with village planning find that the most serious problem of the Romanian network of settlements is the scattered network of villages. At the same time this is also the largest challenge and the question of the future development.

The zoning of villages has partly been solved by the local administrative organisation and supply. The number of councils in middle-sized settlements was reduced from 4259 in 1960 to 2706 in 1970. This means that on the average, five villages belonged to a council. It was considered in 1973 that the modernisation of villages could be started by the developments of council seats. In connection with the villages, the viability and economic criteria of a minimum of 3000 inhabitants was increasingly conceptualised. The problem was seen in the fact that only 5% of villages reached this size, and only 20% of rural inhabitants lived in these villages.

The situation is slightly different in the case of the base level of integrated administrative units, namely settlements (their size is between villages' and town's). In 1970, 58.8% of 2706 settlements had more than 4000 inhabitants.

Partly parallel with the urban development, and partly slightly afterwards, modernisation and systematisation had also reached the villages. The Act No 58/29/10/1974 on spatial planning and urban and rural space delegated the implementation of systematisation to the state.

The presidential decree No 273/1973 showed the most clearly that the process was basically not an economic issue, but its aim was ethno-political: in the case of the presence of even one Romanian child, a Romanian class had to be created in the public school.

The presidential decree No 225/1974 ('the act of accommodations' as it lives in popular mind) held out the prospect of a 5–15 thousand lei penalty for inhabitants accommodating foreigners in their homes or flats. This was clearly directed against Hungarians, but of course it was formally in force throughout the country. The fundamental purpose was the isolation of citizens and the restriction of keeping contacts.

The party committees of the counties received the key roles in the regional implementation of the systematisation plan. The county's prevailing first secretary was the head of the implementation and controlling committee of systematisation. This was partly due to the logic of the party-state structure and partly to the phenomenon that the councils, even on the level of the country, tried to slow down the process; thus, they became unreliable.

Hosszúaszó in Hargita County lost its population in 1974. Its inhabitants moved to the villages nearby: Mindszent and Szentlélek. The depopulation of this Hungarian settlement did not provoke a huge reaction, and later the empty houses with no permanent residents were used as weekend houses by the inhabitants of Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc).

In the second half of the 1970s the efforts to establish agro-industrial centres were emphasised (originating from Khrushchev's idea). According to the plans and ideas, changing repeatedly in the press propaganda of the time, a few hundred agro-industrial cities with 2–3 storey buildings should have been started to be build (The final results built in such a way, seen in some village centres, had already presented a depressing spectacle at the beginning of the 1990s.)

In 1982, Ceauşescu's birthplace, Scorniceşti became a model town by which they wanted to demonstrate how a new and highly developed Romanian settlement should look like.

In the spring of 1984, it was told in many forums of the party that socialist reconstruction would take place not only in Bucharest, but also in rural areas so that they would be shaped according to the needs of socialism and socialist people. It was planned to resettle slightly more than 11 million inhabitants and to liquidate 7000 of the existing 13123 villages within 10 years.

Urban policy received new elements once again in 1987. It was decided on the National Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in December that urban and rural physical and modernisation planning had to be completed by the end of 2000 and significant areas had to be regained for agriculture by the elimination and concentration of villages. The formation of developed socialist society and modern economy should be accelerated and crucial steps should be taken in order to homogenize the society. The huge gap between cities and villages would disappear and the differences between the lifestyles of the working class, the peasantry and the intellectual class would be eliminated. The ultimate goal seems to be close to completion: the homogeneous society of the working class building socialism and communism.

During the elimination of villages initiated in 1987, the residents in several places in the county of Olt protested against the destruction of their houses and settlements.

In March 1988, Nicolae Ceauşescu partly criticised the previous attitude, and selected the most important stages of acceleration. At the time of his speech,

Romania had 13123 villages, of which 2705 were organised into medium-sized settlements. The population of 900 of these settlements did not reach the minimal population limit considered necessary for these settlements. According to Ceauşescu, the number of villages had to be reduced to 5–6 thousand by the destruction. It meant the elimination of 7–8 thousand villages. The settlements should be the real residential place for the population living and working there, and commuting was undesirable, especially for the intellectuals (since it is more difficult to control their activities).

