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Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe

John Kirk, Sylvie Contrepois and Steve Jefferys

What have been the effects of de-industrialisation across key European regions over the past forty years? The decline of industrial economies came to define many parts of Europe during this time, radically altering ways of working and notions of livelihood formed over time. Once distinctive regions and localities shaped by economic development evolved as sub-systems of much wider national formations and traditions, which were commonly shaped through conceptions of nation and state, culture and economy. From the early nineteenth century, the emergence of the Industrial Revolution began the uneven transformation of European nations. Already by the 1950s in most parts of Europe and in other industrialised nations, specific regions had developed distinct identities primarily through the increasing importance and the dominance of industrial work: this could be found, for instance, in coal mines, in factories, in shipyards. Yet as radical economic restructuring in many of these areas began after the 1970s, there was a fragmentation of these established structures, formations and traditions. New products and production methods and technologies and the growth of the service sector rapidly altered the condition of labour, the nature of communities and the lives and experiences of people. One rapid and major effect of this was the rise of unstable and precarious social conditions, leading to the development of flexible forms of work, irregular working hours and a growing discontinuity and transformation in working lives (see Beck, 1992; Sennett, 1998; Thornley et al., 2010).

This book is situated within the interconnecting themes referred to above, pursuing the impacts of this profound economic restructuring within the expanding orbit of the European Union (EU). The term de-industrialisation – and the associated shifts in culture and identities that occur through such a process – signified the decline of industrial
approaching regional and identity change in europe

2  Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe

economies, communities and livelihoods, a process re-forming major regions and communities across Europe. To investigate and explore these shifts the book focuses on specific regions in six countries. The observations are based on research carried out in former industrial areas across the EU (including the EU candidate state of Turkey). The objective is to map their histories from the early or mid-twentieth century to the present and to consider the places of work and living in what are now ‘new worlds’.

The Introduction maps out three key areas that dominate the book. First, we underline some of the effects of economic transformation, or what others might call ‘the rise of globalisation’; this provides a necessary context for the changes outlined in the chapters that follow. Taking the discussion on, we explore altering modes of work and the impact of these transitions on cultures and regional forms: that is on the changes in everyday life in long-established cultural formations and traditions. Finally, here, we draw attention to the effects of regeneration in these former industrial areas, considering how the emergence of ‘new places and new spaces’ finds expression through new modes of work and work places and in the processes increasingly employed in the contexts of regeneration and heritage formations. We close the Introduction by outlining some of the key conceptual terms that inform the book’s arguments throughout.

∗∗∗∗∗

1.1 Regional economies: transforming industrial areas in Europe

Our choice of regions provides the opportunity to cover the importance of economic and cultural transformations in diverse parts of Europe. In the book, we present two regions that remain coal-producing (Upper Silesia in Poland and Zonguldak in Turkey), although both are in decline; the other region is a former coal-producing region (South Yorkshire, in the UK). Two regions are declining manufacturing areas (Northern Bavaria, Germany; and Levante in Spain), while one is a surviving manufacturing region (Corbeil-Essonnes/Évry, France). As part of their earlier histories as ‘successful’ industrial regions, four of the six first attracted and now retain significant ethnic or national minority populations, with important consequences for their social and cultural landscapes and formations. In each region there are similar tensions between contrasting spaces: between two different towns (Levante, Corbeil-Essonnes/Évry), between urban and rural (Upper Silesia and
Zonguldak) and between areas regenerated in variable ways (Northern Bavaria, South Yorkshire).

What is common among these regions and towns is the intensity of socio-economic change involved in the shift from being industrial heartlands to becoming post- or perhaps neo-industrial. In the late twentieth century, the globalisation of the world’s economy through rapid technological transformation and market liberalisation constituted powerful forces reshaping social and political life, thereby re-figuring structures and experiences in decisive ways. The British geographer David Harvey highlighted countries like Britain and the United States as central exponents of the emergent neo-liberal agenda after 1979. New economic structures in particular were a process encouraged by the ideological Right whose political rhetoric sought to promote new conceptions of identity bound around ideas of ‘individualism, freedom, liberty as opposed to trade union power and stifling bureaucratic ineptitude on the part of the state’. The new economy heralded ‘globalisation’; this led to, or invoked, new global identities and cultures. Political advocates of these fundamental shifts shaped a new political agenda so that ‘all forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in favour of individualism, private property, personal responsibility and family values’ (2006, pp. 16–17).

