



INFORMAL HOUSING IN ROMÂNIA

Research Report

March 2018

Research report of the project "No Man's Land": Informal housing in Roma communities - recognition, responsibility and common solutions

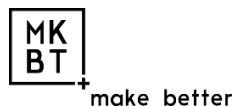
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The report is conducted between November 2017 and March 2018 and is available in Romanian and English. More information on the above project is available on www.locuireinformala.ro.



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Introduction

Purpose and context of the report

The present report has been elaborated as part of the project "*No Man's Land*": *Informal Housing in Roma Communities - Recognition, Responsibility and Common Solutions*, conducted between August 2017 and January 2019. The **overall objective** of the project is to combat barriers that currently hinder the use of EU and government funds for integrated interventions to address the problems of communities living in informal settlements in Romania. One of the barriers identified through working experience in informal settlements (communities in which there are problems related to property acts) in Romania is the lack of awareness of the problem, both at national and local level. At national level, this translates into the fact that the problem is not treated as a priority in public policy; at local level, it leads to the fact that people who live in informal housing situations do not ask for solutions to their problem.

Therefore, the project activities follow **three specific objectives**:

- a) initiating legislative changes for the recognition and regulation of informal settlements in national legislation;
- b) increased awareness and capacity of 3 local communities and their local public authorities to understand the causes and the negative effects of informal housing and to solve the problems associated with it;
- c) raised awareness among local, national and European stakeholders about the disadvantages of current EU policy and funding programs, as well as about the necessary improvements to address the issue of informal housing through the design of integrated programs.

More than 60,000 Romanian Roma families live in informal settlements in the outskirts of villages and towns, without having ownership of the land on which the house is built, without having construction permits and documents for their properties (in some cases, without identity cards) and having limited or no access to basic utilities and road infrastructure, in many cases the houses layout endangering residents' safety and health. However, current legislation, government policies and EU programs contain no reference to informal housing or any definition of those settlements, which is one of the main obstacles to the allocation of EU and national funding to this issue. In fact, in most cases, it is even illegal for mayors to make investments in these areas.

Such informal settlements are found in the entire territory of Romania near the rural or urban settlements or as their neighbourhoods. According to a study carried out by the Ministry of Regional Development in 2014, with a response rate of approximately 53% of the total number of urban and rural localities in Romania, 38.7% of respondents said they have at least one informal settlement on their territory. Overall, the study estimated the existence of 49,338 households and 63,492 families in informal settlements, most of them Roma families.

The proposed steps to be taken within the project are aimed at: a) at national level, to obtain a favourable environment that will allow and stimulate work in the field of informal living: the recognition of the informal settlements in the national legislation and the possibility to implement programs meant to solve this situation; b) be able to use EU and government funds in integrated programs to address this need; c) have better informed and more committed stakeholders; to promote proactive urban planning as a local practice; d) Increased grass-root demand for tools to solve the situation.

Therefore, this report has the role of:

- highlighting the size and urgency of informal housing issues, substantiating the need for adjustments to the regulatory framework, in order to allow for solutions;
- documenting the ways in which informal housing expands and manifests itself (community, local and county authorities practices);
- providing a working context for national partners and local/ initiative groups working with communities affected by informal housing, to develop a common better understanding of typologies, needs and associated issues.

As a structure, the report contains a first chapter dedicated to the description of the phenomenon of informal housing, presenting the context of this issue in the EU and other countries in the post-socialist bloc, explaining the existing typologies and describing the evolution and scale of the phenomenon in Romania, based on studies and reports at the moment. Subsequently, under Chapter 2, the report presents three case studies consisting of informal settlements within three localities, namely Reșița (Caraș-Severin County), Bumbești – Jiu (Gorj County) and Valea Corbului (Argeș County). Finally, the report includes a set of conclusions and recommendations aimed at supporting project partners in later thinking about potential actions and solutions that could mitigate the problems faced by informal settlements in Romania.

The novelty of this report consists in its bringing together of an analysis of the relevant literature and of concrete case studies that present the field reality in the years 2017-2018, illustrating the multiple facets of informal housing, the complexity of the cases and the need for action.

In addition to this report, an analysis of the Romanian housing legislation was carried out within the framework of the same project (focusing on regulatory shortcomings that hinder solutions to the problems associated with informal housing), as well as an analysis of funding programs and instruments (with an emphasis on barriers in financing actions to solve problems related to informal housing). These materials, along with other project outcomes, are available on the project website www.locuireinformala.ro.

The project "*No man's land*": *Informal housing in Roma communities - recognition, responsibility and common solutions* is implemented by PACT Foundation (Partnership for Community Action and Transformation), as project leader, together with the partner organizations MKBT: Make Better (Make Better Association), DEP Bumbești-Jiu Association, Valea Corbului Initiative Group and GAL (Local Action Group) Reșița. It is supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute

in cooperation with the Roma Initiatives of the Open Society Foundations. Preparation of this report was coordinated by Bogdan Suditu, Ana-Maria Elian, Marina Neagu, Marina Von Rosenschild Paouline (MKBT:Make Better) with contributions from the working teams of the project partners: Ioana Petrache, Emanuela Ignațoiu-Șora (PACT), Cristi Haica, Marius Păcuraru , Iulica Aivănoae, Emilia Haica (Valea Corbului Initiative Group), Nica Floare, Adam Tirbăț (LAG Reșița), Constantin Dumitrașcu (DEP Bumbăști-Jiu Association) and the team of students from the Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest involved in one of the field research trips in Valea Corbului. The photographic documentation was made by George Popescu and Bogdan Dincă (Documentaria) and the maps were made by Mihai Tentiș and Alexandru Vija.

Methodological notes

Chapter 1 of this study is based on the analysis of a set of reports, documents and data from recent research into the phenomenon of informal housing, both in Romania and abroad. The analysed sources are mentioned in the bibliographic list at the end of the document.

Chapter 2 is based on research and field observations made in the above mentioned localities, including discussions and interviews with authorities and locals. The photo stock used in the report is mostly made up by photos taken by the photographers contracted through the project (George Popescu and Bogdan Dincă), but also by the team involved in the field research. GIS mapping: Mihai Tentiș and Alexandru Vija

Chapter 1. The phenomenon of informal housing

1.1 The context of informal housing in the EU and other countries from the post-socialist space

Informal housing is a large scale phenomenon that affects communities around the world. In the context of radical changes in political, economic and social systems, more and more settlements in the former socialist space have expanded as informal settlements. Thus, as the studies and analysis in the field show, the phenomenon of informal living in Eastern Europe, including Romania, is expanding.

Reports such as those of UNECE (2009, 2016) point out that the specificities of informal housing in the EECCA area - Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia - are different from the determinants and manifestations of the same phenomenon in developing countries in the Global South.

In the states of the Global South, informal settlements are referred to as "*slums*" or "*squatter areas*", designating areas at the outskirts of large cities where the poor population migrating from the countryside has improvised barracks and shelters, thus relocating with the family closer to the city and the opportunities it offers. Thus, in the literature referring to the Global South, informal settlements are associated with a very poor population, for whom the only way to satisfy their need for shelter is to illegally occupy a plot of land and build a home with their own means (UNECE, 2016, p. 40). The incidence of this phenomenon is related to the accelerated urbanization process (migration from rural areas to major cities) and to the explosive demographic increase of the major metropolises in the Global South, a process that exceeds the authorities' ability to plan urban expansion (*i.e.* the development of street infrastructure, utilities, public services: schools, medical-social infrastructure etc.).

In 2003, the UN estimated that, globally, nearly one billion people can be considered "*squatters*", a term used to denote people living without holding legal documents on land/ housing they occupy; the estimation relies mainly on studies and analyses targeting the Global South.

What is an informal settlement?

Informal settlements are "illegal" residential formations lacking basic infrastructure, security of tenure, adequate housing, etc. (UNECE, 2009)

Informal settlements are residential formations regularly developed on the outskirts of urban or rural localities, where the lands are legally or illegally occupied and the buildings are unauthorized or respect the building permits only partially, and whose main characteristics are lack of access to the basic urban infrastructure, inappropriate etc. jeopardizing the safety and health of the occupying population. (Suditu & Vâlceanu, 2013)



Areas of informal housing in the Global South. "Slum" neighborhoods on the outskirts of Caracas, Venezuela (on the left) and on the outskirts of Johannesburg, South Africa (on the right)

By comparison, informal dwelling in the EECCA area has advanced in the context of a steep shift from planned economies to market economies, which has created a legislative vacuum and a decreasing of "planning" itself as a process of organizing life in communities. Informal settlements in the EECCA area vary as income levels of the target persons, quality of construction and reason or determinants of informality (*i.e.* basic needs versus speculative development) (UNECE, 2016, p. 40).

The same report describes how the transition process had a considerable impact on the housing sector in general (UNECE, 2016) by:

- 1. Restitution and land privatization (different types: possession, divestiture, property);*
- 2. Privatization of the stock of socialist public housing (and change of nature and diversification of property);*
- 3. State withdrawal from the planning and housing sectors;*
- 4. Changing responsibility for providing housing from the state to the private sector;*
- 5. Decentralization and transfer of responsibilities for local urban development to the local government (a process that was not accompanied by adequate allocation of financial resources or human resource training).*

By change of nature and diversification of property, the report is referring to the transition from housing provided and held predominantly by the state to a withdrawal of the role of the state as a housing provider which has led to the diversification of the ways of accessing a dwelling (rental, purchase, construction, mortgage purchase etc.) and existing housing typologies. However, the withdrawal of the state from the role of the main provider of housing was not accompanied by programs and measures to support access to housing by all income categories, which affected in particular the low-income categories that were in the position to find alternatives (informal economy, self-building, non-legal forms).

Numerous informal settlements were de facto formed in the 1950s, when the communist authorities forced the communities of nomadic Roma to settle down, most often on non-fertile lands (pastures, garbage areas, river banks etc.) located outside of villages; the initial households gradually developed beyond the sphere of interest (control) and organizational support of the communist public authorities.

At the same time, the post-revolutionary power vacuum resulted in the fact that a big part of the economic activity in the whole region, Romania included, slipped into the informal sector. With the revision of the constitution and the whole set of laws, a large scale process in all surrounding states, some areas remained uncovered by institutions with clear and well defined mandates. In Romania, following the repeal in December 1989 of urban and rural planning legislation, new urban and land planning legislation began to be developed only in the early 2000s. Of course, the drafting and adoption of a central law does not immediately and automatically transpose into local practice, and this legislation vacuum has generated many forms of informal housing in both urban and rural areas, the phenomenon not being specific only for the ethnic minorities.

Meanwhile, many communities in the region have expanded, both as a spatial footprint and as expansion and modernization of the buildings themselves, a process unaccompanied by clearly defined and applied authorization procedures, in a unitary and equitable manner. It is estimated that for urban areas with sustained growth in the EECCA region, for example capital cities, a quarter to half of residents live informally - see the table below (NALAS, 2011).

Table 1: Estimate of the area occupied by informal settlements versus total area with residential zoning in the capital city

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Slovenia	FRI Macedonia	Montenegro
25-50%	5-25%	0	5-25%	>50%
Serbia	Bulgaria	Republic of Moldova	Romania	Albania
25-50%	<5%	<10%	5-25%	25-50%

Source: NALAS (2011), cited in UNECE (2016)

Moreover, the process of land privatization and restitution (a process not yet completed in Romania) accompanied by the lack of a transparent and up-to-date cadastral system, has generated many confusions, litigations and uncertainty about the situation of some properties in the country. Thus, in many cases, lands that have not been claimed by their owners have constituted and continue to constitute expansion areas for informal settlements.

Of course, the legislative gap, the lack of action of the public authorities and the uncertainties about land ownership have also generated cases where informality is not necessarily generated by extreme poverty and lack of alternatives, as a form of self-organization, land ownership and construction. In the absence of the role of "regulation" and state control (via local authority) in

terms of planning and construction, and sometimes even as a result of speculation, informal housing and informal settlements have sprung.

As the UNECE report shows, informal living in the EECCA region is a phenomenon that includes very different income categories, and the typology of homes in this situation can range from improvised barracks to luxury villas. However, it is important to underline that informality itself has the most negative impact on the most vulnerable categories. Thus, the different categories of income affected should be reflected in related regulations and measures that take into account the vulnerability and real need of those concerned, and distinguish between informality that arose from need and informality that arose from speculation.

Measures to alleviate the phenomenon of informal living

The reports and recommendations that review action typologies on attenuation of the housing informality phenomenon, indicate two main fronts of work:

- (1) investments in providing infrastructure and services to people living in informal settlements to increase their quality of life and reduce health and safety risks (e.g. access to water and sanitation, road infrastructure, water security and water regulation, waste collection etc.). These measures are described in the literature as "*slum upgrading*", denoting most notably measures for the modernization of the infrastructure;
- (2) "formalization" programs that target the elimination of informality on land occupation and construction through support for property titles, building authorization etc. This type of measure is designed to increase security of tenure, enable access to identity documents and access to services, allow taxation, valuation, sale and property insurance and so on. Theoretically, the formalization process would entail correcting the urban planning of the area by removing non-compliant or unsafe buildings, extending the streets to allow safe access and so on (actions that probably involve the greatest implementation difficulties).

The UNECE report (2016, p.13) indicates that in the EECCA there are countries that have developed legislation to formalize informal housing and are in the process of implementation (e.g. Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Georgia) and countries where access to information on the phenomenon of informal housing is low and legislation is underdeveloped (e.g. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and others). Among the countries mentioned to have a long experience in addressing problems associated with informal housing, Greece and Spain are indicated.

The most common public policy measures used to address urban issues associated with informal settlements in the UNECE region:

1. Formalization and legalization
2. Regularization and modernization
3. Relocation and reallocation
4. Alternative housing systems for informal settlements

Source: UNECE , 2016, p. 33

Romania is not the subject of the above mentioned report. We note that in Romania, at the date of this report, the domain of informal housing still does not appear in any strategic document assumed at the level of any governmental institution or assumed as reality and terminology in housing legislation. There is a section devoted to it in the National Housing Strategy developed by MDRAP, but unfinished and formally not assumed. In addition, there are some mentions and provisions regarding the need to support marginalized groups in solving their problem of lack of acts - but not referring to the phenomenon of informal housing as an overall problem - in the National Cadastre Program and the strategic documents of the National Agency for Roma.

In January 2018, under the Government Program of the Government of Romania, in the Minorities chapter, "in order to substantially improve the situation of the Roma, with a special focus on the Roma communities in extreme poverty", it is proposed to solve the problems related to ownership of land and housing inhabited by Roma and to implement housing rehabilitation programs in Roma-inhabited areas through the provision of electricity, drinking water, sewerage, methane gas and sanitation.

More information on the shortcomings in Romanian legislation and strategic and programmatic documents can be read in the other two reports elaborated in the course of this project, as mentioned in the introduction.

