



CHAPTER 4

Urban change and the localities

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1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the experiences of transformation and post-socialism at the local scale. The intention is to ground and explore the wider changes ongoing in east central European and former Soviet societies, discussed in the previous chapters, in the places where they are happening. Whilst the large-scale and wide-ranging reviews of post-socialist transformation are important in understanding the 'bigger picture' and the sheer enormity of the restructuring underway in the region, it is critical also to seek to comprehend what these macro-scale changes mean for the people and places experiencing them – how have people's daily lives changed, what do privatisation and internationalisation mean for the everyday practices of consumption, how have the landscapes of everyday life been transformed, and how is politics now practised at the local scale? These are a few of the questions that this chapter seeks to provide some answers for, whilst also raising more questions and making explicit links to processes of change in other parts of the world.

The chapter's focus is justified further by an identifiable potential for the increased importance of local people under post-socialism. The collapse of communism, the end of the communist party's monopoly on power and ideology across the region and the dissolution of the centrally planned economy have all dramatically restructured the conditions of social, economic and political life in the former Soviet Union and east central Europe. The policies of transition (discussed in more detail in the introductory chapter) have fundamentally altered the region's political economy in a variety of widely catalogued ways. They have, however, also encouraged a radical re-articulation of the scales at which economies and societies are managed and political choices are structured. Within the Soviet-style system the national scale was very much the primary scale of authority – the system was managed at this scale and it was national strategic objectives that were prioritised. The transformations that are ongoing in the former Soviet Union and east central Europe challenge that primacy, such that a shifting of scales of authority and practice, both up and down, must be seen as a critical part of the shift from state socialism. This pluralisation





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results in an increasing contestation of change and it is often at the local, or urban, scale that 'the nature of transition is actively contested and constructed' (Smith 1997: 357).

The processes of post-socialist transformation have offered and continue to offer opportunities to renew the importance of the local in policy, practice and everyday life, but they may also increase the possibilities of control over the local to shift even further beyond the region, to the corporate centres of the global economy and international politics. Herrschel, for example, notes how the unification of Germany and the extension of western German local political structures to the east has led to a significant empowerment of local government and the development of wider institutions of local governance in the old Länder, contrasting markedly with 'the complete absence of "local statehood" under socialism' (Herrschel 1998: 175). The development of what Herrschel terms 'empowered local governance' in eastern Germany and in much of the rest of east central Europe and parts of the former Soviet Union seems to have heralded a new era in local politics as localities are forced to adopt proactive economic strategies and to become political actors in their own right (e.g. Herrschel 1998; Young and Kaczmarek 1999), which can no longer rely on central state subsidy and assistance but which are also no longer dependent on the financial and political resources of the state economy. These new political and economic strategies are clearly changing the face of localities in ECE and the FSU as much as they have done in the West.

In particular, this chapter focuses on change in the urban arena. Although some more general points are made about the transformation of local politics, the local economy and the changing construction of locality, empirical examples of change are drawn from larger towns and cities across the region rather than from the experiences of rural areas. Chapter 5 by Tim Unwin *et al.* in this volume discusses the rural transformations in greater detail as a complement to this chapter.

There are again a number of motivations for drawing attention to urban experiences under post-socialism. In the construction of socialism in ECE and the FSU in the early and mid-twentieth century, considerable emphasis was placed on the city and on the urban proletariat. This focus arose from the work of Marx and Engels and was reinforced by the pragmatics of policy in creating new socialist states. Marx and Engels repeatedly emphasised the importance of *urban* social relations in fomenting and maintaining revolution. Under late-nineteenth-century capitalism, cities were seen to be the environments most likely to support the strengthening of class consciousness, as a result of both the appalling nature of urban conditions and the growing concentration of urban industrial workers. These urban industrial workers were seen to be the key actors in the revolution and were accorded considerable political centrality. The success of the revolution, particularly in a set of countries 'encircled' by hostile capitalist states and still populated quite considerably by rural people, depended on a rapid increase in the power and importance of the proletariat. Such an increase demanded rapid industrialisation and urbanisation.





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For this reason, the post-revolutionary years in both the Soviet Union and east central Europe were characterised by very real tendencies to both urbanisation and industrialisation. In the Soviet Union, the urban population grew from 26 million to 136 million between 1926 and 1970, that is from 18 per cent to 56 per cent of the total population (French 1995: 51). In east central Europe, between 1950 and 1975 the urban population grew from 40 million to 70 million (from 38 per cent to 54 per cent of the total population). The early years of socialism in east central Europe – 1950 to 1960 – saw especially high urban growth levels (Hamilton 1979: 171). This urbanisation was accompanied by a shift from agriculture to industry. By 1953, industry had overtaken agriculture as the major contributor to net material product (the socialist GDP equivalent) in every east central European country (Crampton and Crampton 1996: 158).

Notwithstanding their significance under socialism, and their central role in building new societies, the cities of ECE and the FSU were also critical to the challenges to socialism which grew in strength after the death of Stalin in 1953. As Michael Harloe (1996) notes, east central European socialism was built and died in many of the same places. Many of the places that were bastions of support for socialism were also the ones in which the challenges to socialism were strongest, for example, capital cities, key industrial centres.

