



Past - Present - Future



# CONCEPT FOR CREATING PIONEER AND CULTURE SPACE IN OLD- INDUSTRIAL SITES

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Regional concept for development of  
“Porubsky-Halle” in Leoben

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## 0. Abstract

Culture is an important developmental asset for (old-)industrial regions, and this is especially true for the region Steirische Eisenstrasse (Styrian Iron Route). Benefits can be gained not only by shaping the regions' image and regional identity but also by new approaches fostering creativity and creative industries in the environment of industry and its remains. Abandoned industrial sites (vacancies) can be used as an inspiring creative environment for creative industries or culture, thus improving the industrial "appearance" of the region and reviving old-industrial places. The InduCult activity presented in this report aims at finding a new and cost-efficient way of transforming the 100 year old industrial site "Porubskyhalle" in the city quarter of Leoben/Leitendorf into a forthcoming cultural hotspot and nucleus for further activities in the field of culture and creativity. The concept provided is based on the experiences gained by other European best practise examples.

## 1. Project Context

The Central Europe Project InduCult2.0 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).

One set of activities in work package T4 are pilot actions for reviving old-industrial places through culture and creative industries. Concepts for creating pioneer and culture space in old-industrial sites provide one of the major contributions to this work package.

## 2. Introduction & objectives

Culture is a developmental asset for (old-)industrial regions, and this is especially true for the region Steirische Eisenstrasse (Styrian Iron Route):

- The municipal services for culture and cultural development (and their regional partners at the Steirische Eisenstrasse) share a strong conviction in the power of 'culture as a developmental mechanism'. This conviction has been fed by years of successful development of various projects with international esteem<sup>1</sup>.
- These partners also possess the insight that creativity and culture as a driving force for economic and social urban development have not at all been exhausted. It all comes down to keeping a finger on the pulse of international trends and create a link with the potential and the aspirations of the city and the region.
- Furthermore, in international relations, substantive and financial support is often available for the realisation of good concepts. The InduCult2.0 project is merely the most recent EU-subsidised project that Leoben is a part of. Leoben is not only the 'recipient', but also a leading inspirer in its own right for other regions in Central and Western Europe.
- In addition the municipality of Leoben greatly values civil involvement and open communication with its inhabitants. That is why the project 'City Lab' or 'Stadtlabor Leoben', combined with the participation campaign 'Lust Auf Leoben' is an important initiative and point of reference for new future projects.

The former industrial site "Porubskyhalle" in Leoben is an attractive future location:

- For the 'Porubskyhalle' location, strong conceptual repurposing opportunities including demand analysis and user development have been developed in the recent past by city services<sup>2</sup> and external agencies<sup>3</sup>.
- The essence is that the Porubskyhalle could provide both a resting place and a motor for the next phase in cultural city development, and specifically the 'creative industry'.
- These proposals imply a certain investment budget that is at present not considered a priority by the municipality.
- Yet, the project 'Centre for Creativity and Youth Culture Porubsky Halle' is explicitly mentioned as a priority in the 2014 - 2020 local development strategy of the LAG Steirische Eisenstrasse.

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<sup>1</sup> A selection of the success stories: City museum and Kunsthalle Leoben with internationally renowned exhibits, Museumsverbund Eisenstrasse, Rostfest festival in Eisenerz, ...

<sup>2</sup> Stadtentwicklungskonzept Nr 5.01, 2010: 'Zentrum für Kreativität und Jugendkultur Porubsky-Halle'.

<sup>3</sup> In 2015, a concept was developed "Stadtteilzentrum Leitendorf / Creative\_Tech Porubskyhalle" by the agencies: Nussmüller Architekten, Rosenfelder & Höfler consulting engineers, SCAN Agentur für Markt – und Gesellschaftsanalytik, TBH Technisches Büro.

The concept that had to be found for establishing and improving the cultural space of Porubsky-Halle thus had to respect all the above mentioned factors and find a way forward for the local situation. The aim was to find a cost-efficient and creative container concept that can contribute to the spatial design / development plan for an old industrial city quarter (Leitendorf in Leoben) in which creative industries get to play an important role in future.

Finding a realistic and attractive future perspective for the Porubskyhalle in the city quarter of Leitendorf could help to accomplish the aforementioned aspirations. The city of Leoben linked to this challenge a wish to capitalise on its existing initiative 'City Lab', which allows the inhabitants to get actively involved in creating proposals for the future. Furthermore it had to be looked for budget-realistic proposals, because a structural investment in the aforementioned site (in building and renovation works) currently (2017) does not seem feasible.

