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The Rural Households. Case Study. Cheia Village, Mihai Viteazu Commune, Cluj County

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ABSTRACT

After 1989, fundamental changes in agricultural structures occurred as a consequence of the Land Law no. 18/1991 application along with other subsequent regulations. Excessive concentration of property before 1989 took a new twist, pertaining to excessive fragmentation, therefore the shift from large areas of land to small farms nowadays. But the farmer received only land without machinery or equipment necessary to its efficient operation. In this paper we want to highlight the specific state of rural economic life in Romania after extinctions of political communist economy system and after almost the entire destruction of infrastructure and utilities left from the former political system (decommissioning and destruction of irrigation system, the abandoning of tractors and agricultural equipment buildings, of chemical fertilizer production and so on). In this matter, we aim to show you the present economical state of a village from Cluj County at household level.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the administrative point of view, Cheia village belongs to Mihai Viteazu commune and it is situated about 3 km away from the administrative centre. The precincts of the village are located on the left shore of Aries river, in an area that is instable lithologically. The undermining of the left shore of the river has caused landslides and shore collapses which led to badlands scenery in the studied area. In order to reach the centre of the village, a concrete bridge has to be passed for the village is situated 1 km away from the national road E75 (Turda – Stei – Beius – Oradea). A distance of 6 km has to be covered from Turda to the village and only 1 km from Turzii Gorges, that constitute a relevant national touristic sight. The village is crossed by the touristic road that connects Turzii Gorges to the national road E 75. Near the village there is a gypsum exploration site. The utilities that used to belong to the former Agricultural Production Co-operative (C.A.P.) have been taken over by a Dutch investor and further transformed in spaces for storage and leisure (pony farm).

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

"The rural household represents the first organized form of systematic management of the rural lands" (Surd V, 2003), a territorial complex that fulfils the social functions of shelter and production, applied to the houses (within the village area).

Usually there is a balance in the relation between the household's status and its economic development; hence, the household represents the economical synthesis of richness that characterizes the adjacent geographic area in its structural and functional complexity.

The basic purpose of the household is to shelter persons, animals and the agricultural output needed on a daily basis. Its secondary goal is to cultivate the land owned, with vegetable gardens, orchards or forages. This feature characterizes the rural household in Romania, but bitrates a heterogeneous, subsistence agriculture.

Concerning the methodology, the analysis and observation were made on the field, but also statistically and cartographically.

