

**THE TRANSFORMATION OF LIFE, WORK AND COMMUNITY  
IN POST-SOCIALIST EUROPE:  
A WESTERNER STUDIES NOWA HUTA**

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**Abstract:** On the basis on ongoing research which explores the transformation of work and community in Nowa Huta, Poland, this paper reflects on the nature and value of east-west research and on the connections that can, and should, be made between the varied urban geographies of Europe. Drawing attention to some themes which connect the urban geographies of eastern and western Europe, it argues that we have a 'responsibility to distant geographies but that responsibility rests not simply on studying those distant parts as exotic and intriguing sites for research but on connecting our lives and our geographies to those of distant others'.

**Key words:** work, community, east-west research, post-socialism Europe, Nowa Huta (Poland).

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowa Huta, a district of Kraków in southern Poland, founded in 1949 as the largest project in Poland's first six-year plan and as a symbol of Poland's industrial and socialist future, centred on the then Lenin Steelworks,<sup>1</sup> and later a bastion of Poland's opposition movements, has long attracted attention from researchers, in Poland and beyond. The town's<sup>2</sup> economic and political importance at all stages of Poland's post-war development mean that it represents a very particular urban and industrial experience. This paper reports on a research projects aimed at exploring one part of the process of urban transformation—the changing relationship between work and community—but

presents concrete findings only in an abbreviated form.<sup>3</sup> Instead the paper aims primarily to reflect on the nature of east-west research and on the connections than can, and should, be made between the varied urban geographies of Europe. The paper begins with an exploration of studying Nowa Huta before leading into a discussion of the rationale be-

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<sup>1</sup> At their height the steelworks employed around 40,000 workers and the town as a whole became home to close to 250,000 people.

<sup>2</sup> Originally conceived as a independent town, Nowa Huta has been a district of Kraków since 1950. It nevertheless possesses a distinct identity and, to a certain extent, a distinct economy, thus I continue to refer to it as a town.

<sup>3</sup> These are developed elsewhere—see Stenning 2001, 2003 and [www.nowahuta.info](http://www.nowahuta.info).

hind my particular project. A brief discussion of post-socialist transformations is followed by the presentation of some research results, organized around five key themes. These results highlight not only the post-socialist experiences of Nowa Huta but demonstrate also what can be learnt from Nowa Huta and the contexts in which these lessons must be learnt. In the concluding sections of the paper, the focus of discussion is on the nature and purpose of east-west research and builds on existing debates in geography on the responsibilities of cross-cultural and distant research (Domański 2004; Potter 2001, 2002; Smith 2002; Timar 2003).

## STUDYING NOWA HUTA

This project is far from the first which recognizes and draws attention to the value of studying Nowa Huta. In an earlier period of dramatic transformation in Poland, there was a proliferation of research, geographical, sociological, demographic, which explored the adaptation of parts of the Polish population to modern, urban life and to the new political economic realities of Soviet-style socialism. That Nowa Huta played a special part in these wider transformations and studies is testified to by the growth of 'Nowa Huta studies' (see, for example, Blok-Iwińska 1960, 1961; Goban-Klas 1971; Kwiecień 1962a,b; Siemieńska 1967, 1969; Stojak 1967; for a rare Western example, see Fisher 1962) and the creation in 1963 of a Nowa Huta section (Sekcja Nowohucka) of the Sociological Commission of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Kraków branch) (Dobrowolski 1964). Of course there were clear political reasons why Nowa Huta attracted such attention in

the 1950s and '60s but there were also good academic reasons; Nowa Huta was a place which could tell us a great deal about the way societies worked, the way communities formed identities and about the links between work, community and identity.<sup>4</sup>