### 3. Applied Approach

As a first step, a consulting organization with experience in:

- Creative design
- Development in old industrial regions / localities

had to be found.

After a public call was chosen to work with Het Vervolg / COALFACE from Belgium, who used the following methodology:

- Extensive site visit in Leoben and Leitendorf with a multidisciplinary team (architect / graphic designer / expert in local and regional development).
- Study of existing reports and proposals for Porubskyhalle.
- Study of relevant literature.
- Description and analysis / comparison of 7 good practice projects:
  - Strijp-S, Eindhoven, NL
  - Snorfabriek Utrecht, NL
  - PLLEK, Amsterdam, NL
  - Open\_Lab Ebbinge, Groningen, NL
  - The Movement Café Greenwich, UK
  - Frau Gerolds Garten, Zürich, Ch
  - C-Mine, Genk, B
- Description and analysis of CONTAINER001, 'Industrial Heritage = GOLD'-tour 2014, also as good practice project.
- Synthesis of lessons to be learnt and taken into account: an updated vision of the future of the Porubskyhalle in Leoben.
- A creative design of a 'container solution': STADT\_BOX.
- To prepare a report that the local partner can use to feed the discussion on the way forward.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 An updated vision for the Porubskyhalle

Artists, artisans, creative professions and the cultural industry are attracted in a peculiar way by old industrial areas and industrial heritage. There are countless examples of this all over the world. This ‘quasi natural trend’ is also increasingly stimulated in regional and local development plans.

The six projects showcased in the extensive report (see annex 1.3 ) have, apart from their direct activities, the goal or the side effect of supporting the location where the project is developed, and boosting its reputation. The motivations can be diverse:

- to avoid or halt a negative development spiral (vandalism, social decline...),
- to develop an experimental or innovative activity,
- to bridge a waiting period for a real estate investment,
- to render the area more attractive for government or real estate investment over time.

Of course, the latter also has a downside: the danger of gentrification and social repression. This is a process of upgrading a neighbourhood or a city quarter on a social, cultural and economic level, attracting wealthy new inhabitants/users, and in doing so driving the lower classes out of the city quarter. Of course, within the societal system driven by capitalistic values and realities, this might just be unavoidable.

Moreover, contemporary creatives are always looking for a form of ‘temporariness’. The place where it happens always has to be new, innovative and trendy. Even when this implies that the activity will move to newer challenging locations... The challenge faced by town planners lies in finding the right balance between these factors:

- Trendy, new (in terms of atmosphere, communication, alternative...)
- Room for experimentation (a wide array of affordable and diverse spaces)
- Provided with a basic offer of services (catering, accessibility, high-speed internet)

This way, the creative economy can likely be anchored for longer periods. This is ‘the challenge of permanent temporariness’.

It seems like all around the world, people are waiting for a creative class to settle in. After all, web designers, artists and artisans, designers and creative makers are certainly a growing share of the economy. But in order to be a fertile breeding ground and offer the right form of ‘permanent temporariness’, it needs more than a creative stimulating infrastructure. The city or region wishing to grow a truly new economy or successful projects in this atmosphere must create a link with what is already present and, where needed, what could be developed as a prerequisite. Especially in places lacking a metropolitan character, it is unwise to assume that realising an infrastructure would be enough to also generate action.

For Leoben, a link with the following factors and parties definitely seems worth exploring:

- Student circles
- The Montan University with its global reputation and contacts
- The truly typical and strong companies such as the steel factory voestalpine and the brewery Gösser.
- The city's strong international network and the local development agency 'Steirische Eisenstrasse'.
- A link with the creative city of Graz (design, creative business, youth culture...)

Relevant concrete proposals have already been included in the 2015 report (see footnote 3).

But a new vision on the city quarter is important. A 'permanent - temporary' cultural project in and/or around the Porubskyhalle could provide the proper insights and the necessary energy: the city quarter Leitendorf as a field of experimentation.

A project of between 5 and 10 years can help formulate answers to all questions involved.

Hands-on expertise has many benefits:

- Testing what works and what does not, without taking substantial risks.
- Clarity and certainty about the partnerships.
- Finding supporters and acceptance within the larger public.
- Exploring and solving potential conflicts of interest (e.g. neighbours, adjacent companies, accessibility issues).
- Spreading the time of government investment.
- Convincing investors (public and private).

## 4.2. A container-solution for Porubskyhalle in Leoben.

Het Vervolg / COALFACE proposes the realisation of a container project that would not only achieve the objectives in the project InduCult2.0, but that is also mobile, allowing for the entire city to be 'edited', that can grow *and* contribute to a creative repurposing of the Porubskyhalle site and its surroundings. It could help explore the feeling and the goal of 'permanent transience' necessary to give this site a long-term cultural / creative future.