1.2 Existing Typologies

The typologies of informal settlements reflect the variety and complexity of the cases encountered on the field, as well as the differentiation from the manifestation of this phenomenon in the Global South.

Table 1: Typologies of informal settlements in EECCA and the Western Balkans

	Occupancy	Key subcategories	Tenure Security
1.	Legal title to land and property - unauthorized adaptations	<p>a) Minor adaptations to existing structures without building permission (e.g. closing balconies, addition of one to two rooms in an existing attic). Turning existing premises into living areas (e.g. turning garages into living areas, turning basements into living areas); turning former common spaces (e.g. laundry rooms) into living areas, without a building permit.</p> <p>b) Structural changes to existing buildings, e.g. lateral extensions of apartments in multi-family buildings, additions of floors on existing multi-family buildings.</p>	De facto high tenure security due to the legal land title to the property.
2.	Legal title to land - unauthorized construction	<p>a) Construction on own land following the existing plans and regulations but without an actual permit (in cases where a detailed master plan exists).</p> <p>b) Construction without a permit on own land in excess of existing plans.</p> <p>c) Construction with a permit on own land, but unauthorized changes to approved plans, building in excess of officially approved permit (e.g. building a multi-storey building instead of the approved family home).</p>	<i>De facto</i> high tenure security due to the land title.
3.	Legal title to land – unauthorized subdivisions and unauthorized construction.	a) Legal title to land, but illegal change of land use (e.g. agricultural land used for residential buildings) involving illegal subdivisions of land (and the selling thereof to a different owner).	Tenure may secure to category (a) can be challenged or not; in cases (b) (c) depending on the

		<p>Housing built without building permission.</p> <p>b) Public land or rural land subdivided and given (or sold at market price) by the local authority itself to im/migrants coming to the city, but without a change in the plans.</p> <p>c) Construction without a permit on land with unclear title to land (e.g. that resulted from an unclarified or unresolved process of land restitution).</p>	location, country and quality of the construction.
4.	No legal title to land – unauthorized construction.	<p>a) Illegal land occupation, housing without planning/building permission, not integrated in the broader urban system (relatively good living standards).</p> <p>b) Building in protected zones: national parks, natural reserves, coastal areas, protection areas (e.g. highways, industrial, flood barriers etc.).</p>	Tenure may be challenged depending on the case - high in case (a); may be challenged in case (b).
5.	No legal title to land – squatter settlements	<p>a) Unauthorized homes built by im/migrants settling in un-serviced areas.</p> <p>b) Unauthorized shacks made in un-serviced areas by the low- or no-income population (e.g. Roma population).</p>	Low tenure security.
6.	Illegal rental tenure	Medium- and long-term rents in the informal sector belonging to categories 1 to 5; informal agreements between the landlord and tenant (rented per room, or entire apartment/home); non-registered/non taxed.	Low tenure security.
7.	Temporary legal residence	Temporary legal residence for populations displaced because of natural or man-made disasters. There are generally three categories within this type: 1) custom-built collective accommodation centres (e.g. for refugees/IDPs); 2) temporary	Low tenure security.

		accommodation consisting of tent camps and prefabricated temporary houses; and 3) temporary accommodation in buildings not built for residential purposes (e.g. public buildings, former hotels, schools).	
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Source: (UNECE , 2016)

Table 2: Typology of informal settlements in Romania

Type 1	<p>Groups of housing units with improper conditions in the built-up areas of localities, on the outskirts or outside the built-up areas, mainly occupied by vulnerable categories</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups of housing units usually developed on the outskirts of urban localities, in the built-up areas ➤ Groups of housing units usually developed on the outskirts of rural localities, in the built-up areas ➤ Groups of housing units built outside the built-up areas
Type 2	<p>Groups of housing units situated in areas that, according to the General Urban Plan, rule out residential use, and are mainly occupied by vulnerable categories</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups of housing units situated in built-up areas, where, according to the General Urban Plan, the residential use of land is ruled out; in areas that are vulnerable to natural and industrial risks, in the vicinity of tailing dumps, garbage dumps, in areas of protection and safety for circulation and utilities networks (electrical, gas, telecommunications) and for transport pipelines.
Type 3	<p>Groups of housing units mainly occupied by persons that are in risk of social exclusion and/ or marginalization</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups of housing units situated in the vicinity of localities' landfills; ➤ Groups of housing units situated in protected areas (Natura 2000 sites, natural reservations) ➤ Groups of housing units that appeared as an effect of forced sedentarisation of Roma, during the 1950s-1960s ➤ Groups of housing units of the worker's colony type (initially designed as temporary, later became permanent), built for housing workers involved in hydrotechnical projects, in various types of exploitations (carboniferous, metallic) or working in factories (steel factories etc.)
Type 4	<p>Vacant buildings occupied by homeless persons, in risk of social exclusion and/ or marginalization</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Housing units located in heritage buildings, decommissioned buildings, buildings with uncertain legal status and usually occupied by homeless, socially excluded persons.

Source: I.N.C.D. URBAN-INCERC, 2013-2014, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – evaluarea situaţiei actuale în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”, pg. 5.

1.3 Evolution and scale of the phenomenon in Romania

Studies on this topic in Romania

In Romania, the phenomenon of the emergence and development of informal settlements is still an under-analyzed and debated subject at national level. The first discussions on this issue have been carried out since 2007 within the Working Group on Roma Housing in the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing. These discussions were subsequently materialized in two thematic projects, both initiated and funded by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration: Methodology for the rehabilitation of housing in the areas affected by physical degradation and social exclusion (2007) and the only national research on informal housing - "Analysis of the informal settlements in Romania - assessment of the current situation in order to formulate some regulations and intervention instruments" (2013-2014). The context in which these types of settlements appeared and their socio-spatial and legal characteristics were illustrated in two academic articles¹, which analyzed the phenomenon from a qualitative point of view.

The "Pata" study, by Adi Dohotaru, Hajnalka Harbula, Enikő Vincze (<http://sparex-ro.eu/wp-content/uploads/PATA-web-v11.pdf>) analyzes aspects of formation of the informal settlement Pata Rât (Cluj-Napoca Municipality) - a precarious space of marginalized housing near the landfill of Cluj-Napoca, created through direct administrative actions or institutional neglect and multiple complicities at different levels between public administration institutions, waste companies and small entrepreneurs from different areas. Valuable thematic researches, were carried out by Cătălin Berescu, together with the members of the Cluj-Napoca group of researchers mentioned above, in a number of projects, including the project "Spatialization and racialization of social exclusion. The social and cultural constitution of "gypsy ghettos" in Romania in a European context".

Many more studies have been conducted on the topic of social and spatial marginalization of disadvantaged communities, centered mainly on Roma communities, but they do not address the complexity of problems arising from the situation of informal settlements as a whole. The present study is the first research that analyzes informal housing both in the context of the EU and other countries in the post-socialist space, as well as in the specific context of the Romanian reality, following both the evolution and scale of the phenomenon at national level and the specific peculiarities of some case studies, precisely to illustrate the magnitude and complexity of the

¹ Suditu B., Vâlceanu D.G., 2013, „Informal settlements and squatting in Romania: socio-spatial patterns and typologies”, in *HUMAN GEOGRAPHIES – Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography* și Vâlceanu, D.G., Suditu, B., Toth, G., Ivana, C., 2015, „Housing Inequalities regarding the Informal Settlements in Romania” in *Romanian Review of Regional Studies*, Volume XI, Number 1.

phenomenon and, equally, of the solutions that need to be formulated in order to manage and prevent its spread.

Defining the term for the Romanian context

In the existing literature, but also in everyday practice, there is currently no established definition of the term "informal settlements" in Romania. Also, at international level, the phenomenon has been analyzed and classified from several perspectives and in the context of different social and spatial realities, making it difficult to agree on a unique definition of this phenomenon.

Despite the different terminology used in international research on the subject, the UNECE definition (2009) is the basis for most of the specialist studies. According to this, informal settlements are defined as *"residential formations lacking basic infrastructure, adequate housing conditions etc."*

In the context of the Romanian territorial reality, the first proposal for defining informal settlements is that of B. Suite and G. Vâlceanu in the article *"Informal settlements and squatting in Romania: socio-spatial patterns and typologies"* (2013) namely, *"groups of housing units and shelters made of reused or poor quality materials, formed from family nuclei of Roma population voluntarily or forcedly settled down at the beginning of the communist period, placed on lands for which the occupants have no real tenure rights" and "housing units built without building permits and in violation of land use plans and building standards, even if their owners have real rights over the lands they are building on"*.

Subsequently, in the research *"Analysis of the informal settlements in Romania - evaluation of the current situation in order to formulate some regulations and intervention instruments"* (I.N.C.D. URBAN-INCERC, 2013-2014), the proposed definition is *"groups of housing units regularly developed on the outskirts of urban or rural localities, where the lands are legally or illegally occupied and the buildings are unauthorized or respect the building permits only partially, and whose main characteristics are lack of access to the basic urban infrastructure, inappropriate etc. jeopardizing the safety and health of the occupying population"*.



Squatter area (*‘mahala’*) on the outskirts of Unirea Village, Alba county (photo by B.Suditu)



Shelters on the Pata Rât landfill, Cluj-Napoca Municipality (photo by D.G.Vâlceanu)

The determinants of the emergence and development of informal settlements

The factors that contributed to the emergence and development of informal settlements in Romania are historical and socio-economic, as well as political and legislative, illustrating both the complexity of the phenomenon and of the solutions needed to stop or alleviate its effects.

⇒ Historical factors

The main factor that led to the emergence of the first nuclei of informal settlements is historical and is related to the forced sedentarisation of the Roma during the communist period. Since 1948, the Communist regime has initiated a comprehensive operation of mapping, population registration and sedentarisation of nomadic Roma communities. As a result of this policy, these communities settled down, most often in a random fashion, but also in the vicinity of already existing Roma communities. Also, with the forced systematization of villages, the Roma population has often been moved to housing units on the outskirts of towns and villages, especially in poor urban areas or in semi-urban settlements in agricultural areas (Suditu B., Vâlceanu D.G., 2013). This makes many of the informal settlements in Romania already several decades old, with families established there for several generations and a community that has grown gradually over time.

⇒ Socio-economic factors

The socio-economic factors that contributed to the emergence and spread of this phenomenon are related to social and economic conditions in the context of the 1950-1975 crisis in Eastern Europe, corroborated by a series of major interdependent changes, according to UNECE (2009): rapid urbanization and the forced land systematization of the time, the residential mobility these provoked, the post-socialist restructuring of the national economy, which led to an increase in poverty and social exclusion, as well as low access to housing for disadvantaged categories after 1990. Adding to these, are a poor land planning system, as well as the lack of adequate land

management tools (Suditu B., Vâlceanu D.G., 2013). Numerous forms of informal housing (improvised housing in buildings that initially had other functions, as well as the construction of insalubrious shelters on the outskirts of localities or in risk areas, etc.) are the result of the process of social and economic marginalization of many groups in the context of economic change which Romania has traveled over the last decades - for their occupants, these shelters being places of refuge in the absence of resources and options.

⇒ **Political and legislative factors**

Following the repeal of the law on land systematization in 1990, the development of localities was achieved, until 2001, without any legal framework on spatial planning, and the subsequent regulations made it difficult to integrate the territories containing informal settlements into the built-up areas of adjacent localities. This has made many of the informal settlements expand further in the absence of urban regulations, without building permits or even in biological or natural risk areas, making it even more difficult to identify technical and legal solutions for these settlements at the present moment. Contributing to this expansion was also the fact that these areas have been ignored over time by authorities and developers of urban planning documentation, as well as the absence of this topic from the public and political agenda. The legislative solutions adopted so far have addressed the problem in partial modes without an understanding of the territorial reality as a whole and without a careful analysis of the potential consequences of some of the measures (Suditu B., Vâlceanu D.G., 2013). The delay in legal and urban recognition of informal settlements has aggravated the situation within them, because in the last decade, in the context of building materials getting cheaper and residents accessing higher incomes, most old houses made of adobe or shelters made of recovered materials were rebuilt, becoming wall houses with concrete foundations. In addition, the non-inclusion of these residential areas in the built-up areas of the localities (*intravilan*) rendered impossible the carrying out urban equipment projects (paving or asphaltting, water access, sewerage and public lighting).

The scale of the phenomenon in Romania

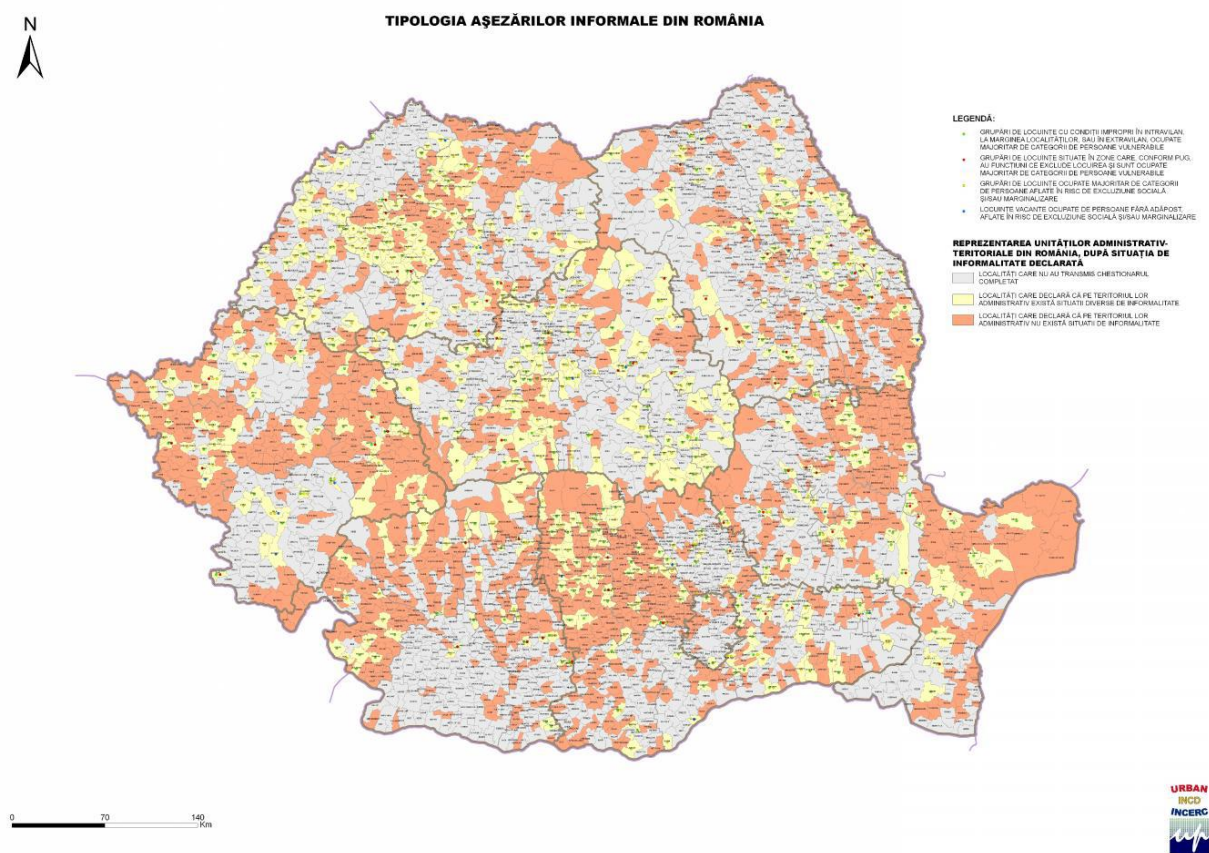
Currently, there is no data in Romania that quantifies the actual number of households and families affected by this phenomenon. The only study of inventory and classification of informal settlements in Romania was initiated in 2013². In the second part of this study, a questionnaire for the classification, analysis and evaluation of the various types of informal settlements was developed and submitted for completion to all administrative-territorial units in the country, through the County Councils.