Within the European Union, the speed and pace of the processes of transition was deeply significant at regional level, even though it was not always, or straightforwardly, uniform in its national effects, as Table 1.1 indicates.

These figures expose the depth of change in the context of manufacturing employment – the world of work constitutive of our regions. Carpenter and Jefferys (2001) argued that the effects of this fell on the European working class in particular, with structural shifts from once-established industrial occupations towards newly emergent service sector work. They (2001, pp. 148–9) noted three key effects: through economic transformations the ‘changing composition of collective work is now being carried out by women’; that there were effects on working-class traditions where ‘work has now become more managerial’ through ‘the dominance of white-collar employment’; and, finally that ‘the trend towards the increasing job insecurity and “atypical” work schedules’ impacted on work experience and community and family ties. Economic structures and planning altered with the ‘new times’. As we will see, in region after region throughout Europe, coal mining, textiles, steel and shipbuilding, as well as much of the engineering industry, contracted dramatically.
Table 1.1 Manufacturing employment as a percentage of all civilian employment, 1970–2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reliable data are available only from 1990 in Turkey and 1995 in Poland.
Source: EUKLEMS Database, March 2008 edition

Table 1.1 flags up the extent of de-industrialisation, and the UK stands out in terms of the dimension of this transition. A radical re-orientation of the UK economy from manufacturing and extractive industries to an emerging service sector led to the loss of millions of manufacturing jobs – particularly in the North of England, and in Wales and Scotland – work embedded in once staple industries such as textiles, coal and steel (see Hudson, 1986; Beynon et al., 1992). Economic liberalisation and free markets combined with an anti-trade union stance, beginning in the early 1980s, and was clearly hegemonic from the defeat of the 1984–5 miners’ strike. The South Yorkshire area we focus on later experienced both that defeat and some of the most dramatic changes in industrial fortune in the UK.

In Turkey a dramatic turn in the national economic policy occurred in 1980 following the introduction of International Monetary Fund (IMF)-proposed measures and the subsequent coup d’état. Turgut Özal, the economic minister of the transition government, who would later serve as the Prime Minister of the first and the second civilian governments, implemented a laissez-faire policy throughout the 1980s. Between 1980 and 1995, the number of coal workers halved in the Zonguldak area, a massive blow to the local economy and to the complex identity formation processes in the region. The rundown of coal mining also impacted upon other European nations, transforming regional identities for good. The political and economic changes were initiated in Poland with a compromise between the government and the Solidarity opposition
made during the 'Round Table' talks in 1989. A new government proceeded to implement economic reforms adopted in October 1989, in keeping with the neo-liberal economic model that dominated Central and Eastern Europe in this transitional period. As we will see later, the intensified processes of de-industrialisation after 1990 had profound implications for the Upper Silesian region.

The Levante region of Eastern Spain is a highly differentiated manufacturing centre, but as with many other industrial districts from the turn of the 1980s, economic and cultural transformations reshaped distinct regional localities. Global competition meant restructuring of economic forms; by 2005 the process was accentuated when China, India and Pakistan became primary competitors with Europe, the Levante included. International competition cut profoundly into regional stability. The more corporatist French and German economies to some degree resisted the extremes of the neo-liberal ‘rush’ that marked the UK and Poland. Thus temperising the declining Corbeil-Essonnes manufacturing centre to the South-East of Paris was the new industrial and service-based town of Evry; and in the midst of the declining Ruhr industrial heartland there are still new technology workplaces emerging.

Yet economic change and the growth in manual worker unemployment has led to the dilution of the manual working class and the near disappearance of the utopian beliefs that once guided collective action through most of the twentieth century in such industrial areas (see Bourdieu, 1991). Symbolising the development was the election in 1995 of one of France’s biggest industrialists, Serge Dassault, to replace a Communist as mayor of Corbeil-Essonnes. Meanwhile, the structural changes reshaping the German economy following the Second World War can be seen in the figures of occupational change: in 1975, 42.4 per cent of the workforce in regions like Northern Bavaria was employed in industry and crafts; by 2006 this figure was down to 21.6 per cent. Job growth in new services could not fully compensate for the number of lost industrial jobs, while industrial companies reorganised their internal employment structure to include more knowledge workers.

This restructuring of former industrial areas represents processes of transition, leading to economies and cultures ‘in transition’. How people live, and where people live, disintegrated in many areas of Europe, and as old means of work fell to global change and political intent, at the same time cultures and communities were reshaped.

PROOF
1.2 Identities: beyond occupational communities and regional cultures?

