

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

***1. International Workshop of Centre for Structural Change
and Regional Development:***

Potentials and Limits of Strategies for Innovation-Driven Regional Industrial Development

When: 29. + 30.10.2026

Where: Cottbus, Germany. Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg

Organisational Information: Participation in the workshop is free of charge. Please note, however, that travel and accommodation expenses cannot be reimbursed.

Multidimensional structural changes are reshaping regional economies worldwide, often driven by politically-decided green energy transitions and broader societal shifts. Governments' strategies for buffering expected transition shocks regularly aim at boosting regional innovation systems and creating new economic development paths, while simultaneously addressing bundles of related issues, such as skilled labour shortages, environmental degradation, or decline in public services. Often, governments' responses centre around a vision of a green knowledge-based economy, aiming at agglomerations of sustainable energy production and technology-intensive firms, kick-started by public spending to support development of higher education and research institutions, infrastructure, and attracting higher-skilled labour.

Such strategies can be observed worldwide, both on national and regional scales. Examples range from processes in coal mining regions in Germany (Berger et al., 2025;

Lange & Bürkner, 2025) and beyond (Jolly et al., 2025; Krommyda et al., 2025), but also in regions that have weaker ties to fossil-based energy production but where similar strategies for path development are still tied to larger sustainability transitions (Eadson & Leeuw, 2025; Laasonen, 2024; Losacker et al., 2023). These logics unfold not only in different types of regions (Grillitsch & Hansen, 2019), but also at national scales, such as in developmental agendas of countries outside the Global North like Singapore (Kiese, 2006), or the Arab Gulf countries (Ewers & Malecki, 2010; Rottleb, 2024).

Despite a growing body of research on these processes, important questions remain regarding the potentials and limits of such strategies for innovation-driven regional development. In particular, the literature has yet to fully unpack the mechanisms through which such strategies are articulated and stabilised, the actor constellations and power relations that shape them, as well as their broader economic and societal viability.

To advance academic debate on these and related questions, the Centre for Structural Change and Regional Development (ZeStuR), established at Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus–Senftenberg (BTU) in November 2025, invites researchers studying comparable processes worldwide to an inter- and transdisciplinary workshop. Bringing together researchers, policy-makers, and regional stakeholders from Lusatia, the coal region in which the BTU itself is located, the workshop aims to create a space for joint reflection on the societal relevance of structural change research, the exchange of methodologies and insights, the identification of research gaps, and the co-development of future research questions and agendas.

The workshop will combine co-creative sessions together with practitioners with academic formats discussing work-in-progress. For the latter, we invite contributions from economics, economic geography, regional studies, transition studies, and related fields. Submissions will be subject to a two-step selection process. 1) Initially, we invite interested researchers to submit a 200-word abstract outlining their work, whether empirical, theoretical, or conceptual, related to the workshop themes. This can range from attempts at structuring raw ideas, to early versions of article manuscripts, to research concepts, etc. Based on these abstracts, we will select a group of participants, who will then 2) be asked to submit a short working paper (5–6 pages) in advance, based on the abstract. These submissions will be circulated among all participants prior to the workshop. Each participant will be assigned one paper submitted by another participant and tasked with preparing a short presentation (10–15 minutes) that summarises and critically discusses the assigned work, including their own reflections and feedback.

Submissions could address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

Empirical insights

- What is the role of firms and entrepreneurs in regions in transition?
- Building regional knowledge economies – what works and what doesn't?
- How can state-led development enable bottom-up agency?
- What are the roles of ideational categories like imaginaries, narratives, visions, etc. in regional structural change?
- How can regions become more resilient through structural change?
- How do perceptions of fairness, opportunity, and risk among local actors influence their willingness to invest in, innovate, or support regional development strategies?

Methodologies

- How and what should be compared when researching regional structural change?
- What methodological challenges arise in our disciplines for researching regional structural change?
- How can participatory, transdisciplinary, and co-creative approaches be meaningfully integrated into economics and economic geography?
- How can we study anticipatory or future-oriented governance and strategies?

Ontological and epistemological considerations

- How is research on regional structural change positioned within, across, or beyond academic disciplinary logics?
- How do normative assumptions shape research on regional structural change?
- What constitutes regional 'structural change', and (how) does it differ from 'transformation'?
- What is a 'region' in transition research, e.g., administrative unit, functional space, socio-political construct, or imaginary?

Critical assessment

- What are the blind spots of established regional knowledge based economy driven development strategies?

- Beyond growth: how can we research alternatives to established regional development strategies?
- What are the uneven geographies of innovation-driven regional development?
- How does research on regional structural change interact with policy-making and governance?

Please send your abstracts as PDF documents **by 1 July 2026** to rottleb@b-tu.de. Abstracts should not exceed 200 words (not counting references) and include a clear reference to at least one of the outlined streams of investigation. Each proposal should be accompanied by a brief biographical outline, including your affiliation, position, and main research interests. We will notify you whether your proposal has been accepted by 1 August, along with further information on the workshop programme. Participants whose abstracts were selected will be asked to submit their 5-6 page working paper for circulation among all workshop participants and review by a designated discussant by 1 October.

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Literature

- Berger, W., Markwardt, G., Rettig, J., Schnellenbach, J., Titze, M., & Zundel, S. (2025). *Die (neue) Rolle der Wissenschaft für den Strukturwandel in der brandenburgischen Lausitz*. BeForSt Policy Brief. https://www-docs.b-tu.de/presse/public/Presseinformationen/2025/2025_4_30_Policy%20Brief/20250417%20Policy%20Brief%20IV%20lang%20Endfassung.pdf
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- Ewers, M. C., & Malecki, E. J. (2010). Leapfrogging into the knowledge economy: Assessing the economic development strategies of the Arab Gulf states. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 101(5), 494–508.
- Grillitsch, M., & Hansen, T. (2019). Green industry development in different types of regions. *European Planning Studies*. (world). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09654313.2019.1648385>
- Jolly, S., Asheim, B., Benner, M., Calignano, G., Eadson, W., Gong, H., & Nilsen, T. (2025). Future-oriented green and just regional industrial path development: Towards a critical examination. *Progress in Economic Geography*, 3(2), 100049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.peg.2025.100049>
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- Lange, B., & Bürkner, H.-J. (2025). Unpacking revaluation in regional restructuring: The case of post-carbon Lusatia. *ZFW – Advances in Economic Geography*, 69(4), 203–222. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2025-2002>
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- Rottleb, T. (2024). *Building the Knowledge Economy, Transforming Cities? Transnational Education Zones as a Multi-Scalar Development Strategy in the Arab Gulf Region*. Springer VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-46352-6>