The place of Nowa Huta in academic research declined somewhat in the middle years of Polish socialism, though the development of the steelworks and town continued to garner attention (Górka 1985; Soja 1986). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, another wave of researchers, both Polish and Western, came to see Nowa Huta again as a valuable example for understanding wider social and economic shifts (see, for example, Domański 1990; Praweńska-Skrzypek 1990). Throughout the 1990s, research focused on the restructuring of the steelworks and the social and physical health of the community as indicative of wider transformations in Poland and central Europe more widely (Hardy et al. 1996; Niward 1997, 2000; Watson 1998). At the same time, the opening of the archives and shifting political agendas allowed for the emergence of retrospective and revisionist histories of Nowa Huta's early development in the wider context of the country's and the region's broader transformations, again by both Polish and Western historians (Janus 1999; Jarosz 1997; Lebow 2001; Krakowskie Forum Rozwoju 1997; Towarzystwo Miłośników Historii i Zabytków Krakowa 1999; Terlecki et al. 2002). In short, repeatedly throughout its brief history, Nowa Huta has been used as an important research site, as a result of the ways in which the town, its economy and community enable us to try to understand broader processes of social and spatial change.

In the period of transformation and adaptation during the 1950s and '60s, it was important to try to understand how people in their communities were dealing with and responding to the challenges of urbanization, industrialization and the attempted Sovietization of Poland. In later years, the focus has been instead on understanding the consequences of deindustrialization, globalization and the 'Europeanization' of

<sup>4</sup> Dobrowolski suggested 'that the reconstruction of social processes of development connected with the creation of Nowa Huta possesses great significance for the theory of the formation of industrial society, for the theory of migration, for the theory of the adaptation of the peasant population, for issues connected with the sociology of work, for the theory of the processes of social disintegration and integration, for the theory of the clash of old and new cultural values' (Dobrowolski 1962: 158).

Poland, yet in all these periods, Nowa Huta has offered a valuable site for study. For me too, the choice of Nowa Huta as a research location was based on the town's privileged location within socialism (that is, its explicit construction as a 'space of socialism'), its position at the forefront of the oppositional movements of the 1980s and its particular articulation with contemporary discourses of globalization, marketization and EU accession, shaped by the restructuring of its principal workplace. Whilst far from typical, Nowa Huta presents an incredibly productive case study of the remaking of communities in post-socialism. Through this case study, the project attempts to contribute to wider debates over the nature, meaning and emergent geographies of post-socialism and the relationship between economic restructuring and social change more broadly, most particularly through the work/community relationship. Thus, the project on which this paper is based rests on the coming together of two pairs of research strands. The first strand relates to i) a desire to explore the lived experiences of post-socialist transformations, that is their influence on the everyday lives of people in the region (see, for example, Burawoy and Verdery 1999b; Hann 2002) and ii) a recognition that Western social scientists have been paying ever increasing attention to the restructuring of everyday lives through the transformation of work and community as one of the most important manifestations of the so-called 'new economy'. The second strand relates to a interest in iii) the mutual construction of space and society, that is the notion that places are structured in part by wider socio-economic systems, but elements of what makes a place what it is (its history, institutions, economic structure) are active in constructing or changing the nature of social systems, and specifically, iv) in the particular experiences of places which built and were built by socialism in east central Europe and the former Soviet Union. There is an implicit comparison in this work (see also Kenney 1997; Lebow 1999), as I work in the context of Western geography, reading and learning

Western geographical literatures and thus present an 'outsider's view' of Nowa Huta and Poland (see Szymońska 2003). What this means is that, almost inevitably, my work is informed more by English-language literatures (despite the use of Polish literatures in studying Nowa Huta itself) and thus this paper develops an ongoing dialogue between Eastern and Western accounts of geography and transformation.

