

SETTLEMENTS IN THE RUCĂR – BRAN CORRIDOR. DYNAMICS OF FUNCTIONAL TYPES

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Abstract. The village is a synthesis of demographic, territorial and functional components, in which the functions highlight the connection between the demographic and the territorial structure. In order to assess the function (or functions) of a rural center, first one must get to know and compare the types of activities. The basic criteria for identifying the types of activity are the professional structure of the employed population and the production value. Likewise, geographical location is another important factor in defining the economic features. The favourable natural setting, the varied topography, the soil cover, the wealth of vegetal species, the well-developed river system etc., correlated with the existence of extensive pastures and hayfields have encouraged the development of a pastoral civilization in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor, which is well known both at home and abroad.

1. NATURAL SETTING

Geographical location and boundaries. The Rucăr – Bran Corridor lies in the central part of the country, between latitudes 45°20' N and 45°30' N, and longitudes 25° E and 25°30' E. It belongs to the Bucegi – Piatra Craiului Massif, a sub-unit of the Southern Carpathians, and generally stretches SW-NE. The topography is made up of rounded ridges and valley corridors, while elevations range between 600 and 1,600 meters (Ileana Pătru-Stupariu, 2011). The Corridor is bordered to the north by Țara Bârsei, to the south by the Stoenesti Depression, to the east by the Bucegi and Leaota massifs, and to the west by the Piatra Craiului mountain range and the Iezer-Păpușa Mountains. As far as the eastern and western boundaries are concerned, these are extremely conspicuous, being highlighted by the impressive cliffs of the adjacent massifs, which tower by 500–800 m this Intra-Carpathian depressionary corridor.

Geological background. Genetically speaking, the study area is a tectonic depression that came into existence through sinking during the Mesozoic orogenic phases, which were responsible for the uplift of the Bucegi and the Piatra Craiului synclines, as well as for the Leaota anticline. The basement of the Corridor consists of hard crystalline rocks, roofed by sedimentary deposits accumulated during several sedimentation cycles. The first layer is prevalingly made up of calcareous formations (compact or stratified limestones, reef limestones, calcareous marls with insertations of sandstones and marls); it is followed by detritic formations, consisting especially of conglomerates and marls. A specific feature of the Corridor is the presence of isolated hillocks (calcareous outliers) called “gâlme”.

Terrain features. The landscape is unevenly developed in space, repeatable at Planetary level, but unrepeatable in terms of its characteristic aspects, having an originality of its own (the presence of a dominant element) (David, 2010). This originality is given by the varied topography. Thus, one can distinguish the Dâmbovița Corridor in the south and the Bran Platform in the north, separated in the central section by the Giuvala-Fundata high plateau, which separates the Dâmbovița hydrographic basin from the Turcu River basin. The singularity of the Dâmbovița Corridor is given both by the great number of tectonic-erosive depressionary areas (Dâmbovicioara, Podu Dâmboviței, Rucăr) and by the picturesque karstic topography. Fundata Platform, which corresponds to the upper level of the Bran

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Platform, displays hillocks (locally called “gâlme” or “dâlme”) made up prevalingly of limestones. The Bran Platform, lying at an altitude between 800 and 1,300 m, dips on a main southwest-northeast direction, but also from the edge of the adjacent mountains to the central axis, which is represented by the Drumul Carului (*Cart Road*) interfluve. Although apparently the platform seems rather smooth, here and there the calcareous hillocks (“gâlmele”) give the topography a touch of spectacular appearance, as they tower the lower areas by 50–100 m.

Climate conditions. By its specific features, the Rucăr – Bran depressionary corridor falls into the moderate mountain climate, since it suffers the influence of the high massifs of the Southern Carpathians. The thermal regime is characterized by average annual values of 4–8°C, the temperature decreasing with elevation: 7.2°C at Rucăr and 4.4°C at Fundata. The average amounts of precipitation increase in direct relationship with hypsometry (altitude), from 810.9 mm at Rucăr to 1,020.9 mm at Fundata. Of particular importance for tourist flows and transhumance is the average duration of the snow cover. If at Rucăr and Bran the number of snow-cover days varies between 120 and 140, at Fundata the snow lasts for 200 days (Simion, 1990).