We mention that in the context of that study, an informal settlement is defined as "a group of (at least 3) housing units, usually spontaneously and uncontrollably developed on the outskirts of

² I.N.C.D. URBAN-INCERC, 2013-2014, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – evaluarea situaţiei actuale în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”;

urban and rural localities, where lands are legally or illegally occupied and that lack access to basic urban infrastructure, adequate living conditions etc., jeopardizing the safety and health of the resident population".

Out of the 3,181 existing administrative units at national level, only half (49.5%) responded to the questionnaire request. The data thus collected and presented below, should therefore be seen through the magnification of this limitation, the phenomenon being in fact much more extensive than is reflected in these data. The territorial distribution of informal settlements, as revealed by the study, is shown in the map below.



Map source: I.N.C.D URBAN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind așezările informale din România – Evaluare situației curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări și instrumente de intervenție”.

(Legend: Representation of Romanian administrative units, according to the informality situation declared: localities that have not submitted a questionnaire (grey), localities that declare the existence of informality situations on their territory (yellow), localities that declare not to have informality situations on their territory (orange).)

35% of respondents attested the existence of informal housing areas on their administrative territory, amounting to approximately 1,200 locations in 584 administrative-territorial units, all over the country.

According to these data, in the 1,198 informal settlements identified, 49,338 homes and 63,492 families are concentrated. On average, on the territory of each administrative unit, there are 2 informal settlements with approximately 40 houses and 50 families.

The distribution of informal settlements on the categories specific to our network of localities indicates a significantly higher incidence of this type of settlements in rural areas, 80% of the total informal settlements being concentrated there. This raises great problems in terms of the ability of local authorities to find solutions to stop the phenomenon and/ or improve living conditions in these settlements.

However, even if the number of informal settlements is higher in rural areas, those in the urban areas are larger in size and include a higher density of people, an informal urban settlement concentrating on average twice as many dwellings and families compared to rural ones.

In relation to the localities' built-up areas, most informal settlements are located on the outskirts of their locality (68%), only 8.6% of them being located near the center of the locality. Most of the settlements in the studied areas (46%) were introduced into the defined built-up area before the last approved general urban plan, which confirms the occurrence of this phenomenon before the 1990s. A percentage of 25% of the total administrative units that confirmed the existence of informal settlements on their territory, stated that those areas were introduced in the built-up area of the locality at the last approved general urban plan. Another 12% of the respondent representatives of administrative units were in the process of introducing them into the built-up area by updating the general urban plan. At the time of the survey, 19% of the inventory sites were located outside the built-up area of the locality, and for 7% of them there weren't any attempts to update the general urban plan to incorporate them.

Table 3: Location of informal settlements in relation to built-up area of the localities, according to study

Location	Frecuence (number)	Share (%)
in the built-up area, rather towards the center of the locality	103	8.6
in the built-up area, rather towards the outskirts of the locality	816	68,1
outside the built-up area, but steps are being taken to introduce them in the built-up area	145	12,1
outside the built-up area and there are NO steps being taken to introduce them in the built-up area	87	7,3
DK/NA	47	3,9
Total locations	1198	100

Table Source: I.N.C.D URABN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind așezările informale din România – Evaluare situației curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări și instrumente de intervenție”, pg. 12

The study also shows that an aspect that makes these efforts more difficult is that a significant percentage of informal settlements (37.4%) are located in areas where, according to the urban planning regulations, housing is forbidden. These include those groups of housing units built in areas that are vulnerable to natural and industrial risks: in the vicinity of tailings dumps, waste dumps, in the areas of protection and safety for circulation and utilities networks (electricity, gas, telecommunications) and for transport pipelines.

With respect to the land status of the informal housing locations, in approximately 74% of the studied cases, the land does not belong to the residents of these locations but is either the private property of other natural or legal persons, or the private property of public authorities or a land in dispute.

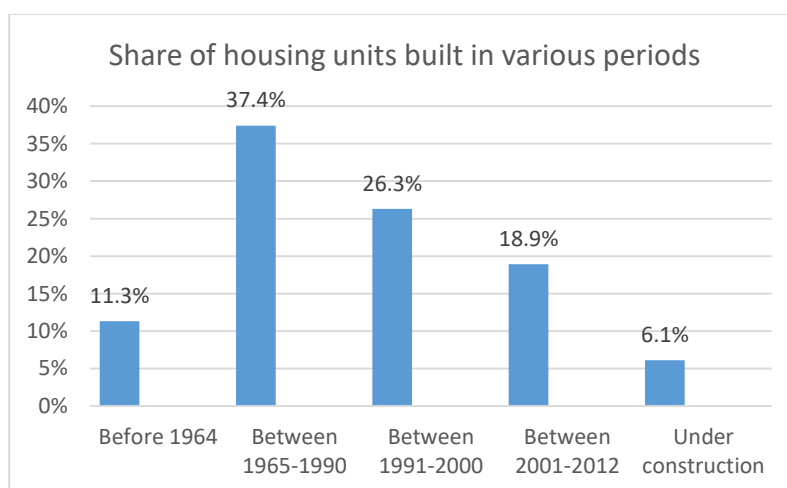
Table 4: Distribution of informal settlements based on juridical situation of the land they are located upon

Land belongs to residents of those settlements			25,3%	
Land does NOT belong to residents of those settlement and is..	a public property	a private property of the Local Council	a private property of natural or legal persons	in dispute
	10,2%	29,5%	33,6%	1,4%

Table Source: I.N.C.D URABN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – Evaluare situaţiei curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”, pg. 18

The distribution of informal settlements based on the construction period of dwellings indicates a majority proportion of dwellings built between 1965 and 1990 (37.4%) and in the period of legislative vacancy, i.e. 1991-2000 (26.3%). Only 11.3% of the surveyed housing units developed before 1964, 18.9% developed between 2001-2012 and 6.1% were under construction at the time.

Figure 1: Distribution of informal settlements based on building period



Data source: I.N.C.D URBAN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – Evaluare situaţiei curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”.

The predominant building materials of the informal settlements surveyed are adobe (*paiantă* or *chirpici*) (40.2%), while 36.2% were made of brick, stone or BCA, 17.3% of wood or beams, and 0.9% of other materials, such as PFL, plastic or metal. This indicates a preponderance of housing units built out of precarious materials, which often does not provide decent housing conditions for families residing in these settlements.

Figure 2: Distribution of building materials used for the outer walls of the dwellings in the informal settlements

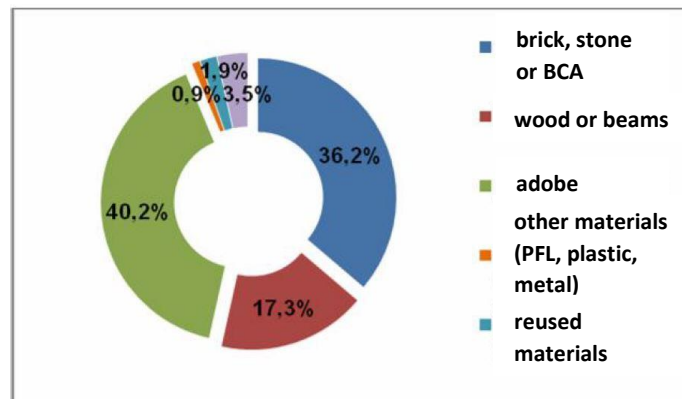


Figure source: I.N.C.D URBAN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – Evaluare situaţiei curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”, pg. 30.

Reduced accessibility to utilities is one of the most widespread problems and one of the main causes of low quality of life in these settlements, according to the study. More than 30% of the localities surveyed do not have access to running water, only 35.9% of them have connections to the public water network, and in 7.3% of these connections are to be made. 16.9% of the communities surveyed provide their own running water system, and most of those who do not have access to water are supplied either from neighbors or from streams, fountains or public stalls.

Figure 3: Share of housing units in informal settlements with access to water supply networks

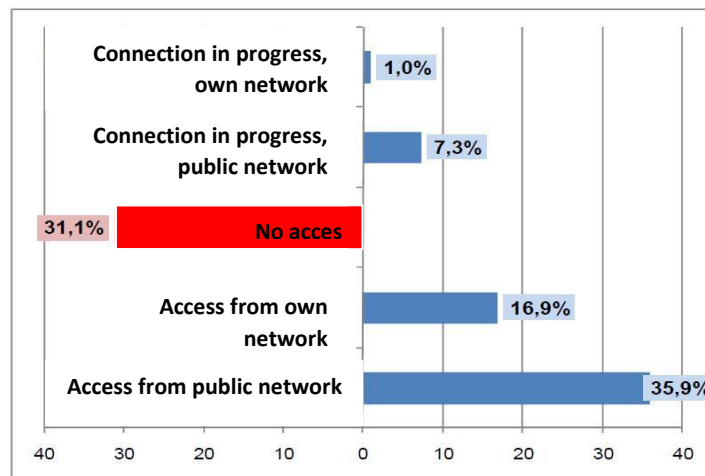


Figure source: I.N.C.D URABN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – Evaluare situaţiei curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”, pg. 34

The quoted study shows that only 7% of the dwellings in these settlements are connected to the public sewage network, for 4.8% of them connection is in progress and a similar percentage is represented by housing units with septic tanks (7%) or being in the process of connecting to a private network (1%). According to the same survey, the overwhelming percentage of 62.5% of the total housing for which the sewerage network is a problem, is an indicator that the extension of the water supply and sewerage network through structural funds is currently not a solution in many situations, because of the financial means necessary for the connection.

Figure 4: Share of housing units in informal settlements with access to the sewerage network

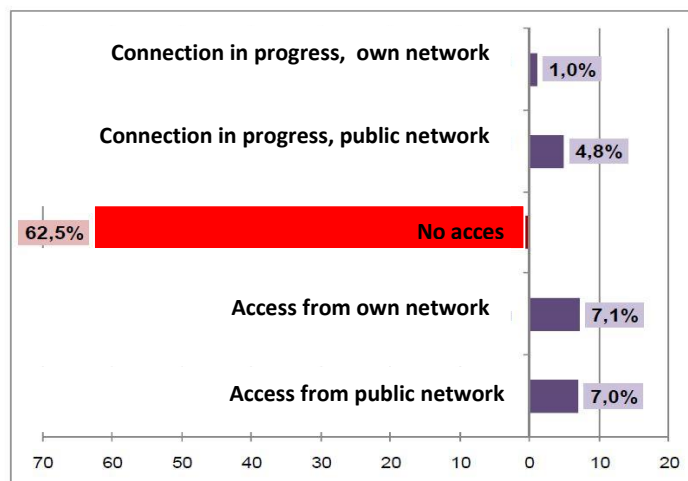


Figure source: I.N.C.D URABN-INCERC, 2013, „Analiză privind aşezările informale din România – Evaluare situaţiei curente în vederea formulării unor reglementări şi instrumente de intervenţie”, pg. 34.

Only 10% of the informal settlements identified are connected to the public gas network, 1.2% has a chance to connect in the following years, while 72.5% of them have no access to this type of utility at all.

With regard to access to electricity, 74% of informal settlements have access to the public electricity network, 4.6% of them would be connected in the future, at the time of the survey, and 11% of informal settlements are completely lacking utility. The study mentions that electricity theft and/ or informal connection to existing networks is a common practice in this type of communities. At the level of perception of the resident population, the problem of improper disposal of garbage is the most serious problem in one third of the studied locations.

Regarding the ethnicity of the resident population from the analyzed areas, the majority population is Roma (59%), while the Romanian ethnic population represents 34%. Other ethnic categories (Hungarians, Ukrainians, Slovaks and Russian-Lipovans) are present in the analyzed areas in a weighting of 7%.

The benefits, not expressed by those concerned, but reproached by neighbors, are that informal residents do not pay for electricity, being connected to electricity through neighbors. This creates disagreements because cost sharing is difficult to achieve in such a way that it is considered fair by all those involved.

Although legal forms are lacking on land and buildings, residents of informal settlements pay tax on land and house (they have a fiscal role).

In the consultations with social partners (in the process of elaborating the strategy of the Local Action Group Reșița), it was also revealed that the authorities are interested in solving the lack of documents, although there was no coordinated action in this respect. The County Police Inspectorate stated that the lack of documents is among the main problems/ challenges in interacting with people in these areas, as one cannot identify the trace or keep track of them, for example in cases of crime or enforcement/ recovery of fines. The lack of documents was also reported by school mediators active in these areas as a barrier to enrolling children in school.

Chapter 2. Case studies

2.1 Informal settlements in rural areas: Valea Corbului Village



The main road from Valea Corbului Village

Typology of informal settlements

Valea Corbului is a compound village of Călimanești Commune, in Arges County, situated on the upper valley of the Râncicov River and located at approx. 40 km from the city of Pitești and 120 km from Bucharest. At the 2011 Census, the population of the village was 1139 inhabitants and it currently totals 1346 inhabitants.

