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Considerations regarding the evolution, distribution and dynamics of the romanian football (League I) between 1989 - 2016

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Abstract: The present study aims to highlight different issues related to: the evolution, repartition and dynamics of the Romanian football (League I) between 1989 – 2016 by using an analytical approach, from singular to particular, from the team (seen as a basic cell in football) to location, county, development regions, historical region and country (seen as administrative units that support football). The importance of the study emerges from the explanatory and logical approach, from the mechanisms that contributed to the development and consolidation of the Romanian football (League I), in close correlation with the post-communist socio-economic transformations which have defined each administrative unit involved as part of the Romanian national state.

Keywords: football, football dynamics, League I, sports

Introduction

The global dynamics of football generated the specific organizational framework for this activity. Thus, organizational structures were created in countries where football has become a social phenomenon. "*Sports, through its*

organization and manifestation forms, through its built specific infrastructure, has become an inseparable part of society in general, the differences being of quantitative and qualitative nature and whose value is generated by the involvement degree of each actor as part of society (of the whole)" (Ilieș et al., 2014a).

The implementation of new concepts within the cultural sports context (Bale, 2003; Calcatinage, 2013; Conner, 2014; Dragoș, 2015) supported by various case studies (Gaffnei, 2008; Ilieș et al., 2014b; Kozma, 2014) through different analogies and generalizations (Szabo-Alexi et al., 2008) could delineate a distinctive framework for sport practicing, and especially football.

In Romania, organizing things according to specific professional principles appeared in August 1990 once the Romanian Football Federation has become an independent leading organ of the football movement in our country¹. As a logical consequence, in 1993 the Romanian Professional Football League was founded².

The activity and performance of Romanian football clubs have generated real disputes and controversy, especially after the events of 1989. Their shift from amateur to a professional status generated significant changes in the dynamics of football organization. The clubs become more visible based on the socio-economic development of the country (Buhaș, 2015a). At the same time, we can observe a dynamics and a fluctuation of the existence and geographic distribution of tradition football clubs at national level, but also the emergence, development and performance of new football clubs.

Football was, is and will remain a social phenomenon that engages a large mass of consumers from different positions: either from the perspective of those who practice it, or from the viewer's perspective (Socol, 2016). There are no social distinctions in what regards those involved in this phenomenon. The elitist social classes generate, at the same intensity as the peripheral social classes, the same passion, "craziness" and involvement in the football phenomenon. *"Thus, it raises the need for cooperation in knowledge. Knowledge can not be a goal itself. Knowledge generates the human capacity of changing, transforming and modifying"* (Buhaș, 2015b, 13). The social importance of this phenomenon is highlighted by the magnitude of energy consumed around it. Televisions allocate an extremely wide space for this phenomenon. Some are exclusively dedicated to sports and particularly to football (Eurosport, Digisport, etc.) In addition to these, the printed media has also dedicated countless editions evoking sports and football industry in particular (Prosport, Gazeta Sporturilor, etc.).

In Romania, the 1989 – 1990 championship edition was the last in which football has been influenced by the specific social organization of the communist egalitarianism. Since 1990, football knows a wide restructuring process, adapted to the European and global organizational framework. Until 1997 the Romanian championship was called Division A and since then it is called League 1³. During all this period, various companies have associated their name with League 1: Ursus (1998-2004); Burger (2004-2008); Frutti Fresh (2008-2009); Gamebookers (2009-