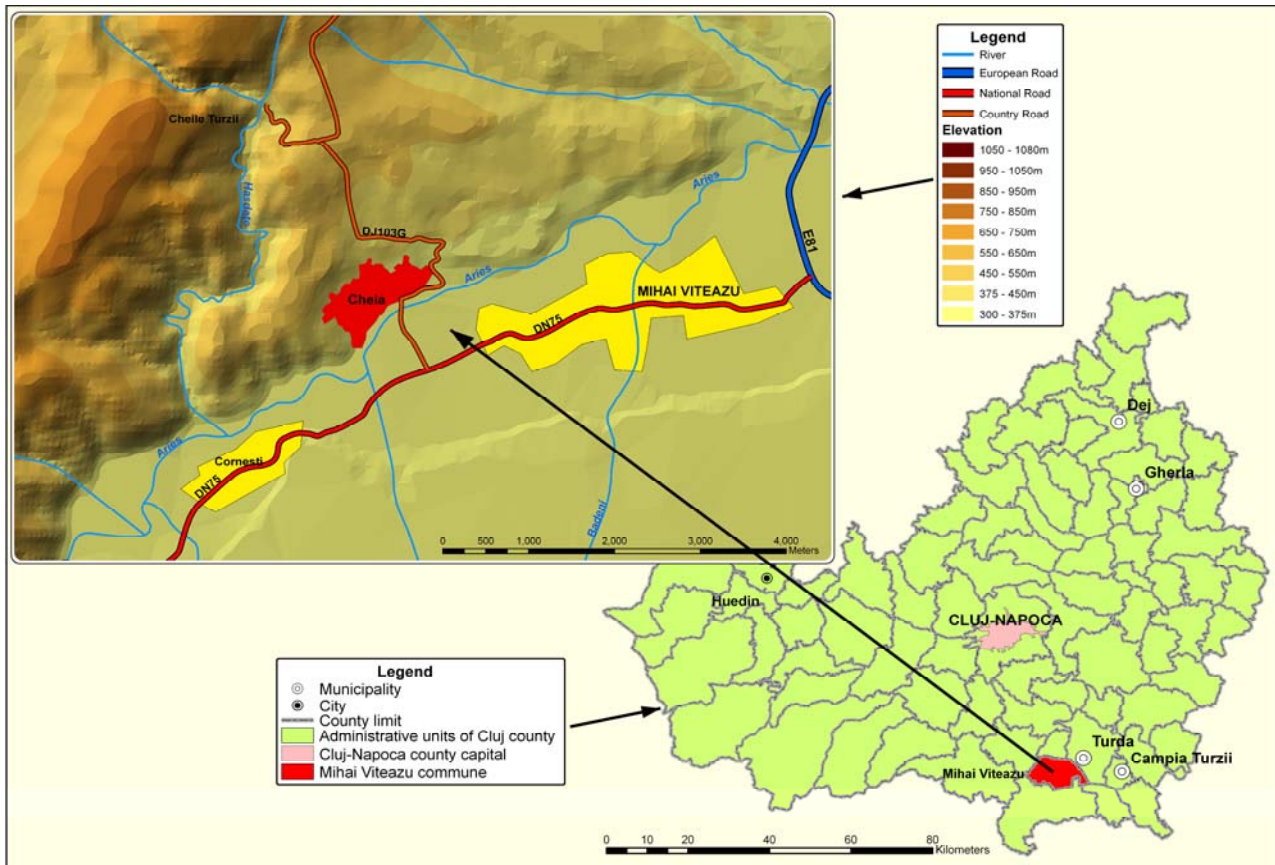


Fig. 1 . Location of Cheia village.

In order to emphasize the main aspects specific to a household, there have been taken in consideration the following indicators:

- the year when the house was built;
- number of rooms;
- number of persons per household;
- whether the head of the family is a male or a female;
- percentage of individuals under and over 60;
- area of the agricultural land per household;
- percent of households that have at their disposal plough pulled either by horses or by a tractor and other mechanical equipments meant for agriculture activities;
- running water and sewage system.

3. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Within Cheia village there have been identified 265 husbandries with 270 houses.

Out of the total number of households, 44 have been abandoned and some of them do not include a house.

3.1. Building year of houses

The year when the house was built offers clues about its modernization extent, assuming that in the

past the houses were built mostly using local materials such as wood, stone, clay etc. In most of the cases, the manufactured construction materials were not used at the time. For the present study there have been taken into account three periods of time as follows:

- houses that have been built before 1940, when Romania had joined the Allies in the World War II;
- houses that have been built between 1940 and 1990, period of time that corresponds to the generalization of the statist economy to a national extent;
- houses built after 1990, year that corresponds to the statist economy collapse and transition to the market economy.

The period between 1940 and 1990 is questionable as it spreads on half of a century. It is relevant though the proximity of the village to the city of Turda that has determined, after 1960 a notable migration flow as people used to ply as a result of the continuous expansion of the urban industry. The industrial development had generated great financial incomes, supplementary to the gains obtained from agriculture (during the collectivization – 1962-1989, each household was given the right to own 0.5 hectares). Because the village did not benefit of the status of administrative centre, children had to ply to the city and back, in order to go to school (Primary and Elementary schools were located in Mihai Viteazu village, while high school and professional school in Turda).