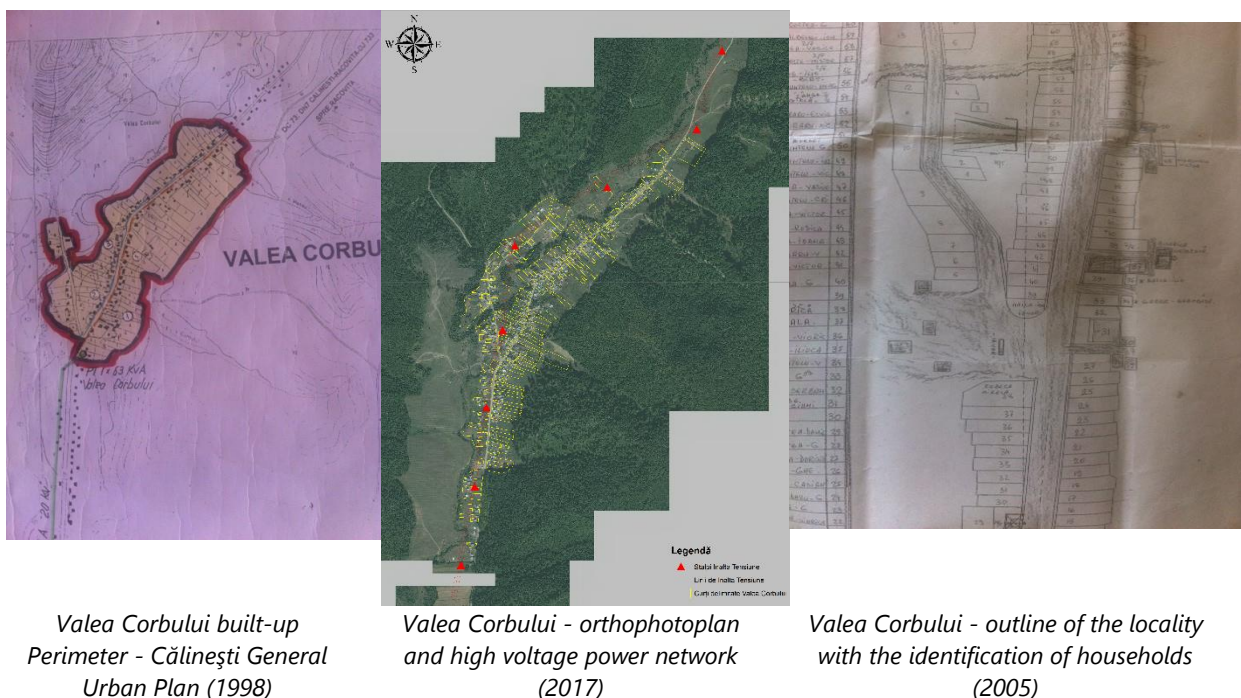
We mention that in 1966, at the first population and housing census in which this locality is officially registered, there were 312 inhabitants occupying 14 dwellings (with 19 rooms, 183 m² and 83 inhabitants), respectively 50 houses of necessity - as the temporary constructions were defined (barracks, huts, etc.) - in which 229 inhabitants lived.

Through its history and its socio-spatial characteristics, Valea Corbului locality is representative for the analysis of the particularities and the understanding of the evolution and dynamics of the informal settlements in Romania. Within the perimeter of the Valea Corbului village, the following situations are encountered: only one third of it is located in the built-up area, one fifth is located in flooded areas and under high voltage lines, about one fifth of the houses

are located on land belonging to the neighboring administrative-territorial unit and so on. In Valea Corbului, the inhabitants do not own property documents for most of the land and buildings, and they have not been subject to the construction authorization process.

Three distinct areas, corresponding to the different criteria for defining the informal settlements, can be delimited in the territory of the village and its neighborhoods, in relation to the status of the occupation and the juridical-urbanistic particularities of the land inside the built-up area:

- 1) the oldest area, the original nucleus of the village, with land titles and houses built without construction permits;
- 2) the area of extension on the commune's lands, with lots registered in the agricultural register and houses without authorization (the area along the road);
- 3) the area developed on land owned by Beleți-Negreni commune, located on the territory of Călinești commune, respectively in the floodable areas and under the high voltage network (the perimeter of Valea Popii and the extension to the hill).



Localization and settlement history

In the absence of studies and official information, data on the emergence and development of the village were reconstituted based on the statements of the elderly in the area. The settlement developed gradually after 1950, when communist authorities forced two large families of nomadic *Rudari* families to settle in the village's perimeter today. Initially, according to Gh.Prundaru (78 years old), the two groups, one of them consisting of 17 huts and the other one of 14 huts, that were "some to Negrești, others to Călinești" - they used to be called "the *Rudars* from the hill" and "the *Rudars* from the valley". The information is confirmed by Decree no. 799/1964 of 17/12/1964 regarding the change of the names of some localities, whereby the village of Rudarii Deal (*Rudarii*

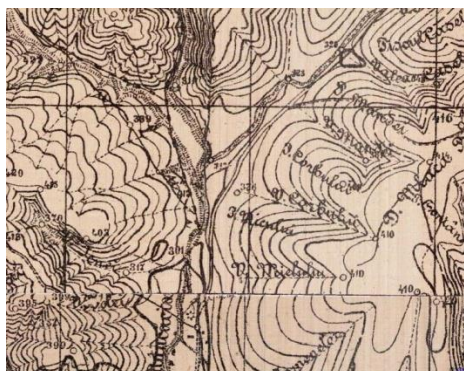
Hill) becomes Valea Corbului (Valea Corbului), com. Râncăciuv, Argeş County, even though in reality, the mentioned village was the one in the valley (located below), and the other one was located upstream from the position of the current village location.

Following the administrative reform in 1968, the village became part of Călineşti commune, even though a number of lands are known even today as belonging to other communities: the forest and canton lands down are those of Cărstieni (the "lower village" as it was historically known), orchards across the valley of Popii are of the Orjeni, and the pastures above the village are those of Beleti and Negreni. These territorial administrative and ownership uncertainties have led to difficulties and delays in the clarification of the ownership regime over the land *de facto* used by the inhabitants of Valea Corbului.

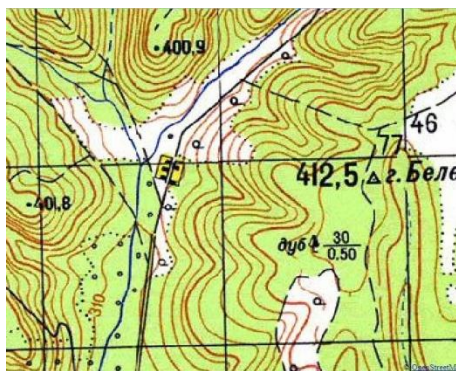
In the context of the epoch, land lots were assigned by the representatives of the Popular Council without any official inscription, on the old village of the commune and on the wilderness lands in the neighborhood, without the inhabitants holding any act on the land on which they sat. However, during the communist period, all inhabitants had ballots (the first made in 1955), and some of those who were employed at SOVROM Petrol, in Pitesti or later in Colibaşi, built larger brick houses.

In the 1990s, the community began to expand; the available land in the neighborhood of the old village was divided into plots of 15 m long and 40 m wide, and the eligible inhabitants received lots for houses and later ownership documents or certificates from the agricultural land register. At the same time, the occupants of the lots from the old village location received property titles, based on the provisions of Law no.18 / 1991 on the land fund.

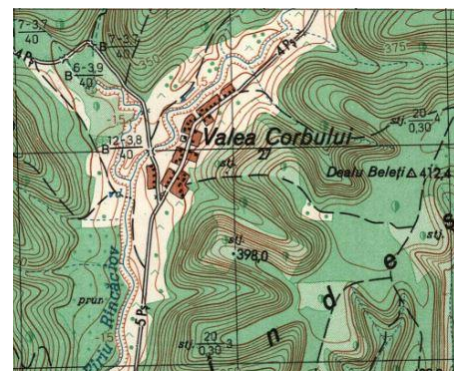
Most of the dwellings (about 80%) are located along the paved communal road, on the left side of the Valea Corbului, while the rest are located on the secondary road on the right bank, in the meadow or on the terraces of Valea Corbului. In the last decade, due to the absence of any organizing structure for the Valea Corbului community, many new constructions (some of them large in size and made of quality construction materials) were raised on the right bank of the valley, under the high voltage line.



The site where the village of Valea Corbului will develop (1910)



The core of the village Rudarii din Deal (Rudari from the Hill) in 1950 (which after 1964 became Valea Corbului)



Valea Corbului village - 1977



Valea Corbului - the limit of the built-up area as it appears in the General Urban Plan (GUP) currently in force (1998), in relation to the territory occupied by dwellings in present

Morphological, constructive and technical infrastructure features

The first built shelters were huts (in Romanian *bordeie*) and wooden houses, these being the dominant type of dwellings until the '70s and '80s. Of those first houses, only a few remained until now, most of them were replaced by other larger houses with more durable construction materials or improvised houses similar to the original ones. Typical houses of the '60-'90's, the most numerous even now, are those with one room (which were later added a second one), their attic being open and used for storing the fodder for horses during winter. As the families grew, to the house with one room, another one was added symmetrically, both with outside entrances and without communicating with each other (also presently called "storehouse").

Most plots and buildings are not modeled according to urban planning regulations and are built without building permits. This leads to a series of construction layout dysfunctions: the houses are built without minimal appliance to the construction rules that ensure the safety of the residents (stable foundation, strong walls, sufficient light inside, etc.), are placed without respecting the rules of locality organization (according to local urban planning regulations), thus being chaotically placed, without respecting the appropriate distances from the road axis and the boundaries of the parcel, without ensuring the accessibility for fire-fighting and ambulance vehicles, and / or being located in areas where housing is not allowed according to the General Urban Plan (GUP), thus being areas of risk for the population health (for eg. under the high voltage lines). Also, some of the houses are built outside the village area, in isolated and hard-to-reach places, which makes it difficult for residents to access social facilities and / or jobs.



Randomly placed houses



Households developed under high voltage lines



Houses built without respecting the regulations related to distances from the neighbors



Households developed in isolated, hard-to-reach places

The building materials from which the houses are built vary from houses from clay and recovered materials, with a precarious structure and resistance, to houses built of more durable materials, namely concrete frames and masonry with BCA. Many of them are in constant transformation, dictated either by the low resistance of the materials over time and of the construction itself, or by the changes in the initial needs and the desire to expand the dwelling.



Old Houses vs New Houses



The old clay house of the '70s vs. the new house of BCA



Improvised houses made of recovered materials



Clay house



New homes, personalized fences



Originally with one room, by building a new symmetrical room, the house occupied by a family of five children becomes a traditional "storehouse"



A house built in successive stages without an efficient plan from the beginning



A village, a community, a church



Many villagers have horses and carts, which they use as the main means of transport, along with bicycles.



Animal husbandry is a frequent practice of the locals, especially horses, pigs and hens.

Electricity was brought to the village in 1985, even though the high voltage and electrification network of the other neighbouring villages were made in the early 1970s. Many residents were then able to connect to the electricity with a contract and an external counter, using the agricultural land register. At present, only the dwellings along the communal road have legal access to the national electricity grid. Even if some people have IDs, as a result of

changing the legal norms regarding the contracting of electricity suppliers, in the absence of a document certifying the ownership of the property, it is not possible to formally connect those dwellings to the electricity.

The water network was introduced to the village in 2016. The village's water supply consists of individual wells made by some of the more wealthy inhabitants of the community, which give access to water to the other neighbors.



Fountains that provide water to the villagers



External gas counter

Risks affecting the community (Aerials Electrical Lines, landslides areas, flooding land, garbage storage)

Numerous dwellings are built in areas of risk for the health and safety of residents, where housing is not permitted according to the safety regulations, being located in the floodable areas or in the perimeter of the high-voltage protection area (with a capacity of 40,000 volts).



People hang their laundry to dry on the high voltage pylons in their yard, according to their courtyard perimeter.

Despite the perceived risk of some people who have suffered numerous electric shock injuries or complain of headaches caused by living under high-voltage lines, homes continue to expand in this area, taking advantage of land availability, except for alternatives for locating new homes. This is caused both by the lack of mechanisms to control / stop the expansion of houses in areas that are not intended for housing or to stimulate the construction of legal forms, as well as a poor awareness of the local community about the need to adhere to some building rules and urban planning compliance of their households.



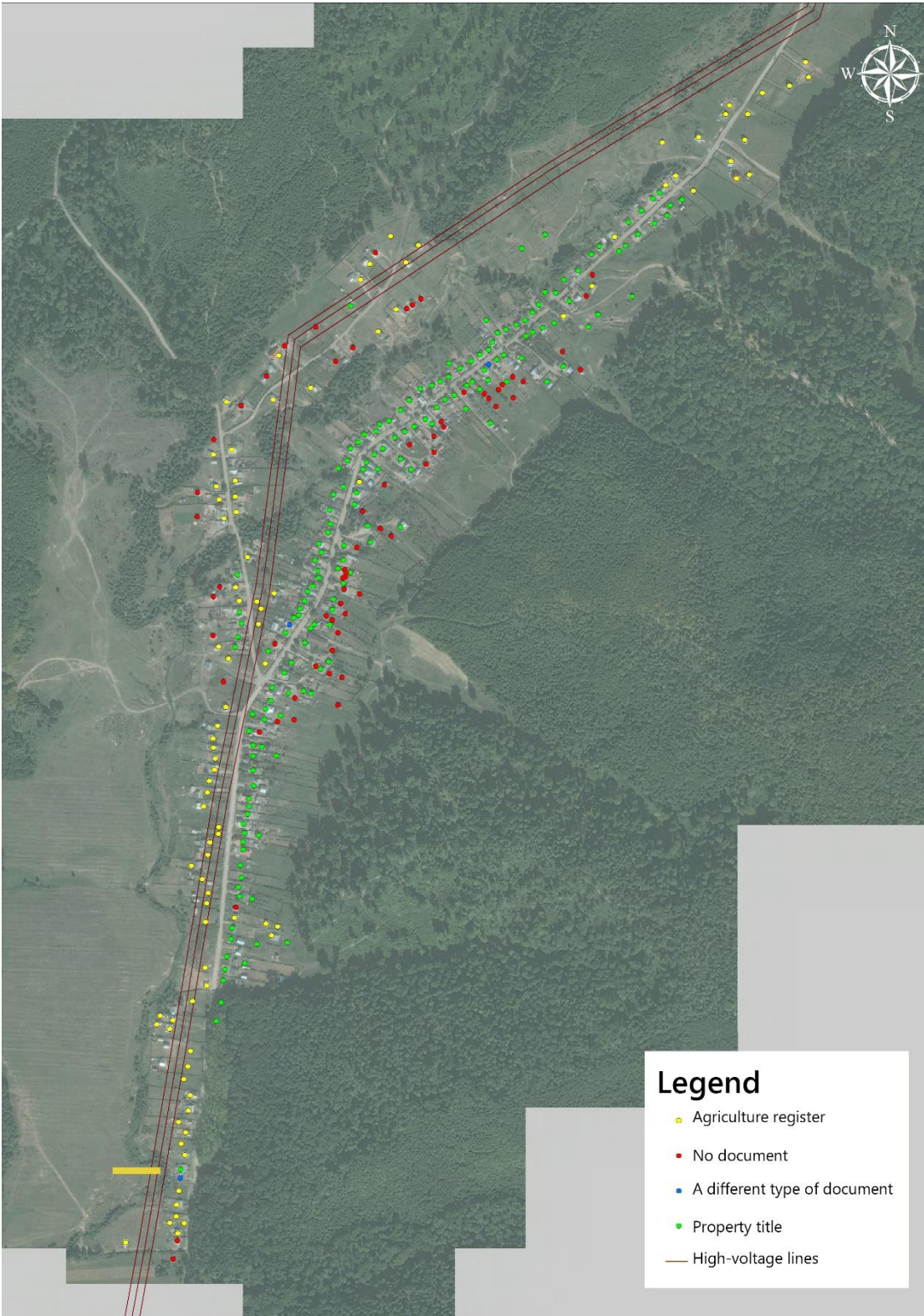
Dwellings under construction or already built just under the high voltage lines

