

## **SPECIAL SESSION: PRODUCTIVE AND RESIDENTIAL REVIVAL IN EUROPEAN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES**

**6th Global Conference on Economic Geography, Dublin, 2022**

Marjolaine Gros-Balthazard, lecturer, Grenoble Alps University, France  
[marjolaine.gros-balthazard@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:marjolaine.gros-balthazard@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)

Magali Talandier, professor, Grenoble Alps University, France  
[Magali.talandier@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:Magali.talandier@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)

Josselin Tallec, lecturer, Grenoble Alps University, France  
[Josselin.tallec@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:Josselin.tallec@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)

As highlighted by Florida et al. (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic could change urban geography and its economic patterns in North American and Western Europe, both regions where metropolization process contributed, in part, to weakening the economic activity of these territories. Two drivers, both residential (based on local consumption) and productive, lead us to believe that changes could lead, in particular, to an economic revival of European small and medium-sized cities – the research object of this special session.

One driver of change is certainly the pandemic-induced rise in teleworking possibilities (Green, Riley, 2021). It has already resulted in a more flexible geography of work and could lead to a substantial residential renew of the small and medium-sized cities. Indeed, promoted by households for environmental amenities, quietness and safety, lower housing prices (e.g. in France: Desjardins, Estèbe, 2019), we observe an home sales increase and new migration to these “zoom towns” (Sodja, 2021). Another driver of change is undoubtedly the political (but also collective and individual) awareness about a loss of economic sovereignty (depending on the outside for masks, respirators, building materials, etc.). It argues for a reindustrialization in European countries already hoped as answers to ecological transition issues. After being severely affected by deindustrialization (Connolly, 2010), small and medium-sized cities seem now to have several advantages to be places of an industrial revival - such as land availability, industrial culture (Bole, 2021), social innovation and cooperation capacities (Kozina et al., 2019 ; Gros-Balthazard, Talandier, 2019) - but also because some of them remain productive and innovative areas (Hamdouch et al., 2017 ; Mayer 2011).

These residential and productive drivers which reflect the two main components of territorial development could furthermore interact to promote new development paths of small and medium-sized cities in Europe: residential attractiveness as a lever for productive renewals and vice-versa.

Connected to these observations, we propose to cross-reference four questions in this special session:

- What are the characteristics and consequences of the residential revival of European small and medium-sized cities?
- Is there a real industrial revitalization of European small and medium-sized cities and what are its patterns?
- What are the interactions between the residential and productive drivers? Under what conditions could residential revival be an opportunity to develop new productive activities?

- An important part of European population lives in small and medium-sized cities (Desjardins, Estèbe, 2019). Can this urban geography be an opportunity for European economic recovery and spatial cohesion?

While the Covid-19 pandemic may have accelerated certain trends, this revival may have been underway for several years. Communications can therefore also cover processes that were underway before the pandemic.

**More information and submission here:** <https://gceg.org/CallforPapers.php>

#### References :

Bole D. (2021), 'What is industrial culture anyway?' Theoretical framing of the concept in economic geography, *Geography Compass*.

Connolly J. J. (ed.) (2010), *After the Factory. Reinventing America's Industrial Small Cities*, Lexington Books.

Desjardin X., Estèbe P. (2019), Villes petites et moyennes et aménagement territorial. Eclairages anglais, allemands et italiens sur le cas français, *PUCA*, 126p.

Florida R., Rodriguez-Pose A., Storper M. (2021), Cities in a post-COVID world, *Urban studies*.

Gros-Balthazard M., Talandier M. (2020), Cooperation, Proximity, and Social Innovation: Three Ingredients for Industrial Medium-Sized Towns' Renewal?, *Urban Science*, 4(2).

Hamdouch A., Demazière C., Banovac K. (2017), The socio-economic profiles of small and medium sized towns: Insights from European case studies, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 108(4), pp.365-379.

Kozina J., Bole D., Hoekstrat M. et al. (2019), *Identifying social innovation in industrial towns: a comparative perspective*, *Bright future for black towns*, D3.4 Synthesis Report, 42p.

Mayer H. (2011), *Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Second Tier Regions*, Edward Elgar.

Servillo L., Atkinson R., Hamdouch A. (2017), Small and medium-sized towns in Europe : Conceptual, methodological and policy issues, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 108(4), pp.456-471.

Sodja E. (2021), Boomtown: Amenity migration in the rural west and the rise of "zoom town", Webinar series summary and follow-up information, Gateway and natural amenity region initiative, 16p.