

Post-Socialism and the Changing Geographies of the Everyday in Poland

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Abstract

In reporting on recent research on the changing geographies of everyday life in the town of Nowa Huta in southern Poland, this paper seeks to promote the use of post-socialism as a conceptual, rather than simply descriptive and/or transitory, category. By exploring experiences of (im)mobility and (in)security in post-socialism, this paper connects to related work on the west and asks what difference post-socialism makes. It concludes by presenting a post-socialism marked out as different by the particular experiences of socialism, its construction and destruction and as a partial and hybrid social form, produced by a combination of multiple social forms constructed at varied scales of time and space.

Keywords post-socialism Poland everyday geographies mobility

Introduction

Mobility, uncertainty, instability and fragmentation have become keywords of the contemporary (post-modern) condition, set in contrast to an earlier image of security, certainty and linearity. For many, the shift between these two conditions is connected to (and perhaps dates from) the end of communism and the Cold War in 1989. As 1989 signalled the end of the knowable world order of two competing blocs – east and west, each founded on relatively stable regulatory systems, it heralded the unveiling (not emergence) of contingency and disorder and the celebration of an unruly globalization (Bauman 1998b). Whilst a considerable body of work has debated and documented the presence and experiences of uncertainty, (im)mobility and risk in the western ‘post-modern’ condition (in particular, see the work of Zygmunt Bauman and Ulrich Beck (Bauman 1998a, b, 2001a, b; Beck 1992, 2000) far less attention has been paid to exploring the ‘post-socialist condition’ through a similar lens. Indeed social scientists are only just beginning to raise the possibility of a post-socialist condition and to theorise it. The aim of this paper then is two-fold – not only to ask how these keywords reflect and shape the lived experiences of post-socialism, but also to think through how these ideas can be used to theorise post-socialism more explicitly.

Theorising Post-Socialism

For many, post-socialism serves simply as a descriptor, either of the region under study (usually east central Europe [ECE] and the former Soviet Union [FSU]) or of the ‘transition’ or ‘transformation’ in those regions. In many ways, post-socialism has been equated with ‘transition’ and thus its explanatory power reduced. My purpose here is not to reiterate many of the critiques of ‘transition’ as a teleological construct which reduced complex processes of transformation to a linear, singular and brief process of reform – this has already been done (see, for example, Stark 1992; Burawoy 1992; Pickles and Smith 1998). Instead my intention is to ask, can we talk of a post-socialism that is not reduced only to the tasks and passage of transition (or transformation)? And what might some of the key features of that post-socialism be?

More and more we hear now of the ‘end of transition’, marked either by the ‘completion’ of the technocratic tasks of political and economic reform or by the accession of a number of ‘transition economies’ to the European Union where they will no longer be characterized by a different set of social, economic and political challenges, but by the same challenges as ‘long-established market economies’ (World Bank 1996, 4-5). Debates over precisely when the transition is over do not deny the fundamental position that transition will end sometime. If not now, then. And herein lies the danger. If post-socialism is reduced to transition, then post-socialism must end with the ‘end of transition’, and in this way post-socialism becomes a temporary, transitional category with no power beyond a limited historical and geographical moment. The difference of these states, this part of the world, is erased, regardless of the enormity and profundity of this region’s diverse histories, not only during socialism but before (and, of course, after).

The use of post-socialism as a transitory category contrasts markedly with the other ‘posts’ of contemporary social theory. The post-modern and the post-colonial, while both coming into our lexicons as descriptions of particular moments, have developed to take on greater explanatory power and to make wider contributions to social theory. It has only been very recently that understandings of the post-socialist have begun to be developed in this role, to engage with other social theories of change, to suggest what might characterise the post-socialist condition and to offer alternative perspectives on other conceptual issues (such as the economy, networks, identity, the state and so on), rather than simply seeing the post-socialist world as a testbed for western policy and theory (see, for example, Humphrey in Hann *et al.* 2002; Burawoy 2001; Kennedy 2001). In contrast to these more recent developments, within the region itself the immediate post-1989 years played witness to calls to recognise the ‘cognitive chance’ of central European social science which “might have a special contribution to make to the development of social theory” (Wessely 1996 (1992)).

This paper does not assume that we can talk of a post-socialist condition, but asks if we can. The post-socialist world is a vast and diverse world, incorporating the cosmopolitan cities of central Europe, the steppes of Siberia and central Asia, the oil fields of the Caspian and Pacific coasts and the rural regions of southeastern Europe, amongst a vast range of social and physical environments. Yet beyond these diversities, there is more than the current ‘transition to capitalism’ which draws these states together. Notwithstanding disparate histories and diverse paths to socialism, Humphrey argues that these states “still had more in common than actually existing capitalisms” (Humphrey, in Hann *et al.* 2002, 12; see also, Verdery 1996). Thus I argue that post-socialism will not disappear after EU accession or the achievement of EBRD 4+ ratings across the board, that the particular experiences of socialism, its construction on a particular set of nascent capitalist societies and its

replacement through a period of rapid and widespread ‘transition’ shape a common condition, one that is not simply a construct of the academy (Humphrey, *ibid.*). Arguing for a post-socialism, is not, contrary to possible critique, backward-looking but attentive to history, both in its past and future forms. So too is it alive to geographical difference. Arguing for a post-socialism does not imply uniformity – no one suggests that post-colonial London is the same as post-colonial Cairo – but commonality (on this see Kandiyoti 2002). Support for a post-socialist condition must, also, be tempered by a strong recognition that it does not exist in isolation. Cold War sovietologists were roundly critiqued for “cut[ting] themselves off from developments in other areas of social science” (Burawoy 1992, 778), denying any connections to broader social theory (see also Fleron and Hoffman 1993). Instead, any post-socialism must be seen as a partial and hybrid social formation, existing in combination with contemporary others – ‘western’ capitalism, the post-colonial – and founded on older forms – pre-socialism and socialism.