This historical centrality echoes into the future. A number of writers have recognised that urban areas represent key sites of post-socialist transformation (see, for example, Smith 1997; Ghanbari-Parsa and Moatazed-Keivani 1999). In particular, cities and larger towns across the region are often located at the forefront of reforms, taking measures to restructure and transform their economies, political scenes and societies in advance of more peripheral and rural areas. In one sense then, cities are the pioneers of reform (Gritsai and van der Wusten 1997), shaping policies and breaking new ground, and thus also experience many reforms in a much more exaggerated form. As Kiss (1999) notes, capital cities, in particular, tend to be 'most innovative and react . . . fastest to challenges' (*ibid.*: 30), often because they had witnessed reform under socialism to a far greater extent than other regions. Kovács (1994) notes how Budapest 'was well advanced along the road of post-industrial development' (*ibid.*: 1089) even before the collapse of communism in 1989 – services already employed the majority of Budapest's workers and the city already possessed a set of infrastructures oriented to the international (see also Bodnár 2001).

Notwithstanding these positive advances, the sheer concentration of employment, economic activity, population and housing in major towns and cities means that the transformations ongoing in east central Europe and the former Soviet Union are deeply and widely felt in urban areas. As Pichler-Milanovich (1994) suggests

. . . despite [or because of] dominant or privileged positions in national and, increasingly, international economies, cities could face certain problems in the future with social polarisation, residential segregation, decentralisation of economic activities and rising unemployment (*ibid.*: 1097).





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2 Approaching urban change: exploring global contexts

There was considerable debate within Western academia prior to 1989 over what constituted a socialist city and if indeed there was anything unique about the socialist city that suggested it should be studied separately. French and Hamilton (1979a) drew attention to the fact that cities under socialism were shaped by both the ideologies and practices of state socialism. The nature of the Soviet-style planning system, state ownership of land and the economy, different economic priorities and rigid mechanisms for land use control meant that the realities of urban development were very different in the Soviet Union and its satellite states than in states dominated by market economies (French and Hamilton 1979b; Pallot and Shaw 1981; French 1995). In the post-socialist era, it is clear that the legacies of socialism and the paths of extrication from socialism are shaping the cities of ECE and the FSU in particular ways. More examples of these legacies are identified below, but they would include, amongst others, the importance of large-scale industry, the dominance of the capital city over other urban centres, the persistence of socialist-era political connections, the symbolism of the urban landscape and, as we have seen, the relative weakness of local governance. Specific attention must be paid to these legacies and to understanding their influence on the contemporary city. However, the transformations that have occurred in the region challenge us also to make connections to wider theoretical and conceptual discussions which link studies of post-socialist cities to those of cities in other parts of the world.

The variety of approaches employed to study the city in the West are too numerous to recount and consider in any great detail here. It is enough to draw attention to a few that inform the discussions in this chapter. One of the strongest tendencies in contemporary urban geography has been the growing focus on governance and the interrelationship between urban politics, culture and the economy. Much of this has been linked to the increasing marketisation of urban lives and the globalisation of urban political economies that encourage the promotion of 'the entrepreneurial city' (e.g. Hall and Hubbard 1998) founded on networks and alliances of diverse local and non-local actors. As these actors prioritise economic restructuring and development, social policy projects become secondary, highlighting widening polarisation (on both an inter- and intra-urban scale), the partiality of urban growth projects and the worsening gap between the 'winners' and 'losers' of urban transformation (Harvey 1989). Cities in east central Europe and the former Soviet Union seem now to be experiencing many of these same processes of change. Similarly, transformations witnessed in the social and physical landscapes of Western cities through, for example, gentrification, the development of suburban malls, the regeneration of city centres and the reshaping of urban public spaces are now also becoming, as we will see below, prevalent in cities further east.

Recent transformations also highlight issues and concerns in post-socialist cities that resonate with concepts and experiences in the urban





South. The introductory chapter of this volume noted that it would be easier to draw theoretical parallels between Warsaw and Paris than Warsaw and Freetown, yet it is worth thinking through some of the parallels that might be better drawn with Freetown, Rio or Delhi. Since 1989, cities of the former Soviet Union and east central Europe have experienced growing income polarities and increasing levels of social exclusion. Whilst this does also mirror change in Western cities, the huge disparities in wealth, noticeable on the streets of Moscow, for example, and the presence of so many international advisors, global bureaucrats and foreign business actors in their Hiltons and Hyatts, living off expense accounts and ignoring the very people whose lives their policies are supposed to improve are surely more reminiscent of the urban South and the huge dichotomies present there. The presence of this international class and the cooperation (or co-option) of a strata of local politicians, bureaucrats and economists, entrenched in domestic politics yet served well by global agendas, seems also to echo the comprador capitalism of Latin America (Sidaway and Power 1998; Stenning 1999). It would seem particularly pertinent to think through parallels with state socialist cities in non-Western countries, for example, Maputo, Algiers and Havana (Simon and Sidaway 1990; Simon 1992). On a more positive note, late- and post-socialist cities have, like cities in the global South, been home to a blossoming of bottom-up, locally rooted new social movements that have resisted and engaged with wider discourses and have created a particular urban and local politics (e.g. Pickvance 1996). It would seem that there are also parallels to be drawn with patterns of economic activity in southern cities. The late socialist and post-socialist years have witnessed a growth in informal trade, urban bazaars, non-monetary survival strategies and the persistence (and re-emergence) of rural social relations in the cities (Clarke 1999; Czakó and Sik 1999; Sik and Wallace 1999).

