

## **Reshaping Working Class Lives and Communities in Post-Socialism**

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- deindustrialisation
- end of “workers’ states”
- material and symbolic shift
  - ~ workers as political actors
  - ~ quantifying class transformations  
(poverty and stratification)
  - ~ absence of ‘class’  
(pre-eminence of ‘race’ and gender?)

→ reshaping working class lives and communities

## *Socialism and the spaces of working class lives*

'non-antagonistic strata'

– workers, intellectuals and peasants

- state

- ~ “workers’ states”

- ~ propaganda and ideology

- ~ egalitarianism and social mobility

- ~ opening up the spaces of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie to working class people

- ~ BUT ‘deproletarianization’ and ‘fictitious nature’ of political representation

- workplace

- ~ urbanisation and industrialisation

- ~ creation of urban working class

- ~ ‘basic unit’ of daily life (Ashwin, 1998)

- ~ divisions by skill / workplace / gender / ‘race’

- community
  - ~ extension of workplace (and its politics) into non-work lives
  - ~ tight work / community relationship
  - ~ the collective
  - ~ creation of working class communities

- home
  - ~ new urban homes
  - ~ settling down

“the last defense against the rapacious socialist state”  
(Burawoy, 1999: 307)

- public space
  - ~ the spectacular – street names, statues, slogans, parades

“The only thing they didn’t do was write it in the heavens” (Soviet worker, 1930s, cited in Kotkin, 1997: 49)

- ~ and the everyday

- reclaiming public space
- producing alternative space
- subverting workplaces
- demanding political space

## *Remaking the spaces of working class lives*

- state
  - ~ “the inheritors of the revolutions ... rather to be the nationalists, the neo-liberals, the ambitious entrepreneurs and the Eurocrats” (Einhorn et al., 1996: 2)
  - ~ “desire that society be re-ordered to reward non-manual labour” (Walkowitz, 1995: 163)
  - ~ “unionocracy” and co-option of labour politicians
  
- workplace
  - ~ job loss, plant closure, insecurity
  - ~ withdrawal of workplace from ‘non-productive’ activities
  - ~ proliferation of new, diverse, small, foreign-owned workplaces
  - ~ decline of the collective/rise of the competitive

“for example, a friend’s father who lost his job at the steelworks just can’t get on with his friends, because they had work, they still worked at the steelworks, somewhere else, but he... The steelworks were his whole life, he spent how many years of his life there, and in the end he couldn’t cope with being with them...”

- community
  - ~ end of industry = death of working class regions?
  - ~ breakdown of relationships constructed at work
  - ~ social and spatial polarisation
  - ~ creation of ghetto/sink estates
  - ~ demonisation of working class communities
  
- home
  - ~ family tensions and instabilities
  - ~ women 'retreat' to the home
  - ~ 'missing' men
  - ~ shift of economic life from the factory to the home?
  
- public space
  - ~ visible poverty
  - ~ popular invisibility (BUT nostalgia/caricature)
  - ~ persistent positive occupation of public space

“We’re one family,” jokes Władysław Jajecznicza, indicating the pensioners sitting on the neighbouring benches, “Almost all of us worked once at the steelworks. The majority live in the closest blocks, although it seems some come from Kraków, because there there aren’t parks where old people can sit calmly and chat.”

(*Gazeta Krakowska*, 1996)

- new market spaces
  - ~ spaces of exclusion
  - ~ private, policed spaces
  - ~ office blocks and shopping centres of nascent capitalism – employment and consumption
  - ~ a new working class?
  - ~ spaces of opportunity?

“rapidly diminishing access to resources – material, social and symbolic” (Kideckel, 2002: 116)