River system. The hydrographic network of the Rucăr – Bran Corridor is very dense and the streams have tenaciously dissected the mountains, creating depressionary basins, as well as extremely spectacular gorges. The flowing waters are represented by the Dâmbovița River, which drains the central and southern parts of the Corridor, and the Turcu River, which flows towards the Braşov Depression.

Vegetation. The varied topography, the elevations ranging from 600 m to about 1,600 m, the climatic conditions and the soil cover are responsible both for the zoning of vegetation and the great diversity of plant species. Thus, from bottom-to-top, one can distinguish the broadleaf forest zone (beech – *Fagus sylvatica*, hornbeam – *Carpinus betulus*, ash – *Fraxinus excelsior*, birch – *Betula verucosa*, etc.), the mixed forest zone (beech and coniferous species: spruce – *Picea abies*, fir – *Abies alba*), and the secondary grasslands. The secondary grasslands represent herbaceous plant associations, which cover large areas in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor, due to the long and intense pastoral life. Here, the vegetation cover consists of red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), alpine meadow grass (*Agrostis tenuis*), nard grass (*Nardus stricta*), meadow fescue (*Festuca pratensis*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and others. Among the flowers that enliven the mountain pastures and hayfields, worth-mentioning are the violets (*Viola odorata*), the chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), the yellow bedstraws (*Galium verum*), the mulleins (*Verbascum thapsus*), and the snapdragon (*Antrirrhinum majus*), (Simion, 1990). There are also endemic species of great scientific interest, the most important ones being *Dianthus callizonus*, which grows on the inaccessible benches of the Piatra Craiului Mts., red vanilla orchid (*Nigritella nigra*) and the Carpathian Kotschy alpenrose (*Rhododendron kotschyi*). This is one of the reasons for which two natural reserves have been established in this area, namely, Piatra Craiului National Park (Natura 2000) and Bucegi National Park.

Soil cover. The soils in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor fall into the following classes: mollisols (rendzinas, etc.), argilluvisols, cambisols (brown acid soils, etc.), and undeveloped soils (*Harta solurilor*, 1975).

2. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

From an administrative point of view, settlements in the Corridor belong to Argeş County (Rucăr and Dâmbovicioara communes) and Braşov County (Fundata, Moieciu and Bran). In relation to the urban centers, the Rucăr – Bran Corridor lies north of Câmpulung (20 km) and Târgovişte (60 km) and south of Braşov (20 Km) and Zărneşti (2 Km). The communes, made up of several villages, are: Rucăr (Rucăr and Sătic); Dâmbovicioara (Podu Dâmboviței, Dâmbovicioara, Ciocanu and Valea Urdii hamlet); Fundata (Fundata, Fundăţica and Şirnea); Moieciu (Moieciu de Jos, Moieciu de Sus, Cheia, Drumul Carului, Peştera, and Măgura); Bran (Bran, Şimon, Poarta, Predeluţ, and Sohodol). The old

cores of the six communes lie within the Corridor (except for Predeluț and Poarta villages, which belong to Țara Bârsei – Borșa Land), but their estates stretch up to the nearby mountains. Thus, the administrative boundary of Rucăr Commune stretches to the Iezer-Păpușa, Făgăraș and Piatra Craiului Mts; of Dâmbovicioara Commune to the Piatra Craiului Mts.; of Fundata Commune to the Piatra Craiului and Leaota Mts; of Moieciu Commune to the Leaota, Bucegi and Piatra Craiului Mts; and of Bran Commune to the Bucegi Mts.