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The processes of urbanisation and industrialisation under socialism meant that by the 1980s ECE and the FSU were predominantly urbanised regions (see Table 4.1). However, this picture is complicated by looking at the region's patterns of urbanisation in more detail. Whilst the Russian Federation, Estonia and (what is now) the Czech Republic recorded urban populations over 70 per cent of the total population, other parts of the region, notably the Balkans and Central Asia, recorded very low levels, around or below 40 per cent. Definitions of 'urban' are broad and include a range of urban spaces, from million cities to small, peripheral towns developed under socialism through the construction of a sole factory and system-built housing for the workers. The urbanisation of the countryside and the mechanisation of agriculture served to blur the distinction further such that many of the countries of ECE and the FSU had 'settlements of urban-type' which were agricultural, peripheral and rural but were included in assessments of urban population (see Chapter 5).



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Table 4.1 Urban populations in east central Europe and the former Soviet Union

	Urban population as % of total population		Population of largest city as % of total urban population	Population in urban agglomerations over 1mn as % of total population
	1980	1998	1995	1995
Albania	34	40	–	0
Armenia	66	69	50	35
Azerbaijan	53	57	43	24
Belarus	57	71	25	17
Bosnia & Herzegovina	36	42	–	–
Bulgaria	61	69	21	19
Croatia	50	57	–	–
Czech Republic	75	75	16	12
Estonia	70	69	–	0
Georgia	52	60	42	25
Hungary	57	64	31	20
Kazakhstan	54	56	14	8
Kyrgyzstan	38	34	–	0
Latvia	68	69	53	0
Lithuania	61	68	–	0
FYR Macedonia	54	61	–	0
Moldova	40	46	–	0
Poland	58	65	14	18
Romania	49	56	17	9
Russian Federation	70	77	8	19
Serbia and Montenegro	–	–	–	–
Slovakia	52	57	–	0
Slovenia	48	50	–	0
Tajikistan	34	28	–	0
Turkmenistan	47	45	–	0
Ukraine	62	68	8	16
Uzbekistan	41	38	26	10
Yugoslavia	46	52	22	13

Note: – denotes data not available.

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

(http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2000/pdfs/tab3_10.pdf).

In the contemporary period, some parts of the region have reasonably dispersed patterns of urbanisation in which the largest city accounts for a small part of total urban populations, whilst in others (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Latvia) around 50 per cent of the urban population is concentrated in the capital city. In many countries of the region there are no urban agglomerations with populations over one million whilst in others around 20 per cent of the population lives in such large urban areas (Table 4.1). In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, levels of urbanisation are in fact declining (see Chapter 5 on the return to rural areas in the 1990s). These variations within and between countries mean



that the urban experience under post-socialism is itself very varied. The review of policies and processes below draws on examples and issues from a variety of different countries but is nevertheless selective – the urban experiences of Central Asia and non-European Russia are far less researched, or at least published, than those of more western regions. Many of the processes discussed are more visible in these latter regions, whilst others are evident, in different forms and to different extents, across the region.

3.1 Transformation and the 'urban'

Other chapters in this book discuss the processes of post-socialist transformation ongoing across the region in more thematic detail. Here I draw attention to the processes of change that are explicitly urban or which, more commonly, take place disproportionately in urban spaces. As I have suggested, cities and larger towns have tended to be at the forefront of restructuring. The marketisation and internationalisation of national economies has, more often than not, been led by the restructuring of capital cities and other major urban centres. In part this is because such reforms are debated, legislated upon and implemented by urban elites in centres of government, both central and local. Thus, for example, the privatisation of the central bank and the achievement of currency convertibility takes place in Prague, Budapest and Sofia rather than in rural Poland, mountainous Bulgaria or distant Siberia.

Internationalisation of the economy

Across the region foreign investment, both direct and portfolio, has been concentrated in big cities. Not only have many of the major investment projects in industry been located in cities, but the vast majority of capital invested in local projects flows through the cities. Kovács (1994), for example, notes that nearly 60 per cent of foreign capital invested in Hungary between 1989 and 1992 was concentrated in Budapest (*ibid.*: 1087). In terms of the economy then, urban areas are much more internationalised than rural. In connection with this, urban areas are home to most of the developing institutions and infrastructures necessary to support the creation of market economies in ECE and the FSU. New banks have been founded in cities and spread their networks to smaller towns (*ibid.*: 1090) (although former state-owned banks tend to maintain a foothold in more rural areas); stock exchanges have been located in capital cities and major regional centres; new and developing motorway networks link major cities, often at a supra-regional scale; mobile phone networks and Internet access are concentrated in towns and cities and only the region's major cities have international airports.

Globalisation of cultures

These better infrastructures and more developed connections with the rest of the region and the world beyond mean that the internationalisation of





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culture and everyday life is taken further in the cities and larger towns. The 'McDonaldisation' of east central European and post-Soviet society is clearest in places like Bratislava, Warsaw and Bucharest, where not only McDonalds but also other global high-street names like Yves Rocher, Adidas, Marks and Spencer, etc., are visible in market squares, transformed 'univermags'¹ and new out-of-town shopping centres. In the region's cities, too, Albanians, Estonians and Croatians, amongst others, can listen to music from North America and the wider Europe and can indulge in cuisine from across the world. In Kraków alone you can not only eat Polish, but now also Vietnamese, Italian, French, Mexican, Jewish, Corsican, Scottish, Spanish, American, Austrian, Hungarian, Serbian, Brazilian and Ukrainian cuisine.² These "united fashions" of global culture' (Sýkora 1994: 1159) would not have been so visible on the urban landscapes of socialist cities and are encouraging a dramatic reshaping of cityscapes. This diversification of urban culture is coupled with a dramatic growth in tourism in the region, much of which is focused on the 'city break', following a trend set in the early 1990s by Prague.

