

## CHINTENI MUNICIPALITY, TRADITIONAL RURAL SPACE VS. THE BEGINNING OF SUBURBANIZATION?

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**Abstract:** Rural space represents the territory where most lands are used for agriculture, forestry and fishing. Throughout the development of the dwelling spaces, people tried to merge the anthropogenic part with the natural environment without bringing prejudice to the latter. Therefore, the rural space has the capacity to preserve and restore the natural environment, as a result of a lower anthropogenic pressure compared to the urban space, associated with the level of economic development and the involvement of the authorities. Chinteni municipality, located near Cluj-Napoca City, changed gradually some of its rural characteristics. The anthropogenic pressure of the latest years led to important changes in the system structure, leading to a mass of different styles and shapes. The sustainable development of a rural space is defined by the balance between the conservation of the natural environment, from an ecologic, cultural and economic point of view, by preserving the traditional elements and the modernization and optimization of the rural life standards. The conclusions of this study demonstrate the orientation of the rural space of Chinteni municipality towards a trend of suburbanization, yet in its primary stage, still preserves specific elements of the traditional rural space.

**Key words:** rural space, rural society, suburbanization

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper is a preamble to the analysis of the characteristics of rural space in Chinteni municipality. Accordingly, I will present the factors that determined the changes in the physiognomy of the municipality in time, as well as the effects. The identification and delimitation of the analyzed area is the first step of this study. The following step was the consultation of existing bibliography and mapping sources and then, ground research. The second stage consisted in analyzing and classifying the information in the integrate study of the phenomena. Then I made maps for the most representative of the situation of the area, using GIS method. Thus, methods like: the method of analysis, regional, chorematic and GIS were used. The principles that have been used are: the principle of causality, ecological, historicism and sustainable development. In order to better enhance the evolution of Chinteni municipality, I analyzed a series of demographic and economic elements. They will be presented next.

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### TRADITIONAL RURAL SPACE

During its existence, Chinteni rural space emphasized one socio-economic reality that contributed to changes in local physiognomy. The continuity and sustainability of the civilization in this territory (the village is attested in documents since 1263) and the complexity of its characteristics are at present materialized in the existence of traditional households and architecture, the high weight of people working in agriculture (82 %), the type of agriculture (subsistence), the types of crops (forage, potatoes, tree growing etc), the traditional costume (figure 1), and some of the preserved customs (The “*Sons of the Village*” Annual Festival). These elements represent the “witnesses” of a traditional rural civilization within the analyzed municipality.



**Figure 1.** The traditional folk costume from Chinteni municipality  
(Source: [www.dansromanesc.ro](http://www.dansromanesc.ro))

### DISTURBING AGENTS IN THE RURAL SPACE

The definition of the rural space at the level of the European Union<sup>1</sup> refers to the territories with villages and small towns, where most lands are used in agriculture, forestry and fishing, while the predominant activities are handicrafts and services and where the functions concerning rest and leisure are important. Based on this definition I will analyze the spatial position of the municipality and its demographic and economic characteristics in order to be able to determine the evolutive trajectory of Chinteni municipality.

The concept of suburban "is the expression of the relationships between the city and the surroundings, relationships that not always have the finality of urbanization the area" (Coccean et al., 2010, p. 5).

According to the study of Suburban Spatial Planning. Case of study Bistrița municipality (Coccean et al., 2010) the main features of the suburban area are:

- proximity to the city;
- functional relationships with the city;
- built spaces;
- standing relations of cooperation with the city;
- suburban area creates agglomerations according to the theory of polarized development;
- it is part of the geographical landscape;
- agricultural activities and fruit tree are the specific forms of activity;
- the volume of demographic movement and the causes;
- reserve space for the suburban sprawl.

<sup>1</sup> European Charta of the rural space, 23 April 1996.

### THE SPATIAL POSITION AND LOCATION

Chinteni municipality consists of the following villages: Chinteni, the seat of the municipality, Pădureni, Feiurdeni, Măcicașu, Satu Lung, Sânmartin, Deușu, Vechea and Săliștea Veche. It is located to the North of Cluj-Napoca City at 12 km distance and has an area of 98 sqkm.

Two of the villages of this system (Chinteni and Deușu) are located on the main axis, DJ109, a road that connects the municipality with the city. The rest of the villages are interconnected by secondary roads (DC 149, DC 174, DC 148, DC 142) (figure 2). From the point of view of connections, the road network is relatively homogenously distributed within the territory. It has a high density, performing the link between the settlements of the municipality, as well as the link with the neighbouring settlements.

Although the density of the road network is high, it is mostly unmodernized which leads to a slower flow of mass, information and energy and puts pressure on the pace of development. The amount distributed in the territory and the absorption capacity of the system are also related to this.