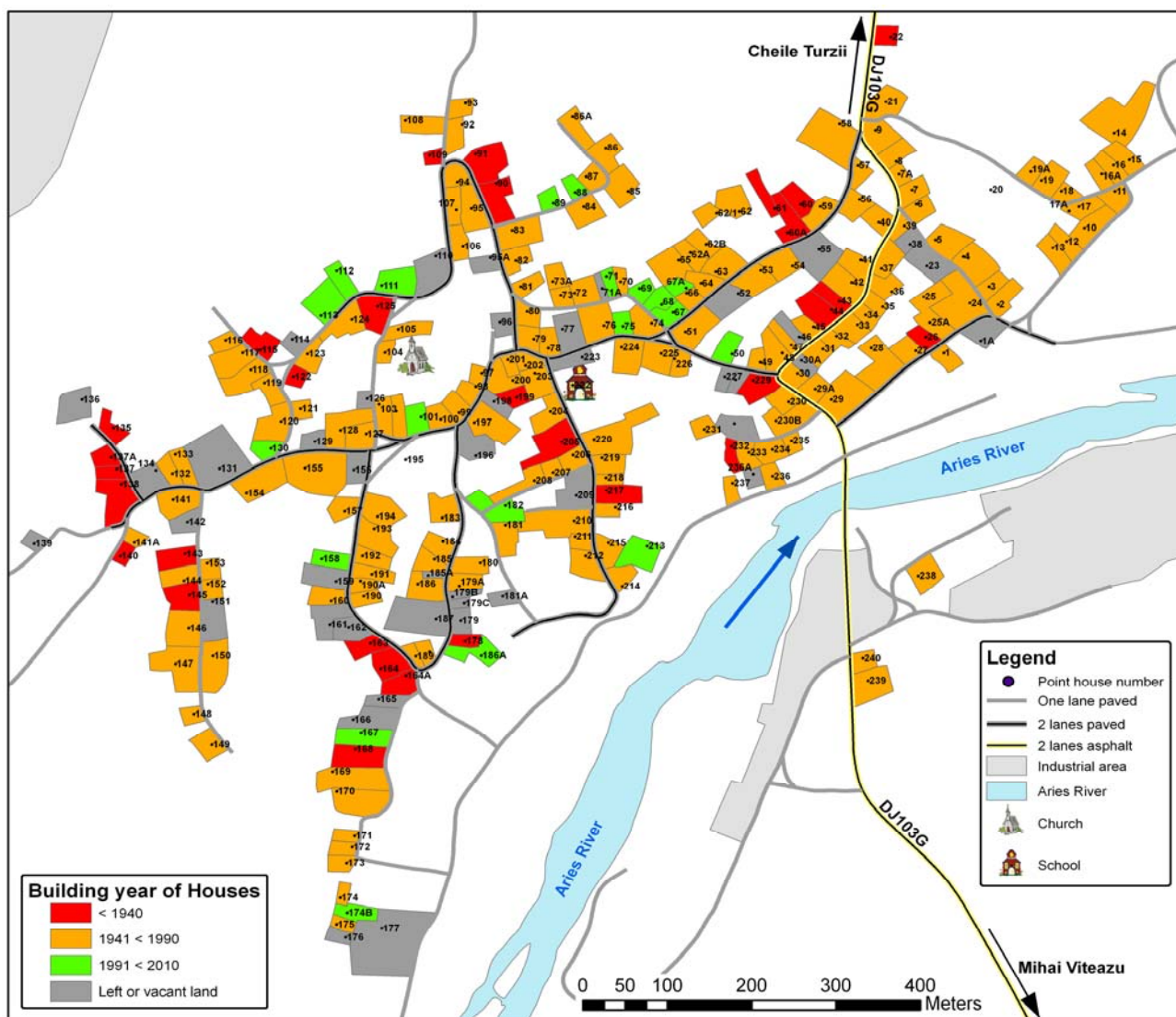


Fig. 2. The building year of houses on household.

Table 1. Year of the house construction.

Construction year	Number of houses	[%]
< 1940	30	11.11
1941 < 1990	175	64.82
1991 < 2010	20	7.40
Abandoned or vacant land	45	16.66
Total	270	100

The statistic analysis of the three periods of time leads to the obvious conclusion that most of the houses (175 – 64.82%) have been constructed between 1941 and 1990.

It is relevant the fact that during the war period (1940-1945) there has not been built any house and between 1945 and 1950 the houses damaged during the war have been restored.

There was not found any significant connection between the year when the house was built and the number of rooms in the house; according to

Pearson's correlation coefficient there was obtained the value of 0.388606.

3.2. The number of rooms per household

The number of rooms is an indicator of the house comfort, considering the number of persons per room, as well. Thus, most of the households have 2 rooms at disposal (126 – 47.54%) and they are followed by the ones that hold 3 rooms (53 – 20.00%).

Relating the number of rooms to the number of inhabitants it results a 0.81 room per inhabitant deficit (unfortunately we do not hold any statistic information concerning the habitable surface, expressed in square meters). Anyhow, the value of 0.81 rooms per inhabitant indicates a relatively common situation as there are only 15 households whose inhabitants use one single room.

Pearson's correlation indicator of the number of individuals and number of rooms shows a value of 0.32663, which only points out a poor correlation between the two elements.