Privatisation

At the more explicitly domestic scale, we can also see the processes of privatisation of the built environment and economic activity impact on the city disproportionately. By its very nature, much of the largest, and often most successful, industry, ripe for cherry-picking by both domestic and foreign investors (Chapter 3), is located in urban areas, often the biggest cities. As such, it is frequently urban economies and urban labour markets that have been most markedly restructured by reforms already implemented. Under socialism there was frequently a particularly close relationship between enterprises and their localities such that many urban services were provided by or through the workplace (Shomina 1992). As a result, the privatisation and restructuring of industrial enterprises has a particularly extreme impact on urban areas in the region, remaking not only their labour markets, but also their housing services, cultural and sporting facilities, and health provision. As was the situation with industrial space, retail space was also concentrated in urban areas. The Soviet-style system worked with a fairly rigid hierarchy of retail provision that resulted in a concentration of facilities in major urban centres. In conjunction then with the sorts of foreign investment outlined above, the city has also been the focus of restructuring in the retail sector.

Property relations and restitution

The remaking of urban space is taken even further by the privatisation of property and the marketisation of property relations. Real-estate markets are emerging in cities across the region, leading to a fragmentation of ownership and a diversification of land values (Sýkora 1994; Ghanbari-Parsa and Moatazed-Keivani 1999). The end of the state's monopoly on the ownership and exchange of land and property has resulted in a reduction in planning, a pluralisation of land use, the evolution of real-estate professions





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and a number of dramatic shifts in the use of urban space. As we will see below, priorities attached to commercial, retail, industrial and residential land have been transformed and urban land markets have become the arena of a multitude of local, national and international actors. This process of privatisation is complicated further by the issue of restitution of property confiscated by communists to its former owners, practised in almost every urban centre in east central Europe and many in the former Soviet Union. The process of restitution is an inherently conflictual one as it reimposes the old order of private property rights on a townscape transformed by decades of socialist practice (Feldman 1999); it is also primarily moral – driven by a desire to compensate former owners – rather than economic, though it does serve also to redistribute former state-owned property (Sýkora 1994; Ghanbari-Parsa and Moatazed-Keivani 1999) and contribute to development of real-estate markets as many restituted owners swiftly sell their property. In countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic the process is still further complicated by the demands and concerns of Jewish owners whose property is subject to numerous competing claims for ownership. Programmes of restitution affect considerable swathes of (primarily) urban land in the region – Sýkora (1994) suggests that over 70 per cent of the housing stock in Prague 1 and 2 (i.e. central Prague) was restituted during 1991 and 1992 (*ibid.*: 1156) whilst Feldman estimates that close to a third of the Estonian population is involved in the claims for restitution there (Feldman 1999: 168). Given the extent of restitution claims this process implicates many different spaces, including not only homes but also the sites of present-day schools, hospitals and other workplaces.

Reform of local government and public services

Further to their implication in the processes of restitution, the hierarchy of service provision and the concentration of delivery in urban centres means also that the reform of health, education and administration is experienced most vividly in urban areas. Although rural areas may increasingly be excluded from these services by encroaching marketisation, it is again urban labour markets and urban spaces that are restructured as these services are transformed. The largest hospitals, the universities and the key centres of administration are all located in towns and cities, and in many places, play a critical role in local economies. These latter transformations are tied up with a remaking of local government, which has been implemented in almost all of the post-socialist states. In each of the states, both the scales and functions of urban, local and regional government have been restructured. Different scales of government have new competencies, some cities and regions have been emasculated whilst others have gained new and improved powers over their territories (e.g. Mitchneck 1997; Herrschel 1997, 1998). As Suraszka demonstrates in her review of urban politics in Warsaw, Budapest, Prague and Bratislava, the post-socialist era has been characterised by changes in the political and administrative relationships between cities and the national state and between cities and their districts (Suraszka 1996). Suraszka concludes that there are few clearly defined legislative structures for urban governance in





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the region's major cities and that such jurisdictional fragmentation creates problems in ensuring cohesion in urban development.

3.2 The remaking of urban space

Industrial space

The clearest tendency in the reshaping of industry and industrial space in east central European and post-Soviet cities has been the decline of production and manufacturing employment in recent decades and especially in the years since 1989. In Budapest, for example, between 1985 and 1995 the number of industrial employees fell from close to 350,000 to around 125,000 (Kiss 1999: 34–6). This meant that the share of industry in employment fell from well over 50 per cent to just 16 per cent. In Warsaw, Moscow, Prague and Bratislava, too, industrial employment fell by tens of thousands. In east Berlin, excessively exposed to the ill winds of competition, employment in manufacturing industry fell by over 80 per cent in the four years after unification (Cochrane and Jonas 1999: 147). This process of industrial employment decline was mirrored by a fragmentation of urban labour markets as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) began to dominate the economy, taking over from large former state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as the primary employers. This shift in employment and in economic structure results from both the growth of new private enterprises and the break-up of former SOEs. Although there have been fewer outright factory closures than might be expected, urban labour markets are no longer dominated by single large enterprises.