¹ <http://old.frf.ro/public/images/uploads/Statut%202011.pdf>

² <http://www.lpf.ro/despre-lpf/despre-lpf.html>

³ http://www.liga-1.ro/content.php?c=articole&articol_id=9255&p=543

2010); Bergenbier (2010-2015); Orange (2015-2017)⁴. A number of tradition clubs strengthens thier existence (Steaua București, Dinamo București, Universitatea Craiova, etc.), while others (UTA Arad, F.C. Maramureș Baia Mare, F.C. Bihor, etc.) are struggling in a total anonymity. We can observe the situation of new emerging clubs in League 1 (Voluntari, F.C. Vaslui, Concordia Chiajna, etc.) which make impression based on their budgets, but also their results (Unirea Urziceni). This is the result of the fast socio - economic changes occurring in the Romanian society. These changes are also highlighted by the amounts of money paid by broadcasters for TV rights. The year 2004 represents a premiere for the Romanian football: the Telesport company pays for the football matches` broadcasting rights the sum of 28 million dollars for a four-year contract with the Professional Football League⁵. In 2008, Antena 1 and RCS & RDS pay for a period of three years the sum of 102 million Euros⁶. As a consequence of the phenomenon`s dynamism, we can observe a significant increase of transmission rights` value. At the same time, the number of foreign players and coaches in League 1 is growing from year to year⁷.

During the period approached in this paper, there is a pronounced dynamics of League 1 football team distribution in Romania. This geographical distribution is generated by a number of interrelated factors which we will discuss in our study. All this led in time to fluctuations related to League 1 organizational framework, leading currently to play off and play out system.

Methodology

The present study is the result of bibliographic research and analytical interpretations in time and space of the information from the literature review⁸. The analysis of the Romanian football (League I) between 1989-2015 was performed at team, location, county, development regions, historical region and country levels. Data from literature review have been translated into a pre-existing database (points, polygons), created in ArcGIS 9.3. Data analysis was performed at point level (45 locations) and polygon level (4 historical regions, 8 development regions, 42 counties). Data analysis for historical and development regions required also quantitative analysis based on summing up the total number of teams promoted in League 1 during the period 1989-2016. In order to highlight the dynamics in time of the total number of qualified teams, we elaborated graphs for the years: 1989/1990, 1994/1995, 1999/2000, 2004/2005, 2009/2010, 2015/2016; based on these, we conducted a comparative analysis (figures 2 and 3). Data analysis regarding the total number of qualified teams during 1989 -2016, at county level, involved a graphical spatial analysis, using columns shaded in different colors. Each column represents a year, respectively: 1989/1990, 1994/1995, 1999/2000, 2004/2005, 2009/2010, 2015/2016. In order to conduct a comparative analysis we elaborated a chart containing the total number of teams promoted within the period 1989 -2016, at county level (fig. 4). Data analysis regarding the total number of qualified teams

⁴ <http://www.gsp.ro/fotbal/liga-1/liga-1-are-un-nou-sponsor-oficial-cum-se-va-numi-campionatul-romaniei-463461.html>

⁵ <http://dictionary.sensagent.com/Telesport/en-en/>

⁶ <http://www.romanialibera.ro/sport/sporturi/102-milioane-euro-pentru-liga-i-130304>

⁷ <http://sportim.ro/editorial/25-de-ani-cu-straini-in-liga-1>

⁸ <http://www.romaniansoccer.ro/competitii/fotbal/national/romania/liga-1/>

during 1989 -2016, at county level, involved a quantitative spatial analysis, by using conventional signs like circle with gray background representing five classes of value: 1 team, 2 - 10 teams, 11 - 50 teams, 51 - 100 teams, over 100 teams (fig. 5). Therefore, using ArcGIS 9.3 we managed to perform a series of specific analyzes regarding the spatial and temporal distribution of football teams from League I at location, county, development regions, historical regions and country levels.

Results and discussion

The evolution of football teams from League I was achieved by monitoring changes over time (1989 - 2015), individually (for each team) and in general, by highlighting the longest teams in time. The analysis regarding the spatial distribution of teams in League I between 1989 - 2015 was conducted at location, county, development region, and historical region levels in Romania. Between 1989 - 2015, the Romanian football from League I was represented by 476 promoted teams, located in 35 counties and 45 municipalities, some of them with rural status (fig. 1).