In the districts of the previously selected 558 agro-industrial councils of the settlements which had already been under construction, a modern agro-industrial town should be built. It was pronounced that at least 2–3 such agricultural (model) cities should be built in each county and the construction of all selected agricultural towns should be finished by 2000.

Spatial planning appeared at this time as a process consisting of several elements, and it initiated huge mergers of councils in the area of public administration. The number of councils should be reduced to 2000 and each of them should include 3000 inhabitants by which the optimal population limit for council work would be created.

The village of Mezőfalva, consisting of 44 houses and located in the county of Mures, was eliminated in 1983. Bözödújfalu was physically liquidated in line with the construction of a water reservoir in 1988. The church and its towers standing in water have become monuments to the destruction of Romanian and Hungarian villages in Transylvania. During the fall in 1988, four villages around Bucharest were destroyed, about which the BBC produced and presented a film that essentially initiated stronger western protests too.

On the Congress of Presidents of People's Councils held on March 3 1988, Ceauşescu analysed the issues of physical planning of settlements, and stated that 5–6 thousand from 13 thousand villages could be made viable and the process must have been completed.

In the spring of 1988, the Romanian leadership decided to accelerate the implementation of the spatial planning programme. In early May, the 'State Commission of Physical and Spatial Planning' was formulated by the leadership of the prime minister. Its essential task was to implement decisions on the basis of uniform principles and timetable. The Commission decided that physical and spatial planning processes should be reviewed by people's council in each county and they should make decisions needed for the implementation, and implement them.

In order to be aware of the irrevocable nature of this decision, the destruction of traditional centres and residential areas of Otopeni, Dimieni és Odăile in the region of Northern Bucharest started with relatively large publicity on May 24. The inhabitants were moved partly to the pre-built and four-story housing estates

of Otopeni by applying harsh violence. Ensuring publicity served that everybody could see from how 'bad' to how 'nice' conditions the people arrived.

The elimination of Buda and Odoreanu in the county of Giurgu was connected to the construction of the Bucharest-Danube Canal. They can be considered as the losers of the process of nature transformation so their liquidation cannot be directly linked to the urban planning process.

On the turn of 1988–1989, the county councils adopted specific decisions in connection with spatial planning, referring to their own counties and identified the villages to be destroyed. The county councils in Transylvania and in the Székely land made their decisions according to national expectations. The decisions were adopted by each village and summarised on maps.

On January 23 1989, the reporter of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI) in Bucharest analysed the document titled 'Comprehensive programme on the migration of rural population and the modernisation of villages' made by the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture for the urban population. In 1989, 40 thousand modern urban apartments were planned to be built mainly in the 2300 new centres of settlements, where the educational and health-care institutions supplying the rural population and directing the agricultural production were planned to be grouped.

The party's newspaper, 'Hargita' highlighted the positive features of the planned transformation in the county in February 16, 1989. In Hargita county, Ditro became one of the agro-industrial centres. Ten block houses in the centre had already been constructed for different specialists and further constructions were under planning. The development perspectives of Ditro were almost unlimited in the region and in the newly formulated structure.

On February 6 1989, a Romanian paper, 'Era Socialista' published the leading article of 'The modernisation of spatial planning and settlements'. The starting point is to reduce the number of settlements radically since the small settlements do not meet the needs of inhabitants living there. The first step should be to uniformise the public administration of settlements and then to provide living conditions for the arrivals in the central settlements. (Political transformation and Hungarian News Agency, 1989).

The article believes that the programme is not against the inhabitants but for the worker's future: 'The current network of rural settlements including many small and scattered settlements without any developmental perspective does not meet the modern social and human requirements as well as educational, health, cultural and modern housing needs. Therefore the regrouping and the systematisation of settlements serve the purpose of transferring several settlements into viable regional-administrational units in the future. The modernisation of the villages is a process with wide prospects. It proceeds in accelerating pace and more in depth.'

