

BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES

Council for Doctoral Studies

Doctoral School of Business Administration II

**THE ROLE OF BUSINESS INCUBATORS
SUPPORTING SMALL CITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Bucharest, 2025

Rezumat

Inițial proiectate pentru a stimula creșterea economică locală, incubatoarele de afaceri au evoluat în fenomene complexe cu impact variabil în diferite regiuni — în unele devenind exemple de succes, în timp ce în altele sunt considerate eșecuri ale politicilor aplicate. Această cercetare doctorală situează incubatoarele de afaceri în contextul ecosistemelor regionale de inovare, urmărind să identifice caracteristicile definitorii ale incubatoarelor de nouă generație care pot contribui la dezvoltarea regională durabilă și inteligentă.

Traectoria dezvoltării incubatoarelor de afaceri este examinată ca fenomene, instrumente de politică și piloni ai infrastructurii de suport pentru afaceri. Cercetarea se desfășoară printr-o dublă perspectivă, culminând cu articularea abordării „ecosistem-în-ecosistem”, concepută pentru a analiza interacțiunea dintre dinamica internă și cea externă

Prin studii de caz multiple, analiza detaliată evidențiază trăsăturile specifice ale practicilor durabile de incubare, recunoscând totodată că nu există o rețetă universală de succes. Agilitatea este recunoscută ca o calitate esențială în cadrul modelelor de business și proceselor interne, demonstrând capacitatea sa de adaptare în diverse contexte de incubare.

Ca și rezultat, teza propune un nou prototip ideal pentru incubatoarele de afaceri de generația următoare: modelul de afaceri *agilizat* pentru incubatoarele de afaceri de nouă generație. Acest model, caracterizat prin flexibilitate și adaptabilitate, este conceput pentru a fi implementat chiar și în contexte urbane mai mici. Descoperirile și perspectivele oferă soluții practice care pot îmbunătăți eficiența operațională a incubatoarelor, fiind în strânsă aliniere cu modelul de inovare bazat pe helix cvintuplu, pentru a sprijini dezvoltarea regională durabilă.

Abstract

Originally designed to stimulate local economic growth, business incubators have evolved into complex phenomena with varied outcomes across different regions—emerging as success stories in some areas while being regarded as policy failures in others. This doctoral research positions business incubators within regional innovation ecosystems, aiming to delineate the defining features of new generation business incubators that can drive sustainable and smart regional development.

The developmental trajectory of business incubators is examined as phenomena, policy instruments, and pillars of business support infrastructure. The research unfolds through a dual lens, culminating in the articulation of the 'ecosystem-in-ecosystem' approach, devised to dissect the interplay between internal and external dynamics.

Further investigation through a multi-case study analysis of diverse incubators exposes distinctive characteristics of sustainable incubation practices while also recognizing the absence of a one-size-fits-all formula for success. Agility is identified as an essential trait within business models and internal processes, demonstrating its adaptability across various incubator environments.

As a result, the thesis introduces an ideotype for new generation business incubators: the *agilized* business model for new generation business incubators. Characterized by its flexibility and adaptability, the model is designed for implementation even in smaller urban settings. The insights and findings provide actionable frameworks that can increase the operational efficiency of incubators, strongly aligned with the quintuple-helix innovation model, to support sustainable regional development.

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