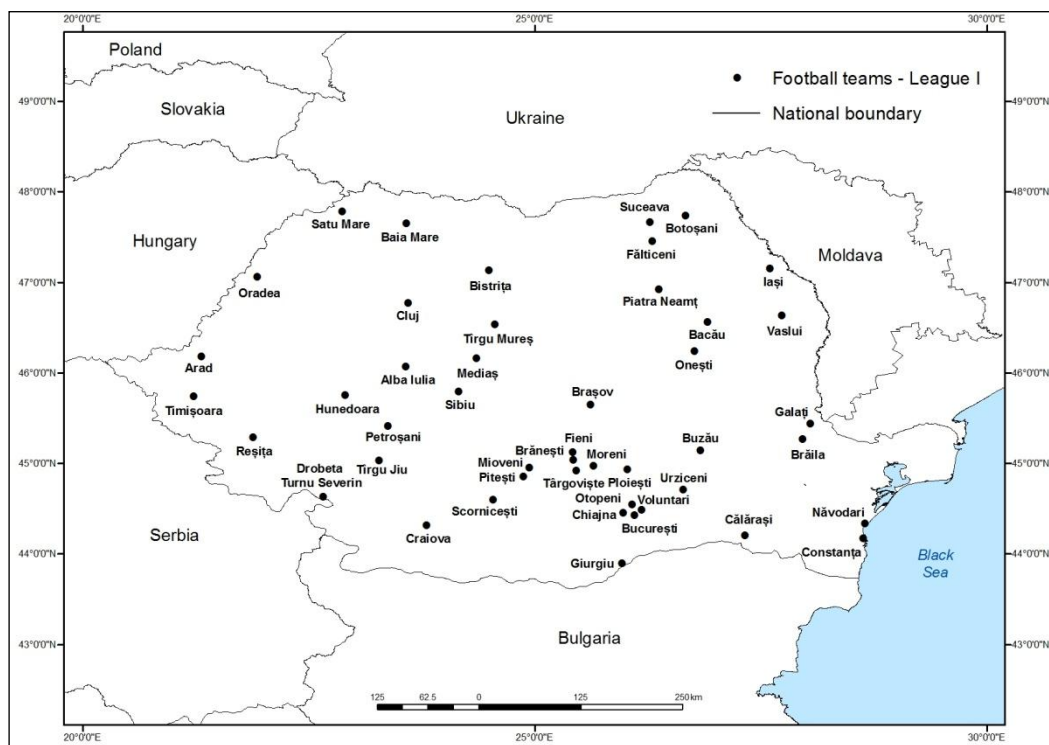


Figure 1. The teams' locations between 1989-2015 (League I)

The historical regions (Țara Românească, Transylvania, Moldavia and Dobrogea) were specific Romanian administrative units. The analysis of football teams' distribution and their representativeness has deep mental connotations in the way how Romanians perceive the current realities, with which they identify in one way or another as football supporters. The analysis of the number of teams in

League I at historical regions level between 1989 - 2015 highlights their proportion in Țara Românească (49%, 231 teams in 20 locations), followed by Transylvania (29%, 140 teams in 15 locations), Moldavia (18%, 84 teams in 9 locations) and Dobrogea (4%, 21 teams in 2 locations) (fig. 2, table 1).