Demographic and socio-professional features

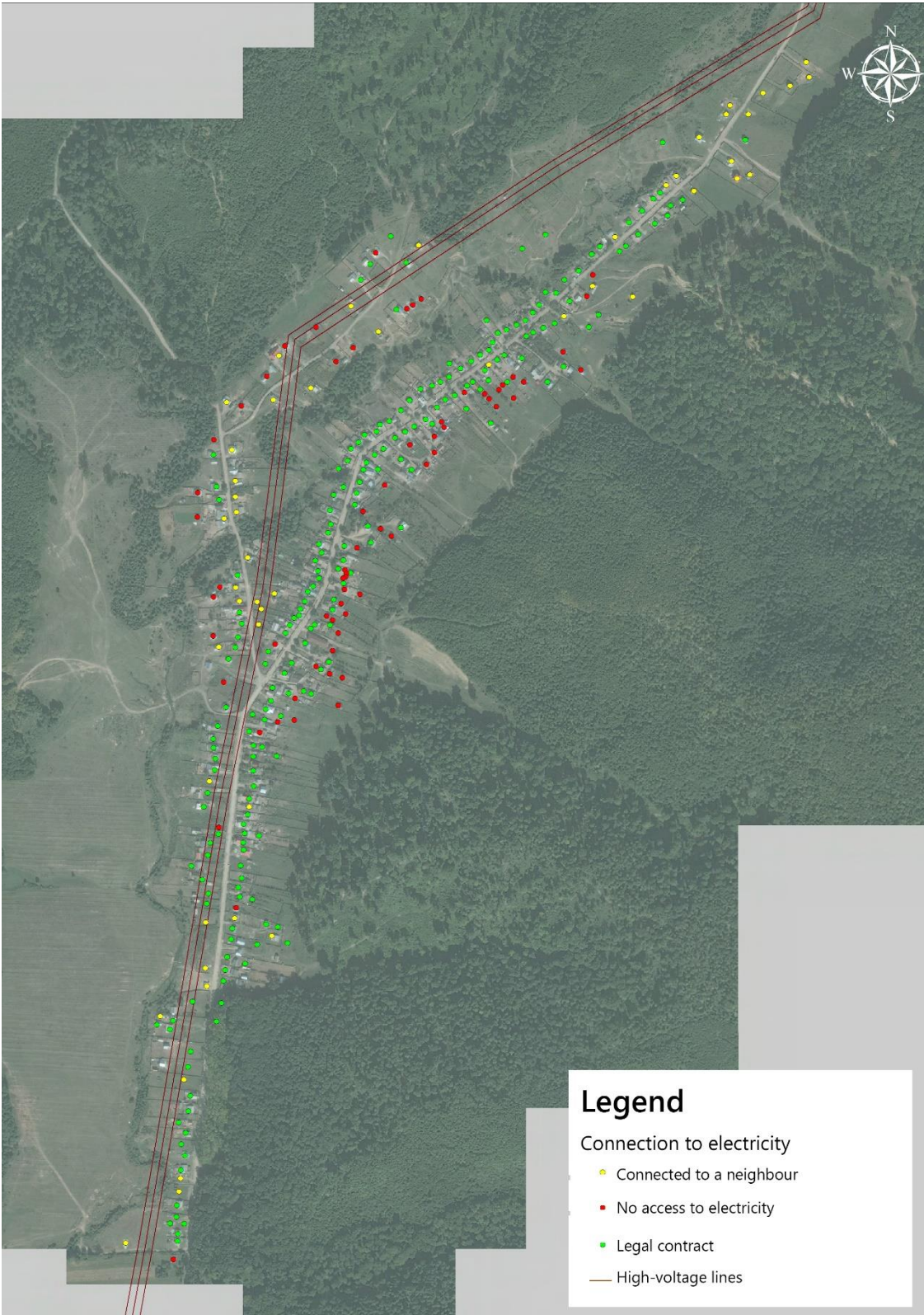
In Valea Corbului there are 279 dwellings where 406 families live: 174 single-family houses, 86 dwellings occupied by 2 families, 15 dwellings occupied by 3 families, 3 dwellings occupied by 4 families, and a home occupied by 5 families.

The structure by age groups shows its dynamism, the share of young people (35.8%) and adults (63.6%) in the community being in agreement with the national average. It should be noted the extremely small number - one person – representing the elderly.

All persons have permanent identity documents and domicile in the locality. Regarding the ownership of the land on which the houses are built, with one exception, the other dwellings either own a property title (167 cases - 59.8%) or an entry in the agricultural register (106 cases - 37.9 %). The houses were mostly made in two periods, in relatively equal proportions: before 1989 (41.5%) and after 2001 (40.8%). The rest of the dwellings were built in the period 1990-2000. With regard to the connection to the electricity grid, 76.3% of the dwellings have a legal contract and 23.6% are informally connected to a neighbor.



The map with the types of ownership documents for the plots on which the houses are made



The dwellings of Valea Corbului - the type of connection to the electricity network

Dwelling and possession practices

The original particularities of Valea Corbului village (the sedentarisation and regrouping of households in the central perimeter of the village), as well as the lack of information and systematization measures of the locality throughout its existence, determined the perpetuation of the informal organization practices. Thus, after 1990, the village expanded, each new household taking over a piece of land (with the agreement of and after discussions with neighbors, members of the community) where the inhabitants built a room, a "store" or, more recently, a big house. Initial developments were made along the main road, and later along the Popii Valley and beyond. Although, according to information circulating in the community, it is known that certain land plots are the property of neighboring communes (Beleți-Negreni, Oarja), there are cases of households which built their house on those lands.

Identifying and taking the possession of land (with poorly -made enclosures or well-built fencing) is done through local documentation and by obtaining the verbal agreement of the neighbors of that land. The practice is similar to cases where relatives accept that somebody in their family builds their house in their yard.

In all cases where the local public authority has information or registered ownership of one person's / family's land (with ownership documents, agricultural register, etc.), these actions were made only after a dwelling had already been built.

Practices on dealing with informal settlements at the level of local public authorities

Since the boundaries of the built-up area in the General Urban Plan of Călinești commune are not made in a geo-referenced vector format, it is not possible to determine precisely on the field which are the plots and buildings included in its boundaries.

This technical-urbanistic uncertainty, together with the inter-institutional contradictions regarding the apparently situation of Valea Corbului's territory being located on three territorial administrative units (Călinești, Oarja, Beleți-Negreni), has led to difficulties and disinterest to clarify the legal situation of the perimeter (the legalization of buildings), respectively to implement municipal projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the inhabitants. We mention that, following the technical discussions, the representative of the Office for Cadastre and Publicity of Argeș County confirmed that, according to the data from the ANCPI Geoportal, in fact the entire informal settlement in Valea Corbului village was located in the territory of Călinești commune, contrary to what the representatives of the local authorities declared.

From the discussions with the local and county authorities, there was a lack of knowledge of the steps that should be taken to solve the deadlock in which the residents in Valea Corbului are; there are many institutions with responsibilities involved and there is a lack of coordination of action and perseverance in taking action. Also, the City Hall is overcome by this problem, because of its scale and complexity, and does not have the funds and knowledge to find solutions or measures to prevent the proliferation of this situation. However, in the discussions with the local authorities,

their approach is proactive, seeking solutions to extend the built-up area of the communal land that is not affected by natural or technological risks.

The community and the local authorities` perspective (advantages and disadvantages of informal settlements, advantages and disadvantages of formalization)

The inhabitants of the Valea Corbului are aware of the barriers they encounter, as a result of the informal nature of the settlement: the difficulty of connecting to utilities, the difficulty of accessing services for which they need to document the ownership rights of the dwelling, and so on. ; the locals also complain about their health (eg headaches if they stay too long outside, under the high voltage lines) and seem to be aware that the proximity to the high-voltage line is harmful for their health. Also, in the interviews conducted in the area, there were no inhabitants mentioning possible advantages for living in an informal settlement. However, the community does not know the steps to follow from the decision to build a home, to choosing its location and its construction with legal forms, nor does it seem to be aware of the need for such process.

Those who have already built houses in non-buildable areas say the authorities did not inform them that they are not allowed to build their dwellings there. Also, those who do not have ownership of the land they built on or who are not registered in the agricultural register claim that the people from the Town Hall did not ask them to apply for titles, even though they did not have this initiative either. These things illustrate a lack of knowledge of the responsibilities and obligations of the town hall and the inhabitants of the community, as well as the lack of actions and proactive measures to stop the spreading of this phenomenon initiated by the local authorities.

2.2 Informal settlements in small-urban areas: Bumbești Jiu Town

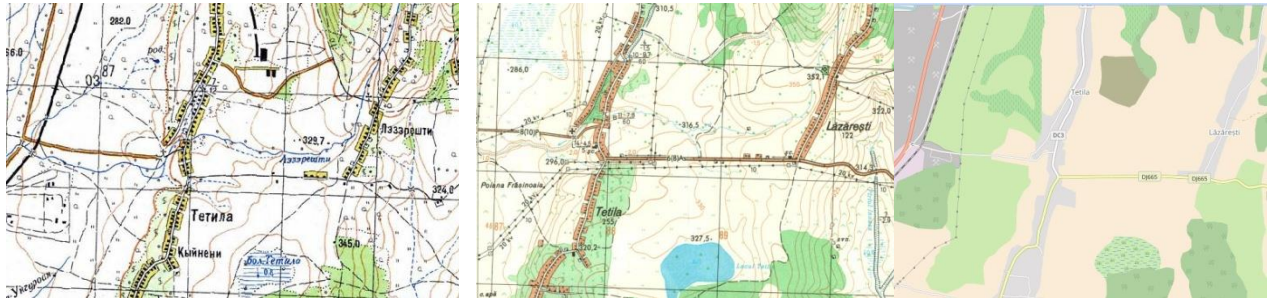
Typology of informal settlements

Bumbești-Jiu is a town in Gorj County, located at the contact between the hills with the mountains, at the exit of the Jiu Gorge, consisting of the Bumbești-Jiu, as administrative residency, and the villages of Curtișoara, Lăzărești, Pleșa and Tetila. Its geographic position has made a significant contribution to its economic and spatial development. The city is divided into two distinct urban areas: Bumbești and Valea Sadului (also named by locals "the colony"). Tetila is located in the central part of the administrative area of Bumbești Jiu, an elongated village developed on the hillside of a hill, still home of old-style houses specific to the sub-mountain area of Oltenia. The constituent localities were not collectivized during the communist regime and benefited indirectly from the positive effects of industrial development (jobs, good wages, etc.), which is still evidenced by the size and welfare of households and the community.

Two perimeters have been identified Within Bumbești-Jiu as meeting the criteria for defining informal settlements:

- Tetila, an informal settlement on the outskirts of town;
- ICH Colony, informal settlement within the former workers' colonies.

Each of the two perimeters is located outside the mentioned localities and has different development stories and trends.



Tetila area - ICH colony in 1950 (a), 1980 (b) and present (c-Open Street Map)

Localization and settlement history

Tetila area: Informal housing on the outskirts of the town

Historically, near the village of Tetila, in the immediate vicinity of the court of the Ionel Niță Rebedea boyar's family and the 4 ponds organized by him on the lower course of the Tetila brook, a group of dwellings of the boyars Gypsies was established, the area being known as "Mahalaua Veche". Starting from the initial core of the slum, at the beginning of the 1950s, the informal settlement expanded into two stages:

In the first stage (1950-1980) the settlement development was made along the communal road DC3 towards the village of Tetila and Barlești (in the north) and towards the village of Căineni (today disbanded, as it was embedded in the village of Tetila, to its south). During this period, the new dwellings were built either in the perimeter of the old `mahala` or along the DC3 road to the north or south, on unbuilt land lots informally assigned or delimited in the area known locally as Găvădanu, to the south of DC3 and DJ665 road intersection. We notice that on the topographical maps of the last century, Negreni („Blacks”) or Corbeni („Ravens”) toponyms appeared to name this informal settlement area, place names which currently do not exist formally and are unknown to locals.

In the second stage (1980-present) the expansion took place along the DJ665 county road from its intersection with DC3 communal road towards Lăzărești. The dwellings made in this perimeter used irregularly delimited land lots, appropriated informally.



Tetila - houses built on undelimited land lots, in the area with recent expansion towards the village of Lăzărești

ICH Colony: informal dwelling within the former workers' colony of the Hydro Power Plant

Following the rationale of large construction sites of the communist period, in the administrative area of Bumbesti-Jiu town, after 1984, a set of barracks (a colony) was built for temporary use for sheltering the workers of the Hydroplant Constructions Company (abbreviated in Romanian as *ICH*) employed for the construction of a hydro power dam on Jiu River. The barracks are located on the Jiu riverside, near the confluence of Jiu river with Tetila brook, next to the road connecting DN66 national road to DC3 communal road.

After 1990, in the context of economic restructuring and the abandonment of this hydro-energetic project, the ICH barracks were not abolished, many of the former ICH employees preferring to continue living in these temporary shelters. The ICH colony area, although included in the urban built up area, has an uncertain legal status as the barracks (each of which contain 4 housing units) do not meet the criteria to formally qualify as housing (although some of them have been sold by ICH to the former employees - tenants) and the land on which the colony is built is still the property of ICH.



ICH Colony - barracks comprising of an array of 4 housing units, built in the 1980s

Morphological, constructive and technical infrastructure features

The situation of the two informal settlements is different: Tetila was built in successive stages, without any urban planning coordination, while the ICH colony was completed in one single organized stage.

In the case of households in **the Tetila area**, most land lots and constructions are not built according to urban planning rules and lack building permits, even if the construction materials used are mostly of good quality (brick and BCA, foundations and solid resistance structures etc.).

The dominant dysfunction is mainly generated by the manner of determining the form and the limit of the lots, respectively the on-site placement of the constructions. Regarding the land parcel delimitations, there are local differences in relation to the stages of expansion of the settlement. Thus, the initial squatter area is not parcelled, the existing dwellings being built on land lacking formal lot delimitation or any inner boundaries. The constructions built during the communist period, on the extension area along the communal road, were made on land parcels precisely delimited by the authorities of the time or on previously delineated land parcels that were unoccupied by buildings. The constructions from the recent expansion stage towards Lăzărești use parcels with irregular shapes and dimensions, informally appropriated, delimited based on arbitrary rules by their occupants, with no compliance to any planning regulations, lacking any legal papers and without being established in agreement with/ or in the presence of representatives of local public authorities. Few households have tenure titles for the plots on which

their houses are built, most of these being those which have obtained their land lots and have built dwellings during the communist period.