The proximity of Cluj-Napoca City represents a favourable element for the perspectives of development of Chinteni municipality, but it also determines a pressure on the rural space, as the rural landscape starts getting urban characteristics, due to the pace of change and the land use. To support this statement, we will further analyze the factors which led and lead to changes in the physiognomy of the rural settlement (Coccean, 2007).

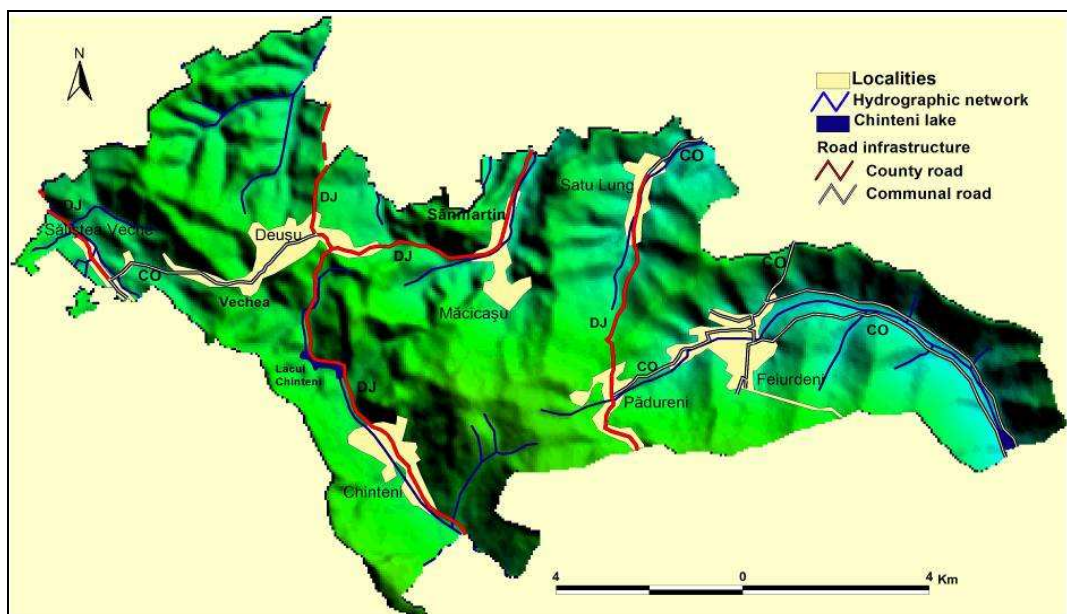


Figure 2. The map of Chinteni road infrastructure

### Demographic characteristics

One may identify two trends in the evolution of Chinteni municipality: the 1910-1960 period when the highest number of inhabitants is registered (6734 inhabitants in 1941), and the period after 2002 when the population decreases (2786 inhabitants). Nevertheless, when analyzing the evolution of population, we have to take into consideration that until the 1941 census, Chinteni municipality consisted of 7 villages and after 1956 it consisted of 9 villages. The new villages are Pădureni (1910) and Săliștea Veche (1956). Throughout the time, these two were part of Feiurdeni (Pădureni) and Vechea (Săliștea Veche). In 1910 and 1956 respectively, they became independent villages.

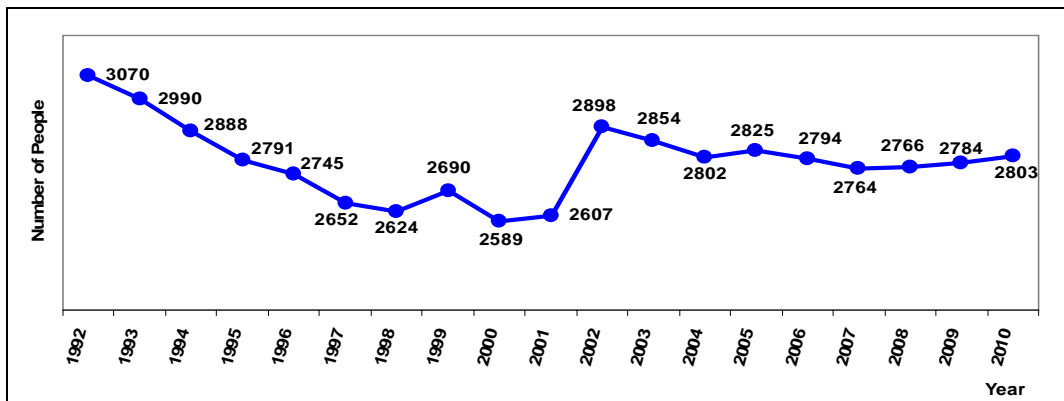
Analyzing the demographic evolution of the municipality between 1910 and 2002, it comes out that the highest number of inhabitants was recorded in 1941, when Chinteni municipality had

6734 inhabitants. Gradually, the population decreased until 2002, when the lowest number of inhabitants was recorded (2786). At present, the total population<sup>2</sup> is 2803 inhabitants, in the context of the expansion of Cluj-Napoca City.