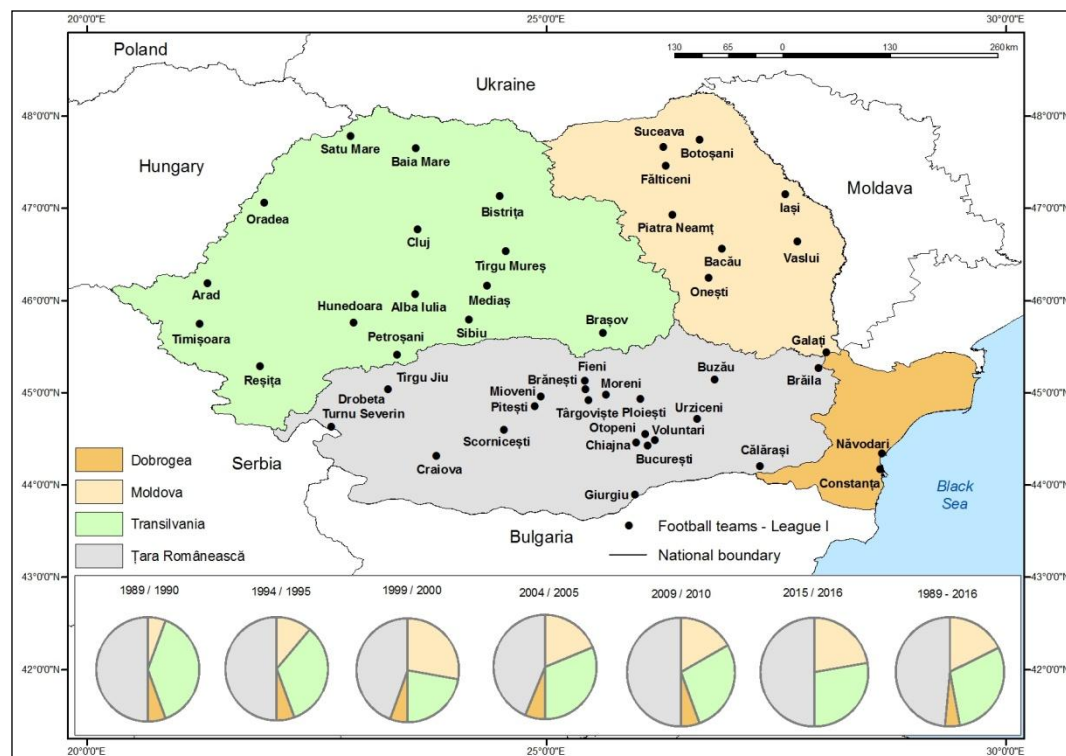


Figure 2. The distribution and dynamics of teams in League I on historical regions between 1989 – 2015

Table 1. The distribution of the number of teams in League I, of the number of locations and counties in which they were located between 1989 – 2015

Criteria	Romania	Historical regions				Development regions							
		Transylvania	Țara Românească	Moldavia	Dobrogea	Central region	Ilfov-Bucharest region	North-Eastern region	North-Western region	Southern region	South-Eastern region	South-Western region	Western region
No. of counties	35	13	14	7	1	4	1	6	5	7	3	4	4
No. of locations	45	15	20	9	2	5	4	8	5	11	4	4	5
No. of teams	476	140	231	84	21	46	122	60	56	64	49	41	38
The ratio between the no. of teams and no. of locations	10.5	9.3	11.5	9.3	10.5	9.2	30.5	7.5	11.2	5.8	12.2	10.2	7.6

In what regards the dynamics and consolidation of Romanian football in League I between 1989 - 2015, at the level of development regions we have a balanced representativeness, except for two regions (Ilfov-Bucharest region with 3% from the total number of teams; South Western region with 4% of the total number of teams); in general, the percentual values for other development regions fall between 11% and 18% (fig. 3, table 1).