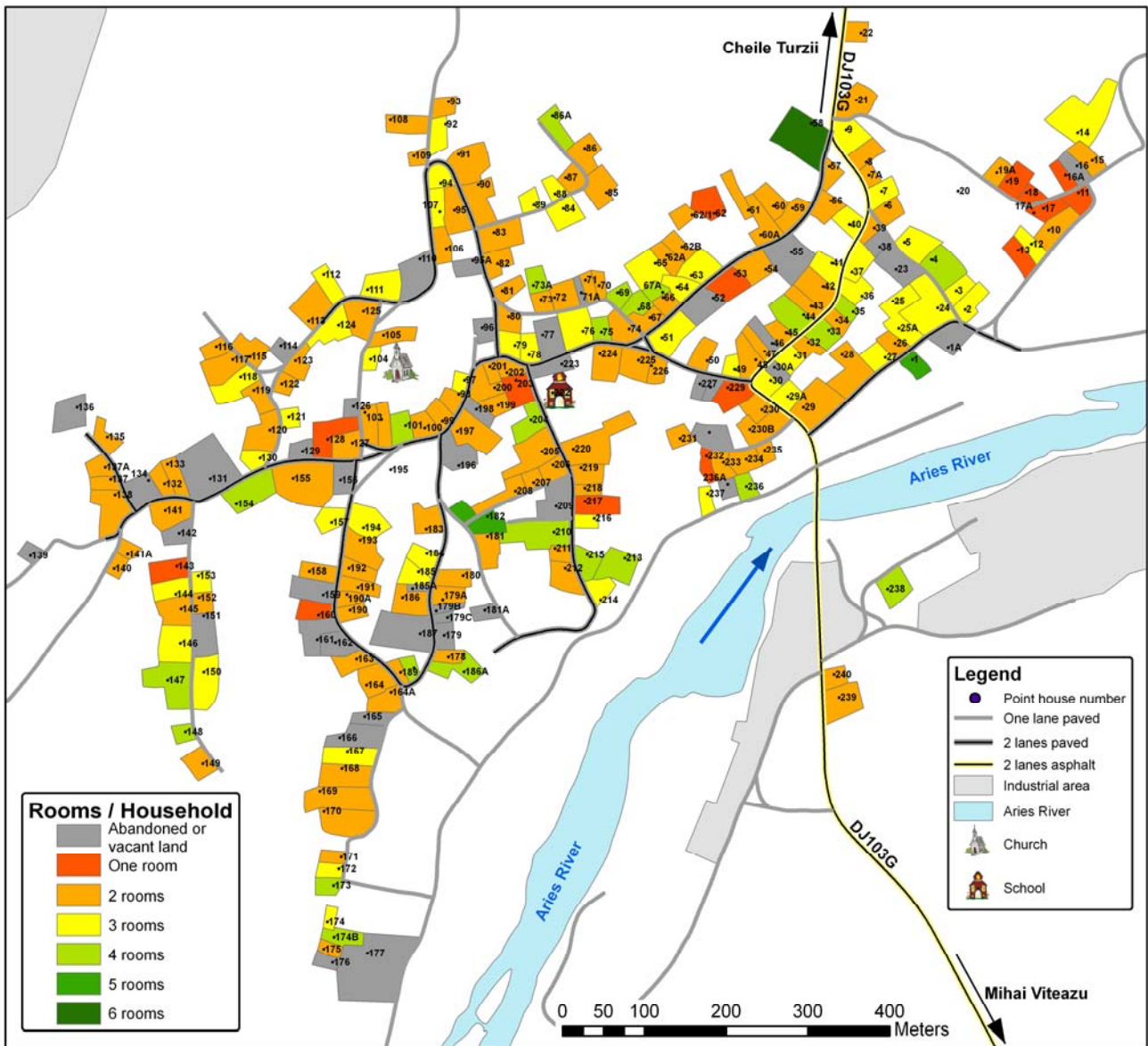


Fig. 3. Number of rooms within a household

Table 2. Number of rooms per household.

Rooms	Households	[%]
0	44	0
1	15	6.78
2	126	57.04
3	53	23.98
4	24	10.85
5	2	0.90
6	1	0.45
Total	265	100

3.3. The number of inhabitants per household

Referring to the number of individuals per household, it highlights the prevalence of the households that only include one person (57 – 21.50%), out of which 34 women (60%) and 23 men (40%).

The rate of the households formed by 2 and 3 persons is equal (18.49%) and also is the percentage of households formed by 4 and over 4 persons (12.46%).

There are 10 households that gather a greater number of members (4.52%), 7 households that include 7 persons, 2 that include 8 persons and one household that shelters 12 persons.

Table 3. The number of inhabitants per household.

Inhabitants	Households	[%]
None	44	0
1 inhabit.	57	25.80
2 inhabit.	49	22.17
3 inhabit.	49	22.17
4 inhabit.	33	14.93
> 4 inhabit.	33	14.93
Total	265	100

3.4. The gender of householder per household

In what concerns the gender of the head of the family, the highest percent represents men (156 cases – 70.58%).

