



Regional

Studies

Association

THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR CITY
AND REGIONAL RESEARCH,
DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

The Regional Studies Association Research Network on *Transition and Resilience for Post-industrial Agglomerations in Central Europe*

AIMS

The general aim of the proposed scientific network is searching for the specific driving forces and capabilities explaining the economic resilience of post-industrial agglomeration regions in Central Europe under the particular circumstances of their transition during the last two decades. A special focus will be laid on those post-industrial agglomerations with heavy industrial background, as there various sources of path-dependencies (industrial, institutional, mental, political, technological, qualification-based) are generally seen as special challenges. In contrast to existing research networks dealing with post industrial regions (e.g. "The role of industrial knowledge" in these regions), this proposed network concentrates on evolutionary processes, factors influencing the resilience in times of crises and the specific challenges of Central European regions in contrast to Western European post-industrial agglomerations. Close cooperation with the existing network will be achieved, as there are already mutual research contacts.

This extension of the research on post-industrial regions is particularly timely, as the global economic crisis shed light to the close linkages between cyclical and structural shocks strengthening the impression of unstable knowledge economies being exposed to technological changes, contemporary environmental challenges and the volatility of financial markets and business cycles. Hence, the research network shall include theoretical discussions on the identification of resilience criteria and factors as well as policy debates and case studies on strategic consequences for regional policies and urban planning.

Capital regions and metropolitan service regions are typically discussed as examples for resilient regions, as they can rely on their high share of public and business-related services, attractiveness, diversity of qualified human capital and technological research. On the contrary, post-industrial agglomerations struggle with relatively high unemployment, depopulation, deprivation, resistance against changes, environmental hazards and specific challenges to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. These problems are even more severe for Central European agglomerations, as they had even worse starting conditions, less public funds and less time for adjustment available, while having been immediately under pressure of international competition. Despite of these obstacles the redevelopment processes in the post-industrial agglomerations in Central Europe are visible. And even within the global economic crisis, these regions still grew and stepped further towards convergence.

The research network shall investigate sources for these transition processes and capabilities to recover in times of crises as well as differences to regions without such an industrial heritage and to the traditional good practice regions in Western Europe, where the sustainability of successful changes is at least questioned by some authors. Studies on the investigated regions in Central Europe show the increasing role of modern service sectors mirroring the change towards creative economies and clean

industries, however still revealing specificities due to the heritage of heavy industries. But are these changes really sustainable, and will they be able to prove resilience in future? The research network shall identify and discuss success stories as well as stories of failure to learn about the specific preconditions.

The network is expected to be particularly attractive for RSA members, as researchers and practitioners from Central and Eastern European countries shall be able to contribute as well as economic geographers, industrial and regional researchers and representatives from evolutionary research fields from all RSA countries.

Taking the above into account the specific objectives of a research network relate to:

- **diagnosis and evaluation** of preconditions for regional resilience in postindustrial agglomerations considering existing case studies and research
- **examining evolutionary development mechanisms** of the post-industrial agglomerations in Central Europe reflecting the specific role of single organisations, programs and instruments,
- **developing economic urban policy recommendations** by identifying preconditions for successful evolutionary policy settings under the specific circumstances of the regions in focus

AMBITIONS

The ambitions of scientists proposing the research network are linked with:

- establishing a stable research network among researchers who survey the issues of the post-industrial cities and regions in Central Europe and the context of resilience and evolutionary economic geography. The core team of the network has already experienced of joint projects and publications, inter alia:
 - *'Evaluation of operational programmes of regional development. Case Studies from: Lowland and Uplands Scotland, Moravian-Silesian Region, Saxony, Silesia voivodeship and Žilina Region'* (ed. **A. Drobniak**, Publisher: The Karol Adamiecki University of Economics in Katowice, 2009. ISBN 978-83-7246-491-0, (<http://www.uekat.com/?contentid=8241>),
 - **A. Drobniak**, *'Evaluation of regional development programmes - proposal of the new concept and method arising from the theory based evaluation approach'*; **R. Wink**, *'Use of the new concept and method for theory-based evaluation for assessment of the Regional Operational Programme Saxony'*; **J. Suchacek**, *'Use of the new concept and method from the theory-based evaluation for assessment of the ROP Moravia-Silesia: between formal rightness and particular interest'* all papers published in *'Evaluation in Regional Development Policy* [eds.] K. Heffner, K. Malik. Polish Academy of Science, Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning, Studia Regionalia, Vol. 26, 2010 ISBN 978-83-89693-03-7,

which created a good basis for further research.

Additionally, close research contacts based on projects include evolutionary economic geographers like Ron Boschma (University of Utrecht) and Phil Cooke (Cardiff University) assuring the participation of internationally well-known colleagues.

- filling the gap in internationalization of current research findings on the development of such urban areas in this part of Europe (within the 'space' of regional sciences) and linking it to theoretical and political debates in West Europe,
- creating a virtual transboundary Central European think-tank for local and regional development policy recommendations within the RSA, which covers the issues referring to re-development of areas with industrial 'heritage'.