

CALL FOR PAPERS

“Anchoring productive capital beyond the core: Small towns and peripheral industrialization in Europe”

Special session of the XXII Annual Meeting of the Hungarian Regional Science Association

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FDI-driven industrial restructuring has been considered a panacea for the economic and social recovery of CEE regions by policy makers and also by many local agents since the early 1990s. Although, the emergence of export-focused enclaves stimulated the growth and the integration of local economies in global production networks, national policies and local strategies relying on this path has been criticised for producing limited value added, multiple external dependencies, the danger of the middle-income trap and fuelling socio-spatial inequalities. Small towns had a substantial share in such processes as industrial locations where material and non-material assets (geographical position, specialized infrastructure, social networks, industrial culture, etc.) were mobilised by various local and non-local agents. Nonetheless, as they often lack supportive institutional framework and do not benefit from agglomeration economies, small towns' development trajectories also exhibit the limits and risks of paths embedded in peripheral industrialization, e.g. difficulties in achieving higher quality production network integration, or getting locked in a path and/or a dependent relation.

The special session aims to bring scholars working in different contexts together and get insight in local processes, discover the diversity of structural conditions and agency of path changes, and reveal the causal relationships between peripheral industrialisation (Arrighi, 1989), the changing position of small towns in regional, national and global networks and power relations, and socio-spatial inequalities. In this way, we contribute to ongoing debates on uneven development and agency beyond core contexts.

Questions discussed in the session:

1. How can we grasp the structural attributes of small industrial towns in the European (industrial) periphery?
2. How are development narratives related to industrialization in national policies and how are those translated to local (small town) context? How does entering the path of (re)industrialization impact the status of small towns in national institutional systems and political bargaining?
3. What local agents are at work in the (re)industrialization of small towns? How are they related? What local and non-local resources do they mobilise?
4. What are the economic, social, and environmental consequences of (re)industrialization that small towns face? What risks and limitations of the current paths are identified by local agents and how do they deal with those?
5. Is there a chance for entering a new path for a small town in the European periphery? What structural, agentic and specific (local) conditions could be mobilized for that?
6. What patterns and structures of socio-spatial inequalities have been/are stemming from peripheral reindustrialization at local, regional and supranational scale?

Quantitative comparative analyses and qualitative case studies focusing on the industrialization of (peripheral) small towns within and beyond the CEE region, as well as papers relating industrialisation and socio-spatial inequalities theoretically are welcome.

Session organizers:

Erika Nagy senior research fellow, HUN-REN CERS Institute for Regional Studies –

Ernő Molnár associate professor, University of Debrecen

nagy.erika@krtk.hun-ren.hu