## **STUDYING TRANSFORMATION**

In the years since 1989 considerable progress has been made in the 'transition' from socialism to some sort of capitalism by all of the countries of the former Soviet bloc. In this context, Poland is regularly identified as one of the front-runners in reform, in the first wave of accessions to the European Union. However, focusing on the success (or failure) of reform at the macro-scale ignores the changes that have taken place behind the headline events. The emergence of post-socialism in east central Europe has been accompanied by radical and wide-ranging transformations in the daily lives of the people of the region yet less work has explored these spatial and local dimensions of change, such that much of the literature lacks an understanding of the role of people and institutions at the local level in transforming social and economic systems and building new practices. The processes of marketization and democratization, central to post-socialist transformations, are processes which radically restructure people's daily lives and lived experiences in a hundred and one ways. The changes wrought by the end of socialism and the construction of something new (be that market democracy or something else) alter the spaces of culture, politics and the economy. Amongst other things, they redefine ideological priorities, they validate new forms of activity (political, economic, social and cultural) and condemn others, they shift the balance of power and authority to new groups, who exercise that authority in new ways and they translate notions of citizen-

ship, nationality and belonging. In short, they transform people's lives.

Many of these themes echo through contemporary literatures on social and economic change in the West, with recent years characterized by a growing focus on understanding the so-called 'new economy' and its social, cultural and political implications. Considerable attention has been paid, for example, to the processes of change in old industrial communities where both social and economic relations apparently more appropriate to an earlier era are transformed and restructured. The geography of labour is seen to shift to globalized sites, networked into flows of knowledge and capital, rather than localities dominated by factories or mines; with these shifts, the nature of work and the broader social relations of employment change as some regions are increasingly characterized by unemployment and by low-wage, marginal employment, offering far fewer of the social and political benefits of older forms of work. In this way, traditional institutions such as trade unions are forced to restructure and traditional industries are relegated to wasteland or heritage (Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dicks 2000; Linkon and Russo 2002). New social and political landscapes are created with new patterns of inclusion and exclusion, shaping geographies of mobility and access, related more to the (in)ability to consume than produce (Bauman 1998b; Beck 2000). In response, there is a demand for new forms of policy, constructed at a variety of scales—from the local to the European.

What follows in this paper is an exploration of these themes in the context of Nowa Huta.<sup>5</sup> The intention is to highlight both the similarities which echo through Eastern and Western geographies, but also to identify some of the differences which call attention to the importance of studying post-socialism and documenting its relationship to wider processes of social and economic change. The academic, political and popular attention paid to Nowa Huta mean that it has been represented as many things—the next section of the paper begins by exploring Nowa Huta

as a town of labour, examining the role of organized labour in shaping economic and political life. The second theme develops the theme of work more broadly, exploring the wider social place of work in socialism and post-socialism. This leads into a discussion of the geographies of everyday lives in Nowa Huta, focusing on the contradictory experiences of freedom and mobility during and after socialism. The focus then shifts to another angle of Nowa Huta's historical experience which remains of critical importance today—the politics of its heritage. These four discussions lead into a more general account of transformation in Nowa Huta, drawing out themes of work, class and community and identifying some spaces of hope (Harvey 2000) in the post-socialist landscape.

## **LABOUR AND THE LANDSCAPES OF (POST-) SOCIALISM**

A growing body of work within geography (see, for example, Herod 1997 1998; Sadler and Thompson 2001) draws attention to the role of labour in actively shaping economic landscapes, challenging the more capitalocentric (Gibson-Graham 1996) scripting of economic geographies. In east central Europe and the former Soviet Union (ECE/FSU), labour institutions have long played a central role in the construction of economies. Under socialism, trade unions and workplaces were charged with the responsibility for social provision and

<sup>5</sup> The research on which this paper is based employed a range of qualitative methodologies including in-depth, semi-structured interviews with residents of Nowa Huta, interviews with a number of 'key informants' and 'gatekeepers' within and beyond the community, a review and analysis of literatures on Nowa Huta and a range of newspaper sources, and ethnographic work, including participation in a number of meetings, in Nowa Huta. I carried out thirty two interviews with residents of Nowa Huta, whose ages ranged from 18 to 87, identified through existing contacts but chosen to reflect a wide range of perspectives within the community; these interviews followed an interview guide which explored relatively freely themes of work, home, social lives, relationships with friends and neighbours, Nowa Huta itself and Kraków, amongst others.