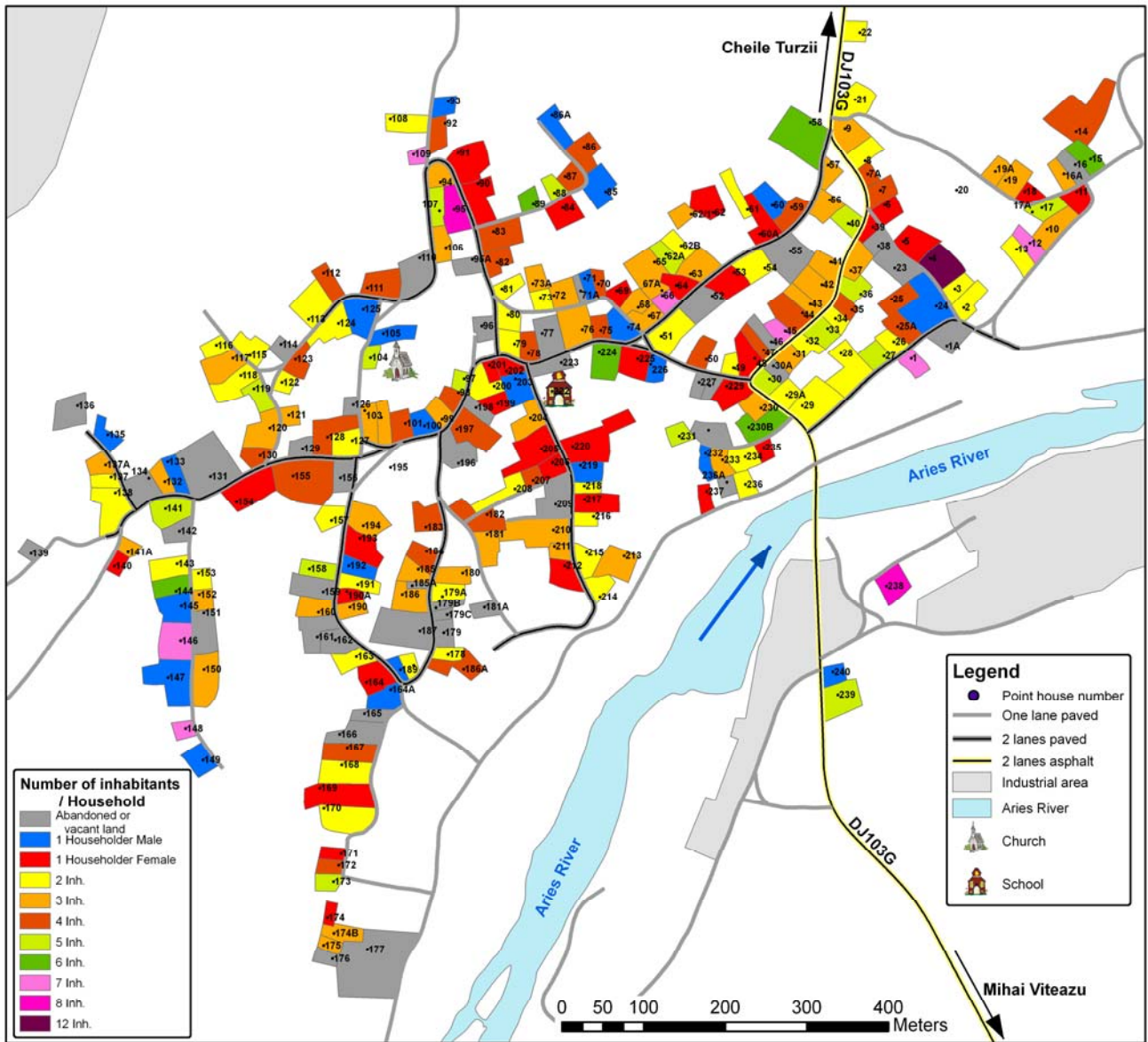


Fig. 4. Number of inhabitants per household.

This aspect indicates a common situation, taken in consideration that within the Romanian traditional family the man has always had the main part in managing the economic life.

Table 4. Gender of the householder.

Householder	Households	[%]
Male	156	70.58
Female	65	29.42
Abandoned or vacant land	44	0
Total	265	100

3.5. The share of people under or over the age of 60 years

Among the 664 inhabitants of the village, there are 349 women (52.64%), situation that closely represents the average at national extent (51 women

and 49 men). About the age limit over 60, women take the lead once more (90 women out of a total of 145 persons, which represents 62.06%). This aspect is linked to women's longevity, at national as well as at European scale. Generally, the households whose head of the family is a woman older than 60, are the ones that include one single person, the widow.