### The design-concept:

The starting point would be two containers with a multifunctional purpose, mobile and expandable in the future, which can be used indoor (Porubskyhalle) and outdoor (e.g. on the open space next to Porubskyhalle). Because of the multifunctionality, it is proposed to also use the containers as carriers of a semi-covered outdoor space, giving the containers a supporting function (e.g. a stage). The different compositions of the containers towards each other generate a number of types of outdoor spaces. The semi-covered outdoor space is obtained by roof elements, which can be multiplied. The compilation between the containers with an intermediate roof creates a pleasant public space: the typology of the intermediate roof contributes to this because of its asymmetrical form in relation to the static container. It also symbolises the industrial archetype; a reference to the manufacturing industry -> craftsmanship. It is possible that 'craftsmanship' could

eventually create a diversity of expansions/modifications to the current compilation of the containers, with which the 'maker' could present themselves and as such various 'makers' could create a new ensemble together.

Two 20-foot containers would be used and linked together by building a covered stage and/or tent between the two.

The ensemble is mobile and multifunctional:

- One of the containers stays fairly rough / industrial on the inside and is used as a materials container, to stock the stage and roof elements and all supplies and provisions for use (sound and light installation, drinks supply, tables and chairs...)
- The other container is well-finished, isolated and acclimatised, and could be used:
  - As an office or small meeting room
  - As a ticket office and information office
  - As a bar with service toward the outside or to the tent area between the containers
  - As a 'control room' for the operation of light and sound...
  - ...

Different setups are possible. The most obvious ones are the following:

#### 'Facing outward'

The settlement serves as a stage for performances and events, and is focused on working with an outdoor standing audience. Between the two containers, a stage could be created measuring either 25 m<sup>2</sup> (5 m x 5 m) or 12,5 m<sup>2</sup> (5m x 2.5m).

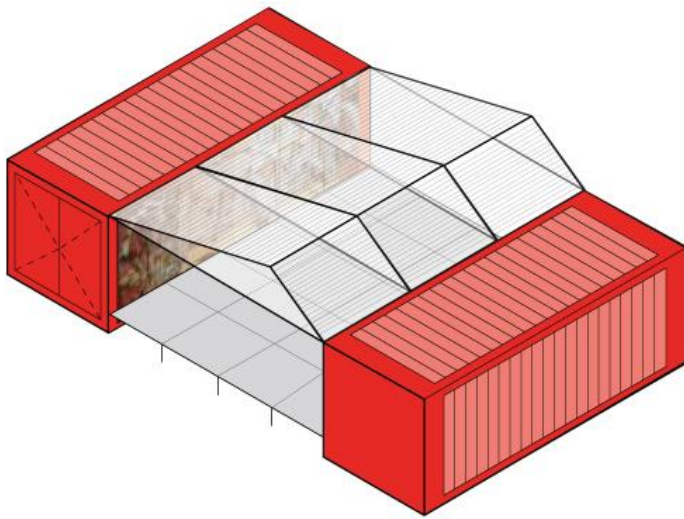
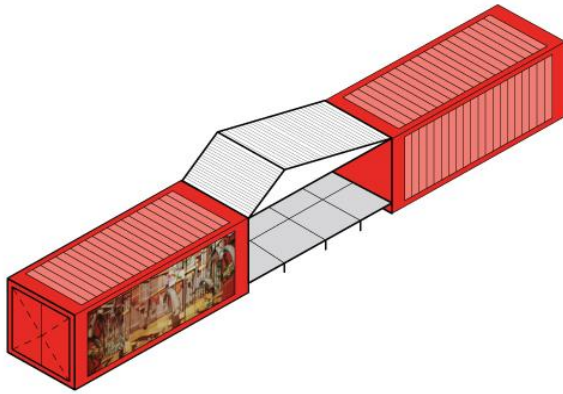
- One container serves as a storage area.
- One container serves as a bar / ticket office / ...

#### 'Facing inward'

The settlement serves as a place of opportunity for meetings, presentations, with a rather internal and intimate character. In between the containers, a covered space is created that could be closed off as required, or serve as an open covered space or shelter.

Of course, the decorated container could also be used entirely 'stand-alone' as a mobile office or a meeting room.