What then of the wider importance of post-socialism? The task is first to explicitly debate what this post-socialist condition might be, and then ask what wider lessons we might learn. In this journal in 2002, Kathrin Hörschelmann argued that the consideration of the post-socialist world by students of the west (and also the south) was often cursory, invoking the events and consequences of 1989 not to understand post-socialism and its relation to other processes of change but to support a more general point, often about neoliberalism. In her 2002 piece, Hörschelmann, echoing David Slater in his promotion of post-colonial writing, called for a more complex flow of ideas and knowledge to develop theorizations founded on non-western experiences. I echo this call.

Rather than describe this post-socialist condition, this paper presents work from one research project to identify some possible features. In reporting on this project, the empirical focus of the paper returns to the catchwords of mobility, security, fragmentation to explore the presence and impact of these in the lives of steelworkers, their friends and families in Nowa Huta, southern Poland. In documenting and exploring these themes, this article highlights some features which seem to mark post-socialism, both differentiating it from and echoing other contemporary conditions, and connects with Verdery's aim "to raise questions that might prove fruitful elsewhere" (1996, 11).

Mobility and transformation

Further to the general debates over mobility identified by Bauman et al, the importance of debating these issues in the post-socialist context is highlighted by two concerns. First, discourses of mobility have played an incredibly important role within the wider discourses of 'transition' and the promotion of markets in ECE and the FSU. Demands for freedom and mobility were clear motifs of the growing opposition movements in the region from the late 1970s onwards. Mobility, coupled with consumption, came to be seen as a space for resistance (Hammer 2002; Hanasz 1999; Wessely 2002) and as inherently good. Mobility became discursively connected with choice (in the context of residential mobility, see, for example, Mandic 2001), with opportunity and with markets. The vast majority of discussions of mobility in post-socialism are constructed around ideas of labour and housing markets and mobility which encourage people to move not because they want to, but because, in this way, 'healthy' markets for labour and property will be developed.

For many, as we will see, far from this discursive utopia, the potential for mobility and widening spaces of consumption are experienced through reduced access and constrained

choice. Post-1989 mobility and access have been shaped by more and more differentiation, on the basis of at least class, gender, ethnicity (witness deepening Roma ghettos [see Bancroft 2001]) and age. As urban transport and residential mobility are increasingly shaped by markets, even the World Bank draws attention to the consequences of mobility transformations for poverty (World Bank 2002). Contrary to all expectations, the years since 1989 have not been marked by a dramatic increase in residential mobility; the evidence, if not negative, is at the very least ambivalent with regional housing turnover indicators still considerably lower and housing tenure periods notably longer than those in western Europe and north America and (Mandic 2001; Ruoppila and Kahrik 2003).

The interest in studying mobility within the geographies of post-socialism rests not only on these shifting experiences of mobility but also on the widespread use of metaphors of movement in analysing and explaining post-socialist transformations. The clearest example of this is 'the transition', deemed to describe the 'road' from communism to capitalism, yet at smaller scales too, people, institutions and communities are seen, for example, to be taking journeys, losing signposts, finding safe harbours (echoing Bauman 1998a,b). Kuehnast (1993, 26, cited in World Bank 2000, 31-2) evocatively parallels the personal consequences of transformation in the former Soviet Union with a doomed journey: "Imagine traveling along in a car for seventy years and suddenly the road disappears and your car crashes. You don't know where to go", whilst Hörschelmann and van Hoven (2003) present a more open account of change in the post-socialist lives of women in east Germany, echoing more recent accounts of 'the transition', with metaphors of complicated, unpredictable itineraries through unfamiliar places to unclear destinations.

Researching post-socialism

This paper aims to amplify these concerns through an account of transformations in Nowa Huta, Poland, a district of Kraków founded in 1949 and centred on one of Poland's three major steelworks, the Lenin Steelworks (now the Sendzimir Steelworks, or HTS). The themes of the paper itself are developed out of a number of concerns, contradictions and issues which arose out of the interviews I carried out with residents in Nowa Huta in 2000 and 2001. In discussing the remaking of their everyday lives, by talking about work, shopping, friendship, leisure, opportunities, education amongst other issues, the increasing feeling of dislocation, insecurity and immobility was a theme which recurred again and again, more often than not alongside a specific insistence on the changing place of work in the community. These connections between social and spatial mobility and (in)security and opportunity echoed strongly with the very rich Polish academic work on Nowa Huta on post-war Poland from the 1960s and '70s (e.g. Goban-Klas 1971; Nowakowski 1967; Siemieńska 1969; Stojak 1967) which I was reading at the time of the interviews. Some interesting and important historical contrasts and contradictions became very clear. Nowa Huta has shifted from being (constructed as) a site of security and opportunity in a chaotic and fragmented, turbulent Poland to being a site of insecurity, immobility and lack of opportunity in another turbulent Poland. This paper explores this shift and uses it to discuss the transformation of mobility and everyday geographies of socialism and post-socialism more generally.

The interviews on which this paper is based were undertaken during the summer of 2001, in the middle of a two year project. In this phase of the research, I carried out thirty two interviews with residents of Nowa Huta, in interviewees' homes and accompanied by one of two research assistants who lived in Nowa Huta. Interviewees were recruited through a number of means: through a network of acquaintances, in their workplace, on the street.

Interviewees ranged in age from 18 to 87. They worked (or had worked) in a range of workplaces. A significant number were already retired and, intentionally, a particularly high number of interviewees were current or former employees of the steelworks; interviewees were chosen for the range of stories and experiences they could recount, rather than any scientific representativeness. Interviews were all carried out in Polish, though in some recourse was made to English. Meetings lasted between 30 minutes and three hours; most were approximately ninety minutes long. Interviews were transcribed in Polish in full and the names of all interviewees were changed (identified here when first quoted). These interviews were supported by a number of meetings with related organisations such as city and district councils, trade unions, labour offices, social services, regional development organisations and community groups and by work with secondary material, both historical and current.