As the role of industry in employment has shrunk considerably, post-socialist cities have also seen the withdrawal of industry from non-productive activities. Industrial enterprises in the region have largely followed a two-track restructuring programme before and after privatisation – firstly, the modernisation of the production process and, secondly, streamlining the organisation structure. This latter has resulted not only in the dispersal of employment but the sale and/or abandonment of services such as health centres, leisure and recreational facilities, housing and retail services. As is discussed in the case study below, this withdrawal not only changes the nature of the labour contract but also the workplace-community relationship as new providers enter the field and citizens travel elsewhere to use such services (Domański 1997; Stenning 2000). All of these changes have impacts on the urban landscape. As with deindustrialisation in the West, the reduction of industrial production and employment leaves redundant spaces in urban areas. This results in initiatives to regenerate old industrial areas, many of which echo policies and programmes in the West (Domański, 2000). Many of the countries of the region, have, for example, developed special economic zones (SEZs) to attract new investment whilst others have seen the development of new retail spaces on old industrial land – the expansive site of a former sodium works in Kraków, for example, now houses a major mall centred on a Carrefour hypermarket. As in the West many of the old sites of production have become locations of obvious and conspicuous consumption.





Retail and commercial space

The development of out-of-town centres is but one of the new trends to characterise retail provision in post-socialist cities. As with the rest of the economy, until very late socialism, the retail economy was dominated by state supply and distribution networks centred on neighbourhood shopping centres and city centre provision of higher order goods (e.g. Coles 1997). Retail was one of the first economic sectors to be privatised and as such its transformation is perhaps most advanced (Werwicki 1998). Werwicki notes that not only did the number of retail outlets in Poland increase by approximately 80,000 to over 300,000 between 1987 and 1991 but that the share of private ownership increased from 15.2 per cent to 96.9 per cent. By 1997, the number of retail outlets had risen to 424,000 (Jelonkiewicz 1999).

In the early years much of this development took place outside permanent or substantial sites. Werwicki (1998) estimates that in one street in Warsaw in 1991 there were over 500 traders, 300 of whom possessed nothing more than a portable table as their 'retail outlet'. Axenov *et al.* (1997a) see the kiosk (and other 'mobile commercial facilities') as real competition for more traditional shop units in post-Soviet Russia. Resulting from a lack of trading space, the need for convenience and flexibility in retail locations, an absence of seed capital and weak state regulation, Axenov *et al.* argue that the kiosk is a relatively stable feature of the post-Soviet urban space (*ibid.*). In St Petersburg, in 1994, around 10,000 kiosks employed between 70,000 and 90,000 people, many in the ranks of the 'hidden unemployed' (*ibid.*: 419, 424). Much of this kiosk trade, in St Petersburg as elsewhere, is linked to so-called shuttle, or cross-border, trading and the growth of open-air and covered markets. Though present under communism, open-air markets have been subject to a dramatic expansion under post-socialism in major cities and often in border towns, in sports stadia, around bus and rail stations, and on dedicated sites (Czakó and Sik 1999; Sik and Wallace 1999). These markets serve not only economic needs (Czakó and Sik estimate the annual turnover of one market in Pécs, Hungary to be approximately US\$225 million [1999: 726]) but are also of cultural significance – 'they have an air of spectacle or carnival' (Sik and Wallace 1999: 703). The importance of the informal sector in retail trade in post-socialist cities mirrors closely similar phenomena in the South (Simon 1992).

In ECE, at least, recent years have seen an increase in retail provision in fixed premises, encouraged to a considerable extent by the appearance on the market of foreign firms. As we have seen, much of this new provision has appeared in out-of-town shopping centres but international chains are also challenging local traders in city centre locations (Jelonkiewicz 1999). In Poland, the number of hypermarkets increased by 117 per cent between 1996 and 1998 with most of the major Western European retail chains, including Géant, Carrefour, HIT and Tesco, entering the market. Many of these developments, in Poland and elsewhere, are focused on huge leisure and retail complexes involving bars, restaurants, multi-screen cinemas and bowling alleys (*ibid.*; see also BBC World Service 1996).





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The development of retail space has occurred alongside the expansion and improvement of other commercial space. As both Kovács (1994) and Gritsai (1997a) note, both consumer and business services were greatly underdeveloped within the socialist economy and have experienced an unmatched boom in the last decade. The vast majority of this development is concentrated in the region's major cities, and often located in the heart of capital cities. Whilst some branches such as tourism, insurance and legal practices have simply been expanded, others, including advertising, auditing and the provision of office equipment have been developed almost from scratch (Axenov *et al.* 1997b). These new service sector developments have encouraged a spurt of new office growth, both through construction and renovation, and a significant reshaping of urban skylines. In many instances, new developments incorporate shops, hotels and office space as major international corporations seek to take advantage of the property boom in post-socialist cities. In Berlin, for example, Sony and Daimler Benz are dominating the redevelopment of Potsdamer Platz (Cochrane and Jonas 1999) whilst McDonalds is rumoured to make more money out of its mixed-use property developments in Moscow than its burger sales. All of these developments are seen to be critical to attempts by post-socialist cities either to claim, or re-claim, world city status, or at least to make a bid for regional centrality (*ibid.*).

Residential space

The expansion of retail and office space and the trend to make post-socialist cities more closely resemble Western and other global cities have occurred largely at the expense of urban residential space. In comparison with British patterns, cities under socialism tended to have high levels of domestic space in central areas – the weak development of business and consumer services reduced the pressure on urban space and resulted in less developed processes of residential suburbanisation. The quality of the urban environment was seen to diminish from the centre to the periphery and 'words like "suburban" or "peripheral" for a Muscovite [for example] carry a distinctly negative flavour' (Gritsai 1997a: 375). As Sýkora notes 'it was the "socialist middle class" who inhabited large housing estates while many households remained in poorer inner-city housing or villages at city outskirts' (1999: 681). With privatisation and the development of new urban functions, the residential landscape of post-socialist cities has changed significantly.