the transmission of political economic doctrine (Pravda and Ruble 1986). In socialist cities, the very tight relationship between workplaces and communities exaggerated still further the importance of labour institutions. In Nowa Huta, Huta Lenina was without doubt the central 'town-forming' institution. The work it provided, the facilities it supported and the trade unions it housed played a major role in shaping not only the built environment, but also the nature and scope of social, cultural, recreational and domestic lives.<sup>6</sup>

The dominance of state-sponsored labour organizations began to be questioned as opposition to the socialist regime grew; the relationship between workers and the institutions which were supposed to support and represent them was faltering. In their place, new looser movements were emerging; Nowa Huta's workplaces, churches and homes developed into sites of resistance and organization as informal networks arose to challenge the state and provide for the community's everyday needs in place of the state (Bivand 1983; Kenney 2002). The creation of Solidarity in 1980, and its later prohibition, was coupled with the established forms of work-community relationships to shape the role of workers' organizations within and beyond the sphere of traditional workplace politics. At the national and regional scales, Solidarity contested the policies of the communist regime, promoting and fighting for alternative economic strategies.

In the post-socialist period, the legacy of these movements is seen in the structures established or maintained to ease the community transformations which accompany the restructuring of the steelworks. The

proliferation of workplace trade unions is just one example of the continued presence of labour organizations in Nowa Huta; the activities of these organizations beyond the workplace build on and reflect the history of community action practised both under socialism and during the Solidarity years. Whilst attention is still paid by the unions to issues within the workplace, recent threats to the steelworks' survival have reinforced the focus on the scale of the community. Through a range of activities such as social assistance funds, charitable organizations and pensioners' centres and networks, the steelworks' trade unions offer moral, financial and in-kind assistance to workers, former workers and their families (Stenning 2003). In a reversal of western forms of 'community unionism' (Wills 2001), in this case extra-workplace organizing is oriented less towards the renewal of the union than the reproduction of the community.

## **REMAKING WORK AND COMMUNITY**

The politics and practices of trade unions and their allied institutions are just one aspect of the work/community relationship. Across the former socialist world, work was afforded a central place in the lives of communities and became the basis for a particular form of paternalism (Domański 1992, 1997). A political economy of scarcity strengthened the socialist enterprise's control over the industrial town in the east and the extreme level of integration between production and social policy under the socialist regimes of east central Europe meant that there were rarely alternative providers of welfare, recreational or consumer services (Offe 1996). In places like Nowa Huta, this relationship offered security and social advance (see, for example, Goban-Klas 1971; Stojak 1967; Siemieńska 1969), providing a home, access to a network of social and cultural facilities and wages high enough to provide for a family.

The recent breakdown of this labour contract and the loss or weakening of institu-

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<sup>6</sup> HiL financed a health service employing 150 doctors plus ancillary staff and offering a full range of general and specialized medical services for employees, pensioners and their families, premises for vocational training, a metallurgical training school, a cultural centre, a sports club and stadium, a theatre, two cinemas and subsidized holidays (Hardy, Rainnie et al., 1996: 150). Huta Lenina did not own, but assisted in the maintenance and construction of, much of the town's stock of housing and many goods and services were provided, formally or informally, through the steelworks.

tions such as state enterprises, co-opted trade unions and the constitutional right to work have fed the emergence of unemployment and fragmented, insecure forms of work. Interviews in Nowa Huta demonstrated how growing insecurity, fear of job loss, increasing pressure to commit more and more of life to work and an erosion of domestic and social lives are seen to result from new forms of work. Work available today rarely offers the financial basis to support a family; the low level of pay and insecurity of employment restricts access both to the essentials of daily life and to social and cultural activities which are becoming increasingly commercialized. In addition to this financial deterioration, interviewees repeatedly noted that fear and envy at work is eroding the quality of personal relationships. As a result, the social lives built up around work are being destroyed and people are retreating to the home, reluctant to engage in activities of any kind in the wider community.