Table 5. Ratio of population < 60 years old and > 60.

People	no.	[%]	< 60 years	[%]	> 60 years	[%]
Male	315	47,43	260	39,15	55	8.30
Female	349	52,57	259	39,00	90	13.55
Total	664	100	518	78,15	145	21.85

3.6. The surface of agricultural land per household

The agricultural land represents the economic source for the rural household.

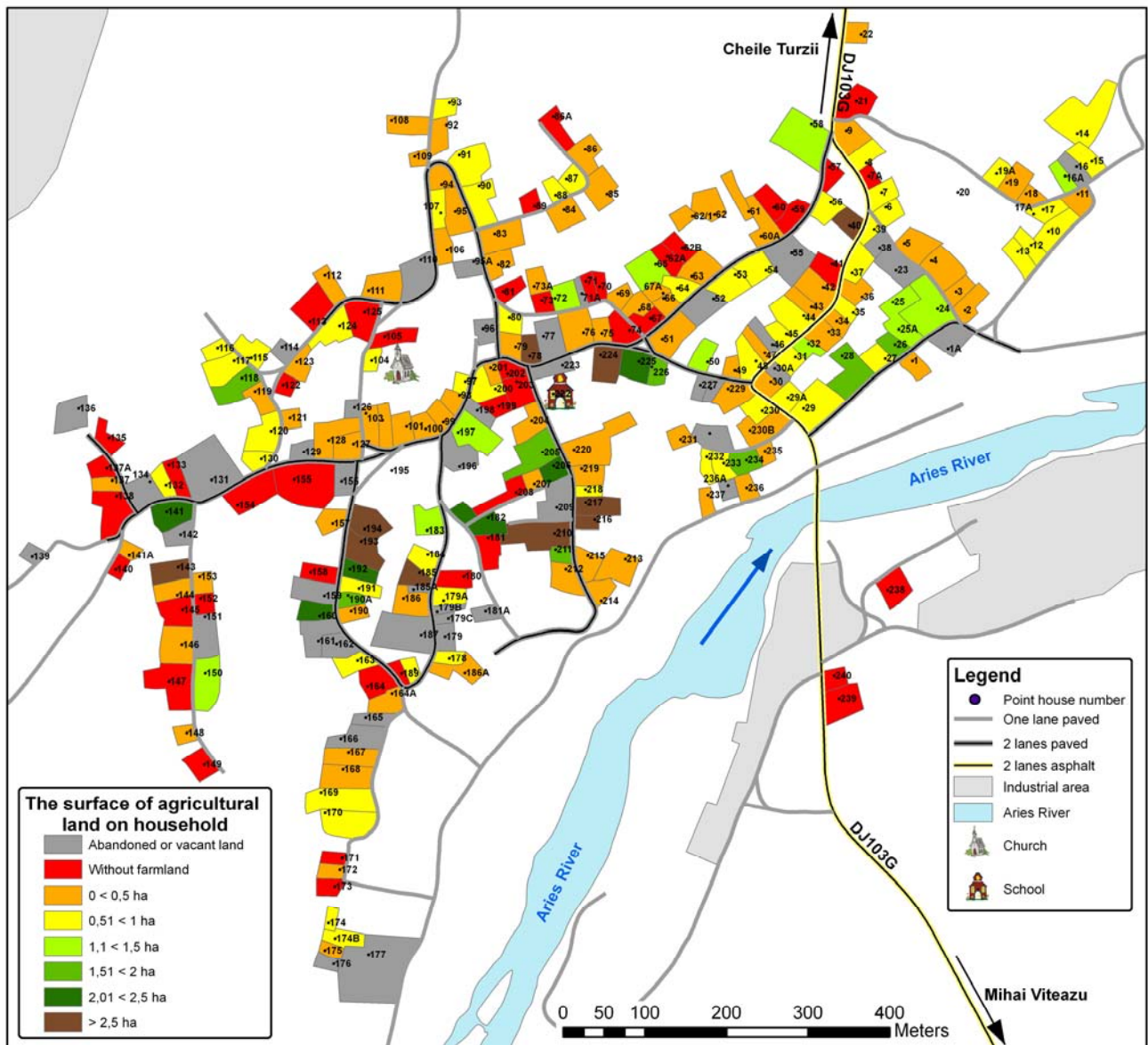


Fig. 5. The area of agricultural land per household.