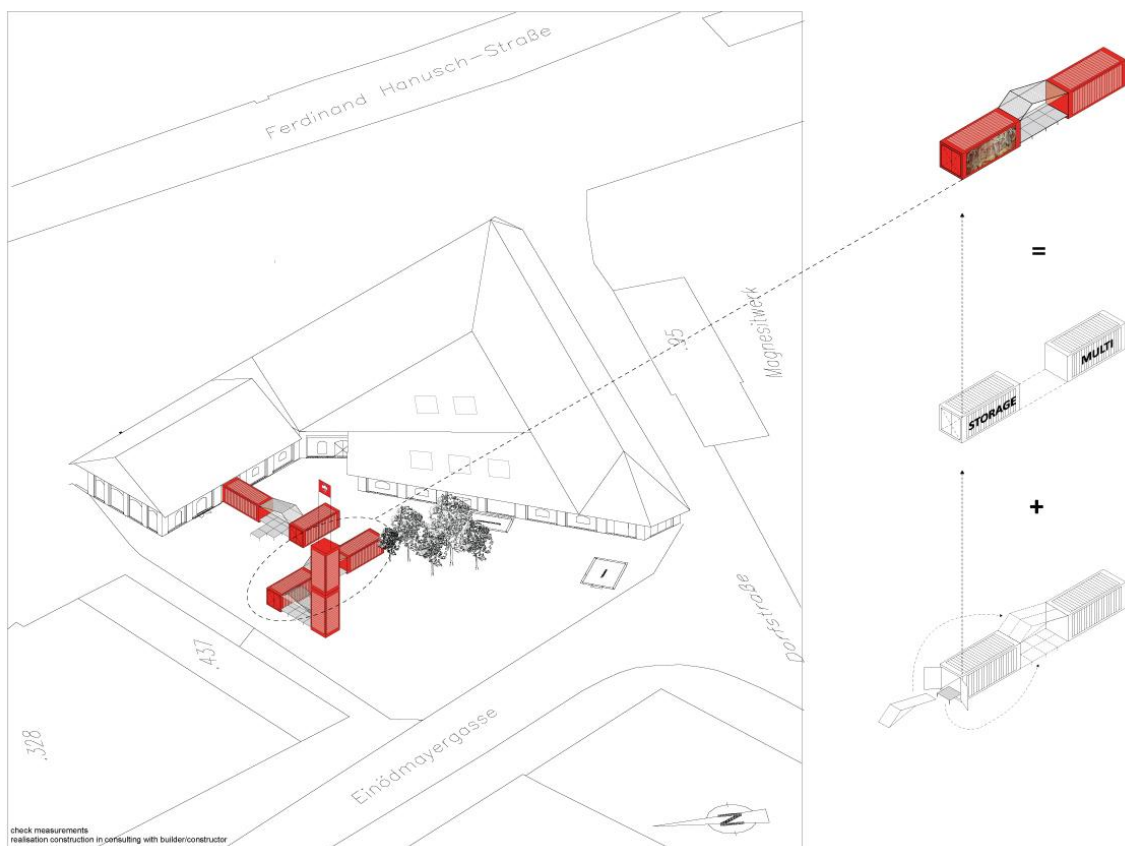


### 4.3. Application for the Porubskyhalle

The InduCult2.0 container project could support a renewed image research for the Porubskyhalle. By executing this relatively limited project in a clearly and publicly communicated link with the Porubskyhalle location, attention and creativity will be sparked.

Activating the use of the Porubskyhalle as a place for creativity, culture and experimentation could happen by linking the new containers to be realised to the site in a number of ways:

- Porubskyhalle as a home base for the containers, which move around from there within the framework of Leoben City Lab.
- Porubskyhalle as an event location for artistic, cultural experiments with the containers as central objects.
- Porubskyhalle as a (social) workspace for the production of these and other containers.
- Porubskyhalle as a continuously growing container settlement. A symbolic link to the city centre could be created by mounting two containers vertically.



## 5. Evaluation/transnational added value

The concept, which was developed for a specific site and purpose in Leoben/Austria, is easily applicable for other regions. Apart from the cost-extensive “container solution”, the concept study also gives insight in comparable European best practise projects. They can provide much inspiration for the other InduCult partners working on the same topic.

## 6. Outlook and sustainability

The concept shows a cost-extensive solution for a ‘permanent-temporary’ cultural project in and/or around the Porubskyhalle. Its realisation can provide the necessary energy for the further development of the industrial city quarter Leitendorf as a field of experimentation. Based on the estimated budget for realisation (see annex 2.6) the next step will be to raise the necessary funds for implementation (which has to be carried out beyond the InduCult budget).

## 7. Annexes incl. picture documentation (if applicable)

Concept “Stadt\_BOX - Permanent temporariness for the Porubskyhalle as leverage for a cultural-creative future” (English, 36 pages)