3. FUNCTIONAL TYPES

The use of the index of professional structure of population as a basic criterion in establishing the functional types of settlements, requires a certain caution. If the workplace overlaps the residence, or its domain and the productive activity is carried out within the territorial-administrative unit, then it is professional structure that determines the function or functions of the settlement. But the moment when the labour force is commuting and the productive activity is carried out beyond the territorial-administrative confines, then the professional structure fails to support the function of the investigated settlement and, defining it, one has to make use of supplementary indicators.

When tracing the functional types of villages, the best results are obtained by using the ternary plot, which illustrates the professional structure of the population. However, the results have to be correlated with direct field observations, because they are the only ones that can offer the necessary data for defining the main subtypes.

In Romania, the first geographer concerned with the functional typology of villages was Vintilă Mihăilescu who, in his “Map of the Main Types of Rural Settlements in Romania” (1927), distinguished the following village types:

- villages with households belonging to mountain stock-breeders, in which he included all the villages in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor;
- villages with mixed functions, situated in the hilly regions;
- villages relying on intensive and extensive agriculture, as well as on stock-breeding.

The first comprehensive classification was made in 1960 by I. Băcănaru *et al.*, on the occasion of the International Geographical Congress held in Stockholm. The authors identified three types of villages, each one having numerous functional types connected with the socio-economic activity of the population: rural settlements with agricultural functions; rural settlements with industrial functions (extractive industry, processing industry); and settlements with mixed functions.

According to the classification of I. Băcănaru, settlements in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor have the following functions: agricultural (animal breeding); industrial (wood industry, food industry); and mixed functions (agricultural, forestry and tourism).

Another classification is given in *Romania's Atlas* (1979), but this time the authors chose as basic unit not the village, but the commune. The indicators used related to primary, secondary and tertiary activities, as well as to the active population structure in 1996.

The last classification appears in the *Romania's Geography*, volume II (1984). It resumes the analysis of Romanian communes, from the viewpoint of the habitat components. In order to establish the functions, we took into account a number of demographic, economic and territorial indices: professional structure of the population, production value, value of sold goods, landuse, and the number of tourist overnight stays.

The methodology employed enabled us to distinguish the following rural settlement functions: dominantly agricultural; dominantly industrial; mixed functions, and specific functions.

The dominantly agricultural settlement has 65% of the active population, the agricultural output value exceeding 70% of the global production value.

This functional type includes the following settlement subtypes: vegetable-growing; grain-growing; grain-growing for animal fodder; vine-growing; stock-breeding, forest maintenance and

wood harvesting; craft activities, small industry and handicraft; crop-growing, also providing external services.

In terms of the quality and profile of activity, the dominantly industrial rural settlements, some are engaged in the extractive industry; others in the processing of agricultural raw materials; and others still in the extractive and processing industries.

In these settlements, the share of industry in global production exceeds 75%, while more than 65% of the active population work in this economic sector.

In the case of settlements with mixed functions, the practice of agriculture is associated, beside industry, with fish-breeding, tourism and forest activities, hence a number of functional subtypes: agroforestry settlements (often associated with wood processing); agricultural settlements discharging transportation functions; agroindustrial settlements; and agricultural and fishery settlements.

Rural settlements discharging special functions are becoming more numerous. So, there are settlements engaged in tourism or balneoclimateric activities, but also in agriculture, forestry and even industry, as well as settlements profiled on fishery and tourism.

The Transcarpathian road along the Rucăr – Bran Corridor has proved to be extremely important, having contributed to the emergence and development of settlements and specific occupations, an intense commercial activity flourishing around the custom-points at Rucăr and Bran and in the vicinity of inns.

The existence of large forests led to the construction of sawmills, used to cut the wood brought here on the Dâmbovița and Turcu rivers. Documents mention the existence of a wooden flask factory at Rucăr and the fact manufacturing of wood in the area was used in the Giurgiu shipyard in order to produce masts.

Shepherding is an ancient occupation of the people living within the Corridor. Transhumance was first documented in the 15th century. Over the years, it has played an important part in the life of the settlements in this area.