The concept of identity informs the following chapters. But we recognise that identity formation remains complex, the result of a range of factors interacting over time and through space (Harvey, 1989; Skeggs, 2004; Kirk, 2007). Though often thought of in individualistic terms, we argue that identities become lived and experienced collectively – people realise themselves in wider social, economic and political contexts that powerfully shape notions of self, and in turn modes of identification and belonging. Culture, too, is an important concept in this context. The cultural co-ordinates through which identities are derived or expressed turn upon much wider understanding of culture than that associated merely with the arts, and should be viewed instead as the components that make up over time a ‘shared web of significance’ for people (Geertz, 1973), so that culture is regarded in this light as ‘a constitutive social process, creating specific and different ways of life’ (Williams, 1977). Consequently, how these ‘specific and different ways of life’ come into being and are (or are not) sustained becomes a question of central importance, particularly at a time of significant historical change.

Historians have long revealed the distinctive character of industrial regions and communities. For Lancaster (2007, p. 24), a region consists of ‘people and space that is frequently in flux in a series of internal relationships with individual groups and processes and externally interacts with metropolitan, national and transnational forces’. While regions are the product of often distinct economic forces, they are also constructs ‘that are created both by people who live in them as well as those who observe them externally and that it is the act of reflection on this process that constitutes the formation of the region’ (ibid., pp. 24–5). Lancaster wants to avoid any static or fixed notion of place – he sees a dialectic at work instead, with the interaction of economic, or material, forces enmeshed with the cultural forms and traditions with which they operate in complex ways. This is an ongoing process as localities emerge through types of work and social interaction: from this, inevitably, cultural forms and identity practice evolve both independently and in relation to wider formations, most obviously in relation to a hegemonic national culture, as we have already outlined.

Regions are never isolated, though they might be, or might become, distinct.

Work itself marks a region’s potential distinctiveness. The coalfield areas, for instance – our examples are in regions of Turkey, Poland and the UK – have revealed clearly defined characteristics, the product of
long historical development constituting ways of life (Dennis et al., 1956). The physical growth of the town/village was shaped decisively by the development of the colliery; according to one commentator speaking of English coalfields, ‘the pit is the village, paying its wages, supporting its shops, keeping the community together’ (Marshall, in Richards, 1996, p. 21). Mining coal, then, was bound up with every aspect of life, representing one of the few industries in which the provision of leisure activities, for instance, was required by law (Dennis et al., 1956, p. 122). Identity becomes bound up in this historical development, with work, producing culturally distinct traditions that shape everyday life: the local miners’ welfare association, the working men’s clubs and a range of sporting associations and activities deriving their *raison d’être* from the ‘organic’ connections to the pit. The presence of the miners’ union was both a powerful cultural and political force, here. We discuss this in later chapters, and in greater detail. These features are replicated in the Polish mining region of Upper Silesia, where the mine still dominates local life with its trade union a central institution, and from which emerge forms of identity practice coded through cultural forms: the wearing of miners’ hat plumes, distinctive miners’ houses called familoki, the blood sausages (*krupnioki*) favoured by locals, distinctive folk clothes and of course a local jargon or dialect. One characteristic feature of the mining culture in the cases of both Poland and the UK was the presence of a colliery brass band, representing a cultural expression articulating both a local identity (the village/pit) and a wider occupational affiliation bound up with complex expressions of class and culture that stretched beyond the village identity itself.

In some crucial respects, as we see in greater detail later, Turkish mining contradicts the picture painted just now. Historically, Turkish workers in Zonguldak were divided into two formations: the ‘underground workers’, mainly drawn from the rural areas, less skilled, employed on a rotational basis (working for a while, then taking some time off to work in the fields, and then back underground); and the ‘surface workers’, settled in the town, skilled and permanently employed. This differentiation of the workforce problematises identity formation and complicates the development of internal politics, labour activism and cultural traditions. This could have laid the ground for the potential rifts between these two factions of coal workers. This reminds us to be wary of any assumed homogeneity of such formations, historically and in the present.