Most houses are built without authorization, do not comply with the planning delineation guidelines and the minimal rules for the organization of the settlement (defined according to the general provisions of the town planning regulations). The dwellings are scattered in disorder, without complying with the corresponding alignments to the road axis and land lot limits, in areas which - for the time being - are not zoned for residential use as per the town's current General Urban Plan (PUG). The houses are generally made of durable materials, respectively concrete frames, brick and masonry with BCA. Many of these are constantly evolving, dictated either by the low resistance in time of the materials used and the construction itself, or by changes in the initial needs of their occupants and the desire to expand the dwelling. Most recent constructions are very large and outweigh the real housing needs of families.



Old house in the Tetila area, recently modified: closed porch, replaced roof



Toilet in the yard



In the old Tetilla squatter area, old and new homes are set up on a plot of land used in common, families share households



The house in the background, one of the oldest in the informal settlement of Tetila (connected to the electricity grid), is the starting point for extensions and wires carrying electricity to neighboring relatives' homes



Houses on the old land lots assigned or purchased during the communist period at the edge of the settlement, recently built by members of the community working abroad (see cars with UK number)



2 houses and 2 generations that share a household in the same yard: the old traditional house (left) bought in the 80's and inhabited by the elderly, the new house (right) that will be inhabited by the young ones at their return from Scotland.

The ICH colony was a greenfield development, using standard barrack construction patterns for energy workers. Thus, at the time it was built, the location of the buildings and the organization of the settlement was not under the pressure of any legislation, administration or authorities with a controlling role. Within the colony, the barracks (each comprising 4 housing units) were located at a distance from each other, each having small gardens in front or behind, and being connected by a concrete road system (of transportable concrete slabs). Power supply and connections, as well as the easy access to the public water network were provided upfront, during the organization of the site. Grocery stores were also placed within the colony.

At present, there are no overall significant constructive and urban changes in the colony. Most of the barracks have the same configuration, the gardens and access roads (main and secondary) are in the same condition. However, as a result of different appropriation mechanisms of these housing units (from apparent abandonment by ICH, to legal purchases by former employees or other interested persons), the buildings, adjoining yards and the colony ensemble has changed. Thus, a number of housing units or entire barracks are abandoned. On the other hand, many residential units and courtyards related to them have been re-arranged, transformed and / or expanded, and are currently occupied as permanent dwellings with access to public utilities.

Although the ownership status of parcels and common road infrastructure is not clear (ICH or public domain), the ICH colony community remains dynamic and is proposed to be zoned according to its defacto use, as part of the built up area, within the new Bumbesti-Jiu PUG, whose elaboration is planned to follow.



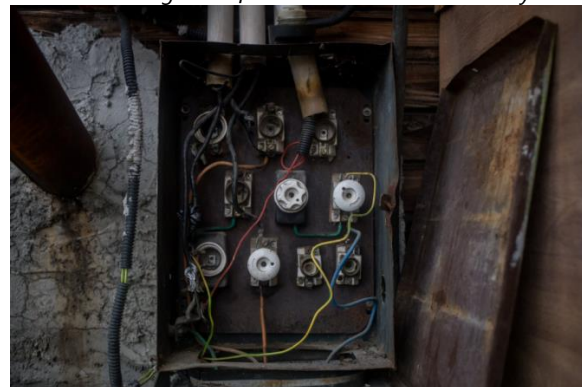
The barracks of the ICH colony were initially made of wood and covered with asbestos plates.



Renovation, upgrading, extension, enclosure of two dwelling units from a barrack in the colony.



The roads inside the colony were made of movable reinforced concrete elements (at the same time as the colony was built)



The electricity and drinking water networks were built upfront by ICH

At Tetila, although located near the electricity grid, not all dwellings are directly and legally connected to this network. Thus, the oldest households or those holding formal tenure documents for the land lot on which the house is located (property title, house purchase contract, agricultural role certificates), in accordance with the legislation in force up to a decade ago, could at that time connect electricity with a contract and using an external counter. Even if all the inhabitants have identity papers, due to the change of legal norms regarding the contracting with electricity suppliers, it is not possible to connect to electricity in the absence of a document proving the ownership of the building. The other houses, whose owners could not prove property rights, are connected through improvised wiring to the first houses, despite the fact that all those involved are aware of the risks of electrocution.

Risks affecting the community (Aerials Electrical Lines, landslides areas, flooding land, garbage storage)

There are no natural, technological or biological risks affecting the Tetila informal settlements or the ICH colony, as confirmed by the proposed introduction of the perimeters of the two informal

settlements as formal residential zoning perimeters in the new Bumbesti-Jiu PUG, planned for approval.

Dwelling and possession practices

At Tetila, the original nucleus of the settlement was the old squatter area („Mahalaua Veche”), where houses were built where the boyar directed them. Those old houses no longer exist, instead of them in the '70s' 90s new constructions were raised with the money earned from salaries or from the works made in Bărağan or the making of clay bricks in the Timișoara-Lugoj area or even Cluj. This period also coincided with the extension of the village because the families had become quite numerous and the houses crowded enough, making cohabitation difficult. On land lots acquired through agreements with their owners (we mention again that the area had not been collectivized during the communist period) new houses were built, but given the time's constraints, proper purchase contracts were not possible, but only hand-written receipts with two or three witnesses. In the absence of urban planning coordination or densification pressure of the village core area, the lots thus purchased were initially scattered, the houses not being built next to one another. On a stretch of about 2 km, approximately 15 people - not all being relatives of grade I or II - bought land lots. The lands available between these households have, over time, been occupied by new homes built, usually by sons, grandchildren, or sometimes the grooms of the first one installed there. The way in which the initial land lots have been organized and built upon is relevant to family evolution: the available space was occupied as the family grew. After 1990, in line with the demographic and economic growth of the community, the settlement extended along the road connecting with Lăzărești village, by illegal occupation of the land initially consisting in the communal pasture and the former boyar's orchards between the road and valley of Tetila.

Regarding the practices and decisions related to the informal appropriation of the land, that is, who decides how much land to occupy and what are the limits of the occupied land, the discussions with the members of the community confirmed that the eldest member of the family usually decides who stays in the house and who builds his house next door. In fact, these trans-generational mechanisms are accepted and respected by all members of the community, being done all the time in good understanding, for no one would have wanted to build where they were not welcomed. There were no local conflicts related to lands, "misunderstandings" were settled amicably at all times, or rarely by local judges (when both sides were ethnic Roma) by elders elected on either side (named *`stabori cu cârstinitori`*).

The new land lots were occupied successively, as each new family that decided to build a house has occupied a perimeter at the edge (which is in permanent dynamics) of the settlement. In the recently expanded perimeter of the informal settlement, towards Lazarești, there are no delineations for each lot on which a house is located and the lots do not have similar sizes. For newly occupied areas, especially after 2000, the legal situation is uncertain, but there are no related disputes between occupiers and potential owners.

In the ICH colony, it was the enterprise that sold the occupants some of the housing units within the barracks. Many of these, especially those unoccupied, are still owned by ICH. The sold ones have entered the usual circuit of a real estate market, where private owners (and there are

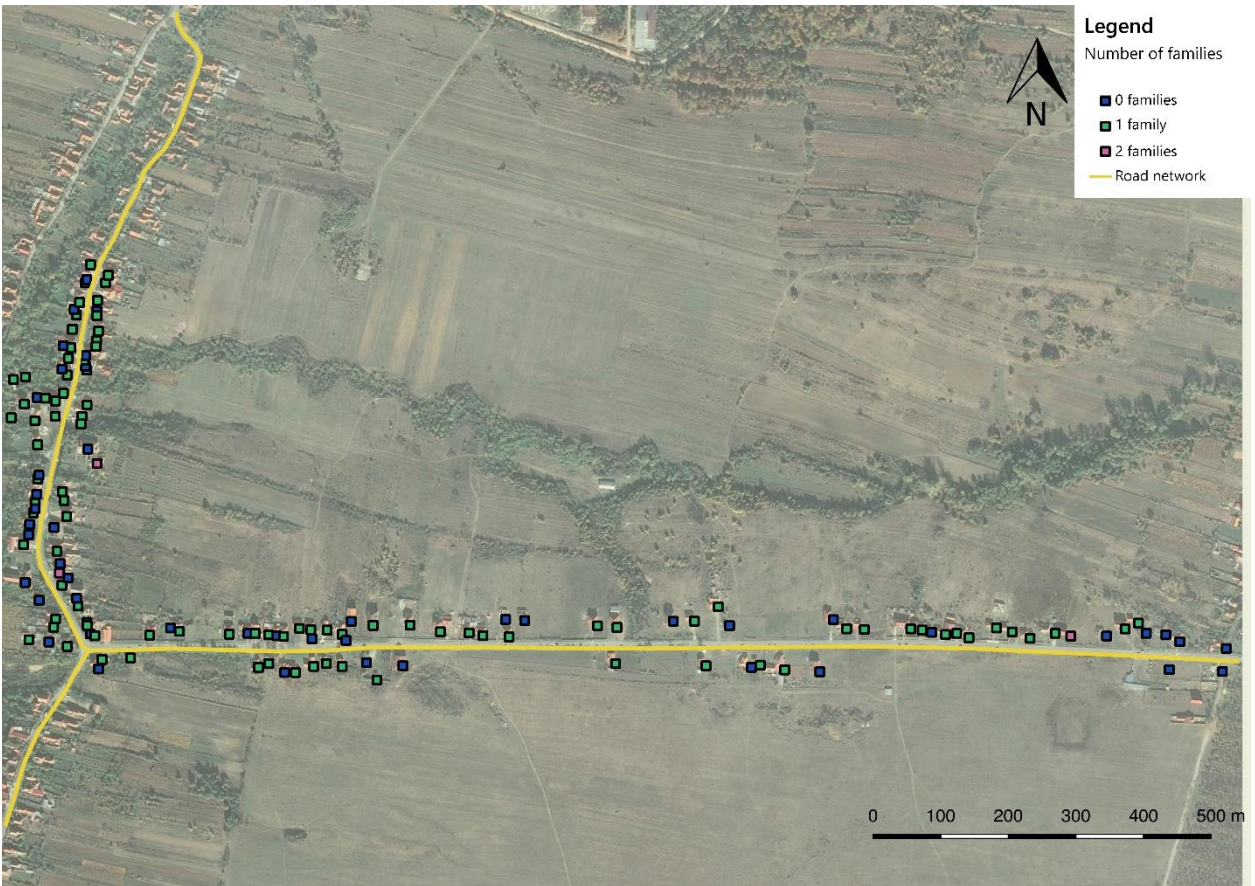
examples of such cases) have resold or are trying to sell these barracks. In the absence of regulations or prohibitions on the use of small gardens affiliated to each dwelling, some of them have been refurbished by the owners, becoming either yards with different uses or perimeters in relative abandonment.

Demographic and socio-professional features

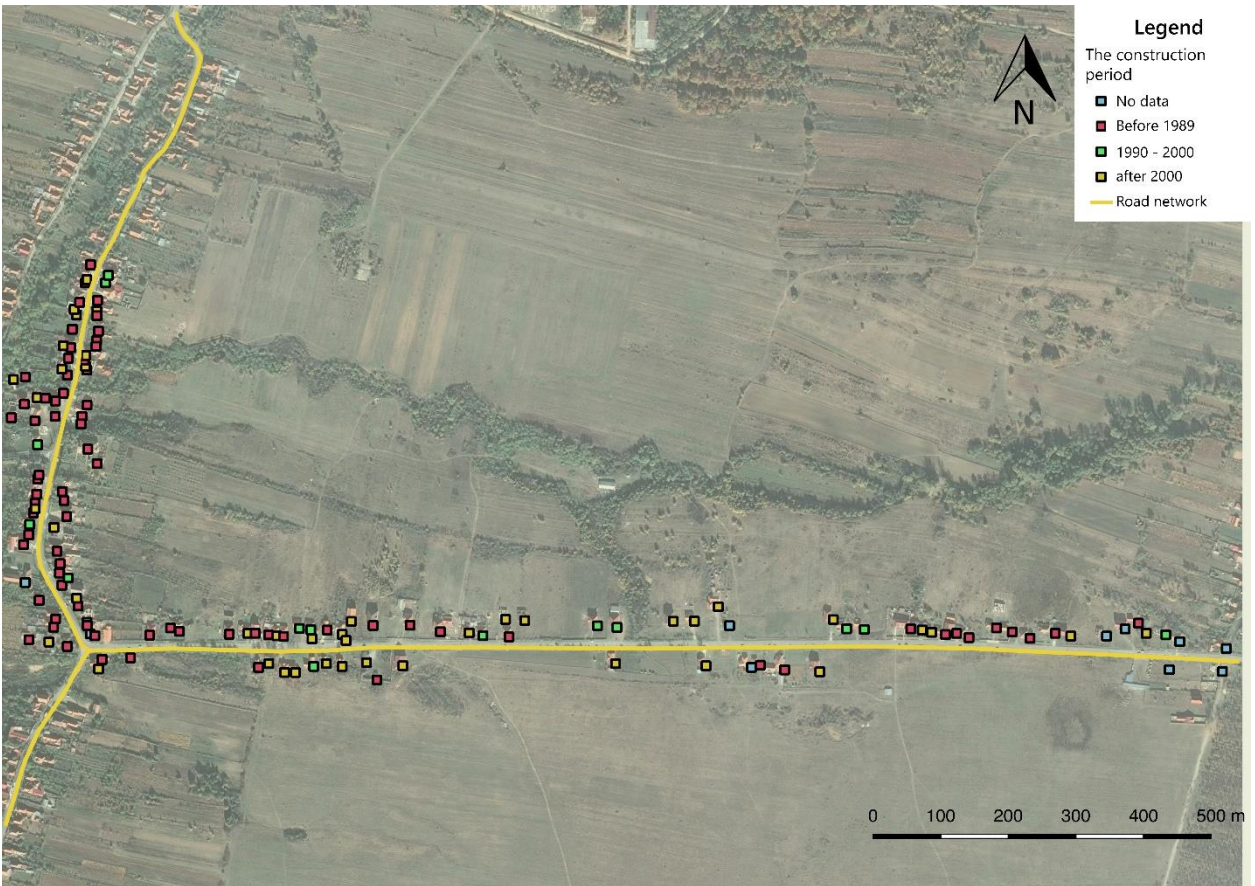
There are 137 houses in the informal settlement on Tetila, of which 42 are unoccupied. In the 95 permanently occupied houses currently live 98 families totalling 384 members. Of these, 107 are youth (27.86%), 237 adults (61.72%) and 40 elderly (10.42%). All community members have permanent identity cards. Only 11 houses have land titling, all of them being built before 1989. For the other houses (88.4%) there is no formal land titling. None of the houses have building permits.