The focus on questions of mobility was not an intentional part of the initial research project; the original focus was explicitly on one aspect of the town's internal geography – the relationship between the workplace and the wider community – yet in exploring this relationship and the changing nature of work with interviewees, issues of mobility and access were frequently raised. Interviewees repeatedly drew comparisons between earlier and contemporary patterns, drawing not only on their own experiences but also those they saw within their wider communities. The connections my interviewees drew between different spheres of their lives created difficulties in classifying responses in any kind of discrete categories. To work through the transcripts, I used an elaborate system of coloured Post-It notes, marking out a number of key themes, together with all sorts of notations, underlining, arrows and question marks. In pulling the transcripts apart in this way, I more often than not ended up with the same excerpt in four or five different thematic files and felt I was

disconnecting spheres that my interviewees insisted on connecting, both implicitly and explicitly. These connectivities between and within different spheres, between production, consumption and reproduction through mundane fields such as transport, housing, retail exemplified the need to study post-socialism in an integrative and synthesising manner.

In the context of the current paper, for example, whilst not employing mobility as a metaphor for consumption (Crang 2002), many of my interviewees did directly connect their experiences of everyday leisure and consumption with their wider geographies of mobility (including international travel). A couple of Zofia's statements, quoted in context later, are indicative of this:

“Then you really could travel, to the West and to Yugoslavia, to Germany. And you could study and everything was in the shops.”

“I don't like the world where some go to Majorca and others are dying on a state farm and don't have anything to feed their children.”

The difficulties in pulling apart themes for analysis is reflected in the structure of the following sections. A set of spheres is taken in succession but themes flow between them. Each sphere also reflects a predominant scale, though these are not absolute, and points to a number of other themes such as generation, public and private space and the role of different institutions. I begin by considering the spaces of shopping and socialising, and then connect this to (un)ease of getting around the city. Less quotidian travel is the next focus as I explore larger scales of space and time, that is travelling for vacations and for work. The fourth theme pulls together ideas which run through these first three, reflecting on the contrary experiences of Nowa Huta as a place both of attachment and flight.

Post-War Poland and the Settlement of Nowa Huta

Post-war Poland, like the rest of the region, was a turbulent place. Wartime destruction, shifting borders, mass internal and international migration and the construction of socialism came together to create a country with very high levels of social and spatial mobility (North 1985; Pounds 1960; Nowakowski 1967). The commitment to urbanization and industrialization within a Soviet-inspired political and economic system was radically transforming the social and economic geography of the country. The largest single project within Poland's first Soviet-style plan was the construction of Nowa Huta (meaning 'new steelworks') – a town and steelworks adjacent to Kraków, a project designed to focus the attention of the nation on building a new Poland, to answer the social and economic problems of the region and country and to serve the construction of socialism in Poland (Goban-Klas 1971; Stenning 2000). Propaganda on the radio, in print media and posters called young people to Nowa Huta to find work, a home, a life. Notwithstanding the terrible early years when the promises of stability seemed unlikely (see Lebow 2001; *Emeryt* 1996; *Stara* 1996) by the 1960s stories of stability, opportunity and security were dominant. In Polish sociologies of the time, Stojak (1967), Siemieńska (1969) and Goban-Klas (1971) focused on the importance attached in the development of Nowa Huta on improving social-occupational and material positions and on securing future stability. In this work, migrants to Nowa Huta explicitly identified it as a site of stability and opportunity, 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.¹

¹ Clearly the ideological context of the times brings into question the verity of these studies. Nowa Huta provided a test case for the construction of 'new socialist man' [sic] and Poland's post-war sociologists were predictably under pressure to verify the regime's claims. Some post-1989 recent studies (for example, Janus 1999) ridicule the optimism of these studies, yet, other triangulations allow for greater acceptance of the 1960s work – Siemieńska's work remains widely admired and sought after, not only as a rich portrait of Nowa Huta but as a ground-breaking piece of sociology. Praweńska-Skrzypek (1990), for example, whilst critical

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Leisure and Consumption

Nowa Huta's early years were characterised, perhaps paradoxically given the prevalence of migrants in the population, by a relatively small everyday geography. Soviet town planning and social policy ideals aimed to establish micro-districts (*mikrorayoni*) which would serve many of the residents' daily needs – schools, medical facilities, playgrounds and food shops – within a small area, often with a workplace at the centre (both strategically and physically) (Osborn 1970; Strumilin 1961). The connection of social policy to industrial policy and thus to strategic priorities meant that the moves towards comprehensive 'cradle to grave' provisions were uneven; not everyone had equal access to the tenets of security and stability nor to the same opportunities for recreation (Ferge 1996; Domański 1997). In Nowa Huta, occupying a privileged position within Poland's post-war political economy, after a wave of investment of the late 1950s and early 1960s (see, Jarosz 1996), patterns of leisure reflected a range of sports stadia, cinemas, cultural centres, clubs and associations, and both shops and a health service to rival most large cities (including Kraków), all supported financially by the steelworks. The social and cultural facilities offered by the steelworks, the Party and its youth organisations provided workers and their families with opportunities to socialise and be entertained within the community. For this reason there was little need to visit Kraków; Siemeńska's interviewees (1969) often only visited Kraków on special occasions. One of my

of the post-war regime in other contexts, echoes Siemeńska's recognition of tight networks and local patriotism in communities populated by migrants, founded, she argues, often on common experiences of settling down and achieving social advance. Moreover, western writers, researching outside the ideological framework of Polish socialism also highlight the advances offered to and made by Nowa Huta's early residents (see, for example, Fisher 1962). In addition, older Nowa Huta residents quoted in recent reportage (see, for example, Sadecki 1994, 1998 and *Emeryt* 1996; *Stara* 1996) and all of my interviewees who had lived through this period in Nowa Huta confirmed these experiences of security, stability and advance.

interviewees, Józef (a steelworks maintenance worker in his early 50s), discussed how he often “used to meet friends, colleagues after work in a pub or a restaurant”, established and subsidised by the steelworks. Edward (a retired steelworker in his late 80s) described how

“once around eleven o’clock Huta was teeming with life, people on the streets returning from the cinemas, from restaurants, from clubs of some sort”

For families too, there was much to do. Dorota (a retired bookkeeper in her 80s) reflected on family leisure in the 1950s and ’60s, contrasting it with the situation today:

“I went with the children everywhere at first, when the children were small we went to the lake without a break. When Saturdays and Sundays came, then we’d play there the whole day. And later with the grandchildren, I’d go to the pool in Kolorowe [a Nowa Huta neighbourhood]. Everything was free, and now there’s nothing.”