Because of the large number of sheep, wool processing required simple, but efficient, equipment, namely the stamp mill and the fulling mill with surging river water, which harnessed hydraulic energy. For grain milling, people used a number of watermills.

Functional dynamics of settlements (1966–2011)

In order to analyze the evolution of rural settlements in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor, we resorted to the classification made in *Geografia României* (The Geography of Romania), volume II (1984). This analysis compares three years: 1966, 1992 and 1997. For 1997, we used the data gathered in the field, as well as information on the population's professional structure supplied by communal town-halls.

In 1966, rural settlements in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor had the following functions:

Agricultural functions, characterizing Fundata Commune, as well as Drumul Carului, Măgura and Peștera villages, where the main occupation of the locals was stock-breeding, associated with wood harvesting and forest maintenance. The processing of agricultural raw materials came second in their economy.

Mixed functions, which are specific to Rucăr, Dâmbovicioara, Bran and Moieciu communes, where agricultural and non-agricultural activities had an almost equal share in defining the functional type. Examples of such settlements are the villages belonging to Dâmbovicioara Commune, where stock-breeding was the main occupation of the inhabitants. However, a large part of the active population (28%) was engaged in the processing of wood and animal products. The agricultural function connected with stock-breeding was backed by an industry processing agricultural raw materials. Consequently, the area had a number of factories for cheese production, as well as wool-processing

facilities. There was also a milling and bakery industry, represented by several water mills and bakehouses, situated especially in the capital villages of the communes. In Bran Village there was also a handicraft industry.

In 1992, one could see the results of the “flourishing” communist period, when industry held a central place in the economy, which explains the building of some factories in the hearth of several villages of the Rucăr – Bran Corridor. For instance, a timber factory at Rucăr, and a workshop that produced various parts for the terrain vehicles factory in Câmpulung Town, and a yard for building a dam on the Râușor, a tributary of the Dâmbovița River; at Moieciu a dairy plant, the settlement also supplying labour-force for the industrial centers in the area. However, this labour force, even though employed outside the territorial-administrative boundaries of the commune, was nevertheless recorded in the statistical datasets of the home settlement as active population occupied in industry. Because the Rucăr, Bran and Moieciu communes were confronted with this situation, percentages do not explain the real functions of the respective villages.

In 1973, following the Order of the Ministry of Tourism, Rucăr, Fundata and Șirnea became villages of tourist interest. Unfortunately, by Decree No. 225 / 1974, accommodation of tourists in private households was banned. However, the villagers continued to accommodate tourists illegally, but at Rucăr, Moieciu, Bran and Șirnea tourism, got momentum after December 1989, subsequently spreading throughout the Corridor.

Also after 1989, one can notice a spectacular increase of commercial activities, as family companies were set up, these were generally represented by mixed shops and several small production units.

In 1992, the villages belonging to the Rucăr, Bran and Moieciu communes would discharge mixed functions, while most of the population was occupied in industry, followed by the services sector, and a small percentage in agriculture. But, taking into account the population employed outside the place of residence, the share of the active population working in industry and in the services sector is almost equal.

The villages belonging to Fundata Commune, as well as to Moieciu Commune (Măgura, Peștera and Drumul Carului) have preserved agriculture as main function, basically stock-breeding. Here, one can also notice an increase of active population in the services sector. Dâmbovicioara Commune has preserved its agroforestry functional type, but part of the population engaged in agriculture shifted to the services sector.

In 1997, the consequences of shifting to a new economic system, had ever since influence the functionality of rural settlements in the Corridor.

In a number of villages, the economic crisis disorganized and paralyzed the industrial function either totally, or partly. Consequently, a new form of organization developed, while the permanent urban-to-rural migration, as a result of economic reorganization, increased the active population occupied in agriculture.

The population that now migrated to the rural area, was the population which had settled in urban areas in the years 1970–1989, when there was a high demand for industrial workforce.

The services sector developed simultaneously with the reorganization of agriculture. It was the private sector that contributed to the development of the economic function.

