

POSTINDUSTRIAL CITIES: INTRODUCTION

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The goal of this special issue is to discuss what it means to be living in places marked by industrial decline. It analyses the politics and practices of postindustrial place-making, as well as the socioeconomic transformations, challenges, obstacles, and chances that emerge from deindustrialisation processes. Starting from a cultural anthropological perspective, the articles published in this issue focus on societal and cultural responses to the major economic shift in former industrial strongholds. These responses include various forms of agency and participation that address environmental and health problems, market shifts and long-term unemployment, gentrification tendencies, quality of life in deindustrialised localities, the impact of new technologies, and the question of how to repurpose industrial spaces to meet the needs of diverse social groups and individuals in the city. On the other hand, they also encompass different expressions of uncertainty and fear, nostalgia for a lost way of life, and feelings of being stuck and forgotten among postindustrial ruins and in polluted and marginalised zones. Some of the studies included in this volume discuss the use of an industrial past in the reformulation of the regional imaginary conveyed by policy makers and social media. Others identify and compare the mechanisms by which communities that live or work in deindustrialised areas deal with major changes in their ways of life, as well as their own role in those transformations and their visions of postindustrial futures. These include the responses of deindustrialised neighbourhoods and former industrial workers to transformation trends and imply their position in postindustrial remaking processes.

All the ethnographically grounded papers in this issue place themselves at the intersection of postindustrial transformations and contemporary everyday lives in deindustrialised places. They derive from a panel entitled “The Rules and Ruptures of Postindustrial Cities”, which was organised in the frame of the SIEF congress hosted by the University of Helsinki, Finland, in 2021. The aim of the panel was to shed light on questions of power, transgression, and participation in the social production and construction of postindustrial

cities, primarily in the European context. In it, participants observed how the rules of postindustrial place-making are being made, affirmed, negotiated, questioned, or transgressed.

The articles stemming from the panel explore a variety of modes and dimensions of urban remaking by researching different places in Croatia, Portugal, Germany, Lithuania, and Sweden. However, all of them have one thing in common – they highlight the lived experiences of deindustrialisation by using qualitative methodology and ethnographic methods. The authors critically examine the concept of urban sustainability and tackle strategies through which people can attain visions of a better urban future – or fail to do so – in the postindustrial context.

This special issue shows that, in many cases, contemporary industrial transitions in Europe are far from over, although they are institutionally often proclaimed to be closed deals. We rather see them as processes that have a long-term effect on the everyday way of life and wellbeing of people that interact with deindustrialised environments, as components continuously revisited in the contemporary remaking of social worlds, space, work, and communities in postindustrial cities.