6.5 International protests against the destruction of villages

Beginning with 1988, many protests have taken place in several countries of Europe against the process called 'the destruction of villages'. In the case of Hungary, it was mainly the growing opposition of the time that had organised the demonstrations, but the official policy also raised its voice against the planned demolition of villages. The largest demonstration was held in Budapest on Heroes' Square on June 27, 1988. Contemporary estimates told about 40–100 thousand demonstrators.

In 1988, the organisation called 'Opération Villages Roumains' was created in Belgium. It wanted to save the Romanian villages by international collaboration by establishing relationships between 'sister villages'. Belgian, French, Dutch, Swiss and English villages participated in the 'adoption movement'. The movement, still operating in our time, has also subsidised the given Romanian village.

On March 5 1989, the Committee of the Regions of European Community invited the European authorities to symbolically undertake the patronage of each Romanian village to avoid its liquidation. The Committee of the Regions knew that 17 villages had been completely destroyed until the Spring of 1989.

On April 29, 1989 at the opening ceremony of an architectural exhibition in London, Charles, Prince of Wales criticised the settlement policy of Romania unusually sharply, pointing out that destroying the traditional rural structure also means the destruction of Romanian communities regardless of their national and ethnic character. Charles believed that the systemisation of settlements in Romania reflected on the defective practice used in the development of settlements in the West in the 1960s. The entire settlement policy and its implementation in practice reflects a false modernity.

Speaking about the minorities in Romania, the recommendation No 1114/1989 of the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe opposed to the planned destruction of the half of 13 thousand villages in Romania and warned that the process had already started in the region of Bucharest.

7 Summary

On the level of rhetoric, Romanian socialist spatial policy was presented as a modernisation-based system of objectives that would ensure the welfare of the whole nation, but in fact, in a largely concealed way, it had specific economic, social and ethnic political elements as well.

The settlement policy of the Romanian state socialist era was mainly urban policy since the towns received the largest part of the available resources.

Bucharest was in a particularly prominent position and it has become a modern metropolis with 2 million inhabitants. This is due partly to political reasons and partly to the earthquake in 1977.

By the end of the state socialist era, a network of cities with modern economic bases was created. The established urban building stock (in the rebuilt city centres and especially in the large resident areas) was technically weak and aesthetically frightening even at the moment of its establishment. (Their technical and moral depreciation has accelerated, and these large-scale residential areas currently begin to require reconstruction.)

Systematisation ('sistematizare') aimed for the exceptional development and rebuilding of towns, the conscious change of ethnic composition in Transylvania, and breaking the strength of Hungarian communities through urbanisation. The concepts of modernisation, urbanisation, spatial development and physical planning etc were politicised and gained specific and partly hidden meanings.

At the beginning, rural transformation work started in the actual backward villages of the Regat. Ceauşescu's native village (Scorniceşti) in the county of Olt was one of the first settlements which was modernised and rebuilt according to the new principles. Only Ceauşescu's birthplace has remained in order to proclaim from which poor circumstances he had come from. (Also in connection with his native village, Ceauşescu was personally convinced of his magnificence and progressive rural political works.)

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the development of Bucharest used the large part of the available financial, economic and building capacities. Thus, the systematisation of rural settlement structure was delayed. At the same time, the dimensions to be destroyed were increasing: in 1974 only about 3000 villages were planned and selected to be destructed, but in 1988 Ceauşescu wanted to destroy 7–8 thousand villages.

The destruction of villages hardly started, so it could not cause extremely significant damages throughout the country, nor in Transylvania. However, the issue should be analysed seriously, since on one hand the launched processes have had effects later on, and on the other hand the Romanian settlement network and villages faced with new economic challenges by the transformation of the regime and some concepts in connection with the villages remind of the terminology of the previous regime, state socialism – almost ghost-like.

One of the first provisions of the revolution in December 1989 was to withdraw the provisions referring to the normative provisions of systematisation between 1966 and 1985. (These provisions were listed in detail in Decree No 1 adopted by the Council of the National Salvation Front on December 26.) With this act, the legal process of the destruction of villages came to an end.

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