Thus, at present, the Corridor shelters more than 350 private commercial companies, most of them in Bran Commune. After 1992, the tourist function has experienced the most significant growth. Therefore, all the villages in the Corridor are known as tourist villages.

Rural tourism began on personal initiative. As the interest was growing (after 2000 and especially after 2007, when Romania joined the European Union), a number of small companies were set up and local associations came into being, followed by national ones. Among them, we would mention OVR (Operation Villages Roumaine) and ANTREC (National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism).

Table 1

The structure of active population in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor (%)

Communes	1966			1992		
	Industry and construction	Agriculture	Services	Industry and construction	Agriculture	Services
Dâmbovicioara	28.7	56	15.1	29.4	45.5	25
Rucăr	39.2	40.1	20.6	55.5	12.8	31.5
Bran	34	44.3	21.7	56	15.5	28.3
Fundata	16.1	69.8	14	13.1	69.4	17.4
Moieciu	32.4	47.3	20.1	56.3	17.9	25.6
Communes	1997			2011		
	Industry and construction	Agriculture	Services	Industry and construction	Agriculture	Services
Dâmbovicioara	27.1	44.5	28.4	15.3	60.2	24.5
Rucăr	48.6	18.3	33.1	21.57	48.08	30.35
Bran	50.2	17.6	32.2	17.83	25.26	56.91
Fundata	12.6	66.1	21.3	13.25	52.26	34.49
Moieciu	49.8	20.4	29.8	13.48	28.12	58.4

Source: Population censuses of 1966, 1992, 1997, 2011 and statistical data supplied by town-halls.

By analyzing the functional nomogram of settlements in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor (Fig. 1), one can see that the functional village types have not changed significantly compared to 1992. Thus, the villages belonging to Rucăr, Bran and Moieciu communes have mixed functions, the main activities being the processing of agricultural raw materials, the bakery industry, wood processing and the handicraft industry.

The active population engaged in commercial and tourist activities exceeds the share of the population working in agriculture. Other settlements with mixed functions are the villages of Dâmbovicioara Commune, but in this case, agricultural activities prevail over the services sector.

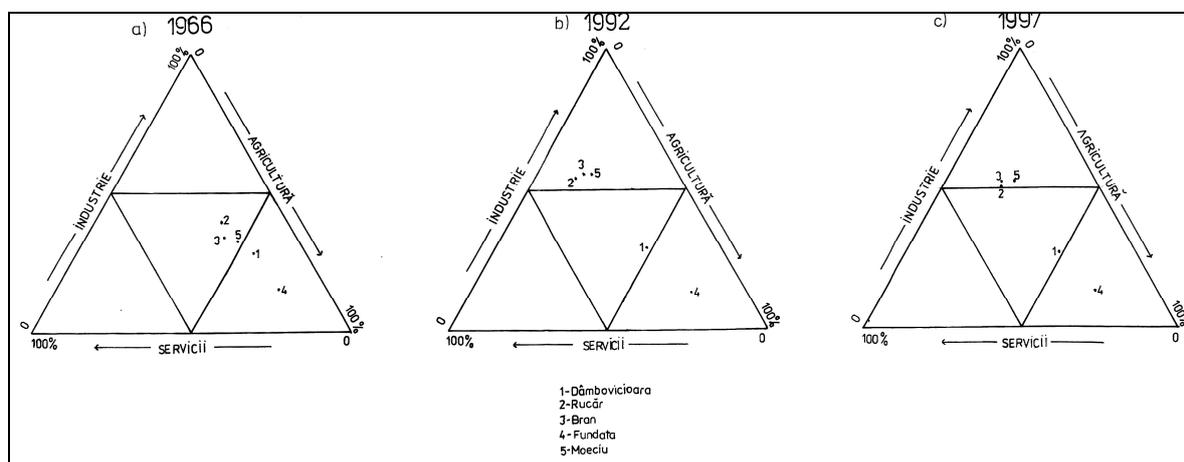


Fig. 1 – The functional nomogram of communes in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor.