Due to the historical circumstances, the rural agricultural property in Romania is deeply fragmented. It is important to mention the preponderance of households that own less than 1 Ha of agricultural land (141 – 63.80%).

Also, the percent of households that do not own any agricultural land is remarkable (45 – 20.36%).

Table 6. The area of agricultural land.

Surface	Households	[%]
Abandoned	44	0
Without farmland	45	20.36
< 0,5 ha	86	38.91
0,51 < 1 ha	55	24.89
1,1 < 1,5 ha	11	4.99
1,51 < 2 ha	8	3.61
2,01 < 2,5 ha	6	2.71
> 2,5 ha	10	4.53
Total	265	100

Only 16 households (7.23%) own enough agricultural land so to benefit of an acceptable economic situation, compared to the situation at national scale.

The viability of the remaining households is sustained thanks to the existence of the pensions paid by the State and by the former Co-operative Farms. The same Pearson correlation indicator highlights a value of only 0.0235362, representing the correspondence between the area of the agricultural terrain and number of persons.

3.7. The level of endowment with horse-drawn plough and tractor

Analyzing the existence within a household, of horses, tractor and other mechanical means meant for agricultural purposes, it's remarkable the fact that only 4 households (1,8%) have at disposal a tractor (numbers 181A, 118, 179A and 64), while 12 households (5.24%)

have horses and plough for ploughing the land. The 4 tractors mentioned above, belong to an Italian contractor. It is once more emphasized the situation of an autarchic agrarian economy, which has few products to offer to the market. The owners of the 4 rented tractors till their own land and for a certain amount they also till the agricultural lands of several men living in the same village that afford to pay this kind of service. Table 7 represents the great number of households that include specific dependencies (196-

88.68%) and the ones that raise fowls and swine (40.73%). Only one family raises bees and it holds 50 beehives (no. 83).

3.8. Current water and sewer

Only 133 households (60,18%) enjoy current drinking water and sewage system, which gives to their inhabitants extra comfort in the daily life.

Table 7. Categories of households that use tractors, horse traction, which have annexes, domestic animals and benefit of running water.

Household	Households with tractor	Households with hipo traction	Households with annexes	Households with swine and birds	Households with birds, swine, sheep and cattle	Households with current water and sewer
Count	4	12	196	65	5	133
[%]	1.80	5.42	88.68	29.41	2.26	60.18
Total inhabited households	-	-	-	221	-	-