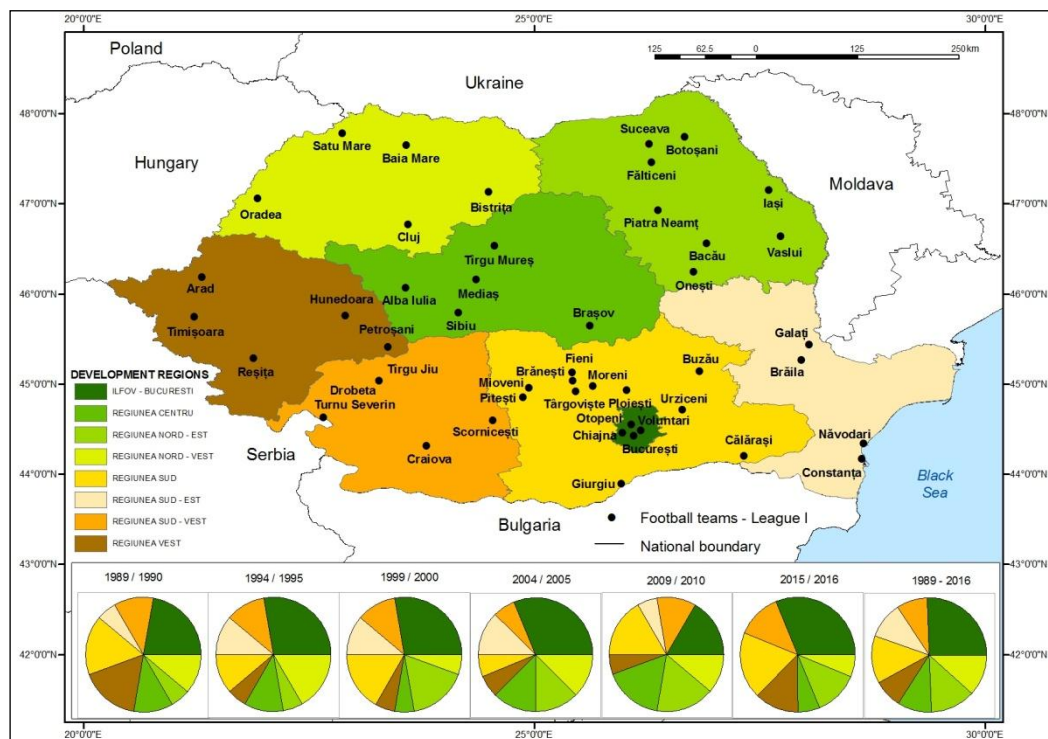


Figure 3. The distribution and dynamics of teams in League I on development regions between 1989 – 2015

A more representative image regarding the distribution of football activities in League I emerges from the analysis of the number of teams at county and local level. At county level one can observe that between 1989 - 2015, seven counties (Covasna, Harghita, Vrancea, Sălaj, Vâlcea, Teleorman and Tulcea) were not represented in football in League I, while at municipality level we can see that teams in the League I were located in 45 locations (Figure 4). The counties with most football teams in League I, during mentioned time range, are: Bucharest (111), Dolj (28), Cluj (27), Prahova (24), while to the opposite side were counties like Teleorman, Tulcea, Vâlcea, Vrancea, Covasna, Harghita and Sălaj with any team present in League I (fig. 4). We mention that the total number of teams is given by their annual summing (in most cases, can be the same clubs).

The graphical analysis of the total number of football teams in League I, at municipality level, reveals the dominance of the urban centers, some of them being county capitals: Bucharest (111), Craiova (28), Cluj (27), Galați (24), Ploiești (24),

Braşov (22), while at the opposite were localities like Moreni, Scorniceşti, Satu Mare, Fieni, Otopeni, Brăneşti, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Călăraşi, Năvodari and Fălticeni, each with one team (fig. 5).