Through processes of restitution and privatisation, much former residential property has been transferred to non-residential use (Sýkora 1994), often in clear contravention of land use regulations (Pichler-Milanovich 1994). Bater *et al.* note that the escalating demand for office space in Moscow has largely been met through the conversion of housing in central areas. The return on investments in commercial property is considerably higher than that for residential refurbishments (Bater *et al.* 1998). This is clearly having an impact on the social composition of urban populations – poorer residents are being forced out whilst commercial activities and the new rich are increasing their presence in the city (*ibid.*; Gdaniec 1997). In short,





the centres of many post-socialist cities are undergoing processes of gentrification, creating major problems for meeting the housing needs of lower income households.

On the edges of cities and in the suburbs, twin processes are in train. On the one hand, post-socialist cities are now experiencing the middle-class suburbanisation long-witnessed in Western Europe and North America. Cochrane and Jonas (1999) identify growing levels of out-migration and in-commuting in Berlin reflecting the development of some prestige housing developments on the urban periphery. In Budapest, many of the new professional workers are increasingly opting to build their own houses in the city's 'green belt', that is in villages adjacent to the city limits, and pay their taxes there (BBC World Service 1996). These new suburbanites, however, continue to work in the city and use its health, educational and transport facilities. Increasingly then, post-socialist cities are experiencing the running down of urban budgets in the same way as Western cities have in post-war decades.

This tax issue exacerbates the other processes ongoing at the edge of the city – the threatened deterioration of high-rise estates built during the socialist housing boom of the 1960s and 1970s. Csagoly estimates that currently more than 170 million people in ECE and the FSU live in over 70 million apartments in panel-built blocks (Csagoly 1999; see also Bransten 1998). Budapest, for example, has 105 panel-built developments, housing close to a quarter of a million Hungarians. It has been argued that new housing developments based on panel-built blocks and neighbourhood structures lack social, retail and cultural facilities (e.g. Csagoly 1999 and Hanley 1999) but what becomes clear in any comparison with similar peripheral local authority housing estates in the West, especially the UK, or indeed with private housing estates developed after 1989, is that they are in fact very well-provisioned. Neither under socialism nor under post-socialism have these estates witnessed the level of service flight that their Western counterparts have. Nevertheless, the ongoing restructuring of post-socialist cities and the lack of state investment in housing continues to threaten residential standards in lower-income areas. As housing markets develop and wealthier residents get access to mortgage finance, there are dangers that peripheral housing estates will become 'ghettoised' and become home to more marginalised social groups. Sýkora (1999) already points to evidence of increasing differentiation between estates as some witness new development whilst others, often those with poorer accessibility, show signs of decline. Although more and more families are building their own homes, new build for low-income households is all but non-existent (BBC World Service 1996).

Symbolic space

All of these changes in the function of urban space reshape the fabric of the city, markedly altering the appearance of post-socialist towns and cities. Moreover, as Kiss (1999) notes, 'it is not only the urban landscape . . . that has changed, but its whole atmosphere and image' (*ibid.*: 42). Perhaps the most obvious remaking is the replacement of the signs and symbols





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of socialism with the fascia and insignia of capitalism. The region is replete with examples of Stalinist architecture being adorned with advertisements (Domański 1998), of McDonalds' 'golden arches' appearing in every major town and city (Boym 1994) and of the renaming of streets and towns to recall national, pre-socialist heroes and institutions (Azaryahu 1997; Stenning, 2000). Statues of Lenin, the worker and the peasant, and local communists were felled, often dramatically and violently by the people (Verdery 1999).

As in the heady days of socialism, the towns and cities of ECE and the FSU are populated by cranes and construction sites as planners and architects re-build cities to fit new realities and new discourses. In many towns and cities, the renovation of the historic city core has been accorded high priority in recent years (e.g. Gdaniec 1997). Not only does such reconstruction allow these places to reaffirm their national (and often European) heritage (Bell 1999; Bitušíková 1998) but it also encourages the development of urban tourism and the growth of international prestige. Bitušíková (1998) describes the synthesis of all of these elements in the revitalisation of the medieval square of Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. For tourists and residents alike, the new square with its renovated buildings containing shops, banks and restaurants, its new coat of arms, fountains and benches and its restored statue of the Virgin Mary 'has become the symbol of internationalisation, westernisation and Europeanism' (*ibid.*: 619). Elsewhere in post-socialist cities, international architects, such as I.M. Pei and Richard Rogers, have been brought in to design office blocks and public spaces that better reflect the global status to which cities such as Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow and Prague aspire. These developments too are seen to find a balance between the prestige of high-rise development and the promotion of local vernaculars and national traditions (e.g. Cochrane and Jonas 1999).

4 Case studies of urban change

The two 'snapshots' that follow demonstrate how the shifting political and economic agendas of the FSU and ECE are played out in two different urban contexts. Novosibirsk and Nowa Huta are both cities of socialism. Novosibirsk, in the Siberian region of the Russian Federation, was founded in 1893 but its real expansion took place after 1917 as the Soviets embarked on the construction of a new economy for a new society. Nowa Huta, in southern Poland, was founded in 1949 as the Poles adopted a Soviet-style economy and followed the Soviet Union down the path of industrialisation and urbanisation. Both Nowa Huta and Novosibirsk are industrial cities but their geographies are quite different. Nowa Huta, with a population of approximately a quarter of a million, is adjacent to (and now part of) the city of Kraków, a dynamic urban economy, whereas Novosibirsk lies in the geographical centre of the Russian Federation, a long way from anywhere else and with a population of 1.4 million. The experiences of Nowa Huta and Novosibirsk in post-socialism, though similar in many ways, allow us to draw out different lessons and highlight different tendencies in the transformation of urban space in ECE and the FSU.





