



Past - Present - Future



# CONCEPT FOR IMPROVED EXTERIOR APPEARANCE OF INDUSTRIAL QUARTERS

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Regional Concept for face-lifting industrial quarters in the city of Leoben & Styrian Iron Route

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## 0. Abstract

Industrial Culture comes to life through stories told by people, buildings and landscapes. The importance of stories in and for cities has grown steadily in Europe over the past two decades. Changing the exterior appearance of (old-) industrial regions and cities is a promising way of telling such stories. Worldwide a number of successful initiatives have already succeeded in achieving image transformation and involving citizens in their industrial cultural environment. A focus group of the region “Styrian Iron Route” has worked on this topic in the frame of a design thinking process and developed a catalogue of feasible ideas and inventions. Depending on financial resources some of them will be carried out as pilot project in 2019.

## 1. Project Context

The Central Europe Project InduCult2.0 ([www.inducult.eu](http://www.inducult.eu)) addresses Central European regions mono-focused on industrial production. Through InduCult typical regions utilise the tangible and intangible cultural assets of their industrial past, present and future in a synergetic way for positioning their regions as attractive places for working, living and recreation. Together with local stakeholders, they rediscover and develop the positive elements of industrial communities. Specifically, the partnership intends to:

- promote and establish the idea of Industrial Culture in Central Europe;
- strengthen the distinct culture of industrial regions and utilise it as location factor;
- empower industrial regions by re-activating their pioneer spirit.

Involved are eight representative regions from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia and Poland. They are supported by two scientific partners from Germany and Austria.

Each of the regions has prepared an “argumentation paper” on their specific industrial culture and its benefits. This provides the basic frame for developing and implementing actions in the field of Industrial Culture and therefor for promotion of a Central-European (respectively European) Industrial Culture.

Actions are to be developed by the regions in three fields (work packages): Actions on ...

- ... cultural measures for fostering regional identity (T2)
- ... cultural initiatives influencing industrial labour market and company commitment (T3)
- ... cultural measures promoting creativity and pioneer spirit (T4).

Apart from concepts for creating pioneer and culture space in old-industrial sites and thus reviving old-industrial places, the other major activity in work package T4 is the improvement of interaction between producing industry and creative communities. Improving the exterior appearance of industrial quarters by means of creativity is one approach to achieve this goal.

## 2. Introduction

Industrial Culture (IC) is a young member of the European culture family. Its roots can be found in many European regions, which 200 years ago were not only cradles of industrialisation, but have been up to now sites of industrial production. A typical representative is the region “Styrian Iron Route” and the adjoining Mur-Mürz-valley. Over the centuries the hegemony of industrial production and mining has created a specific cultural climate, which - apart from visible monuments and artefacts - can be experienced in specific values, traditions, skills and a distinctive way of living. Nowadays the region is one the most important industrial regions in Austria, with the city of Leoben and the Styrian Iron route - with the global steel player voestalpine, the mining university and the breathtaking site “ore mine Erzberg” (where according to the legend, ore has been extracted for more than 1300 years) - in its centre.

Industrial Culture comes to life through stories told by people, buildings and landscapes. The importance of stories in and for cities has grown steadily in Europe over the past two decades. A city thus becomes what it is, characterized by stories and legends, poems and paintings, novels and films and by nothing less than the most banal conversations.

The story's narrative has the power to define what "exists" and what does not. The narrative is not just a representation of the urban, but an idea of it. An idea of what is urban and how city can work. Stories are derived both from the history of a place and from its name. All these stories influence the planning of building types and the mobility of the city. Stories are also used in branding and marketing for cities. And: Stories are best transferred when induced by the means of art.

When art in the urban space, like the metal sculptures of Richard Serra, is able to change patterns of movement by passers-by, it becomes clear what significance art can have for our cities in urban as well as rural areas.



(c) Kamahale (left image), Lorenz Kienzle (centre image), (c) Elijah Porter (right image)

Art has the ability to create identity by interacting with a wide public. Leading creative artists in Austria view "art in public space" as a contemporary form of dealing with current social questions. It tackles socio-political issues and explores the relationship between the people who inhabit or pass through a region and their surroundings. A regular, direct contact with citizens through dialogue and / or citizen participation events promote a positive dialogue culture (as it is planned to happen around the topic of Industrial Culture in Leoben) and at the same time touch the creative potential of inhabitants. Communities, when invited by the city to co-create, have proven to invent numerous ideas and concepts to actively shape the immediate environment. Art in the public space may be used as an integral part of the development of future perspectives of citizens.