In recent years, the lake, pools, restaurants and cinemas of Nowa Huta have been eclipsed by a plethora of sophisticated new facilities such as multiplex cinemas, shopping malls and a water park, shimmering on Nowa Huta’s north-western edge. The loss of financial support from the steelworks and the growing commercialisation of facilities have destroyed the ‘self-sufficiency’ of Nowa Huta. For my interviewees, particularly young people, Nowa Huta offered little for entertainment, the proliferation of opportunity in Kraków running alongside the closure of facilities in Nowa Huta (Radłowska 2002). Whilst Nowa Huta in the 1950s and ’60s was seen as a town of youth, offering opportunity for both work and leisure, today Kraków is the attraction. Beata (an 18 year old student) is typical in bemoaning the situation in Nowa Huta:

“So do you more often go to Kraków rather than to Plac Centralny [the centre of Nowa Huta]?”

Really, yes, because there there are more opportunities for young people, more of those places, where you can hang out. You know, because here in Huta, what is there? ... here there just aren’t any great places which might interest and attract young people”

The last trams from Kraków, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, packed with young people returning “just to sleep” (interview with social worker in Nowa Huta, 2001) symbolise the desertion of Nowa Huta, contrasting so clearly for Edward with the teeming streets of earlier years:

“now, now it’s just a complete desert ... Now generally at eleven o’clock its silent on the streets, if you see one person then that’s a rare sight.”

At first glance, the boundaries of young people’s social lives seem to be much wider than their parents and grandparents; visiting Kraków is an everyday experience, not just for entertainment, but also increasingly for education and employment. Yet, even for this group, this is not the full picture. Most still felt that their closest friends, often those with whom they travelled to Kraków’s pubs, lived in the closest blocks and neighbourhoods, friends from school, from summer camp and from neighbouring apartments – the so-called *paczka osiedlowa*, or neighbourhood gang. Ania (a nurse in her early 20s) described how most of her friends live:

“In Huta, the majority lives in Huta, because like I said to a large extent, they’re friends from primary and middle school.

Right here in this neighbourhood?

Not only, in this neighbourhood there’s maybe five people who I meet up with often, but, from secondary school, then they’re spread across the whole of Nowa Huta.”

Though the pubs in Kraków were a draw, much of their social lives was still centred in Nowa Huta. As Paweł (a tour guide in his late 20s) explained,

“If you’re talking about Kraków then it’s more often a trip to a pub, but if you’re talking about just hanging out, then it’s more likely to be Nowa Huta.”

This was much more similar to the accounts of older people, many of whom also had a close network of old school friends at the centre of their social lives, often, of course, supplemented by friends from work and neighbours (many of whom were indeed the same people), who gathered at each others houses for birthdays, name days, or just a cup of coffee. Whilst some

older people visited Kraków more frequently, to go to museums, meet friends and simply take in the atmosphere, for others, the apparent proliferation of opportunity was little more than an irrelevance. Elżbieta and Danuta (two steelworks maintenance workers in their mid 40s) talked about how they'd love to "pop into Kraków, even sit somewhere in the square underneath the umbrellas" but, put off by the cost of travel (4.4PLN, approximately €1) let alone the price of a beer, stayed instead in the bars around their apartments. For Józef, even the bars and restaurants in Nowa Huta he had enjoyed previously were slipping away; now he "very rarely ever goes out". For many, for myriad reasons of cost, time and the closure of facilities, more and more time is spent at home, with family watching the TV rather than out in the public spaces of consumption, new or old (see also Ashwin 1999; Domański *et al.*, 2000).

Not surprisingly social lives and entertainment are shaped by generation; in other spheres, however, the 'smallness' of everyday lives crosses generational boundaries. For a variety of reasons, both young and old tend to stick close to home when it comes to shopping.

Indicative of a number of interviewees, Edward and Beata represent opposite ends of the age spectrum but express similar views:

"Round us you'll see it's very good, downstairs we have a shop, which on account of age and mobility difficulties is a very convenient shop, in the next block we have another little shop, there just where you go out onto the street we have a kiosk with vegetables, everything's within 100 metres..."

"Well, kind of in the closest surroundings, here we've got around us a lot of such big supermarkets like Biedronka and Plus, in which you can buy different products for reasonably accessible prices ... Beyond that there's large stalls like markets or in the square by the [Church of the] Ark, where you can always get hold of fresh vegetables at prices lower than in normal shops. Yeah, and clothes usually also somewhere here in the neighbourhood shops"

With two hypermarkets and dozens of supermarkets on their doorstep, Nowa Huta's residents can choose to shop where they want, when they want, yet, based on assessments of convenience, proximity and cost, many shop locally. Despite the competition of foreign-owned firms and the loss of preferential supply networks through ministerial channels (which to an extent kept shops in Nowa Huta stocked whilst those in Kraków had empty shelves), the network of local shops established under socialism has been maintained, developed and complemented by the emergence of open air markets, offering food, clothes and equipment at well below hypermarket prices (Sik and Wallace 1999). However, there is a further layer here. As Marta, a school secretary in her 40s pleads:

“I'm sorry but I don't like big shops. They're a nightmare for me ... I don't like those crowds and hordes ... so I go to shops here in the neighbourhood, in which I know where the butter is, where the milk is...”