4.1 Novosibirsk: the restructuring of urban elites and local politics

The emphasis in this review of post-socialist Novosibirsk is on questioning the shifts in urban politics and the changing agendas of local economic development. Its aim is to highlight the restructuring of priorities for urban growth, occurring alongside the persistence of Soviet-era structures and institutions.

Under Soviet socialism, economic priorities and their achievement were directed by planners in Moscow, their deputies in the regions and the managers of state-owned enterprises. In Novosibirsk, just 3 per cent of economic units were in the hands of local authorities or other local actors. Ministries and departments in Moscow controlled the remaining 97 per cent. Decisions of the communist party took precedence over alternative, local proposals and nationally managed industrial enterprises wielded considerable influence in the locality (Stenning 1999). The centrality of the state and the party within Soviet politics created a situation in which other organisations, such as trade unions, effectively acted as little more than conveyors of policy from Moscow, whilst other social groups, such as women, were excluded from local decision-making almost entirely. These tendencies were exacerbated in Novosibirsk whose economic structure strengthened the hand of central planners still further – Novosibirsk was dominated not only by heavy industry, but also particularly by defence production to the extent that the city's well-developed scientific institutions were also defined by this sector. As discussed above, both the local and the international scales were weakened by the dominance of national strategies and national authorities under socialism. Although Novosibirsk was open to foreign visitors, unlike many large Russian cities, economic links beyond Russia were tightly regulated and, once again, directed by authorities in Moscow.

The political and economic changes ongoing in Russia have forced the restructuring of Novosibirsk's economy. Heavy industry, especially defence production, no longer offers the prestige or financial benefits of the Soviet era. The city faces the task of reorienting its economy to ensure the survival of its population and to build a future in the competitive world economy. Throughout the 1990s, four recognisable, though loose, strategies could be identified in Novosibirsk (Bradshaw *et al.* 1998). After years of exclusion from global economies, the regional administration and other local actors have made an explicit commitment to increase *the city's participation in international trade and activity* through the development of its airport and container ports, the expansion of exports and its promotion as a 'gateway' in and out of Siberia. This is coupled with *the promotion of hi-tech developments* on the basis of the revitalisation of the city's Soviet-era science base through cutting-edge research and innovation in computing, biotechnology and agro-sciences amongst others. Both of these developments were founded on the expansion of available funds for investment through *the strengthening of Novosibirsk's role as a major regional financial centre*. This growth was to be founded on the concentration of banks, investment companies and financial exchanges in the city, underlining its





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successful integration into world markets and global capital flows. The emphasis on financial clout was mirrored by a desire to *strengthen and promote Novosibirsk as the capital of Siberia*, as a political and administrative centre to challenge Moscow for authority in Siberia and the Russian Far East. This not only serves the expansion of service employment in the city, but also allows Novosibirsk to wield influence over its neighbours and gain stature in federal and international politics. Whilst some of these strategies build upon Novosibirsk's historical and geographical experiences, others relate much more closely to hegemonic discourses of local economic development borrowed from (or imposed by) the West with little real consideration of the Russian or Siberian context.

It would be sensible to suspect that these new agendas were being promoted by new actors, by people and institutions who had not been involved in the governance of Soviet-era urban politics. The discourse of transition in the former Soviet Union and east central Europe celebrated the pluralisation of politics and the flowering of new social movements to break down the monotony of Soviet politics and to provide a space for the representation and participation of new voices, excluded under communism. In Novosibirsk, it would be difficult to argue that this is true. The post-Soviet era has witnessed the continuing dominance of the old *nomenklatura* (largely party bosses and enterprise managers) to the exclusion of alternative voices. The authority of those entrenched actors was so deeply rooted in the structures of the Soviet political economy, at both national and local scales, that moves to pluralise politics and to involve, amongst others, women, workers and the environmental lobby in urban development debates have been largely unsuccessful. Nevertheless, those traditional actors have adopted and adapted the discourses and policies of the market and have been reinforced in these processes of adaptation by the inclusion of some new voices – specifically foreign investors and consultants and small entrepreneurs.

What results in Novosibirsk is a strange combination of the old and the new, and of the local, national and the global. New agendas are being promoted through new structures of governance. Different institutions – both governmental and non-governmental, formal and informal – are involved in the promotion of new development strategies in Novosibirsk, yet these are often peopled by the same old actors. And whilst they promote new ideas for economic development, such as special economic zones and science parks, often crudely borrowed from the West, in practical terms much political and economic attention is in fact paid to older concerns about the survival and sustenance of the city's heavy industrial sector, the payment of wages and the maintenance of the city's heating and water networks. Much has indeed changed but much has stayed the same, and Novosibirsk, ten years after the end of communism, still faces the challenge of ensuring its place in the world space economy.

4.2 Nowa Huta: the restructuring of everyday life

In contrast and complement to the discussion of Novosibirsk, the emphasis of this section is on understanding the reshaping of urban life and work as





a result of wider shifts in political and economic priorities. Its aim is to think through the impact of new agendas and new modes of governance on the practices of everyday life in post-socialist cities.