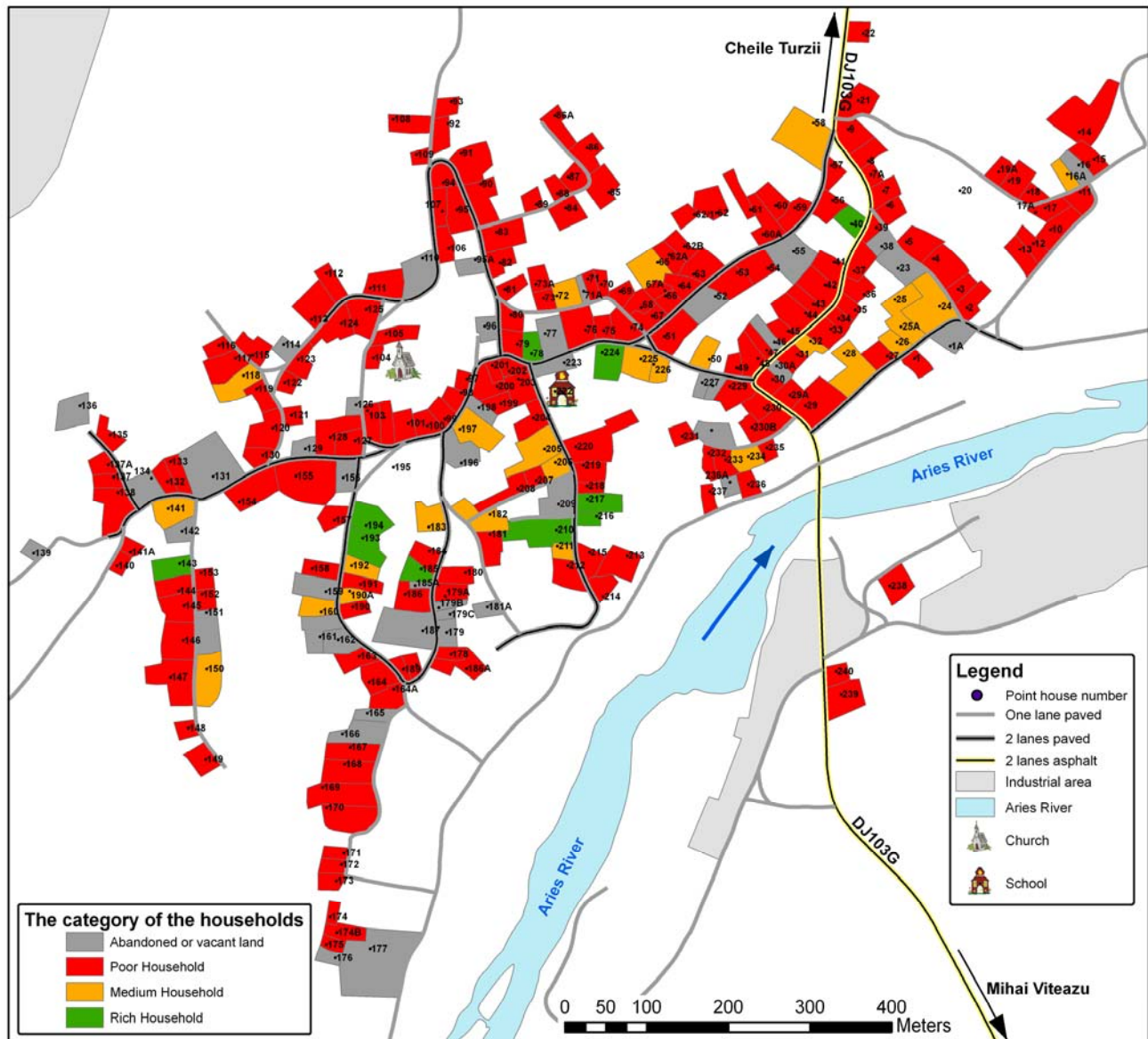


Fig. 6. Category of households.

4. CONCLUSION

Putting together the indicators gathered along this research, emphasizing the economic development of the 265 households situated in Cheia village, there have been identified 4 main categories of households: abandoned, poor, average, wealthy.

As shown in the cartographic representation (fig. 6), 44 households (16.6%) are abandoned; some of them barely reveal ruins of the former households. These ones belong to direct heirs, established in the city or in other rural settlements, and due to their financial situation cannot afford to integrate them on the market. These 44 abandoned households have not been taken into consideration in the present analysis for obvious reasons (there are no individuals taking care of any of these households).

Table 8. Category of households.

Categories	Households	[%]	
Abandoned or vacant land	44	16.60	
Poor	186	84.16	70.20
Medium	25	11.31	9.43
Rich	10	4.53	3.77
Total	221	265	100
			83.4

The category of poor households that either do not own agricultural land at all, either own less than 1 ha, represents 84.16% out of the 221 inhabited households. Within this category there has been observed an unusual situation, some of the households have a modern infrastructure and also benefit of running water and sewage system. They are inhabited by persons that have already retired and their only income is the pension they receive from the State (129 households out of 221 – 58.37%).

The 25 average households own 1-2.5 ha of agricultural land and represent 11.31%. Most of these households gather the income obtained from their specific activities and the pensions from the former Co-operative Farms. They usually include more than 3 persons per household. The households of the following category, the relatively wealthy one, own over 2.5 ha of agricultural land. They do not own a tractor, nor horses or a plough to till the land; hence, a great part of the land is not cultivated because of the unprofitable economic income. The difference is that the owners of these households receive better pensions from the State compared to the other pensioners living in the same village, and do not desire to grant their land on lease to other individuals to cultivate it. They are actually waiting for the time when the price of the land will raise and they will sell the land. As it has been referred previously, the relative wealth of this kind of household is not due to the owned agricultural lands, but to the owners' pensions and non-primary activities.

This brief study reveals the status of the economic situation in the rural area of Romania, after the abolition of the statist economical and political systems. After the infrastructure and equipments of the former political economical system, have been destroyed almost completely (abandoning the irrigation systems and the entire agricultural infrastructure), Romania sees itself in a situation of importing about 70% of the food that its citizens consume, 55% of it goes in the urban area. Nowadays the agricultural economy of Romania is defined by two different methods:

- modern agriculture, orientated exclusively towards the market, developed on certain areas and according to managing information held by the new land owners in their fading attempt to stand out;
- the great rural agriculture originated by the former co-operative agriculture, finds itself in a state of advance fragmentation of the agricultural land, using mechanical means of low efficiency, larger and larger areas of agricultural land are being abandoned and so the present agriculture turns more and more similar to the traditional, interwar agriculture.

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