

Participatory Pathways for Reshoring European Manufacturing (RESHORE)

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RESHORE is a two-year Marie Skłodowska-Curie project exploring how communities of artists and artisans understand and intervene in industrial futures in central Europe. In spite of decades of economic globalization, offshoring, and a global race-to-the-bottom, manufacturing remains a significant part of the European economy, employing around 30 million people. Given increasing evidence of the vulnerabilities and radical unsustainabilities resulting from over-reliance on global supply chains, especially in a post-Covid and inflationary context, RESHORE will enhance our understanding of how alternative production networks (APNs) operate and thrive.

Facing shortages of products and raw materials during initial months of the Covid crisis, governments and communities eschewed the market and stepped in to meet shortfalls in various ways. The US invoked the Defence Production Act to allow state direction of industry, while an advisor to French President Macron asserted that “the EU must protect strategic sectors, bring back certain industries, increase our capacity to manufacture and stock in the fields we neglected for decades, such as medicine.” While it has been argued for decades that much of the food supply can or should be relocalized, sparking a flourishing of research on food sovereignty and Alternative Food Networks (AFNs), alongside related localisation tools such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), this perspective has been less prevalent with regard to the production of non-foodstuffs. Instead, the economic imaginary of the Global North as “post-industrial” remains prevalent.

Central to RESHORE is a desire to destabilize familiar narratives of the economy—such as the notion that there is one singular “capitalist” or “post-industrial” economy—and instead acknowledge the economic diversity (including household labour, volunteering, gifting, community exchange, and other non-capitalist dynamics) that underpins social reproduction. The project will learn from existing community-led manufacturing initiatives in Germany and the Czech Republic, and result in numerous public-facing and academic outputs. Putting community participation at the forefront of economic thinking, it contributes to understandings of how local resources can be better utilized as a commons for collective benefit.