Like Novosibirsk, Nowa Huta faces the challenge of reorienting its economy, and indeed its identity, after the 'downsizing' of its industrial base. Nowa Huta is centred on the former Lenin Steelworks (now Huta Sendzimira), which at their height employed 43,000 workers and supported a full range of social, cultural and consumer services in the community. As a result of the marketisation and internationalisation of the Polish economy, embodied in Nowa Huta by privatisation, product and process modernisation, and organisational restructuring, employment in Huta Sendzimira is now being reduced to just 8000 workers. Many of its ancillary activities have been spun off, transferred to the local authorities or closed down altogether (Hardy *et al.* 1996; Hardy and Rainnie 1996). The steelworks can no longer be seen to form the sole social or economic focus of the community.

These changes have a number of impacts on the community and on the urban experience in Nowa Huta. As we have seen, one of the most rapid transformations in urban space tends to be the renaming of the townscape and the promotion of new symbols and ideologies. Nowa Huta is no exception – streets have been renamed to honour Poland's national heroes and to celebrate the achievements of the anti-regimes movements of the 1980s – for example, Six Year Plan Avenue has become John Paul II Avenue, whilst Lenin has yielded to Solidarity (Stenning 2000; see Simon 1992 for parallels in the decolonisation of Africa). The rapidity and visibility of such changes tend to conceal the depth and scale of transformation in work and daily life. In many ways, Nowa Huta seems to be surviving post-socialist transformations well. Despite the reduction of employment at Huta Sendzimira, unemployment remains at a very low level. In part this is explained by job loss through scheduled and premature retirement, but thousands of workers have found new jobs under new conditions, with new geographies, demanding new skills. Echoing the experiences of deindustrialisation in Western Europe and North America, retraining, the rise of self-employment and new SMEs have been widely promoted in Nowa Huta. Many of these new employment opportunities have arisen in neighbouring Kraków.

Kraków is a thriving economy that has been successful in developing the kinds of new economic activity – retail, business and tourist services – highlighted in the discussion above. It has attracted relatively high levels of foreign investment, including a number of flagship projects – Motorola has created a programming centre and plans a semi-conductor plant; Tesco headquarters its Polish investments here – and has very low levels of unemployment. In one sense then Nowa Huta is lucky to have such a neighbour. Yet the expansion of both economic and social opportunities in Kraków and their contraction in Nowa Huta itself imply an increase in the scales of everyday life for the residents of Nowa Huta. Under socialism, visits to Kraków were relatively rare. Most daily wants and needs were met in Nowa Huta (Siemieńska 1969). The routines of everyday life were centred on the workplace and the community facilities sponsored by the steelworks. As Ciechocińska writes, 'the workplace was turned into





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the main axis of organization of social life' (Ciechocińska 1993: 32). Life in Nowa Huta may have been stifling and limiting, but it may also have been secure, known and accessible. All this has changed, as Kraków has become the focus for work, for leisure and for consumption.

The dismantling of the socialist project, Poland's insertion into global markets and the consequent restructuring of Huta Sendzimir heralds wider changes than simply finding a new job, a new place to shop or a new place to hang out. The transformation of work, of the locality's central workplace and the changing relationship between Huta Sendzimir and Nowa Huta all lead to a radical reshaping of people's lives and a major rethinking of Nowa Huta's place in the world. Not only did Huta Lenina provide many of the facilities used by workers and residents on an everyday basis, but 'the company became an important element of [the resident's] sense of place' (Domanski 1992: 357) and was also the foundation of the town's wider identity ('the one which made the town known in the country' [*ibid.*]). The political and economic changes that make up post-socialist transformation alter the urban experience in multiple ways – the post-socialist city is a very different place to live and work from the socialist city.

5 Conclusions

Cities, as places where people live, work and govern, have always been at the centre of social, economic and political transformations. The nature both of historical developments (before and during socialism) and of contemporary restructurings means that this is certainly true of the cities of the former Soviet Union and east central Europe. As we have seen, it is in the region's major cities that post-socialist transformations have initially been shaped, contested and experienced. It is often at the urban scale that the large-scale discourses of post-socialism meet the everyday strategies of change, survival and success, practised by individuals and institutions, where the abstract processes of change are made real and lived.

The diversity of urban environments across the region remind us that the processes of post-socialist transformation are constructed through existing histories and geographies, such that the legacies of socialism, the promises of capitalism and the challenges and opportunities of location are played out in very different ways. In contrast to the caricature of socialist cities as uniform and stagnant – socially and physically – the post-socialist urban experience is characterised by difference. The landscapes of post-socialist cities are increasingly heterogeneous and dynamic, whilst the urban experiences of the region are more and more varied.

In some parts of the region, it is all too easy to form an impression of prosperity and almost frivolity. In the lives of many urban dwellers, the processes of post-socialist transformation have indeed led to vast new opportunities for material and social promotion. Yet alongside these signs and sites of success, post-socialist cities are also now home to phenomena which barely existed under socialism – unemployment, homelessness, begging and other manifestations of social, economic and political





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exclusion. This diversity of experience and the echoes and reflections in ECE and the FSU of Western themes and concerns make the post-socialist city an important and fascinating place to study the process of systemic transformations.

Notes

1. The 'univermag' or universal shop was a common feature of many socialist countries. It formed part of the state monopoly supply system and represented one of the key sites for the provision of consumer goods.
2. It is interesting to note, however, quite how few of these are founded on diasporic communities and 'ethnic' chefs.

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