The majority of the houses reviewed, respectively 76 houses (55.47% of the total Tetila dwellings), are built before 1989, about 10.2% in the period 1990-2000 and 31.9% after 2001. For 4 houses the exact construction period is unknown. With regard to the connection to the electricity grid, 97 houses have contracts (representing 70.8 % of the dwellings in the community), 29 houses are connected via improvised wiring to a neighbour (usually a member of the same family) and 4 dwellings are not connected at all. For 7 dwellings there was no information collected.

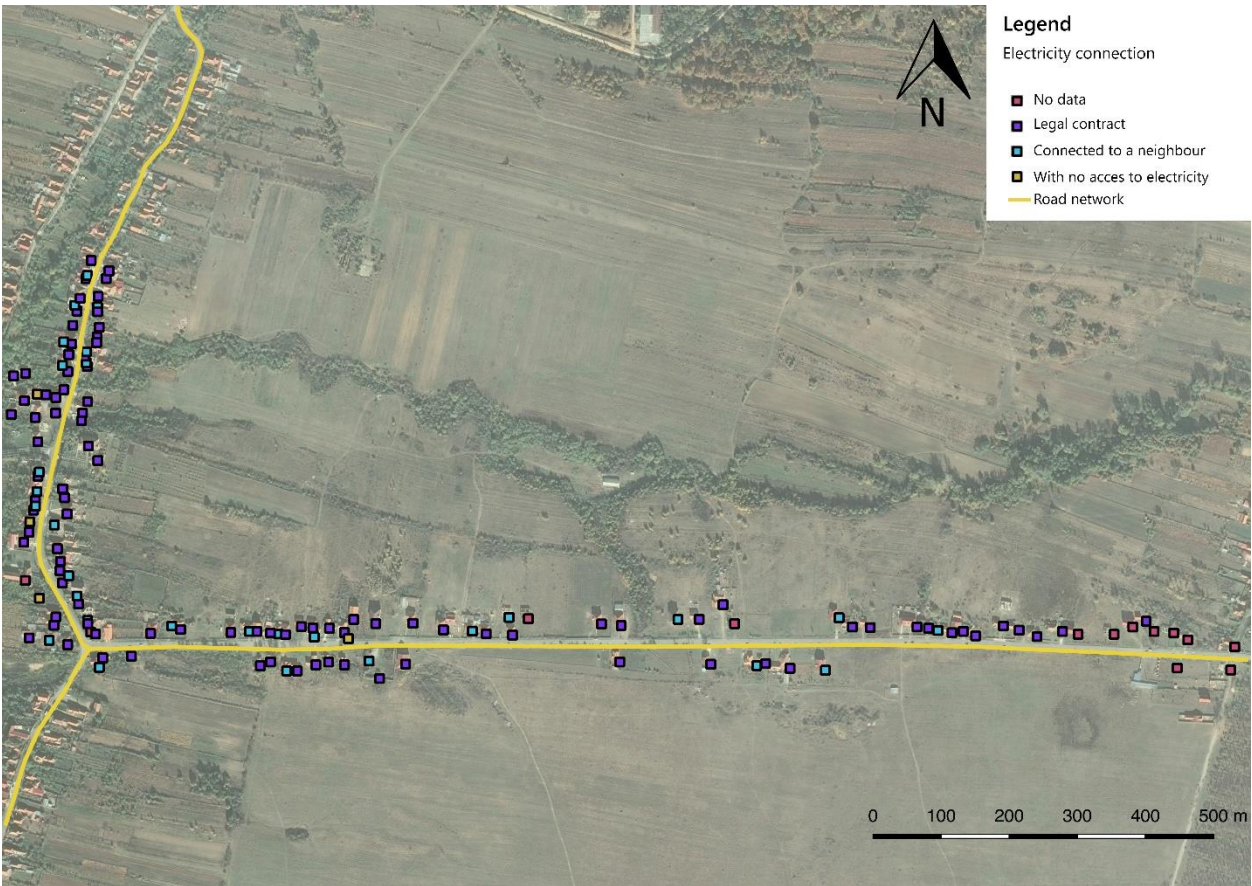
Within the ICH colony there are 31 buildings, of which 14 barracks with 4 housing units each, 11 barracks with 2 housing units each and 6 houses built after 1990 on the available land between the barracks. All buildings are connected to the electricity grid and all people in the colony have identity papers. While the 6 houses are owner occupied, in the case of the housing units within the 25 barracks, only half are occupied by people / families who bought these dwellings from ICH. The rest of the empty dwellings still belong to ICH, most of them being quite degraded as they have been unused and lacked permanent maintenance.



Types of households by the number of families



Map of the building period



Map with types of connection to electricity

Practices on dealing with informal settlements at the level of local public authorities

The issue of housing - and informal housing in particular - is an area of competence of several public institutions, including: the Government / MRDPA - with responsibilities in developing and promoting the normative and operational framework for this kind of territories and communities; NACRP / OCRP: cadastre responsibilities, registration of ownership, respectively the establishment of the right of possession, but also the management of the National Cadastre and Land Book Program, respectively the detailing of the "official map of Romania" in order to clarify the boundaries of the administrative-territorial units; the Prefect's institution ensures the coordination of the activities of the territorial administrative units, provides support in clarifying the conflicts regarding their boundaries, as well as the interface between the MDRAP and the local public authorities; The County Council together with the local public authorities cooperate to solve the problems related to urbanism and ensure the sustainable development of the localities; The National Roma Agency and the County Offices for Roma carry out activities to support Roma communities in informal settlements; Community: Involvement and support for City Hall in identifying viable solutions for sustainable development of the locality and settlement of informal settlement.

At present, although the existence and problems of communities in informal settlements are known to local public authorities, they do not have legal and operational tools to solve them. In addition, their complexity require the intervention of several institutions, and in the absence of a coordinating framework of action and perseverance in taking action, there are no solutions and results foreseen.

The community perspective and the perspective of the authorities (advantages and disadvantages of informal living, advantages and disadvantages of formalization)

The inhabitants of Tetila are aware of the barriers they encounter as a result of the informal character of the settlement. Lack of ownership of land and construction without authorization, make it impossible to connect to utilities and make legal inheritance impossible. In addition, community members have noticed that they have little knowledge of the responsibilities a landowner has, that is, which are the stages and steps to follow to solve the deadlock. The desire of the community to identify solutions to have land ownership documents is unanimous, and the list of practical benefits deriving from it is clearly understood. The main element that created the awareness on the absence of documents was related to the impossibility of legal connection to the electricity grid. By contrast, in the ICH colony, considering the organized manner in which the colony was established and the constant support provided by ICH, the direct effects of informality, as mentioned above, did not cause problems for the occupants of the barracks.

The Bumbesti Jiu Mayoralty understands the realities of Tetila and has shown openness to identify legal and operational solutions aimed at solving the juridical status of the area. In addition, the representatives of the local public authorities interviewed pointed out that identifying solutions for legalization of these settlements have more advantages (taxation, community control and regulation of future constructions, etc.) than disadvantages.

2.3 Informal settlements in county seat urban areas: Reșița Municipality

Typology of informal settlements

Reșița, a county seat town with a population of 73,282 inhabitants at the last Population Census (2011), has several areas with different informal settlement typologies. The residence profile in Reșița is closely linked to the development of the city as a result of the heavy industry (steel, railways, locomotives, engines, turbines, etc.), an economic activity initiated here since the eighteenth century. Hence, a large part of the city's residential areas correspond to a certain stage in the development of the industry, being generated as housing for workers. Some of such areas currently include informal housing, either as housing units occupied abusively, without legal form, or improvised dwellings in the vicinity of residential buildings originally used for workers. In addition, other informal settlement areas in Reșița have developed on the outskirts of the town

or in villages pertaining administratively to Reșița, on lands that were initially communal pasture areas, on the edges of the forest or on river bankside, predominantly by groups of Roma residents, due to their lack of land ownership.

- **Informal dwelling within or near former colonies of workers**

At present, industry in Reșița has strongly contracted as a result of a sustained decline in the post-communist era. This process has also led to a pronounced demographic decline and a change in the profile of the inhabitants, especially in residential areas in the proximity of industrial sites / former colonies for workers. While some families have relocated to other localities or abroad in search of new jobs, there has been an increase in the number of low-income residents who have occupied, in some cases informally, housing units originally used by workers, or have improvised dwellings in their vicinity. Thus, there are reported cases of informal housing in residential buildings currently owned by the town hall such as Mociur, Moara Juracek, Ceretui, Oituz and others. Families living without formal papers (*ie* rent contracts) are cohabiting with those who have a tenancy agreement with the mayoralty, sometimes being their relatives. This situation has been made possible due to poor management of the public housing stock - eg. some of the housing units have been greatly degraded and / or the original occupants have left, therefore the units thus becoming available have been occupied by relatives / friends of those who have a rental agreement for the other housing units in that respective building. There has been a practice whereby such families file a request to the City Hall and may obtain a tenancy contract to "formalize" the occupation of the otherwise abusively occupied space. Although this is a way of solving the housing problems and needs of low-income families, this practice is inconsistent with a transparent and equitable management of the public housing fund. The City Hall also has long waiting lists with social housing requests for families in need and, legally speaking, it is required to evaluate all files submitted in order to re-allocate and contract units made available on the basis of a transparent score set to prioritize families with the highest needs (*eg* number of children, health problems, etc.).

Photo: Area Dealu Crucii, a former colony of workers, located between the Resita Siderurgic Compound and the slag heap



*View of the Dealu Crucii area, as seen from the slag heap
Standard worker houses, currently owned by the town hall,
rented*



Improvised houses / schacks

Photo: Moara Juracek (right) and the blocks in Mociur (left), housing units owned by Resita City Hall and rented to tenants. Families with a tenancy contract co-inhabit with illegal occupiers.



- **Informal settlements on the outskirts of the city / in surrounding villages**

Informal settlement area of Călnic



Informal settlement area of Călnic: view from the Bârza River, pedestrian access to the neighborhood



Bistra Street, partly asphalted, construction site in progress for completion of water network installation;

Informal settlement area in Terova, Viitorului Str.



Houses without legal forms on Viitorului Str.



The dwellings are built on a slope under the edge of the forest; older buildings in the background and newer / under construction units on the side.

Localization and settlement history

Câlnic area - Str. Bistra

Câlnic is a village-neighbourhood of Reșița, located at the northeast of the city, and administratively annexed to the city in 1968. The informal settlement area analysed under this project is located at the end of Bistra Street, in a relatively isolated area to the rest of the neighbourhood, between the railroad and the Bârzava river. Based on the information obtained from the locals, it appears that this community was established during the interwar period, but it expanded significantly during the communist period.

The initial group was made up of a few Roma families which, isolated on the outskirts of Câlnic village, were craftsmen of pots and brass tools. During the communist period, the community changed significantly as a result of the establishment of many people of the same ethnicity, but without working on a specific craft, and coming from all regions of the country. Thus, during the communist period, the predominant activity of the locals was that of recovering scrap iron, glass jars and other recyclable materials, covering the entire city. The quasi-disappearance of this sector of activity (with the exception of scrap metal recovery that has gained another dimension) has increased the poverty of the community and has determined a limitation of travel to seek for work or resources in this isolated area between the former village, the river and the railway. As a significant part of the community members are not from Reșița and have (at best) only temporary identity papers (due to the absence of a domicile proven by tenure papers in the area), for fear of being legitimized and fined in the city, they are increasingly isolated spatially and socially within this informal settlement.

In its spatial evolution, the informal settlement at the end of Bistra Street was limited by the railway and the river, the constructions made in the last decades being made either on land available between the old houses or in their yard, respectively on the free land at the edge of village,

towards the former football field that became partly a pasture and partly a garbage ramp for the community.

Aerial photography: 2005 vs 2016



Țerova area – Viitorului Str.

Țerova is a village belonging to the municipality of Resita, located in its eastern part. The informal settlement area covered by this report is located at the edge of Țerova, along Viitorului Street. The settlement is over 70 years old, with the first Roma families settling in this isolated village after the Second World War. Later, the community grew mainly by demographic growth and less by migratory input (except when some people came here following marriage with community members). The intensification during the last two decades of the scrap metal recovery, a representative activity for the community during the communist period as well, caused the replacement of most old houses with larger houses made of better construction materials.

The replacement of constructions has not been preceded by a juridical clarification of the status of the land, *ie* a more judicious delimitation of the free ones, thus a part of the constructions are grouped along a slope, minimally arranged for pedestrian traffic and difficult to access over winter, by the elderly or mobility disabled people.

Aerial photography: 2005 vs 2016



Dealul Crucii Area

Dealul Crucii area is located between the TMK industrial site (the former Steel Factory) and the slag heap. This was, initially, the location of the limestone quarry of the factory in the 30's, and at the foothills near the today's steel factory, the place of the first lime kilns of Reșița. It is in this perimeter that the „Iron Factories and the Resita Domains” company, as it was named at the time, developed in the interwar period a neighbourhood of "light homes" for the workers in the area, which were in fact service homes made of wooden structures or cob. While they were meant to be used for a limited period, these dwellings still exist today in the perimeter of the streets of Mierlei, Alunului, Turturelelor, Vulturilor, etc. Subsequently, in the years 1970-1990, in the vicinity of the UCMR colony, the unloading area of the steel batch waste and slag from the blast furnace was located.

The area of barracks - small-scale constructions on wooden and masonry structures with housing units coupled along a street front- currently in the property of the town hall, has expanded in the 60s-70s, when several other self-built squatter dwellings have appeared. At present, 91 housing units exist in the barracks located the area of the Dealul Crucii Hill, owned by Reșița City Hall, most of them being degraded and lacking comfort, even though they have been extended / upgraded with by their tenants, with their own resources.

Aerial photography: 2005 vs 2016



Morphological, constructive and technical infrastructure features

In all analysed areas, the houses vary in terms of the quality and typology of the materials used. The oldest are the shacks / improvised dwellings made of adobe, unburned bricks, covered with tin sheet roofs or improvised covers of bituminous cardboard. Some houses use tile, recovered from demolitions. The most recently built use corrugated board or recovered plastic sheets / reused promotional banners, and so on.

Dwellings are generally over-crowded, with 1-2 rooms with improvised cooking and washing areas, most often outside. Families who have been able to engage in revenue-generating activities, but still predominantly in the informal economy, have started new buildings either next, or as extensions to existing ones. Wood stoves, sometimes with improvised smoke evacuation systems, are used to heat the house.