While historically, manual manufacturing occupations sustained relatively hegemonic industrial cultures in the Corbeil-Essonnes and Northern Bavaria examples discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the industrial cultures constituting a region can also reveal a distinct entrepreneurial
character, a seeming contradiction when speaking about class identities in ‘collectivist’ modes or contexts. Textile and shoe making in Spain is a case in point, and this is explored in detail in a later chapter. Unlike other industries whose owners may not belong to the community, in this case companies are the product of the initiative of local middle classes, and working classes, too, in some cases – evident in the case of other Spanish regions and industrial sectors: machine tools in the Basque Country, metalworking in other regions. As a consequence, it is not new for individualism to be in tension with communitarian structures of feeling. There is an established familial culture within this tradition. Husband, wife and even children were often part of a family business up to the 1970s and beyond. Identification with the work itself took precedence over a collective industrial identity. Given the individualistic character of this industrial culture, it is possible to identify pride in the experience and the knowledge of making shoes or sewing clothes, as well as in the excellence of the outcome, and this can be understood, as our Spanish contributors suggest, as *a source of the self* (Taylor, 1989).

In the regional situations described so far work expresses in part a common and complex identity: *habitus*, or structures of feeling inform cultural practice and social identities, and this provides the basis for forms of collective identification. Work identity also enunciates cultural meanings that find expression through and in both space and place. But added to this, industrial regions came to be viewed not only (or stereotypically) as spaces of working-class life or labour, but also, to a large degree, as *masculinised* spaces of both production and consumption – conditions marginalising female participation. Nevertheless, other industrial activities and localities (notably textiles, as with the Spanish example) resisted a similar connotation in quite the same sense, thus seen, indeed, as more *feminised*, and this will be argued in Chapter 4. How far the shift from industrial forms, traditions and cultures to service sector-based formations modifies the complex interrelationships described here proves to be a key question for us throughout. Cultural identity is bound to not only class and labour, but to gender as an important analytical category. For making sense of new relations and the formation of identities, gender is central to our investigation of class cultures and occupational forms.²

But economic restructuring, and processes of deindustrialisation set in train in Western Europe from the end of the 1970s (and a decade later in countries to the East, in the context of post-communism), powerfully undermine traditional collective identities.³ The material world
and cultural life of working-class communities across Europe have come to be regarded, it seems, as extinct or as increasingly obsolete and, in recent years, the object only of heritage spectacles and exercises in nostalgia. This suggests new emerging forms of identity and belonging, not based around work and community or class and culture in any significant sense at all. Identity becomes redefined, a response to economic changes, but also to understandings of identity in contemporary times. Studies have long since exposed the divisions within former working-class communities in the UK, particularly in terms of gender (Campbell, 1984; Steedman, 1986). Recent commentators now see those identities as ‘constructed within the play of power and exclusion ... the result of the over-determined process of closure’ (Hall, 1996; also Said, 1992). Moreover, the dimension of inward and outward migration has historically typified many of the working-class communities where industry flourished, and this continues to shape and frame European experience. We therefore need to argue for an understanding of how communities have traditionally formed and maintained ‘complex solidarities’ (see Kirk, 2007). We need to investigate how these solidarities have been nurtured and how they have evolved and indeed survived over time, and how and why community and workplace relations often play a key role in this process.

1.3 Regeneration and the region: reconstituting space and place

Regional regeneration has central objectives that are not only to find ways to enable new economic growth, but also to undertake activities intended to reshape the physical environment itself, transforming the understanding and experience of ‘place and space’. This involves altering the material and the cultural landscape in which people have interacted historically, what was once the very fabric, the constitutive setting, of ‘home’. Yet in this ‘creative destruction’ the processes of restructuring and regeneration interact and operate to remodel, and even erase, complex solidarities and identities forged over time.

A further concern, then, in this book is to underline the effects of such transitions, acknowledging that cultures and economies ‘entail geographical as well as historical relationships’ (Wills, 1998). In turn this underscores the way restructuring of place is part of ‘a disorientating and disrupting impact upon political-economic practices...as well as upon cultural and social life’ (Harvey, 2006). Williams’ term ‘rooted settlements’ (1980) reveals how a bounded ‘presence’, the
product of historical forces and social interaction, can come to be disrupted by an ‘otherness’ from outside finding articulation in various formations.

Recent regeneration processes are not merely economic reconstruction, however; in large part, they have involved ‘re-imagining’ community and place, ‘re-inventing’ or ‘reshaping’ traditions and formations, and such objectives are enunciated in much regeneration literature itself. So both the material and discursive effects of regeneration interact in the formation of new places and cultural change. This is closely linked to the concept of ‘representation’ – articulated in both political and aesthetic modes. Therefore, representations fix ideas of region in the popular consciousness; specific cultural practices have historically worked to establish a sense of place and identity, often in contradictory ways.

