



Săliște – a Traditional Village that Dies in the Shadow of a Big City, Cluj-Napoca

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This village is located at 15 km distance of Cluj-Napoca city, a rank II city in the national hierarchy of Romania. Despite the short distance to the big city, the village persists in a constantly demographic regression, in 2002 registering a number of 118 inhabitants as compared to a population of 383 inhabitants in 1966, mainly due to the poor quality of the road connection with the city. The village is endowed with electrical network, possessing a remarkable setting potential in accordance with natural factors like water (excellent quality) and woods. The village may be, and must be, revitalized mainly through modernizing the road connection with Cluj-Napoca city, by the people returning from urban to rural and constructing new secondary and even permanent residences within the village.

Săliște is a village that belongs to Ciurila commune, Cluj County. It is located on the South-Western slopes of Feleacu Hill at a height of about 650 meters. Ciurila commune also includes the following villages: Ciurila, Filea de Jos, Filea de Sus, Pădureni, Pruniș, Sălicea and Șuțu. It lies at 7 km from Ciurila (the commune centre) – although there are only 3 km in straight line – and at about 25 km from Cluj-Napoca - although there are only 15 km in straight line.

The village is located at the contact between Feleacu Hill and the Hășdate Depression, at the springs of Săliște Creek, left handed tributary of Hășdate River.

Since 1850, the year of the first census in Transylvania, the population grew constantly until the Second World War with certain backdrops in 1870s and during the First World War (fig. 1). After the Second World War the number of inhabitants decreased with higher rates in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, when a part of the population moved to neighbouring cities. This happened due to the economic strategy of industrialization of urban centres planned by the communist leadership.

The gender structure in 1992 and 2002 surprisingly indicates a small predominance of males. Due to the small number of inhabitants the age structure is not so relevant. There are age groups that are not represented at all, such as female categories of 20-24 years and of 30-34 years and males 25-29 years. There are unbalances in the age pyramid (fig. 2) because there are more males or females in certain age groups. On the other hand, most of the inhabitants are in their 60s or older, which indicates an aging trend.

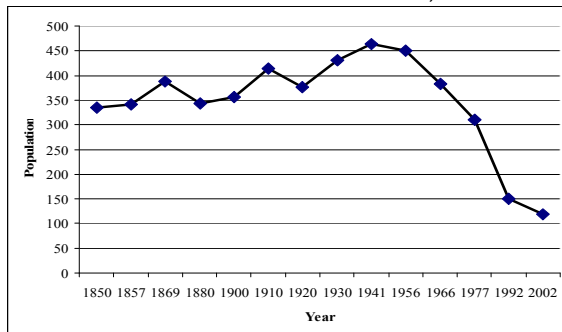


Figure 1. The dynamics of the population between 1850 and 2002.

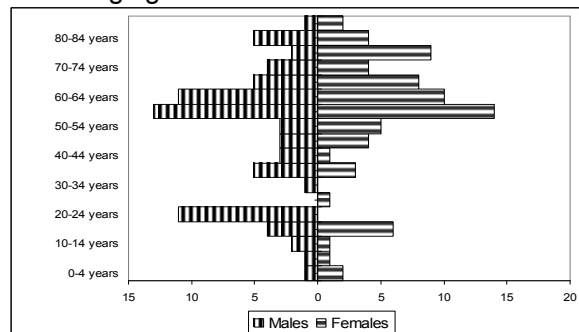


Figure 2. The age pyramid of the population of Săliște village in 1992.

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The occupational structure (fig. 3) indicates that most of the inhabitants (84%) are active in the primary sector, mainly in agriculture and only a few are employed in the industry of the neighboring cities or in trading activities. Several persons have jobs in the local public administration and only one person works in the health system. Unfortunately, the villagers provide farming and agricultural products mostly for their own use and not for the market. Thus, there is an autarchic economy that explains the low living standards of the population.