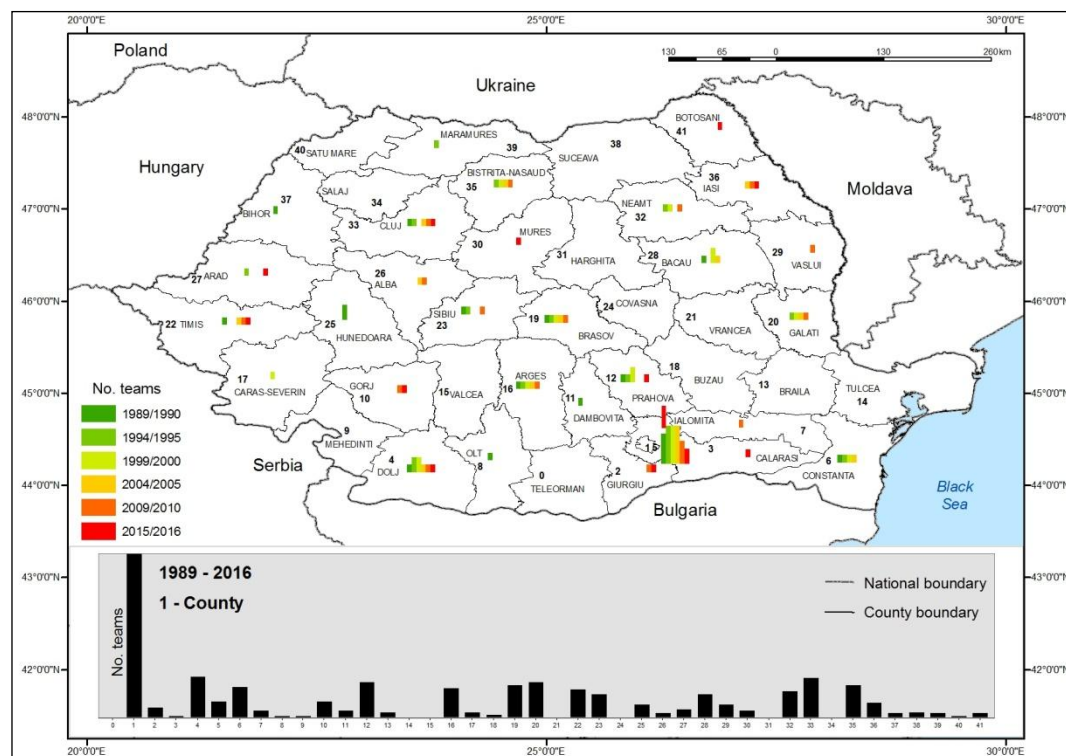


Figure 4. The distribution and dynamics of teams in League I at county level between 1989 – 2015

In order to create a spatial overview on the dynamics of the Romanian football in League I, we calculated the ratio between the number of teams and the number of localities in which they activate. For Romania, the value for this indicator was 10. A relatively similar situation can be drawn also from the analysis of this indicator at historical regions level: Ţara Românească, Dobrogea, Moldavia and Transylvania, which had values ranged between 9.3 and 11.5. Regarding this indicator, major differences were noted at development regions, county and municipality levels: its value was inversely proportional to the size of the administrative unit. The smallest the administrative unit (historical region, development region, county, city), the higher the value of the ratio between the number of teams and the number of municipalities in which they were located. At the level of development regions the highest value for this indicator was registered in Ilfov-Bucharest region (30.5). For the rest of the analyzed development regions the indicator value ranged between 12.2 and 7.6. At county level, Bucharest stands out (111), while at the opposite side we have counties like Satu Mare, Suceava and Călăraşi, with a value of 1. A similar situation was reported also at localities level (table 1).