Much academic work in the UK and North America (see, for example, Bauman 1998b; Beck 2000; Sennett 1998) has suggested that work is no longer as important in shaping people's lives as it was under the post-war regimes in both east and west. What my research in Nowa Huta has demonstrated is that the apparent 'end of work' paradoxically results in the persistent centrality of work, albeit manifested in very different ways. Despite the fact that work now no longer offers the security, benefits and community once experienced in Nowa Huta, many of my interviewees testified to the continuing dominance of their lives by work, the search for work or the absence of work. People are spending more and more time and energy working, to the detriment of their lives outside work; the absence, or low value, of work is shaping, particularly, young people's lives as they have limited access to other forms of stability; and the loss of work is ruining relationships built around it. Whilst stories of the 'end of work' echo through experiences in both ECE and the west, the remaking of communities in the former is reinforced by the concurrent 'end of socialism'. This dual ending exacerbates the challenges to both the

material and ideological foundations of industrial communities in ECE, heralding as it does a double decline of communities built on the efforts of socialist labour.

Perhaps the most important effect of these shifts at the scale of the community has been the shifting commonality of experience. Many of my interviewees discussed the ties, both within and beyond the workplace, which bound the community together; their lives were connected to each other through routines and institutions established around the workplace. Today, the common experiences are more likely to be of job loss and insecurity than social progression and achievement, and they are less likely to be experienced collectively. What is more, the achievements of the new system—consumption, enterprise—are more likely to be experienced individually too. The wider political implications of this fragmentation means that it is more difficult to question and deal with the ongoing transformations, echoing Bauman's (2001) identification of a disintegration of citizenship. A further danger of current discourses of work is that they erode the resources (both tangible and intangible) which contain the potential for meaningful renewal. The ends of work and socialism clearly have consequences and the ways in which these endings are narrated and understood shape the opportunities/alternatives for the future; by ignoring or undervaluing the resources of an earlier era and ascribing to the contemporary forces of capitalism an unchallenged role (Gibson-Graham 1996), the spaces in which community futures might positively be created are themselves destroyed.

## **MARKETIZATION, GLOBALIZATION, ACCESS AND MOBILITY**

Much recent work has drawn attention to the new patterns of mobility and security emerging in the light of economic restructuring and globalization. Authors such as Massey (1993) and Bauman (1998a) have highlighted the uneven mobility of people in

a globalizing era, noting that whilst for some travel and social mobility are improved, others appear instead to be witnessing either the shrinking of their life-worlds or the expansion of horizons without the real possibility of reaching them. These stories of mobility and insecurity are especially interesting in Nowa Huta as a result of its history as a town of migrants. There is an apparent paradox in Nowa Huta now being characterized as a place of insecurity, declining mobility and uncertainty, in contrast to its earlier characterization as a place of opportunity and stability.

Poland's immediate post-war years were marked by an ideology of construction which called on Poles to join the task of founding a new Poland, full of opportunities and offering long-term stability. It was within this context that Nowa Huta was founded; the town and steelworks were seen as a site of stability, opportunity and migration, offering possibilities for social mobility and (eventually) security.<sup>7</sup> Nowa Huta's early years were characterized by a relatively small everyday geography (Siemieńska 1969); lives were focused on work in, and construction of, the town and steelworks; social networks, echoing the rural traditions of the migrants' home communities, were centred on neighbouring blocks; and a distinct division was maintained between Nowa Huta and Kraków. The provision of leisure opportunities through the workplace made trips to the cinema, theatre and opera, for example, accessible for all. In a community like Nowa Huta oriented to the needs of a strategically important steelworks and its workers, the diversity of social and cultural provision was particularly high, and embedded within the community's urban fabric.

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<sup>7</sup> Material produced by Polish academics in the 1960s and 70s explores the ways in which migrants to Nowa Huta swiftly embarked on constructing stable lives, spending their relatively high wages on 'domestic investments' (such as furniture and kitchen equipment) and rejecting the day-to-day uncertainty which had characterised their immediate post-war lives in favour of planning for tomorrow, building rooted social networks and forging a deep local patriotism (Goban-Klas 1971; Siemieńska 1969; Stojak 1967).