Fundata Commune continues to keep its agricultural function, namely stock-breeding, but in the villages belonging to it, increase the active population in the services industry has been increasing.

After 1992, rural tourism got momentum as more and more tourists wished to spend unforgettable holidays in the vicinity of beautiful natural landscapes, and far away from the bustle, noise and pollution of big cities.

From the point of view of structure, the active population, together with the number of employees, is an extremely important element in defining the economic profile of the Rucăr – Bran Corridor, on the one hand and the functional type of the settlements, on the other. It reveals the contribution of the population to the productive or unproductive activity characterizing this physiographic unit.

In 1966, the share of the economically inactive population to the total number of residents represented 48.8%, decreasing slightly to 48.2% in 1992 (Figs 2, 3, 4).

This decrease of inactive population comes from elderly people continuing to work up to 65 or 70 years old. However, in Bran and Dâmbovicioara communes, the inactive population was seen to increase in 1992 compared to 1966.

As far as the active population is concerned, this shows high values both in 1966 and 1992, in the communes of Bran (60.5% in 1966 and 53% in 1992), Moieciu (53.5% in 1966 and 56.6% in 1992), and Fundata (56% in 1966 and 79.4% in 1992). At the other end are Dâmbovicioara (48.1% in 1966 and 45.7% in 1992) and Rucăr (40.2% in 1966 and 40.3% in 1992), where the share of the elderly population had considerably grown over the 1966–1992 interval.

In 1966, the highest percentage per total active population had the population occupied in agriculture (24.7%), followed by that in industry (16.5%) and in the services sector (10%). The active population working in agriculture accounted for 39% at Fundata and 16.1% at Rucăr.

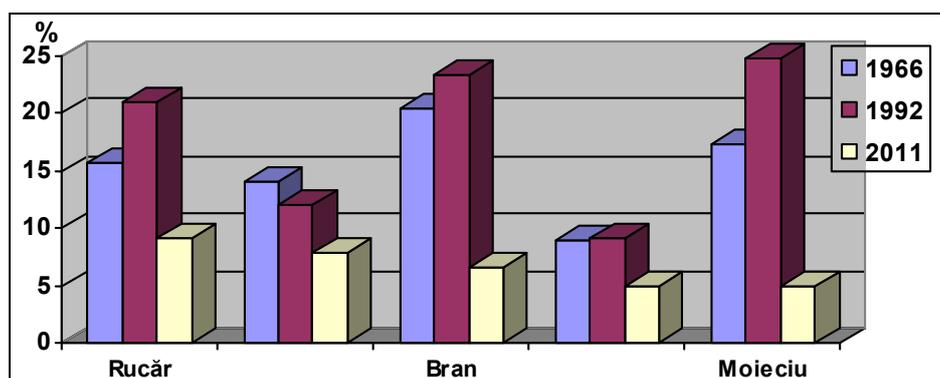


Fig. 2 – The Rucăr – Bran Corridor. Active population structure – Industry.

In 1992, because of the forced industrialization drive imposed by the communist regime between 1970 and 1980, most of Romania's active population worked in industry (22%). At the same time, the active population engaged in agriculture dropped significantly (9.8%), compared to the services sector (11.9%).

Due to the economic reorganization, in 1990 unemployment grew to 7.8% of the total population, with the exception of Dâmbovicioara and Fundata communes where situation was different from that of the entire Corridor. Thus, in Dâmbovicioara Commune, most of the population worked in agriculture (190 people, i.e. 14.7%) and in the services industry (187 people, i.e. 14.4%); in Fundata Commune over 50% of the total population (52.5%) worked in agriculture and 13.2% in the services sector.

That rather few people from these two communes worked in industry could be the consequence of the great distance from industrial centres, but also of a low-skilled labour force, a large number of unemployed having Moieciu (644) and Bran (648) communes.