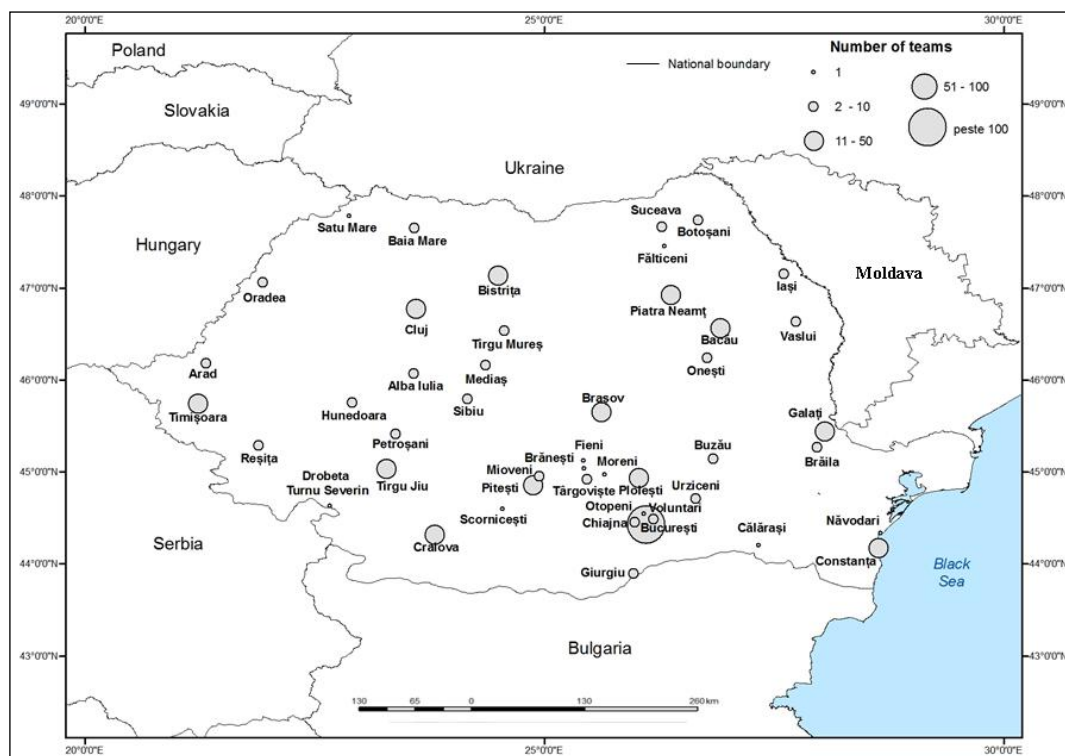


Figure 5. Distribution of the total number of selected teams in League I at locality level between 1989 – 2015

Conclusions

One of the most dynamic phenomena that define the post communist Romanian society is sport. Among other sports, football holds a special place due to its spread and social impact. In this context we have tried to outline an overview of the Romanian football in League I, between 1989-2016, highlighting the mutations that it had recorded in time (1989-2016) and space (at locality, county, development region, historical region and country levels).

On the presented maps one can observe an uneven distribution of all 476 football teams in Ligue 1 in the above mentioned time range. They are not different, and do not represent each one club. The number of outlined teams is given by their number of display in League 1.

In the studied time period, we can observe an unequal distribution of these teams. Only 45 municipalities in 35 counties are represented. The display, concentration, consolidation and stability of teams is closely related to the socio-economic dynamics of the area. There are areas in Romania where the existence of natural resources and the development of collateral industries influenced the emergence and consolidation of teams (Fieni, Moreni, Pitești, Reșița, Ploiești, Târgu Jiu, etc.) In the same context, we can observe that along with the degradation of industry in the communist period and the development of another economic sector, teams shift to more favorable areas. If at the beginning of the studied period, teams

from cities such as Arad, Timișoara, Reșița, Baia Mare, Hunedoara represented points of concentration and athletic performance, as the economic potential has deteriorated, teams migrated to regions such as Otopeni, Chiajna, Voluntari, etc. where new areas of business emerged.

Another cause for the spatio-temporal mobility of football teams is generated by the concentration of financial flows in certain areas (Bucharest, Timișoara, Cluj, etc.).

There are areas that endeavor to preserve the tradition of high-level football even in the context of low (or lack of) economic potential (Arad, Brăila, Bistrița, Suceava, Piatra Neamț, Bacău etc.), but these teams have a highly fluctuating dynamics in League I.

During 1989-2016 the division of football teams in League I has been highly uneven and strongly linked with the fluctuating dynamics of socio-economic development in Romania. An important contribution was brought by the sedimentation of sports and football culture especially through the protection and maintenance of some tradition football teams (Iași, Arad, Timișoara, Brașov, etc.), often with the involvement of local authorities.

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