Conceptions of identity and belonging are embedded in both the real and the mythical, as already suggested. Thus, communities disclose ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1961, 1977) that are the product of historical experience and which find articulation in cultural forms, traditions and expression, as well as factories and coal mines. The objective of regeneration is to shape the ‘new’ through the forms of the ‘old’. Thus the concept of tradition is imperative in a range of expressions, both individual and public. Simultaneously, heritage has become bound up with regeneration, both confirming the objectives of regeneration in ultimately acknowledging the ‘new’, while challenging at the same time regeneration’s amnesia in relation to the past. What counts as the past, and what constitutes the present, remain essential in forming and comprehending ‘new’ identity forms alongside the still active, though residual, collective histories.

1.4 Outlining orientations/themes/histories

Each chapter, in valuable ways, seeks to define perspectives on economic and occupational transition and cultural change in distinct European regions. We explore, then, the effects and meanings of the demise of ‘old’ formations and the emergence of ‘new’ ones within key regions in the EU. A theoretical and historical frame shapes each argument, offering varied approaches, but with common intentions and aims. Key themes dominate: conceptions of place and space in historical contexts; the place of identity, community and action; the significance of gender in evolving cultural times; and, finally, the relevance of representation of the past for the present.
Throughout the book, each chapter is vitally concerned with work, but also crucially occupied, as we have insisted already, with the significance of culture as constitutive of and constituting the material world. In general we define culture more broadly than mere artefacts (paintings or books), regarding instead the place of culture and its products as part of a ‘whole way of life’, embedded in experiences and practices, formalised in institutions and in public spaces, instantiated in experiential dispositions and actions and evidenced through structures of feeling and practical consciousness. Raymond Williams and the work of Pierre Bourdieu underpin many arguments here, with Bourdieu echoing Williams’ concept of structures of feeling through his own notion of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991). The two concepts of habitus and structures of feeling importantly signify culture and identity formation.

Through the notion of habitus we see the importance of structures in determining identity through time and in space. The internalised structure of the habitus acts as a classifying mechanism for making sense of the world – embedded dispositions generate in the subject an almost spontaneous response to the world they inhabit, confirming a kind of ‘feel for the game’, or a ‘design for life’ (both of the chapters covering Germany and Spain, for instance, draw on Bourdieu here). In Williams’ understanding of structures of feeling and identity formation we get a more immediate sense of the experiential, interacting nevertheless with external forces and historical events interacting over time (see the chapter covering South Yorkshire).

Bourdieu regarded the internalised structure of the habitus as a classifying mechanism for the actor to make sense of the world. What he calls dispositions further constitute the habitus – shaped by institutions of the family or education systems, for instance – reproducing the social structures that shaped them in the first place reflecting the ‘habitat in which they were formed’ (Sayer, 2005, p. 24). Williams argues for what might be regarded as a more fluid understanding of identity formation and culture, suggesting that what he calls structures of feeling might constitute the site of a ‘practical experience’, or ‘practical consciousness’ (Williams, 1977, p. 130). Practical consciousness differs for Williams from ‘official consciousness’ – Bourdieu’s notion of doxa – in that it is ‘being lived ... not only what is thought is being lived’ (Williams, 1977, p. 131). Lived experience is key for Williams; so he defines practical consciousness as ‘a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become a fully articulate and defined exchange’ (Williams, 1977, p. 131). Agency appears to loom more prominently in Williams’ understanding of identity and
its expression through cultural and social forms. These two analytical frames explain lived regional experience and cultures as exchange, highlighting the significance of action in historical transformations.

Williams underlines the importance of formations, traditions and institutions in shaping identity and constituting cultures. He also talks of ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ structures of feeling, which operate in the context of more socially and culturally dominant forms. In the following chapters, and touched upon in the Introduction here, the place of tradition and identity formation in the context of industrial communities comprise major components of the regional cultures discussed. While some of these traditions might now be defined in Williams’ terms as ‘residual’, closer inspection reveals a more nuanced picture. As we will see later, identity formations in Poland take an interesting shift in terms of both gender and class, with the emergence in more recent years of the first female trade union in the Polish mining sector. Williams would view this as evidence of an emergent structure of feeling, though one rooted in political and cultural frames bound up with work, or class or gender identity, as well as regional and occupational formations. A similar development occurred in the UK during the 1984–5 Miners’ Strike. Discussing former mining communities in the UK, Jane Parry underlined how ‘work geared towards supporting communities was a central, albeit a taken for granted feature of coalmining cultures, and adhered to highly gendered formations’ (2005, p. 149). In the South Yorkshire area, and elsewhere, the political and economic conflict of 1984–5 led to a greater role for women, politicising many, and this re-emerged too in the protests against widespread pit closures in 1992. The central question to emerge here, examined in a number of chapters, is how politicised acts are sustained and what their impacts are on an established way of living in the reshaping of communities and identities, with the notion of intersectionality drawing attention to the place of class, work and gender.

