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## **REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018**

A World of Flows:

Labour Mobility, Capital and Knowledge in an Age of Global Reversal and Regional Revival

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Lugano, Switzerland

### **SPECIAL SESSION 28**

#### **Session Title:**

**Fostering regional development via 'Industrial Culture'? Concepts, discourses, utilisations**

#### **Session Organiser:**

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In the frame of major societal and economic changes, Europe's industrial societies have seen a transformation towards networked information societies that are increasingly based on knowledge-intensive services and creative industries. These trends affect territories in very different and uneven ways: Especially (former) industrialised regions outside agglomeration areas, once leaders of technological innovation and knowledge, now often face difficulties in attracting the knowledge economy in the same way as larger cities (e.g. 'brain drain').

In this context this session will discuss the relevance of 'Industrial Culture' in regional development. The term has no coherent definition, but can be counted among the intrinsic, territorial potentials of place (e.g. Damsgaard et al, 2009.). It is often being narrowed down to industrial heritage, i.e. the physical remains of former industrial sites and their preservation or re-utilisation. While this is indeed an important utilisation of the industrial past, previous research has highlighted already other aspects, such as intangible elements of the industrial past, focussing on skills, traditions and specific mind-sets and know-how (Harfst and Wirth 2014; Harfst et al. 2016). Thereby the term 'Industrial Culture' addresses place-bound aspects of long-term industrial production, as its whole 'milieu' of social and physical remains (Byrne 2002). In a link to regional development Eaton (2016) states that Industrial Culture refers also to the reservoir of cultural meaning and practices actors construct around existing local development, 'and then draw upon in response to proposed future development'. Recent research also highlights the potential of strengthening regional identity, improving regional company and labour force commitment and fostering creativity and innovation - addressing core needs of old industrialised regions across Europe (Wust et al. 2017).

With Industrial Culture being a cross-disciplinary concept, it has linkages to various existing European policies initiatives and strategies, such as on Cultural Heritage being an important driver of regional change (e.g. European Parliament DG IP 2013); the 'Re-industrialisation of Europe' initiative (e.g. Competitiveness Report 2013) or the European Territorial Agenda 2020 (EU Ministers of Spatial Planning and Territorial Development 2011). Additionally, social aspect of Industrial Culture addresses directly the quadruple-helix structure of the EU strategy on 'Smart Specialisation'.

For this session we invite contributions that discuss and broaden the theoretical framework of Industrial Culture (also from different academic angles), as well as case-study related examples of its utilisations, discussing possibilities and limits of the approach. Special focus is given to (post-) industrial regions marked by predominantly peripheral, small and medium-sized town settings.

The session is linked to the accompanying research of EU's Central European INTERREG project InduCult2.0 funded by ERDF ([www.inducult.eu](http://www.inducult.eu)).

## References

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