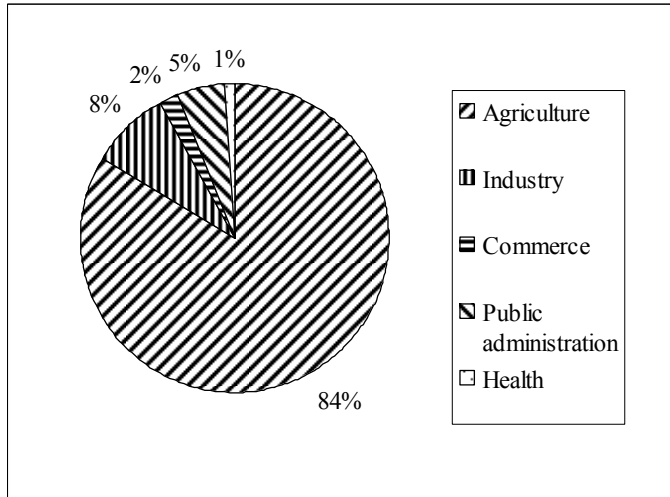


Figure 3. The occupational structure of Săliște village in 1992.

There are 28 people who are actually employed, 21 men and seven women. Only four people are unemployed and looking for a job. A number of 53 persons, representing about half of the population, are retired, but most of them actually working in agriculture, like other categories such as the housewives (ten).

Analyzing the educational structure of the population, one can easily remark the low level of education among the villagers. No one has a university degree and only four people managed to graduate from high school. Most of the population has only graduated the primary or the compulsory eight-form school. However, there are at least four people with no education whatsoever. The generally low level of education maintains due to the fact that people with higher education preferred to move to the neighboring cities.

The national structure of the population, as given by all censuses, indicates a vast majority of Romanians. The religion of the inhabitants was Greek-Catholic at all censuses until the Second World War. In 1948 all Greek-Catholics were declared Romanian Orthodox. After 1990 most of the inhabitants kept their Romanian orthodox religion, but a few returned to Greek-Catholic, or changed to neo-protestant confessions.

Typologically, the settlement belongs to the nucleated type (fig. 4) at a spring of a small valley. The households are old, located along a few lanes. They are not connected to the water, gas or sewage networks. There are 96 private permanent and holiday households. 61 of these are permanently inhabited, 31 are used only temporarily, mostly as holiday or secondary homes, while four are not inhabited and face degradation.



Figure 4. The structure of Săliște village (Source: Cluj-County Atlas, p. 130).

One may notice that there are three household generations. The oldest generation belongs to the interwar period when many houses were built, but only 18 of them are still standing. The second generation of households dates from the postwar period, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the present day houses (64) were built during this period. The newest generation of households belongs to the present day period, after 1990, when democracy was reinstated in Romania. Up until now there were only 14 houses built since 1990.

As the households are not connected to the water, sewage or gas networks, the inhabitants have sometimes created local systems to improve their standard of living. Thus, 20 families have water within their house and 18 created their own sewage system. There are

heating systems based on liquefied gas in one household, while other 95 households are heated with solid fuel (wood). However, 23 households use liquefied gas for cooking.

Not all households are connected to electricity; there are still 15 houses without electrical power.

There are kitchens in 62 households, 51 of them are inside the house and the other 11 are built separately. Only eight houses have a bathroom inside the house, and only six of these include a WC.

The villagers have few public institutions and places. Except for daily needs, the population must go to commune seat and even farther to Cluj-Napoca or Turda. There are a nursery school and a primary school with very few attending children, but pupils aged 11 or more must go to the general school in the commune seat or to high school in Cluj-Napoca. The church was formerly Greek-Catholic, but Romanian Orthodox services are now provided by a priest who comes to the village from time to time. The inhabitants may buy basic food at the small local store where spirits and other drinks are also provided.

