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## Sustainable development of marginalized urban areas by applying knowledge-based public policies

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### Abstract

This paper addresses the sensitive subject of residents in marginalized urban areas and proposes solutions in order to improve life quality parameters by accessing multidisciplinary networks of knowledge and information. In the context of contemporary technologies, conclusions resulting from applied practices in strictly contextualized situation become important sources for the implementation of efficient public policies. Access to knowledge proves to be a primary necessity, in conditions when efficiency is imperative and sustainable development bases on a minimum resources input in exchange for a maximum values output. In the context of a mining zone that is in full economic decline, where the local identity is not built yet and the contemporary processes offer a priority to urban centres at the expense of the marginal areas as a development and economic growth engine, the necessity for public policies concentrated on the needs of the first is essential. Studying the ways in which resilient cycles based on production and consumption can offer to communities a raised degree of independence to the external context in trying to define a unitary development pattern, the authors propose the implementation of a public policies program, through which the inhabitants of every Vicinity Unit can access the most relevant information and can participate in multidisciplinary education and formation projects.

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary agreements oriented to sustainable development concentrate the efforts in central urban areas, in activity cores with a precise economic character, proposing social assistance and inclusion for the marginal areas in the effort to support the first (according to Lisbon Strategy). The result is an urban system with a hierarchical configuration, in which marginal areas are subordinated to the central ones, with various effects, from economic to sociological. Marginal areas exist, in this case, in order to economically support the central ones, and the central areas exist in order to support the marginal ones, economically as well as extra-economic. In Romania, according to a recently published atlas (MDRAP, 2015), there are six types of marginal urban areas (MUA, in Romanian ZUM). These include ghettos formed by collective blocks of flats, ghetto areas of former mining settlements, slums formed by household groups, slums formed by temporary homes, social dwellings in collective households or homes abusively occupied in historical areas. These areas are confronted to numerous problems, on different scales: minimal living conditions, total lack or reduced access to infrastructures, minimal legal incomes or total lack of incomes, vulnerable positions in labour market or restricted access to education for adults and high rates of school dropouts. In Jiu Valley, there are all types of ZUM previously presented, the urban areas in this micro-region being the ones that show the highest marginalized population rate reported to a total number of inhabitants. The most complex problems overlap the areas that show the most stages of becoming in history, mixing various ethnical and social class groups.

We find a necessity for public policies that primarily target these urban areas and the way in which, by processes of decentralization and delegation of tasks and responsibilities, can become freestanding communities by implementing public policies that are already successful on a world scale. The theme of knowledge, access to information and innovation necessitate a special treatment as essential factors in this process, creating non-material networks and a multidisciplinary cooperation in addressing specific problems.

## 2. Subject approach

Jiu Valley has a rich industrial culture, cultivated as a result of over 15 decades of intense industrial activity. The fact specific to the Valley is the process that gathered small communities around their families' etymology related to settlements close to Hateg basin. The place of these small communities complements the hearths of the new neighbourhoods, even though various stages of industrialization overlapped the traditional household groups. Historical maps (mapire.eu) show in the turning period between the 19th and 20th centuries an area consisting of rural communities and new workers' settlements. This cultural fragmentation between social groups remained strong between WW1 and the Stalinist period, but the late communist era vanished former resorts and societal relations through the implantation of modern collective housing units (figure 1).

Taking the cultural context into concern, we focus on the geographical morphology of the landscape, allowing cities and towns to settle only along the river banks and meadows. The outcome is a conurbation with a length of about 50 km between Tirici and Campu lui Neag, and a width varying from 100 m to 2 km. The genesis of these settlements is related to the positions of the mines, as presented in figure 2.

For the social profile of the community, we present recent official data. According to the document edited by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MDRAP, 2015), there are three summative indicators for a marginalized urban area:

- Low human value, if two of the following three indicators present percentage values that overcome a limit established at a national level: active population with a low education level (over 22.05%), children (over 20.44%), or persons with disabilities or other health problems (over 8.00%);
- Low level of employment (more than 22.15%) for those between 15-64 years old;
- Precarious living conditions, if two of the following three indicators present percentage value that overcome a limit established at a national level: people that live in households without electricity (over 0.00%), people that live in overcrowded spaces (<15.33 sqm/person, over 54.73%) or households that are confronted with housing insecurity (12.32%).

These three indicators meet the two basic categories at the bottom of Abraham Maslow's updated hierarchy of needs (Kenrick, 2010). As a matter of fact, affiliation, or the sense of belongingness to a social group, is relevant

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