### 3. Objective

The goal was to accentuate industrial buildings being part of the appearance of the city of Leoben and therefore reframing its negative visual image. The main artistic elements should focus on the faces of people and their stories told in various visual but also multi-sensory ways.

This includes a transformation of sites that citizens call 'ugly' into meaningful canvasses for the observer's eye to enjoy and find solutions to use art and industry culture to build a new visual identity in the towns along the Styrian Iron Route.

### 4. Applied Approach

In a design thinking process (which is based on the method of appreciative inquiry) the regional focus group developed a catalogue of actions for each of the three InduCult work packages. Some were selected for implementation within the project period until 2019. Other concepts require long-term planning. These concepts will be presented to major industry and heritage players in the region to secure sufficient funding and allow execution and maintenance.

The design thinking workshops were coordinated by Cities Next, a civic innovation company from Vienna, which led through the design thinking process with 15 stakeholders who accompanied the 4 workshop slots and the concept creation. The stakeholder group consisted of members of the city government, the tourism board, local universities and schools, industry, museums, regional organizations and associations and creative artists. The 4 phases of the design thinking workshop based on the model of appreciative inquiry led the participants through a discovery phase of discussing and evaluating the resources, expertise and talents of the region, the dream phase in which ideas were developed and visions articulated, a design phase where concepts were prototyped and a destiny phase which guided the concepts through a business canvas model to evaluate the chances and risks, the effectiveness and efficiency of the concepts.

In the sensing phase of the design thinking process, the participants were asked to describe the expertise and resources of the region that create a certain local pride and identity. They were also asked to think of transformation examples in Austria and internationally that would be worth looking at. In addition worldwide input (best practice examples) for the change of the exterior appearance of industrial quarters was provided for inspiration in the workshops.

This led to a catalogue of activities which are presented in the next chapter.

## 5. Results

Based on the intense discussions during the design thinking workshop, two concepts are recommended to improve the exterior appearance of companies or industrial quarters in Leoben or along the Styrian Iron Route:

### 5.1. Unconventional Storytelling in public spaces and places

Industrial infrastructure can be viewed as an irritant element in the rural landscape. The workshop participants were divided in their opinions on how to ‘beautify’ industrial buildings or to accept their architectural functionality and rather develop a visual identity for each town throughout the region.

Based on the repeated statements in the design thinking workshop that requested to listen to the stories of local heroes who built the identity and success of region, it was decided to create multi-sensory storytelling events based on interviews with these local heroes. The memories, values and messages would be projected or in any other artistic form visually, acoustically and emotionally represented on places and spaces throughout the region; either on industrial sites or onto key landmarks. These artistic interventions are based on interviews carried out with local heroes (= scientists, entrepreneurs, creative artists, everyday-heroes).

Placing interventions based on faces and stories that allow raising awareness and building a long-term identity among citizens in the region either requires a big bang with interventions consisting of large images, designs and oversized elements or a less noisy set of initiatives based on smaller-sized formats but with higher frequency.

It matters where the images, designs or elements are placed and how long they are placed. All of these decisions have to be taken in a taskforce group of curated experts in the field, based on the knowledge of artistic resources in the region, sponsors who provide financial resources and a workforce of paid helpers and volunteers to install the artwork and also maintain it.

The following initiatives were found relevant to learn from in the design-thinking sensing process phase.



### 5.1.1. Inspiration and best-in-class cases as role model initiatives

#### 5.1.1.1. Wynwood Walls (Miami)

In the early 2000s, Wynwood was much like many other industrial urban neighborhoods. It had ugly industrial sites and abandoned warehouses. At night, it was dark, gritty, and desolate, and pedestrian activity was nonexistent. The natural vocabulary of the community could be found in hand-painted signs, graphics, and graffiti.

In 2009, the Wynwood Walls project was born. **Wynwood Walls** is a collection of six privately owned warehouses that flank previously abandoned land used for junk storage and garbage in the urban core of Miami. In creating Wynwood Walls, the building facades were transformed into 30 canvases and the open land area was converted to a gallery floor. The result is an **outdoor “museum of the streets”**.

The giant wall canvases produced by internationally acclaimed artists from more than 15 countries. The Walls provide multiple areas for the public to enjoy, free of charge. The Wynwood Walls have transformed an ugly industrial region to one of the hottest new creative and culturally significant neighborhoods in the United States. The walls now represent now the heart of the neighborhood and a destination for locals and tourists alike. Revenue for the Wynwood Walls is generated from retail, restaurants, and rental of the outdoor space for events.

