

## **Acclimating post-mining territories: architecture, landscape, design**

**Organizers:** The Chair «Acclimatize post-mining territories», in partnership with European Cultural Centre and its exhibition «Time, Space, Existence», is organizing a day of meeting and brainstorming aimed at creating an international network.

**Date and location:** 4th September 2021, Venice, Italy

### **Proposal accepted for oral presentation**

**Title:** Geographical and cultural limitations in the post-mining development strategy. Case study from the Jiu Valley coal basin, Romania

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**Abstract:** Coal mining regions traditionally offer limited access to other industries, and the transition from coal may lead to significant social dislocation in some of the affected regions, partly due to the lack of an anticipatory policy to accompany the transition (Botta, 2019). To achieve ‘just transitions’ it is important to identify which, and understand why, some regions will need special attention from government interventions (Fleming-Muñoz et al., 2020). In this regard, perspectives from geography and political economy can contribute to the development of more insightful and richer understandings of the state, as we need to understand not only the role of a state but also to deepen the nature of the state in different contexts (Johnstone & Newell, 2018). Geographical location plays a decisive role in economic diversification, influencing the presence, absence and mixture of enterprises and industries (Garmestani et al., 2006). At the same time, the potential to attract highly qualified employees depends on the attractiveness of a region (Sherrieb et al., 2010), hence several limitations when imagining post-mining scenarios.

Talks about Green Deal implementation have been dominated so far by the great development opportunities opening for mono-industrial regions through investments in sustainable projects, while discussions about power relations between stakeholders deciding a community's green future have been avoided (O’Sullivan et al., 2020; Sovacool, 2021). Undesirable consequences are not evenly distributed among the population and, depending on their level of awareness and preparedness, some communities are more vulnerable to possible side effects than others (Carley et al., 2018).

Vulnerability, like resilience, is generally seen as specific to system disruptions (Gallopín, 2006) and both resilience approaches and vulnerability are concerned with how systems respond to change (Miller et al., 2010). Although it has been assigned a key role in the success of the just transition, resilience has rarely been recognized before a shock, stress or disaster has occurred (Weichselgartner & Kelman, 2015). Facing the same challenges, having access to similar financial resources, communities still achieve different results in managing the energy transition, because they possess different local capital (summing up material goods, know-how, people and community), therefore copying a certain smart practice in a new context does not necessarily lead to success (Frantal et al., 2018).

Anchored in lessons learned from the experience of other regions with similar features described in the literature, based on data collected from official reports as well as our own mixed methods of qualitative research, this paper delivers a case study in Jiu Valley, where Romania's largest coal resources are located, seeking to anticipate whether this region has the capacity to absorb the shocks caused by the impending coal phase-out.

The paper delivers a stakeholders mapping, grouping them on criteria of influence, credibility and positioning towards the transition to green economy. It also provides an anticipatory assessment of the just transition in Jiu Valley, based on the ETUI<sup>1</sup> criteria: a) social dialogue, b) the role of local government, c) re-employment, d) retraining, e) the role of state welfare and f) infrastructure investments.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Trade Union Institute is the independent research and training centre of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which itself affiliates European trade unions into a single European umbrella organisation.

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