For Marta, it isn't simply that she knows where to find the milk and butter, but also that she knows the people in the shop, both her fellow shoppers and the shop assistants. As Lena (an airline employee in her late 20s) confirms, “kind of, even in shops, people chat to each other, so there's this small-town climate”.

Everyday Mobility and Security

The theoretical provision, under socialism, of daily needs locally and the tight connection between workplace and community rested on public transport which reflected these local movements. Heavily-subsidised public transport (Pucher 1995) was coupled with underdeveloped road infrastructures which shaped (and restricted) patterns of everyday mobility (Ferge 1997); “mass transportation was both an ideological symbol and the everyday reality of communism” (Hanasz 1999, 3). In Nowa Huta, bus and tram networks were dense and accessible; though in part they mirrored the residential geography of steelworkers, connecting neighbourhoods to the mill, they also enabled cheap and easy travel around Nowa

Huta and to Kraków. With the incursion of the market through threats of privatisation and calls for rationalisation, cheap and easy travel is becoming less of a reality. Fare increases and service cutbacks are eroding local mobility; through successive price increases which, in Warsaw between 1988 and 1994, for example, saw ticket prices rise by 400% and the share of an hourly wage required for the purchase of a ticket rise from 4% to 26%, Pucher argues that “shock therapy has produced a public transport policy which is more conservative and more market-oriented than .. in most .. capitalistic, market-based economies” (Pucher 1995, 8). Though many in Nowa Huta still enjoyed a comprehensive system, others, such as Edward, were beginning to recognise a deterioration:

“Although I’d have to say honestly that communication between Krakow and Nowa Huta is perfectly good, at this time good, going back 20 years and comparing with those times, in those times it was wonderful ... Now at eleven o’clock the trams run to the garage, after eleven you don’t have a single connection with Huta [from Kraków], you have to wait for a night bus, that journey is only possible with the help of a taxi...”

Elżbieta and Danuta, as we have already seen, found the price of travel increasingly prohibitive for non-essential journeys.

The increasing dependence on taxis is indicative of the growing place of cars in Poland’s mobility regime. In contrast to the ideological link between communism and public transport, car ownership was seen as rebellious and a challenge to the system (Hanasz 1999). In the post-socialist era, for Hanasz cars are “engines of liberty”, representative of an automobility equated with autonomy (ibid, 15). Car ownership (together with home ownership)² is seen to embody dreams of the west and the market, and there has indeed been a sharp increase in recent years (with not only social but also environmental impacts, see Oldfield *et al.* 2003). In Nowa Huta, the desire for car ownership coincided with restructuring at the steelworks and

² The contradictory representations of mobility in car and home ownership are fascinating and deserve to be explored further.

the availability of generous redundancy packages. Myths (and realities) of former steelworkers spending all their money on cars abound – as a social worker based in Nowa Huta explained “these people practically became millionaires in a day, and then they bought a new car, so that their neighbours would see”; yet, cars were not just status symbols but also seen as a means to an alternative income. The decline of public transport and continuing low levels of private car ownership have fed a taxi boom, and, as elsewhere, redundant industrial workers were at the forefront of this expansion. The flooding of the taxi market highlights the flipside of this myth of car ownership; taxi-driving former steelworkers often find themselves with a car, but little or no work, no money and reliant on social assistance. The dreams of autonomy and automobility remain distant.

For others, movement around the city still depends on public means – buses, trams, walking and occasionally taxis – increasingly vulnerable to the threat of crime. The deserted streets of Nowa Huta and the ‘ghettoisation’ of public transport, fed for some, especially older people, a growing perception of violence and insecurity. In contrast to the known and populated streets of when “in Huta it really was safer, you could wander about” and the high levels of mobility of his youth, Edward identified a feeling of entrapment today:

“Because once for me, I could cross the whole world upside down, and nothing threatened me, but now, I’m afraid to go out onto the street...”

For Dorota, also retired, the promises of freedom after the collapse of communism have been far from positive. Echoing Edward’s experiences of safety in earlier times, she claims:

“Previously it was safer, I could go out at night, even at 2. And you know, no one would accost you. And now it’s not possible, because everybody’s afraid, everyone’s afraid...”

And why do you think this is?

Maybe it’s this freedom. It’s not good to have too much freedom, this freedom. Maybe that freedom’s lost us, but what else I don’t know. As they say, under the communists there was more discipline. There were more militia, those district militia. Who walked about constantly looking after the neighbourhood. And now I don’t even know...”

For Edward and Dorota, the presence of state control, which limited (or threatened to limit) everyday freedoms, was balanced by the security and opportunity it offered. Stifling and restrictive though it may have been, such a state presence did also limit the worst excesses of individual behaviour. For others, though, the everyday restriction of mobility was more keenly felt as access to any number of ‘public’ spaces was controlled by the state and its security forces. In late socialist Poland, especially in places like Nowa Huta, bastions of the growing opposition movement, the power and presence of the police and militia was extensive, though in fact few of my interviewees raised it. The contradictory experiences of freedom in Nowa Huta testify to a complex sense of personal and spatial security. Whilst for older generations, the sense of fear and subsequent entrapment felt today contrasts markedly with the ease of travel and mobility of their younger lives, for others, the promises of personal mobility, stoked by the fervour of 1989, have been dashed by the decline of public transport and the faltering dreams of car ownership.

Travel and Tourism

As well as shaping the geographies of local transport, the steelworks and its allied workplaces also structured the contours of less quotidian travel. In addition to establishing and subsidising a range of leisure facilities in Nowa Huta, the steelworks also created opportunities for excursions beyond; as Michał (a former steelworker in his mid 50s) explained “after every shift in the afternoon coaches left in every direction ... it was all easily accessible, everyone who wanted to use these forms of relaxation could”. Piotr (a steelworks electrician in his late 30s) expanded on this, indicating the erosion of such opportunities in recent years:

“There were outings ... which the steelworks organised. There were more 2, 3, 4-day excursions, people were more integrated. People went on, you know, picnics ... Today there are outings, of course, but they’re just for a day, or they’re cash things. Then it was free, when for example you went somewhere...”