Rural tourism offers a chance for new sources of revenue by creating a system of services, which also includes the domestic product offer. This will put an end to the exodus of rural population to the city. Consequently, the infrastructure and accommodation comfort will be improved, while autochthonous goods (handicraft products, fruit and vegetables, diary products, meat etc.) will be sold on the local markets. But the great advantage of providing tourist services in rural areas is the

possibility for a farmer to make good business and money, and thus enjoy living standards specific to the city.

Today, settlements in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor are known as tourist villages. In order that tourists get in touch more rapidly with the peasants who will host them, several accommodation centres have been set up. It is the case of the ANTREC branches in Bran and Rucăr, as well as the accommodation centre in Șirnea, which provides services for settlements in the Giuvala section.

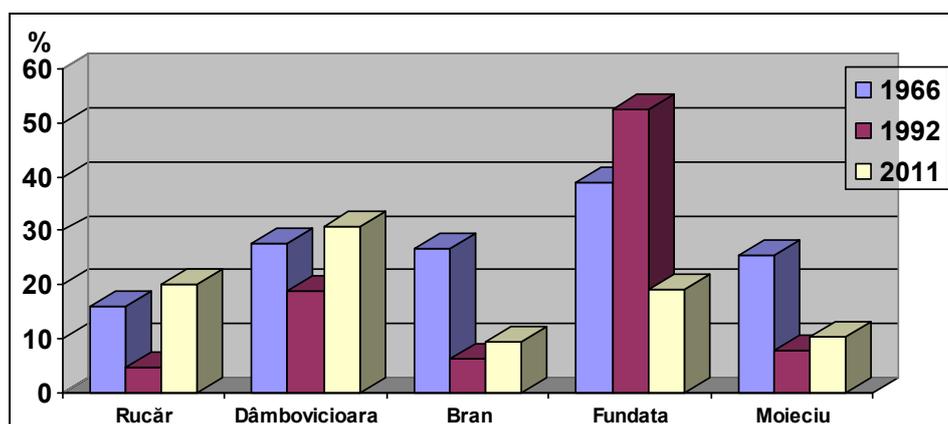


Fig. 3 – The Rucăr – Bran Corridor.
Active population structure – Agriculture.

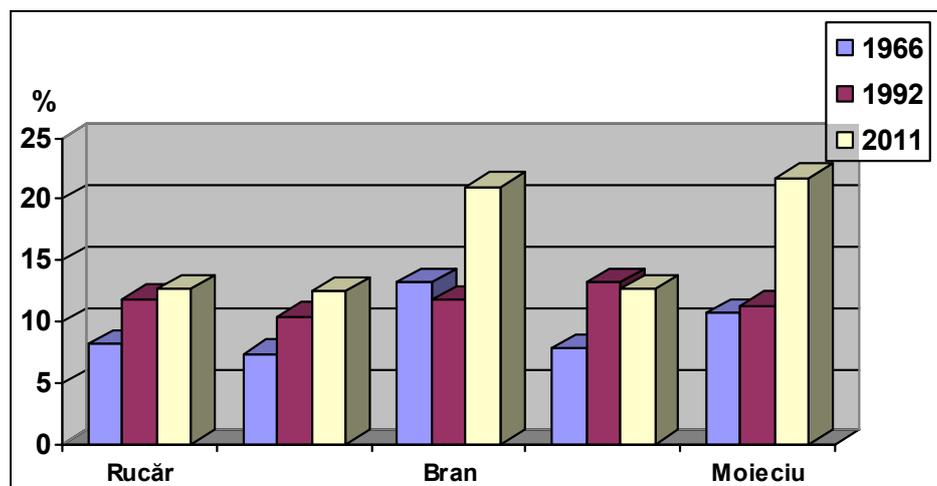


Fig. 4 – The Rucăr – Bran Corridor.
Active population structure – Services.