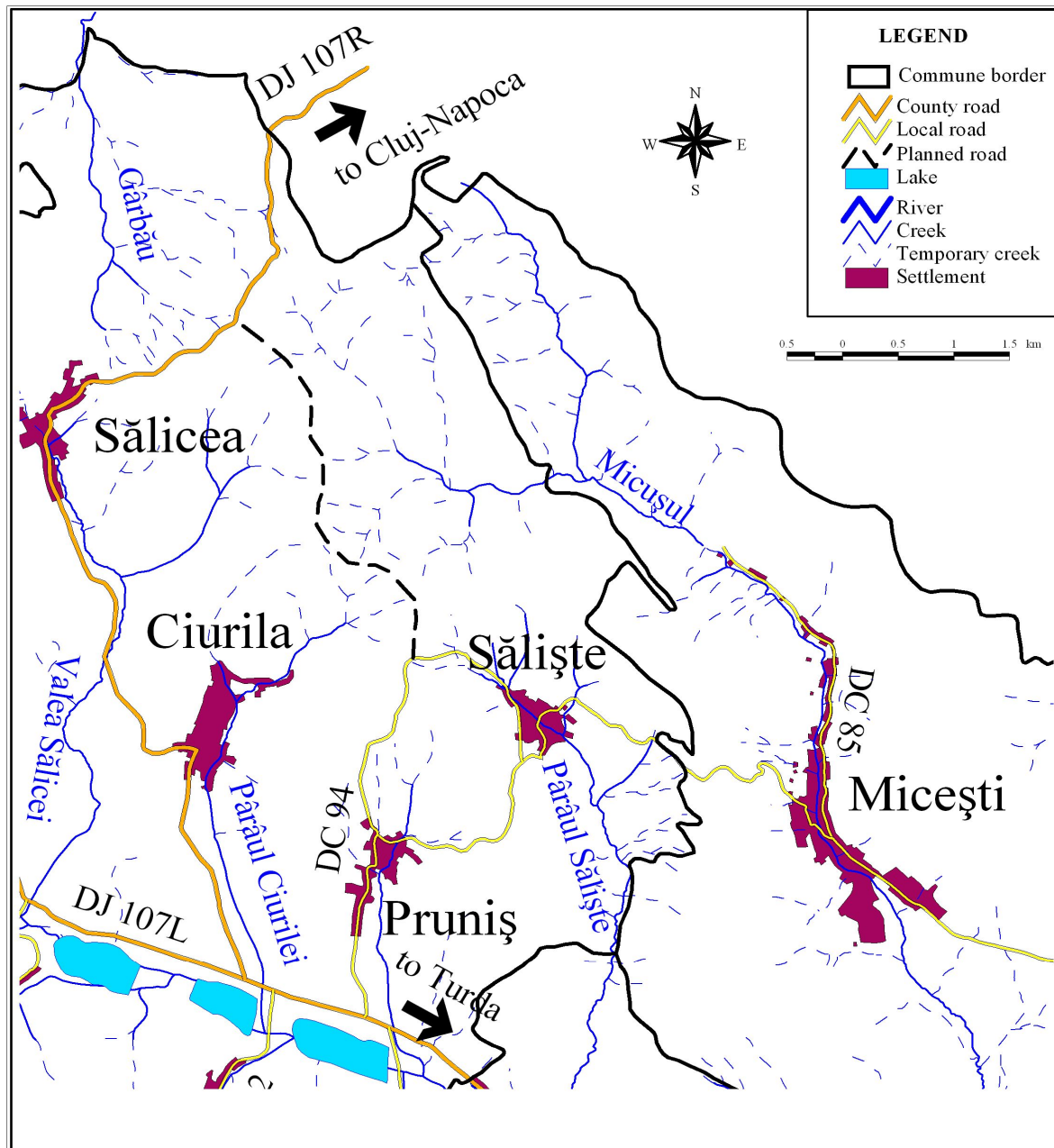


Figure 5. The location of Săliște village and the communication lines of the area.

The communications lines are in a very poor state. The nearest railway station is located at more than 25 km (in Cluj-Napoca) and the nearest national road is also far away. The village is not even crossed by a county road, but only by a local road – DC 94 which connects it with Pruniș village and the nearest county road, DJ 107L. The local road also links Săliște with Micești village in the other direction, but this sector is almost impossible to be used. The local roads are anyway not modernized and difficult to use especially when wet. There is also a path through the woods towards Cluj-Napoca which is accessible by car in summer, when dry. This path is an important shortcut for the villagers and it provides good access to the county road DJ 107R, but it should be at least paved with gravel in order to become usable at all times and for all types of vehicles.

This is highly important as the village already represents a shelter for city dwellers who found at Săliște a beautiful and peaceful place to build secondary and holiday homes. Accessibility should thus be the main priority for the sustainable development of Săliște and the avoidance of its disappearance.

The village is endowed with electrical network, possessing a remarkable setting potential concordantly with natural factors like water (excellent quality) and woods. The village may be, and must be, invigorated mainly through modernizing the road connection with Cluj-Napoca city, through the people returning from urban to rural and constructing new secondary and even permanent residences within the village.

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