In marked contrast, transformations since 1989 have led to the characterization of Nowa Huta rather as a place of insecurity, restricted mobility and 'entrapment'. Mobility and access, rather than being founded on employment status and location, are undergoing a rapid commodification; opportunities for travel, consumption and recreation are no longer supported and subsidized by the steelworks but instead provided by a plethora of commercial actors. People no longer have to holiday in the workplace pension in the mountains or subsidized apartments on the Black Sea, but this also means that there are no longer any guarantees for travel. A vast range of new leisure facilities, such as multiplex cinemas, shopping malls and a water park, shimmers attractively on Nowa Huta's western edges, but only serves to highlight the exclusivity of leisure today. The loss of financial support from the steelworks and the growing commercialization of social and cultural facilities have not only eroded levels of provision in Nowa Huta (see, for example, Radłowska 2002), but also the community's autonomy from Kraków. The increasing need, and desire, to visit Kraków for entertainment, education and employment does not however seem to have significantly reduced the strength of ties in Nowa Huta. Low levels of housing mobility and the association of housing tenure with the workplace have meant that networks of acquaintance and friendship tend to be long-standing and stable. Such neighbourly networks form a significant, but almost taken for granted, source of support and reinforce the strength of attachment to community.

Two themes are important to pull through here. Firstly, as many commentators have suggested, that mobility is held to be a marker of contemporary life contrasts dramatically with the experiences of many who find themselves trapped by the commodification of opportunity; that is, the increasing marketization of access to possibilities for travel, consumption, education and so on. In the post-socialist context, the shift from ideology to economy in the shaping of life chances creates a motif of uncertainty

and precariousness rather than mobility and opportunity. Secondly, these experiences shape an understanding of movement even when staying put, with a sense of dislocation emerging not from migration but from loss of the structuring institutions which shaped a community's place in the world. This notwithstanding, experiences in Nowa Huta and elsewhere suggest that the local is not only about 'entrapment' but also opportunity. The resources of communities—that is, the material and discursive sense of security constructed through networks of support and feelings of attachment—offer space for the voicing of alternatives and the protection of local lives from the erosion of commercialism. If these resources can be maintained and developed, communities can take advantage of the 'de-structuring effects' of post-socialism and the spaces for 'lifeworlds to stamp themselves on the emerging economic and political order' (Burawoy and Verdery 1999a: 2).

### **THE USES OF HERITAGE: INDUSTRY, CLASS AND POST-SOCIALISM**

Alongside the more usual policy prescriptions for retraining, SME promotion and infrastructure developments, considerable attention has been paid in Nowa Huta to the potential uses of the town's heritage. These debates surrounding Nowa Huta's history have become more important as the post-socialist decade, in Poland and elsewhere, has been marked by a re-writing of history and the promotion of 'communist heritage tourism' (Light 2000). There are a number of dilemmas which the promotion of this kind of tourism suggests. In some cases, we see a 'snipping out' of the communist period and a recourse to earlier, more palatable histories (Young and Light 2001). In others, we see the removal of the artefacts of socialist realism to a distant site, where they can be consumed as faintly ridiculous remnants of the past (James 1999). In places like Nowa Huta the questions are trickier—its embedded sites, buildings or communities, though important in their socialist and Solidarity

era heritage, continue to be places in which people live. Nowa Huta is not a museum; it is home to around 250,000 people.

The value of Nowa Huta's heritage works at two, intertwined levels. The valuing and promotion of community heritage plays a part in the attraction of external capital, but perhaps more important than the external projection of the town's identities is the perception of such images internally. The stereotyping and negative representation of Nowa Huta by outsiders undoubtedly has an impact on those living in the town. Whilst the town's particular histories have without doubt engendered a very clear 'local patriotism', the use this could be put to in supporting initiatives for community development is undermined by the defensiveness often invoked by derision from outside. In her work on the Welsh coal mining valleys and their heritage, Bella Dicks distinguishes between two different ways of talking about and presenting communities. A more political view sees 'community as a resource for future-oriented political action' (Dicks 1999: 362); a more anthropological view focuses 'less [on] the potential for communal action, and more in the enterprise of documentation and preservation' (ibid. 363). The former aims to shape the future, the latter simply hopes to represent the past.