Until 1960, Chinteni municipality represented an attraction center which gave its population a high level of stability and obvious development, in the context of the trend of rural depopulation and the grouping of people in urban centres with forced industrial development. This stability was provided by the presence of certain favourable conditions, like:

- the favourable geographic position, given by the proximity of Cluj-Napoca City (12 sqkm);
- modern roads at that time (1960), D.J. 109;
- possibilities to employ the available population in economic activities in the city, due to the favourable conditions for commuting (the small distance of only 12 km to the town).

According to the existing data at the level of municipality (nine composing villages), in 1992 the population number was 3070 inhabitants. One may notice that the number decreased to 2786 inhabitants in 2002 (figure 3). This decrease is due to the migration of the population to areas that offer them highest life standards and possibilities to develop personally and professionally (Pop, 2007). The rural-urban migration phenomenon emerged, leading to the destruction of outgoing structures (depopulation of settlements, population aging and the disappearance of the autochthonous work-force) (Vincze, 2000). The weight of the population aged 60 and over at the level of the municipality is 24.4 %, and the demographic aging ratio is 1.30 due to the high weight of the elderly and the emigration ratio of 1.6 ‰, the dependency ratio in the municipality is 169.6‰. The high value of the dependency ratio influences the work productivity and the standards of life of the population.



**Figure 3.** The numerical evolution of the Chinteni municipality between 1990 - 2010  
(Source: www.insse.ro)

Due to the increased number of building authorizations<sup>3</sup> during the latest years, the population number estimated today is 2803 inhabitants. If in 2002, seven building authorizations were issued for residential buildings, in 2009 this number reached 58. Thus the usable area increased from 537 sqm in 2002 to 16,161 sqm in 2009. Compared to 2003, one may notice a decrease of agricultural lands by about 320 ha, due to the expansion of real estate market and the built-up areas.

Thus, the phenomenon of urban-rural migration emerged, the opposite to the one that took place after 1990. This phenomenon is registered in the context of Cluj-Napoca expansion, the increase of real estate prices in Cluj-Napoca, the increase of taxes for water, energy and gas, as well as in other fields, and the lack of green and recreational spaces in Cluj-Napoca.

<sup>2</sup> www.insse.ro

<sup>3</sup> Cluj Regional Department of Statistics

There were 108 people who moved their residence from Cluj-Napoca or nearby areas to Chinteni in 2009 comparing to 22 in 2002. This increasing migration to the rural space generates major changes in the physiognomy of the village. These people brought a new set of rules and principles. Modern and luxurious constructions stand up against the traditional rural buildings.

The expansion trend of the residential built-up space along with the continuous flow of people moving in the municipality, the heterogeneous population, the high number of commuters to Cluj-Napoca and the decreasing elements of the traditional rural space will lead to a phenomenon of suburbanization in the near future (Cocean, 2005).

### **Economic characteristics**

The employment structure is characterized by a high weight of the primary sector of economy (82.4 %), followed by industry (12.3 %), while the others are employed in trade (1 %), administration (0.3 %), education and culture (3 %), health (1 %).

The inconvenience for the high percentage of the primary sector of economy, both in Chinteni municipality, as well as in all other Romanian villages, is the practice of low-level subsistence agriculture, the low number and quality of agricultural equipments and machinery (even if they exist in the municipality, they are out of use and of low quality, and 2.73 % are compensated by animal traction) and the legal status of the lands. The law no 18/1991 concerning the lands determined the excessive split of agricultural lands, leading to the development of subsistence agriculture, instead of a modern, performing agriculture. Therefore, the average size of a land lot in the municipality ranges between 2 and 3.5 ha.

Animal husbandry is an ancient activity in Chinteni municipality, as it is located on the hills and the area covered by grasslands and hay fields is large (3779.8 ha out of the total of 7609.16 ha of agricultural lands). This sector of agriculture is also oriented towards subsistence, fact demonstrated by the high number of households that raise sheep and swine (87.3 %), compared to the low number of those who breed cattle, sheep and swine (12.7 %). The animals in Chinteni municipality represent only a means to supplement the products obtained by crops, necessary for the everyday life.

An economic characteristic of space is the dependency of the type of capitalization of the natural (forest, agricultural and mineral) potential. The activities developed throughout the time reflect the closed relationship with the environment. Therefore his dominant activities are animal husbandry, craftsmanship and the production of construction materials (Surd, 2002).