Beyond short and local excursions, company resorts and subsidised travel meant “everyone could take themselves on holiday. You didn’t have to pay much. Every child could go to camp” (Dorota). For children, the annual summer camp was a means of getting out of Nowa Huta, whilst also reinforcing friendship networks at home; children went on holiday with the offspring of their parents’ workmates and neighbours. In contrast to earlier years when the steelworks-sponsored camps offered weeks or months beyond Nowa Huta and emptied the town’s streets of children, Piotr depicts a loss of direction:

“and now look, when we have this affluence, look at the neighbourhood, these children are bored, wandering about, because their parents can’t send them on camps...”

For adults too, whilst holidays and foreign travel is no longer structured by the state and its agencies, recent experiences have been mixed. For Zofia (a graphic artist in her late 50s), 1989 marked a clear turning point:

“I haven’t been on a vacation outside Kraków for 12 years. But in the PRL³ I went on holiday with the children to get some fresh air three times a year ... because then workplaces organised holidays, that’s how the system was, that people were given the means and the opportunity for relaxation and even the payment you could divide up into instalments. Yes, when I was studying I went on holiday for every holy day, two to four times a year, and now the last time I went on holiday was 1989 and that’s it ... I sit on my backside in Kraków and I’m grateful that I’m living ... I don’t know if those were better times, but every average person, the inhabitants of these housing blocks, people like us, could go on holiday ... then you really could travel, to the West and to Yugoslavia, to Germany”

Whilst the commercialisation of vacation travel and the subsequent loss of subsidy often means that costs are prohibitive, it is not just money that limits holiday travel. For many, the introduction of competition to labour markets meant that either they were having to work longer hours to maintain an adequate income and thus had no time to spare for leisure and

³ *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, the People’s Republic of Poland.

recreation, or that the threat of redundancy caused them to prove their commitment through longer working hours and foregoing holiday time.

Notwithstanding these limits, many did recognise the proliferation of potential opportunities.

For Bartek (a former steelworker and trainee optical technician in his late 20s) this was a source of excitement and pride, as he explains:

“the situation which has emerged requires maybe wider perspectives, for example horizons have widened, on account of the situation, you know, in Poland, so I’ve been around Europe a bit, with friends, that’s a great thing, can I tell you where I’ve been? I like doing that ... but these are opportunities, which didn’t, you know, exist before”

In his recent travels, Bartek had chosen his itinerary and timetable, had mostly travelled by private car and crossed multiple borders, but having taken these opportunities in the early 1990s, he now wasn’t so sure he’d be able to afford the time or money again. His deliberations highlighted a quandary: whilst people no longer have to holiday in set destinations, the workplace pension in mountains or subsidised apartments on the Black Sea, this also means that there are no longer any guarantees for travel. As with other spheres, recent transformations have shaped a clear polarisation of opportunity, with some travelling internationally and others socially and spatially trapped. Thus, Zofia complains “I don’t like the world where some go to Majorca and others are dying on a state farm and don’t have anything to feed their children.”

For some in Nowa Huta, international travel wasn’t just a feature of leisure. The town’s privileged position within Poland’s economy meant not only beneficence locally but also better than average opportunities to work overseas. Contract work in friendly states, within and beyond the eastern bloc, allowed some, mostly skilled, workers to spend considerable periods of time working outside Poland. Interviewees recounted stories of family, friends

and colleagues travelling, for example, to Iraq and Syria to work often on large-scale but relatively short-term construction projects; others had longer stays abroad. Before setting up his own business after 1989, Tomasz worked for a fire safety contractor which took him abroad “to Russia three times, to Vienna in Austria. In total I spent about 5 or 6 years abroad in different places”; for Tomasz “that was normal in this country.” In general, these periods of employment overseas were used to support lives at home through extra earning and in none of the instances recounted to me had people decided to emigrate permanently.⁴ Whilst many interviewees had friends and family living overseas, these had moved in earlier periods – Poland has a significant diaspora populated through waves of emigration at key stages in Polish history (for more details, see Sword 1989; Zubrzycki 1988). As we will see below, the post-1989 period has been identified as the most recent of these waves, and Nowa Huta has been involved in this.

Attachment and Escape

In many ways, lives in socialist Nowa Huta were very mobile; travel at many scales of time and space was shaped and subsidised by the state, often through the workplace. However, perhaps the clearest marker of the town’s experiences of mobility is its foundation on a base of in-migration, accounting for the majority of population growth in Kraków as a whole (Kwiecień 1962; Matejko 1956). Migrants came not only from small towns and villages across the region and country, but also from elsewhere, “even from Greece” notes Paweł (late 20s, travel agent). As a result of this in-migration, much of the town’s population expressed an attachment to more than one community, nurturing both memories of and important social and economic connections to their family home (*rodzinny dom*). For those whose families came from villages in the region, these connections continue to shape their everyday lives.

⁴ Clearly I was not interviewing emigrants. These comments relate to interviewees’ discussions of their friends and family.

Marta, for example, whose “sentiment returns to the countryside” spends as much time as she can at ‘home’, visiting most weeks, and in the school holidays spending two months there. Both Rafał (an engineer at the steelworks in his 30s) and Józef have small cottages not far from Kraków where they spend every weekend, returning to Nowa Huta just for work. Many more have maintained these rural connections and live their lives within and between these two places (see also Jarosz 1997).