Recent plans to promote Nowa Huta's heritage and develop the tourist potential of its history have taken a number of forms, which reflect both these representations of community. The plans of the Association for the Development of Nowa Huta<sup>8</sup> aim to present the economic and social significance of the town and steelworks against the wider political and economic context of Poland and Europe whilst also promoting a development programme for Kraków East; the city council's tourist trails present an interesting, but fairly narrow image of Nowa Huta's history and the plans for SocLand, a foundation created by some of Poland's cultural elite

<sup>8</sup> Formerly the Association for the Establishment and Development of a Museum of Nowa Huta and Huta Sendzimira.

(including the film director Andrzej Wajda) aimed to establish a multimedia museum not to tell the story of Nowa Huta but to caricature socialist realism and 'create something like Disneyland' (Muzeum Komunizmu... 2001). Whatever the other rationales behind these programmes, the promotion of Nowa Huta's future development is an important aspect of each. Each of these projects involves a range of actors, from members of the community, to district and city councillors, representatives of Huta Sendzimira, the European Union through offers of funding to SocLand, private investors and potential visitors from the rest of Poland and beyond. The extension of these debates well beyond Nowa Huta and the conflicts fed by the politics of the communist past make the challenge of constructing productive, future-oriented projects very difficult.

These debates highlight a quandary for the management of post-socialist heritage sites; tourists are unlikely to visit to see prehistoric relics and medieval buildings. Europe is full of these. What Nowa Huta and other 'spaces of socialism' offer to visitors are examples of socialist urban planning, Stalinist architecture and the physical expression of a socialist way of life. Nowa Huta's attraction lies precisely in those representations for which it is in other circumstances derided. These communities face the challenge of capitalizing on the legacies of socialism, using their socialist heritage in the construction of capitalist futures, whilst downplaying those legacies in other spheres. The general derision of the projects of socialism coupled with the recognition that many of the spaces of socialism were also key sites in the contestation of socialism makes representing these histories for popular consumption very difficult; how can representations of Nowa Huta as a town of socialism and hero workers be balanced with a rich story of diversity and the complexity of everyday life? The success with which these conflicts are resolved and the extent to which these developments contribute to the regeneration of Nowa Huta in practice are open questions.

## **WORK, CLASS AND COMMUNITY IN POST-SOCIALISM**

The more general theme which runs through these findings relates to the changing shape of communities in the 'spaces of socialism'. In identifying the institutions, networks, meanings, identities and practices connected to work in Nowa Huta, this research has drawn attention to the centrality of class, work and workplace in structuring lives in/of communities, noting how, whilst there have been shifts in the forms and meanings of work and class over time, their centrality is persistent. Industrial work, once the basis of citizenship and social policy, is now eroded by economic shifts and more likely to be the basis of social exclusion than inclusion. Particular working class histories, once a source of pride and propaganda, are now likely to be derided, or caricatured for economic gain. Working class communities and their institutions are characterised less by the construction of a hopeful new reality than the alleged mistakes of a misguided attempt at reconstruction.

By narrating the history and geography of a community from the perspective of labour and founded on the everyday experiences of its populations, it is possible to identify and validate spaces outside 'the system' (be it socialist or emerging capitalist). Both before and after 1989, Nowa Huta has been (and remains) home to a range of institutions, formal and informal, which, though shaped by their relationship to the plan or market, possess a relative autonomy which reflects and encourages 'lifeworlds', mediating individual experiences of political economic systems and their transformation. Thus, for example, friendships formed in the workplace extend beyond the workplace and offer families access to, amongst other things, knowledge about employment opportunities and networks of reciprocity; 'grey' market retail spaces develop to fill the gap between the discourse of consumption and the material realities of family budgets.