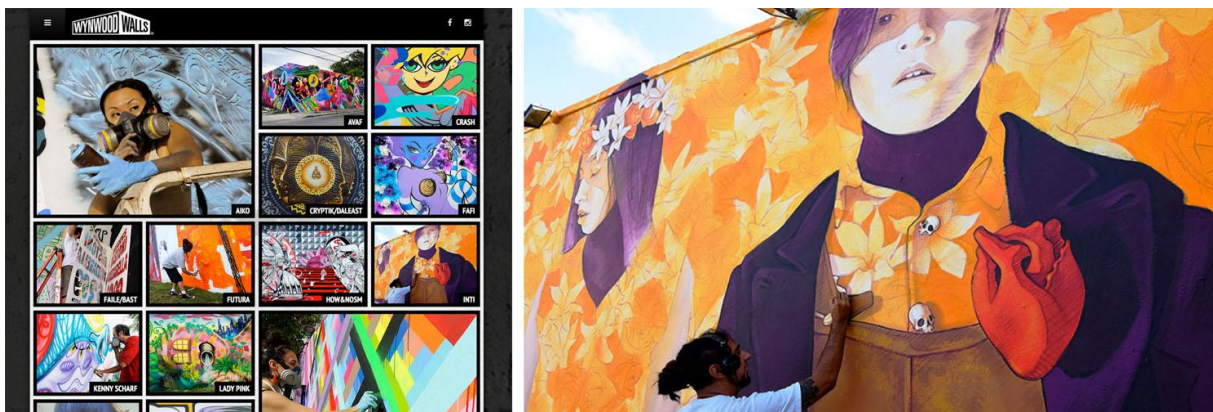


Figure: Wynwood Walls - Website

#### 5.1.1.2. Landscape Park Duisburg

Beautifying a former steel plant for re-use was the aim of this spectacular initiative. Rather than looking at the industrial site's disturbed and complex conditions as nuisances that should be erased or camouflaged, the landscape designers Latz + Partners worked carefully to mine them for their creative potential. The aim was to change the industrial landscape with minimal intervention, recycling and visually renewing decaying architectural objects into poetic places that pay homage to the site's past.

The transformed site creatively repurposes existing structures, and throws in a number of amenities that promote recreation and community, including a deep diving pool, a rock

climbing wall, picnicking areas, hiking trails, and multiple performance spaces — all woven together to create tapestry of memorable places.



Figure: Landscape Park Duisburg Nord

#### 5.1.1.3. Crown Fountain Chicago

The Crown Fountain in Chicago portrays 1000 Chicago citizens and has managed to build local pride amongst inhabitants over many years since its inauguration in 2004. The oversized faces have received local and worldwide recognition, as they present local heroes and portray their local cultures, attitudes and issues.



Figure: Crown Fountain Chicago

#### 5.1.1.4 Other artistic formats and use of material (feasible use for ‘ Styrian Iron Route’)

**Use of Light** (Example Industrial Park Duisburg)





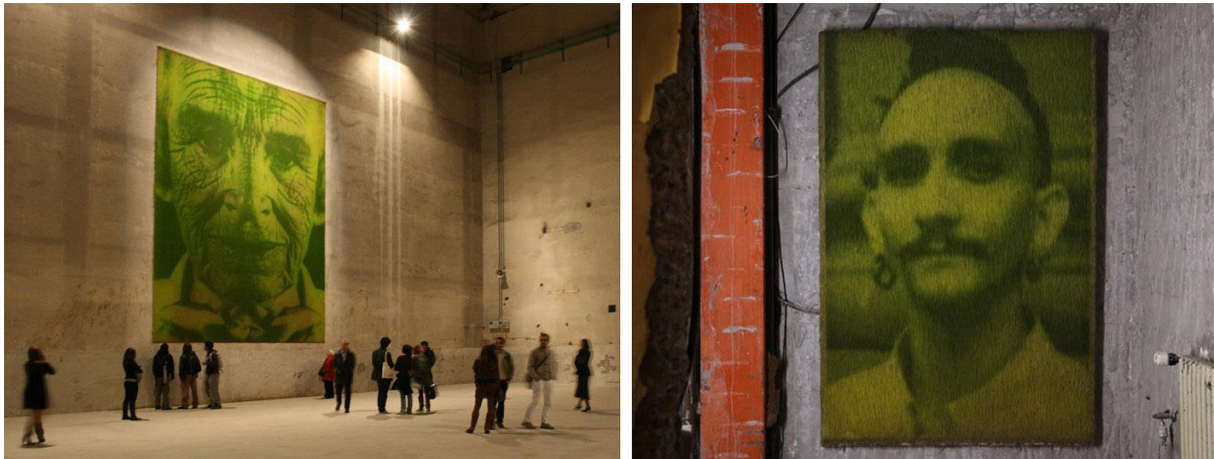
Use of Paint (Example Wynwood Walls)



Use of Prints (Example Street Artist JR)



### Use of Grass (Example Artists Ackroyd and Harvey)



### Use of Construction Sites and Empty Store Fronts (Example from Cynthia Schwertsik, left and Egg Picnic, right)



Figure: Artful designed construction site hoardings create big impact for small budget

In an effort to beautify the city center and conceal much of the construction work at building sites around Sydney, 10 submissions were recently selected from hundreds of artists to create the Site Works creative hoardings program. Adelaide artist Cynthia Schwertsik brought awareness to plastic shopping bags adrift in the sea (left image), whereas Illustrators Egg Picnic focused on the ecological power of the Australian birds (right image).