In all three districts (Câlnic, Țerova and Dealu Crucii) there are water networks in place, or in progress of being installed, but based on discussions with the locals, it seems that their connection is unlikely because their capacity to pay monthly water supply invoices plus the cost of connection is limited and, in addition to this, in the absence of baths / toilets / kitchens fitted in the interior, these connections seem unnecessary (resident in Câlnic: "*there is water, yes, in the ground, the mayor installed it for us, what is it that we would need is a tap water fountain*"). The connection to electricity is made from the few houses that were able to have a legal contract during the period when it was not necessary to have a formal document proving possession or ownership over the house in order to have an electricity contract. Electricity goes via improvised wiring from these houses to those built at a later stage.

Most of the locals live on social benefits, working informally for day jobs, collecting and selling scrap iron. Some households also grow animals beside their house for their own consumption (especially in Câlnic).

Unlike other informal dwelling areas, in Călnic, Țerova and Dealu Crucii, the street network allows the access of the ambulance and the fire machines, although the roads are of poor quality. All three areas are marginal positioned in relation to the city, posing accessibility challenges for the locals trying to reach different services and facilities in the city.

The storage and collection of garbage is unsatisfactory, especially in the Călnic area. The garbage fee is 5 lei per family per month (approximately 1.08 EUR), but the Town's Garbage Collection Company declares that they have no contracts signed with the families in the area. Based on their declarations, large containers for garbage collection have frequently been installed in the area, but they end up being cut and sold at scrap metal centers, or filled with manure.



A family of 8 people - 2 adults and 6 children - in a 2-room house



Dwelling overcrowding - 3-beds room (right, background and left)



Heating system of the house: stoves on wood



Access to water at a common fountain; a water supply network has been recently built but it lies underground without branching; houses of better or less good quality building materials and finishes



Household example: improvised space as a washing area



Household example: outdoor kitchen as an extension of the house; water transported from the common fountain stored in plastic barrels;



Improvised electrical connections (Mociur)



Household example: yard full of scrap metal for recovery, wood scraps and other materials most likely to be used for stoves and cooking hobs; and animals for household consumption



Storage of garbage on the river's edge; improvised roof from reused promotional banner;



Various typologies of houses and building materials; (in the background, left) there are water sources for firefighters; partially asphalted but non-systemized road (without leakage and sidewalks); access to electricity and street lighting;



Adobe house with improvised sheet metal roof



Improvised roofing made of bituminous cardboard

Risks affecting the community (Aerials Electrical Lines, landslides areas, flooding land, garbage storage)

The area of Dealul Crucii is particularly affected by the risks generated by proximity to the slag heap. The TMK slag pit is offered for exploitation to a slag sorting and trading company, used in construction / transport infrastructure projects. The heap forms a nearly vertical wall a few meters away of the housing area (see photo below). Based on discussions with people, it was revealed that there is a discomfort and correlation with respiratory problems because of the dust, especially during periods of dryness, without precipitation. According to the regulations in force^[1], the minimum sanitary protection distance to the housing areas of the controlled waste (hazardous or non-hazardous waste) should be 1000 m.

In the Călnic area there are also houses located very close to the river bank (see photo below), in the floodable area. Waste disposal is made inappropriately, being thrown directly onto the river bank, in the area frequented by children and household animals.



Dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the slag heap (Dealul Crucii)



Housing on the banks of the Bârzava river, vulnerable to increase in water levels (Călnic)

Demographic, socio-professional features

In the informal settlement in Călnic, there are 39 dwellings, 4 of them being unoccupied. The other 35 dwellings are occupied by 49 families (167 persons), as follows: 11 dwellings are occupied by 2 families; 1 dwelling with 4 families and 24 single-family dwellings. The age-groups structure demonstrates its dynamism, the share of young people (52.1%) and adults (45.5%) in the community being well balanced. The 4 elderly in the community represent only 2.4% of the current population.

There is no case of dwelling having ownership documents. Almost all of the dwellings currently occupied (34), except for one, were built before 1989. However, more than half of adults have permanent identity documents (54.24%), the rest having provisional ones (45, 76%). Concerning the connection to the electricity grid, only 14 dwellings have legally concluded contracts (representing 35.9% of the dwellings in the community), 13 dwellings are connected informally to a neighbour through an improvised wire (usually a member of the same family), and 8 dwellings are not connected at all. For 5 dwellings there is no information regarding this subject.

In the neighbourhood of Dealu Crucii, in the vicinity of the barracks colony built during the interwar period for the employees of the Reșița Factories and Domains, and of the former industrial railway, there were 4 dwellings built on Mierlei Street before 1989, occupied by 10 families and 24 persons (5 young people, 18 adults and an elderly person). The other 35 dwellings are occupied by 49 families (167 persons), as follows: 11 dwellings - occupied by 2 families; 1 dwelling with 4 families and 24 single-family dwellings. Half of the adult inhabitants have permanent identity documents, half of them have temporary documents and only one of the four household owners claims to have ownership of the land on which they are located.

Within the informal settlement on Viitorului Street in the component village of Țerova there are 15 dwellings (one of which is not occupied), occupied by 25 families with 87 persons. The occupied dwellings have the following occupancy structure: 5 single-family dwellings, 7 dwellings occupied by 2 families, and 2 dwellings occupied by 3 families (one of which being resided by 14 persons). The age-group structure demonstrates its viability, with about 2/3 of the community members being adults (53 persons and 60.9%, respectively), 1/3 young people (28 persons and 32.1% respectively) and only 5 elderly persons.

There is no dwelling in this area to have ownership documents. Current dwellings replace partially or totally dwellings built before 1989. However, more than half of adults do not have permanent identity documents (57.1%), while the rest have temporary ones (43.9%). All dwellings are legally connected to the electricity grid.

Dwelling and possession practices

From the declarations of the local people, there is an "unwritten rule" that in Călnic area only Roma people live / settle. The locals/natives of the place can be recognized by the fact that they have electric counter installed. Generally, the one who has a dwelling on a land is considered by the community to be the "owner" of that land. If he is gone for several months, and there is a land

in the immediate vicinity of his house, nobody enters that land without him being there. The "right to property" is respected in the community, even if in reality the ownership is informal. When the families grow numerically, new dwellings are being built on the land in the immediate vicinity of the initial one.

Even if there are no ownership documents, there were situations where dwellings were "sold" based on a mutual agreement between the "owner" and the new "owner", so the exchanges build on trust, solidarity and understanding between families. People who have settled over time in this neighbourhood are also Roma.

In Țerova area, the dwellings were built before 1989. Everything added in the meantime was built due to the increase of the number of people in the family and they were built on the land of the "owner". There are homes that have been renovated starting from the foundation and have not encountered any problems. However, if one of the neighbors with property papers renovated his home from the foundation, for which he did not apply for an urbanism certificate, he was sanctioned with a fine of 10,000 lei and the demolish of his second level. However, the family in question did not complain that the neighbors built / renovated their homes informally. There were no situations of selling dwellings or land.

In the Mierlei / Dealu Crucii area, of the houses built around 1970, with no construction permits, there are only four dwellings left, two of which have managed to obtain property papers. The abandoned dwellings were demolished and the land was bought from the state by neighbours. Their residents have temporary identity documents.

Practices on dealing with informal settlements at the level of local public authorities

From local residents' declarations, they pay taxes and duties on dwellings / land, so they are fiscally registered, even if they do not have property papers for them. From 2014, superficies contracts have been concluded in Călnic, but this has not influenced / helped the inhabitants to obtain the right to a permanent identity document.

The situation in Resita is simplified by the fact that the land in the three researched areas is largely owned by the town hall, so public infrastructure investments (eg roads, water network / canal) have been and are possible. This does not mean, however, that there has been or is any local policy in place to solve the problem of locals about identity documents. In fact, the topic of informal settlements - from discussions with Town Hall representatives - is not known as such and is not the subject of any structured program / approach. Although the Town Hall has more staff than for the smaller localities covered by the case studies in this report, including specialized staff, the problems faced by the city are much more complex and on a larger scale than those from rural and small urban areas.

The city's general urban plan is over 15 years old and needs to be re-made; the key staff (mayor, chief architect, etc.) is less than 2 years old, so there are still many directions for action - including informal settlements - that don't yet have a working mindset or approach.

The steps taken in recent years to address those areas are related to the modernization / extension of public infrastructure and networks - namely the water and sewerage network and water pipeline investments for emergency interventions.

The community and local authorities` perspective (advantages and disadvantages of informal settlements, advantages and disadvantages of formalization)

The disadvantage that people perceive from the fact that they do not have legal forms of housing is that they do not have permanent IDs, but only temporary ones. Some of them have obtained identity documents on a different address, for a cost of around 100-200 EUR – when a homeowner formally rents a part of their household, to enable them to get an ID. There are also people whose temporary IDs have expired and failed to renew it, as it is a bureaucratic process, which has to be repeated annually for a fee, while being valid only for a short period of time. According to the local police, there are about 400 Resita residents with a temporary ID, but this number fluctuates each year (depending on how many people renew their temporary ID) and does not reflect the actual number of people affected the lack of an ID.

Some locals also declared that by not having a permanent ID, they can not work abroad, although they would want to. In addition, they can not benefit from bank facilities or products that would allow them household-related investments (e.g. " *we cannot get a refrigerator, pay it in instalments*")

The benefits, not expressed by those concerned, but mentioned by neighbors, are that temporary residents don't pay for electricity, although they are informally connected to the grid through their neighbours. This creates disagreements, because cost sharing is difficult to achieve in such a way that it is considered fair by all those involved.

Although the residents do not own the land or the buildings they use, they pay taxes, being fiscally registered.

During the consultations made with social partners (in the process of elaborating the strategy of the Local Action Group Resita), it was also revealed that the authorities are interested in solving the documents problems, although there was no coordinated effort in this regard. The County Police Inspectorate finds it challenging to interact with residents in these areas since they don't have the means to identify or trace them, for example in cases of crimes or enforcement / recovery of fines. School mediators also reported that the lack of property titles prevents children for enrolling in schools.

Conclusions and recommendations

The present report, although without a claim of academic rigor, highlighted and validated a series of perspectives and conclusions that could bring more light and understanding to the phenomenon of informal housing in Romania.

⇒ **There are very little data and research reports on informal housing in Romania**

The theme of housing, in general, in Romania is devoid of a statistical infrastructure with relevant indicators and a periodic collection mechanism that could bring light to the associated needs and problems. Informal housing, particularly, by the very nature of its informality, is a hidden phenomenon, beyond the scope of conventional monitoring mechanisms. Thus, detailed X-rays are only possible through sustained efforts of qualitative research, requiring in particular field research.

The limited number of research efforts in the field is also linked to the lack of an institution that has formally assumed this issue as a direction for action. Thus, aside from the study commissioned by MDRAP in 2014, there were no funding programs or lines to stimulate or support the interest of other researchers or organizations in this phenomenon.

⇒ **Romania resembles the former socialist states in terms of the scale and trends of the informal housing phenomenon**

The incidence of informal housing in Romania is closely related to the regulatory vacuum and/ or lack of reinforcement of urban planning provisions in practice, after 1989, in the context of land ownership reforms (privatization, claim, etc.). It is also facilitated by the limited capacity of authorities at the local level to pursue and take initiative to prevent or limit the expansion of these situations. In addition, the limited resources of public authorities (information, methodology, money, legal framework) are reasons for which interventions to solve informality or improve living conditions in these peripheral/ isolated neighbourhoods have not been a priority. The social and often spatial isolation have sharpened the difficulties of the inhabitants of informal settlements in the countries of the former communist bloc.

⇒ **The phenomenon of informal housing in Romania is growing**

All analysed case studies indicate that the phenomenon of informal living is increasing, the propagation being possible due to the lack of adequate tools to prevent/ stop the phenomenon and due to the tacit encouragement through inaction/ tolerance on the part of the authorities. Families from disadvantaged environments have no choice, cannot afford, or do not know alternatives to this practice, being trapped in a vicious circle that propagates from one generation to the next. On the other hand, in the absence of instruments and firm institutions to regulate territorial planning and control the development of localities and building, the practices of unauthorized building have amplified, irrespective of the legal status or the suitability for building of the land.

⇒ **In the public discourse and agenda, the phenomenon of informal housing is quasi-absent as an overall problem**

The only few solutions or measures designed to support informal settlements generally address only part of the problem. For example, in situations where the land on which an informal settlement was situated was publicly owned, infrastructure investments (urban networks, roads) could be made to improve the quality of life. However, the mere existence of these investments does not automatically translate into better access to services and, implicitly, to a better quality of life, as the cycle of deficiencies is complex: without documents, people have difficulty accessing education, skills and jobs, being more prone to low incomes and poverty, therefore not being able to afford paying recurring utility bills. Living in an informal settlement causes a number of difficulties related to the security and comfort of living, access to identity and housing documents, access to sanitary and social services etc. Although many public authorities have perspectives, responsibilities and sectoral interventions, in the absence of formal *de jure* recognition of informal settlements, there are no coordinated multi-sectoral programs or interventions.

⇒ **There are many different typologies and situations that require a wide variety of solutions; there cannot be a single solution - a template for solving the problem of informal housing**

The wide range of typologies and situations identified in the field make the template solutions impossible. Even within the same informal settlement, different households require different solutions. For example, some households may be located on a land that is not suitable for housing (UNECE, 2009), so even in the context of good intentions and an appropriate regulatory framework, their *in situ* formalization would not be possible, relocation being the only solution. Other households are located on private land and there are no legal means of coercion for *de jure* land owners to sell/ transfer to those who *de facto* occupy the land. In addition, some dwellings are not in line with the building regulations in force, so their construction cannot be granted post-factum authorization in any form; or the organization of the settlement restricts the access of fire brigade cars or ambulances for emergencies.

⇒ **Practice in the field of informal housing in Romania is almost non-existent and, in addition, hampered by numerous regulatory gaps and barriers**

Public information, theoretical and practical knowledge related to informal housing in Romania are limited. Both the analysis of existing reports and fieldwork have shown that working practices in thinking and implementing solutions to mitigate the problems associated with informal housing are poorly developed and, even where there is interest and availability, lack of experience and lack of a permissive legal and programming framework hinder action. If there were punctual interventions and solutions to some problems (identity papers, schooling, access to social services, etc.), there are problems that do not have solutions yet - such as problems related to security of land and building tenure, construction authorization, settlement systemization and urban infrastructure,

⇒ **Informal housing is at the same time a determinant and a manifestation of poverty and social marginalization, that requires a systemic, long-term approach**

Although informal housing is not a characteristic of low-income groups exclusively, the incidence of this phenomenon disproportionately affects poor, marginalized communities. Problems related to informal housing exacerbate the vulnerability of these communities, complicating their existence and imposing barriers/ obstacles in accessing services and programs that would otherwise be dedicated to them. The complexity of the informal housing phenomenon may not be an excuse not to act, given its long-lasting effects on communities that are facing it.

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