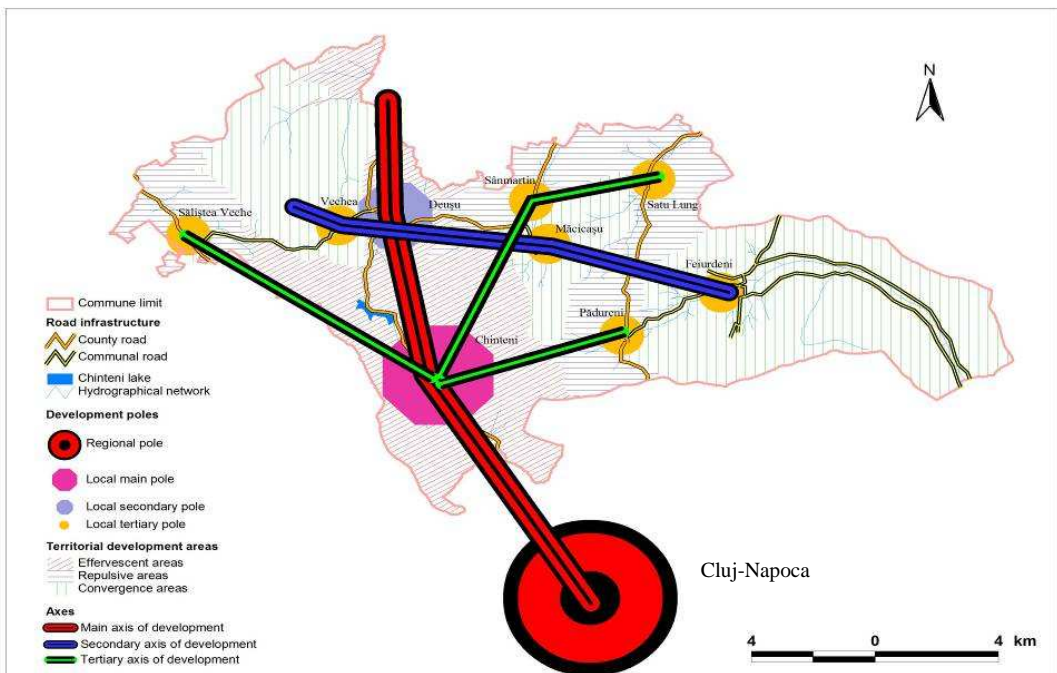
Even if agriculture continues to be an important activity in the rural space, the secondary sector gains ground (12.3 %). Due to the soil and mineral resources (construction rocks, tuffs, sands, marls and clays used for cement, ceramics and kaolinic sands) of the analyzed system, an industry based on the production of construction materials has developed. This activity is performed locally by 4 companies specialized in construction materials.

The percentage of those who work in the tertiary sector is low (5.3 %). Most of the people commute to Cluj-Napoca. This phenomenon is also encouraged by the short distance between the two systems (rural-urban, 12 km), by the reduced time of the ride (15-20 minutes), by the low cost for transport (individual cars, because there is no public transport service to facilitate the connection with the neighboring areas).

The relations of the village with the neighboring areas (with Cluj-Napoca City especially) are also favoured by the villagers' dependence on the products of the market and the provided sanitary and educational services. The presence of supermarkets (Real is the closest), of shopping malls, of banking, health and educational institutions make Chinteni inhabitants dependent on Cluj-Napoca and not on the village resources. Apart from the labour force oriented to Cluj-Napoca City, Chinteni municipality also provides the city with vegetables and other products on the city's markets. The dependency ratio between the two systems is largely in favour of Cluj-Napoca City.

**The chorematic method** allows capturing the reality and highlighting the major territorial relations within the analyzed area. The elements that support the constructions of the Chinteni municipality choreme (figure 4) are:

- multiple levels of growth poles (administrative pole, main pole Chinteni, secondary pole Deușu, three rank poles);
- axes of I, II, III order;
- areas of communication with external;
- effervescent areas (areas with high potential for development);
- repulsive areas (areas with slow socio-economic development with population decline and high-containment areas);
- convergence areas;
- external centers of polarization (Cluj-Napoca).



**Figure 4.** The choreme of Chinteni municipality

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was based on different indicators chosen to give a better overview on the changes occurred in the area of Chinteni municipality. These features outlined the beginning of a suburbanization process and the adoption of urban construction and architectural elements as well as an urban way of life.

However, one should not be mistaken about this shift of the rural towards urban structures, because there are still many traditional elements in the analyzed territory: the rural lifestyle, the low degree of modernization of the technical, the capacity and degree of services. Chinteni has a low level of development, and elements of a higher degree of endowment are noticeable only in those parts of the municipality where the “new” (allochthonous) population lives.

Proposals made within the territorial development projects and the measures to be implemented will lead to a total suburbanization of the territory of Chinteni municipality.

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Submitted:  
February 02, 2011

Revised:  
February 25, 2011

Accepted:  
April 26, 2011

Published online:  
May 5, 2011