Yet notwithstanding these persistent links outward, Nowa Huta’s migrant population built networks within the community too. The restrictions placed on mobility by the state were reinforced by the integration of so many spheres of life around the workplace – housing, welfare, education, recreation and so on – which meant that moving was a complicated process. Long waiting lists for accommodation clearly also slowed the mobility process. The structuring of social lives in this way shaped a tendency to stability and meant that mobility was often unnecessary. Once you had obtained work and through this accessed the other facets of existential security (Ferge 1996) there was little *need* to move again. The achievement of existential security in Nowa Huta through the institutions of the state and workplace was coupled with the migrants’ more recent peasant past (Fisher 1962) to create a ‘small-town climate’, a theme echoed by a number of interviewees who characterised Nowa Huta as a village, the intimacy of social relations within neighbourhoods and blocks more reminiscent of rural Poland than cosmopolitan Kraków.

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. Often neighbours all moved into their flats in the same week, and there has been little turnover since. Numerous interviewees recounted how they had lived in the same flat with

largely the same neighbours for 30, 40, even 50 years. As a result as Bartek suggests, its commonplace that neighbours know each other:

“Yes, yes, just as the block was constructed, we moved in straight away and so by the force of events I know a lot of people round here...”

These relationships are a major part of everyday routines and not just rooted in lengthy acquaintance; younger people are also drawn in. Edward (in his 80s) explains how:

“I’ve been here in this apartment thirty years already ... and yes, I know all the neighbours ... in truth, not with everyone, but with these neighbours here we have good neighbourly connections, often they visit and we often chat with them, someone sorts something out for another, does something, helps with something, advises...”

whilst Ania (in her early 20s) notes that “if someone on the staircase is ill, then the whole staircase knows about it and comes to visit”.

Whilst interviewees expressed a particular connection to their blocks of flats and staircases, many, such as Marta, notwithstanding her connection to her home village, also articulated a wider attachment to Nowa Huta as a whole:

“I know all the neighbourhoods in Nowa Huta, I know where I am, I think that this is definitely connected with the fact that I live and work here ... I’m very connected to Nowa Huta ... I simply feel at home here.”

The flipside, of course, of such dense networks is a feeling of entrapment and an inability to get out. Whilst a community in which ‘everybody knows your name’ offers security, it also threatens claustrophobia. I have already identified a growing perception of crime in Nowa Huta and this is coupled for some with a broader characterisation of the town as a place without a future, lacking in potential – in stark contrast to its representation in the 1950s and ‘60s. Although, just three of my interviewees expressed any desire to leave Nowa Huta permanently, externally it suffers from poor perceptions. Advertisements seeking

accommodation in Kraków regularly include the phrase “Nowa Huta not considered” as people choose not to move there.

In contrast to the period when Nowa Huta experienced the positive side of internal migration, recent years have come to be characterised, if not by realities, then at least by myths of out-migration. A number of interviewees noted that people, both young and old, were seeking to leave Nowa Huta. Nowa Huta’s youth hope to flee the town for the same reasons their grandparents came – to escape boredom and unemployment, to seek opportunities and excitement (Niward 1997), whilst those grandparents are increasingly returning to their home villages after a lifetime of living and working in Nowa Huta. Some young people were hoping to make the most of opportunities offered by imminent accession to the European Union, travelling legally or illegally to western Europe for work and study, highlighting Poland’s position in the right half of the uneven geography of an enlarged European Union. Others however pointed to new in-flows, often of students seeking cheap accommodation, with the potential to revive the community; in some cases, young people are moving into the older neighbourhoods, taking on the flats of their grandparents as they leave or die, and dramatically altering the blocks’ demography.

Another notable in-flow is of poorer families with many children being allocated flats in Nowa Huta by the municipality and by social services (interview with social worker in Nowa Huta, 2001). Because of Nowa Huta’s poor external perception, some of its housing stock is difficult to let or sell and, in a strong echo of western public housing policy, cheap, unattractive flats are being allocated to poor families. Alongside this in-flow, we can identify another pattern of enforced mobility as the rate of evictions for non-payment of rent grows and poor families, often from minority communities, are re-housed in smaller, cheaper, worse

apartments (interview with social worker; see also Sobotka 2001). At this end of the spectrum, Nowa Huta's historic connection between mobility, stability and security must seem distant and alien.

Changing Geographies of the Everyday: The Shape of Post-Socialism

Many of these patterns and processes echo quite distinctly the accounts of Bauman and others who write of the fragmentation of social life and dislocation (both spatial and experiential) as markers of globalisation. Bauman notes that “most of us are on the move even if physically we stay put” (1998b, 77), experiencing a sense of displacement as the world around us changes so dramatically and so fast. The threat to structuring institutions such as work, the family and community leaves many in search of a new place in the world. Meanwhile, the freedom to move (and to act) is concentrated with the relatively powerful and wealthy; mobility is polarised between tourists and vagabonds, choosing and forced to move respectively, while others find themselves trapped, “barred from moving and thus bound to bear passively whatever change may be visited in the locality they are tied to” (Bauman 1998a, 88). At the same, however, the local represents a choice and opportunity, a space where the incursion of the market is not complete, where being known offers security and a ‘safe harbour’ (Bauman 1998a) and where other social and economic forms might continue to exist. On this level it would be possible to see ways in which these theories travel from west to east. There are important commonalities, rooted in common processes of economic restructuring and social change; the ‘pillars’ of post-socialist transformation – the liberalisation and marketisation of economies – are, after all, themes of neoliberal restructurings elsewhere. Yet, I would argue that the similarity of these processes conceals important differences in their construction and experience. In the accounts presented above, the contemporary experiences of post-socialism are shaped as much by earlier structures and

practices as they are by the more recent processes of marketisation which they partially share with other parts of the world (and other ‘posts’). In some senses, this is a very simple argument – history and geography matter – but one which is overlooked in accounts which reduce post-socialism to transition and which identify post-socialism as a descriptive category, the differences of which are empirical not conceptual.

