

URBAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE GREEN TRANSITION: A PERSPECTIVE ON YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the perceptions of young people from urban and rural areas regarding energy transition and sustainable community development, focusing on the use of photovoltaic panels and electric vehicles. The study, based on survey data from 232 respondents aged between 18 and 34, aims to identify the social, economic and territorial factors influencing the ecological attitudes and behaviors of youth. The research employs an innovative mixed-method sociological approach, combining descriptive statistical analysis with deep qualitative interpretation of open-ended responses through grounded theory methodology to develop new socio-ecological typologies. Findings reveal significant differences between urban youth, who benefit from greater access to infrastructure and information and display higher openness to green technologies, and rural youth, who face greater economic and infrastructural barriers. However, rural youth express substantial willingness to engage in sustainable development if these barriers are overcome. Based on these findings, the article advocates for differentiated and inclusive public policy approaches that consider the specificities and genuine needs of local communities. The paper makes a significant contribution to understanding how the young generation can become active and central agents of the green transition, promoting sustainable development and social equity in the current Romanian context.

Keywords: community development, green transition, youth, renewable energy, social perceptions, territorial inequalities, civic ecology, sustainable mobility.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is already part of everyday reality, affecting natural resources, critical infrastructure and, ultimately, social cohesion and the quality of life of communities around the world. Severe droughts, heat waves, violent storms and wildfires have shown that the effects of climate degradation can no longer be ignored, but are felt both economically, socially and culturally, in the form of disruptions to food and energy supply chains, rising costs to the population and increasing inequalities already existing between urban and rural areas where infrastructure and access to information remain limited [1]. At the same time, fossil fuel market fluctuations and associated energy crises highlight the close link between energy security and climate action [2], stressing that every delay in reducing greenhouse gas emissions makes it more difficult to keep global growth below