These spaces often rest on familial and community relationships which though

articulated with contemporary formal institutions testify to a strong element of both continuity and hybridity in the repeated transformation of east central European societies. To use an earlier lexicon, what we are witnessing in post-socialism is both uneven and combined development. The unevenness of the development of capitalism feeds a fragmentation of experience. The political representation of the working class is disjointed; the collapse of social networks, destroyed often by the costs of transformation, is reflected in a wearing away of collective action and a celebration (or, more often, begrudging acceptance) of individualism and new patterns of exclusion are emerging in the region as gender and ethnicity become significant markers of poverty and marginalization. These experiences echo western stories of individualization (Bauman 2001; Beck and Beck-Gersheim 2001) and social exclusion and suggest that we should learn lessons from the erosion of community experienced in the west. This research has demonstrated the presence and value of a range of structures and institutions in the reproduction of communities; the challenge now is to formulate policies which, rather than eroding these resources still further, allow them to be used as building blocks for a secure set of futures.

## **DISCUSSION**

These themes reflect clearly on the common experiences of economic and social change in contemporary Europe (and beyond). They demonstrate the need to study Nowa Huta in the context of broader transformations in both East and West. Processes of deindustrialization, labour market change, class and community transformation and European integration are as critical to understandings of Nowa Huta as they are to understandings of Western cities and regions. Yet these large-scale transformations are played out in different ways in East and West. In the accounts presented here, for example, I have identified the particular role of labour and

labour institutions in the shaping of everyday lives, reminiscent of the paternalism of Western capitalism, but reflecting the particular institutional and cultural centrality of work in socialism, which produced not only the geography of socialism but continues to mould communities today. And as in the West, the uses of this heritage are contested, but are complicated by the politics of Stalinism and the post-socialist need to downplay certain legacies of socialism. Thus despite their resonance, none of the broader processes of change—marketization, European integration, capitalism—can be understood without an understanding of socialism (and indeed the pre-socialist history of Poland and the region). Yet the value of locating Nowa Huta within the broader contexts of European geographies serves not simply as a comparison but also to identify the connected, networked space of Europe and the wider world within which Nowa Huta is located and must be understood. Any attempt to study Nowa Huta in isolation is partial and inaccurate.

This study of Nowa Huta, then, aimed to respond to the continuing challenge to understand post-socialist Europe and its relationship to other social and economic forms (Soviet-style socialism, Western capitalism, post-colonialism, for example) but also to encourage reflection on Western geographies and their claims to centrality (Potter 2001). As Bradshaw (1990), Potter (2001), Smith (2002) and others have suggested Western geographers have a ‘responsibility to distant geographies’, to attempt to know other parts of the world. That responsibility rests not simply, however, on studying those distant parts as exotic and intriguing sites for research but on connecting our lives and our geographies to those of distant others (Smith 2002). As the research described above suggests, it is not only that experiences of economic and social change echo across distant cities and regions, but that these localities are increasingly linked through networks and flows—both material and discursive. Whilst colleagues in the UK highlight the comparisons between Nowa Huta and Consett, or other post-industrial communities

in the UK, the more important point is that these places are connected through very real structures of, for example, corporate control, EU integration, discourses of post-industrialism and flows of migration. To understand patterns and processes of economic and social change across Europe (and more widely), Westerners must study the East and Easterners the West. As Domański (2004) argues, central Europe should not be seen as peripheral within Europe but as integral to any understanding of contemporary Europe and its geographies. In a similar vein, Judit Timar calls for 'East-West cross-cultural and collaborative studies' (2003: 32) which might teach all of us more about contemporary capitalism and globalization while Michael Burawoy (2001) argues for studies of post-socialism which, through empirical accounts of the construction of capitalism in east central Europe and the former Soviet Union, theorize its limits. It is for all these reasons that a Westerner studies Nowa Huta.

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