One of the specificities of post-socialism lies in the particular shaping of contemporary experiences by the structures and practices of socialism and its construction. Thus, for example, for Zofia being stuck at home with no chance to travel is experienced not simply as a result of the commercialisation of tourism post-1989 but also through comparison with subsidised, accessible and frequent travel during the socialist period. For Dorota and Edward, the dislocation and insecurity of getting round Nowa Huta today is a product not just of the rationalisation of public transport and rising (perceptions of) crime, but also of the mobility and security that were part of their socialist-era lives in Nowa Huta. For Józef, the pressure and desire to spend more and more time at home is experienced not only through the loss and prohibitive cost of neighbourhood leisure facilities, but also through the stark contrast with the active networks of sociability at work and beyond which were central to his earlier life. Pre-socialist practices are also important in shaping post-socialism - for Marta, the anonymity of today’s hypermarkets is experienced not only through their newness and strangeness and the proximity and familiarity of the network of neighbourhood shops built up under socialism, but also through the rural social relations which continue to shape a significant part of her life.

Whilst in the west the modernity of Fordism was associated with an important role for the state and paid work in shaping everyday lives and opportunities, under socialism, especially in communities such as Nowa Huta, the centrality of these institutions and their role in

integrating multiple spheres of people's lives was both explicit and extensive. Under socialism, and founded in part on the earlier rural traditions imported into new socialist spaces, production, consumption and reproduction were intertwined at the local scale through structures of employment, housing, the state, community, transport, to name just a few. Thus, travel around and between Kraków and Nowa Huta was shaped by the labour demands of the steelworks; social networks tightly reflected residential patterns which in turn mirrored the employment priorities of the steelworks and its allied institutions and patterns of leisure and consumption reflected the strategic importance of the steelworks to the state, its supply networks, priorities and fiscal situation. The importance of these connections was highlighted in the discussion of my methodologies and analysis and echoed through my interviewees' accounts of their lives. Post-socialism can not be understood without attempting to map the connections within and between these varied spheres of life. These connections and the related networks of transformations which are reshaping the everyday lives of people and communities in the region can thus be seen as another characteristic of post-socialism.

The accounts which I have presented as indicative of a post-socialist condition not only highlight the importance of historical practices and institutions but also the particularities of 'transformation'. To argue that post-socialism should not be reduced to 'transition' is not to deny its importance in understanding post-socialism. Whilst, as I have suggested, the 'transition' has much in common discursively with wider economic restructurings in both the west and south (see also Bradshaw and Stenning 2004), the particular promises and processes of 'transition' in the east have shaped the experiences of mobility and security in the region. For Bartek, for example, the prohibitive costs of travelling would not be so disappointing if they were not coupled with the post-1989 celebration of widened horizons and new

perspectives. For the taxi-driving former steelworkers, the experience of immobility and indebtedness is deepened by the heady promises of mobility and autonomy before and after 1989. Far from a brave new world of mobility and opportunity offered during and after the revolutions of 1989, post-socialism is marked by a contradictory widening of horizons and the shrinking of lifeworlds. The promises of mobility falter on the realities of dislocation, immobility and insecurity.

Discussions of discourses of ‘transition’ highlight clearly the connections between post-socialism and other social formations. Whilst arguing for the difference of post-socialism, it is important also to maintain a balance – post-socialism is not simply rooted in the historical development of socialism but also in contemporary events and processes, many of which it shares with other parts of the world. In many of the examples cited above notions and practices of ‘capitalism’ and Europe, for example, are critical to understandings of post-socialism. Thus, Marta’s post-socialist shopping experiences reflect past practices but also the incursion of western multinational retail firms into Poland, and Edward’s post-socialist bus experiences are shaped not only by the apparent beneficence of socialist-era subsidised travel, but by the pressure on municipal budgets from the accession agenda of the European Union. Post-socialism exists in combination with these other social forms and is, as I have already suggested, partial and hybrid. In some spaces, the socialist seems to be a stronger influence, in others practices of western capitalism seem to be more influential. In all, post-socialism is marked by a combination of multiple social forms, constructed at varied scales of time and space.

One oft-recognised marker of post-socialism is the scale of differentiation between experiences and practices under socialism and under post-socialism. The rapidity of post-

1989 reforms has triggered a set of transformations which have been dramatic and profound. As ‘shock therapy’ implicitly intended, the reshaping of everyday lives has been quicker and more traumatic than a more incremental process of reform and transformation might have produced. Yet, my arguments for recognising (a) post-socialism rest not simply on a question of scale – after all, there are numerous communities in the west and south which experienced the overnight closure of workplaces and destruction of livelihoods. Whilst the scale (both temporal and spatial) of post-1989 reforms is a reason to study the region, it is not an adequate basis on which to claim the particularity of post-socialism. Instead, as I have argued above, post-socialism is marked out as different because of the particular experiences of socialism, its construction and destruction. There are clear and important resonances of wider processes of social, economic and political change, yet the particular ways in which these transformations are played out and, importantly, experienced are different. In short, post-socialism can not be reduced to neoliberal economic restructuring, nor just to the legacies of socialism (and pre-socialism), nor indeed to the passage of ‘transition’. It is all of these. This paper has explored the combination of these processes in the context of patterns of mobility and security, identifying some of the practices and institutions which shape the everyday geographies of Nowa Huta. What it has also done is develop the challenge of identifying, interrogating and theorising post-socialism as a conceptual rather than a descriptive category. The purpose of this challenge is to debate the continued study of the post-socialist world after the ‘end of transition’ and to suggest that far from ending, any post-socialist condition is only just beginning to reach some kind of theoretical maturity. This maturity will only come with more and more studies which debate the contours and boundaries of post-socialism, exploring differences and commonalities within it whilst also interrogating its connections to other worlds. In these ways, not only can we achieve a deeper understanding of change in the post-socialist world, but we can also continue to think through

the ways in which non-western experiences might offer alternatives to western knowledges, connecting to post-colonial studies which call into question received wisdoms and open new understandings.

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