#### 5.1.2. Selection of sites

Where the XXL images, designs and elements are placed, needs to be curated within a task force of local scouts, city representatives and experts in the field of assembly, etc. It should be adjusted with other initiatives such the foreseen “Industrial culture festival”.

#### 5.1.3. Budget requirements to execute

Printing XXL images is cost-intensive despite the massive impact they receive. Before stepping into further planning, it is recommended to find financial resources among major industry players in the region.



#### 5.1.4. Promoting the initiative

Cooperation with regional media corporations, bloggers, journalists and social media experts is essential. Promoting the project also includes cooperation with schools and universities, inviting pupils and students to become ambassadors and news multipliers, sharing photos via their instagram profiles, videos via snapchat with their local and international networks. In general a focus on unconventional media strategies which reduce media expenditure but maximize output through smart growth hacking choices has to be laid on.

## 5.2 Visual Art Identity and Guiding Systems

Citizens and Visitors should be creatively guided through their city and made aware of Industrial Culture in the everyday life context. Due to budget constraints, the decision makers need to decide whether large image interventions on or around industrial sites or a town- or even region-wide visual identity or guiding system is preferred.

The following initiatives could be adapted to local stories, history and needs in the process to establish Industry Culture in the region.

#### 5.2.1 Inspiration and best-in-class cases as role model initiatives

##### 5.2.1.1 Remscheid, Germany

A former railway line was converted into a footpath and cycle track. The city of Remscheid, through which the new track leads, is worldwide known for its tools. Almost all “city branding interventions” refer to this topic. The low city marketing budget focused on the design of a graphical guidance system of markings and embossed asphalt surfaces. The route leads people through run-down districts but is now clearly recognizable as a cohesive strip, with a continuous pictorial symbols showing a set of tools along the 4.5 km long track.



Figure: City Marketing Campaign Remscheid with tools guiding the way

#### 5.2.1.2. Montréal, Canada

The Center of Montréal in the Quartier des Spectacles searched for a new identity and wanted to emphasize its growing presence in the art scene and promote itself as the cultural center of the city. In addition, it wanted to remember its history, using the means of light. In the 1920s, the junction of Saint Laurent Boulevard and Saint Catherine Street was the center of the Red Light District, with dancing bars and other "caves of sin." Now red lights in the revitalized neighborhood are projected down onto the pedestrian footpath, leading through the space and serving as historical reference points.



Figure: Light guiding through Montréal

#### 5.2.2 Selection of Sites

Cooperation with tourism organizations and the industry to define interesting paths throughout the cities and towns in the region is essential as well as cooperation with schools and universities to crowdsource ideas for quests and a playful approach to gamify knowledge transfer and present the highlights and landmarks of the locations to locals and visitors.

#### 5.2.3 Budget requirements to execute

see 5.1.3.

#### 5.1.4. Promoting the initiative

Use of online media and social media platforms (website / youtube / snapchat / facebook) to invite to events, co-create by crowdsharing ideas and feedback and document all activities.

## 6. Evaluation/transnational added value

International best-practice examples have provided inspiration for the potentials and options for changing an industrial city's exterior appearance. The knowledge exchange with the InduCult project partners will be beneficial in the implementation phase in regards to learning about resources when searching for artists and collaborators to transform an industrial site or to create a guiding system.

## 7. Outlook and sustainability

The term 'Industrial Culture' has yet to be internalized by the participants involved in the transformation process. Whatever the general meaning of the term and the definition that has been chosen as a framework for InduCult 2.0, it was observed in the workshop series that people need to feel the relevance of what 'Industrial Culture' could mean for the region, the world of employment, the world of education and everyday life. Installations in public space can contribute to this new understanding.

A local task force will work towards identifying ambassadors, casting supporters and finding financial and educational resources to allow crucial steps towards transformation of the identity and image of cities and towns along the Steirische Eisenstrasse.

The execution of first pilot measures is planned to start during 2019 within the frame of the Industrial Culture festival.

## 9. Sources

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