Thus, in 2011, the percentage of people employed in the service sector / total population was 21% in Bran and 21.7% in Moieciu, which means 10% increase compared to 1997. Over this 14 year interval, the population occupied in industry dropped from 23.3% in 1997 to 6.6% in 2011 in Bran, and from 24.8% in 1997 to 5% in 2011 in Moieciu. As far as Dâmbovicioara and Rucăr communes are concerned, the share of the population employed in industry and constructions decreased, while that in agriculture increased. Instead, in Fundata Commune, the active population in agriculture fell significantly, from 52.5% in 1992 to 19.2% in 2011 through the growth of the inactive population (the ageing phenomenon).

Table 2

The number of employees in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor

Commune	1995	2013
Rucăr	1,207	392
Dâmbovicioara	124	124
Bran	302	806
Fundata	14	60
Moieciu	63	508

Over the 1995–2013 period (Fig. 5), due to the reorganization of industry, the number of employees dropped in the southern part of the Corridor, for instance, from 1,207 in 1995 to 392 in 2013 in Rucăr Commune. Instead, in the central and northern parts of the Corridor, the development of tourism, led to numerical increase of employees over the same period: from 302 to 806 in Bran Commune; from 14 to 60 in Fundata Commune, and from 63 to 508 employees in Moieciu commune.

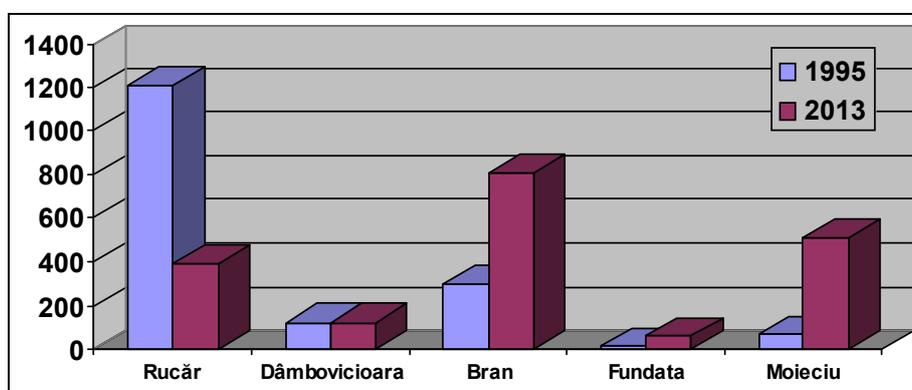


Fig. 5 – The number of employees in the Rucăr – Bran Corridor (1995–2013).

4. CONCLUSIONS

One can note that, in time, the rural settlements belonging to Bran and Moieciu communes have had a mixed function, agricultural and non-agricultural activities making an almost equal contribution to defining the functional type of settlements, both in terms of the share of the occupied population and its participation in global production. Around 1970, agricultural activities would prevail to the detriment of industrial ones, but after 1989, industrial activities recorded a boom, being by 50% in excess.

The population of the services sector exceeded the number of people working in agriculture and it continued to grow. Over the 1992–1997 period, with the transition to a new economic system, industrial activities recorded a decline, while agriculture started being reorganized.

After 2000 and especially after 2007, when Romania joined the European Union, the highest development registered the services sector in the rural areas, especially through the tourist and commercial functions.

Likewise, Dâmbovicioara and Rucăr communes had mixed functions, agroforestry being associated with wood processing and tourism. After 1992, the services sector booming, the population occupied in commercial and tourist activities topped that working in industry. After 1997, with industry restructuring, the communes have begun to rely primarily on agriculture.

In the villages of Fundata Commune, Moieciu Commune (Măgura, Peștera, Drumul Carului) and Dâmbovicioara Commune (Ciocanu) were engaged in agriculture, basically in stock-breeding associated with forest maintenance and wood harvesting. The extensive character of the agricultural economy is highlighted by the atomization of households. After 1992, one can notice the development of rural tourism, as more and more people wished to spend an unforgettable holiday in the midst of nature and its beauties, far away from the bustle, noise and pollution of big cities.

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