

28 May 2026

**Universities in Cities undergoing Structural Change
– invitation to take part in a new Research Network**

This is an invitation to you to participate in an international research network within the framework of the UNIC collaboration to investigate and compare the role of universities in the structural change from industrial cities to something else.

These cities are sometimes called post-industrial cities. But is that the right word? Perhaps only work has changed its character and become less visible in the cityscape? It is clear in any case that universities are a major employer in these cities now. They are often seen as key success story in the transitioning of these cities from a past dominated by manufacturing industry to a future where services are much more important. Where in many cases, a specific manufacturing industry has been dominant in these cities earlier, they now are more oriented towards a range of different services. Higher education has a prominent place in those service-sector-related institutions.

Who were the decision-makers when the universities were established?

Who were the actors putting forward contested visions of the role of universities in cities where key manufacturing industries were in crisis?

How did the universities become success stories in the transitioning of these cities towards more service-sector-related industries?

What problems did universities encounter in their attempts to help their cities master the crisis of manufacturing industries?

These are examples of questions that we would like to explore together.

We welcome researchers from different disciplines to participate. We plan to have an online workshop in the fall of 2026. If you are interested in participating, or if you have any questions, please send us an email.

Kind regards

Stefan Berger, Professor of Social History and Director of the Institute for Social
Movements, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
E-mail: stefan.berger@ruhr-uni-bochum.de

Magnus Gustafson, postdoctoral researcher, Department of Urban Studies, Malmö
University, Sweden
E-mail: magnus.gustafson@mau.se