

Challenges for sustainable suburban communities: comparing suburbanization in Romanian and Italian metropolitan areas

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to highlight the differences in sustainable living between suburban settlements in the metropolitan areas of two European countries, emphasizing the role played by urban planning regulations in managing suburbanization. We study the different attitudes of the Italian and Romanian planning systems regarding the suburban development of metropolitan areas. Using three local administrative units as case studies, we analyze the growth of urban areas using Urban Atlas 2006 and 2018 data. The comparison was based on a qualitative method for assessing criteria related to urban morphology, access to basic infrastructure and landscape quality in the selected study areas. The results showcase significant differences between the Italian and Romanian cases, suggesting that the enforcement of upper-level planning regulations, at provincial or metropolitan level, could play an important role in facilitating better living conditions in suburban areas. The study thus shows the importance of comparative analyses in understanding the role of urban planning provisions and metropolitan governance mechanisms in developing sustainable suburban areas. The paper underlines the role of the proposed qualitative assessment methodology in understanding the differences in suburban living in different geographical areas, with the study areas in Romania having significant issues related to landscape quality and the provision of public services. The qualitative analysis method could also be used to define a set of policies for metropolitan or local councils, targeting quality of life improvement in suburbia.

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