1.4.1 Emergent/residual identities in place

Reshaping landscapes and communities opens up the possibility of new identities and regional forms in the midst of older formations and working spaces. Immigration can be a central factor here, both internal and external in form, an important development across the EU in recent times. Yet, as Nayak (2006) identified, practices of social interaction flag up the ‘enduring significance of place, locality and regional identities’ where ‘the cultures of the old industrial city and the identities
therein refuse to be written out of existence’, but are instead refigured ‘as palimpsest – a cultural text upon which the previous inscriptions of past cultures continue to be etched into the present, to be embodied by a new generation’ (2006, p. 828). Manufacturing towns like Alcoia, Corbeil-Essonnes or Nuremberg or mining regions like Upper Silesia, Zonguldak or South Yorkshire have been strongly identified through their occupational identities, yet economic reconstruction is now intensifying the importance of the geographies of place. This is an important dimension to the book as it turns upon ideas of community, belonging and what are, ultimately, identities and cultures. The place-bounded dimensions of identity practice, as it is embedded in historical time, become ‘an important source of meanings for individuals [and groups] which they can draw upon to tell stories and thereby come to understand themselves and their positioning within the wider society’ (see Reay, 2001).

Historians of de-industrialisation noted the way ‘industrial smokestacks’ – and the myriad other material structures linked to and symbolically marking the production of coal, or steel, or textiles – loomed large in working-class districts, shaping landscapes and defining a sense of place and constituting culture (see for instance Linkon and Russo, 2002; High and Lewis, 2007). Landscapes form places of belonging, the product of social relations weaved together over time, so that ‘when people invoke “place” and its attendant meanings, they are imagining geographies and creating identities’ (High and Lewis, 2007, p. 32). How new communities and geographies are imagined and lived in radically altered material circumstances also forms our investigation of labour and identity formation.

1.4.2 Narrating work and regions

What we have just referred to in terms of landscapes can also be articulated as the relevance of place-consciousness. This reflects the notion of ‘home’. Bound to this, however, are discursive practices that operate at a different cultural and social level to define these very regions – not only for those dwelling within, but for those with no real connections with the region at all. In this sense we might see places become inseparable from their representations, thus drawing attention to the role of narratives in constituting cultural identity. Thus experience of place is articulated through cultural forms as well as more unmediated experiences, expressed through, for instance, the novel and film, autobiography and social documentary, photography and art.
Representation of place has found expression through regeneration practices, along with other modes of heritage representation, which now inscribe these former industrial landscapes in culture. We have already discussed this above. We suggested that such forms bear down on notions of old/new identities. Heritage practice in former industrial areas offers ‘versions of the past’ that imply new identities in contexts often marked by the ‘old’. These narratives constitute what Williams would call a ‘selective tradition’ (see Williams, 1977; also Kirk, 2007) – where the past is constituted for the purposes, primarily, of the present. This sees the establishing of traditions as an institutional and hegemonic process, the past and its artefacts made and remade in and for the present, as we have already suggested. There is a dialectic created here between ‘old’ understandings and experiences of place, and the ‘new’ ones constituted through material change. These discursive forms will be a further area of investigation in a number of the book’s chapters.

1.5 Chapter outlines

Chapter Two, ‘Social and spatial change in the Nuremberg metalworking region’ focuses on the Northern Bavarian engineering heartland of Germany, which has undergone major recent restructuring. The industry consolidated a regional and occupational identity from the late nineteenth century, but with quite different skill and gender structures from, for instance, the coal-mining regions we discuss later. The metalworking or engineering industry is differentiated internally, with a whole range of different products and different ways to organise the labour process, from craft shops and assembly lines to computer-integrated metal-shaping stations and offices. But this is tied together by employing similar types of labour. The occupational forms seen as emanating from mass production, and the favourable trade union-organising conditions of huge factories, were instrumental in developing strong union and social-democrat traditions, involving both institutional frameworks for action and strong neighbourhood bases. Additionally, there have been large immigration waves, attracting people from the Bavarian countryside up to 1950, people from Italy and Greece in the 1960s and from Turkey in the 1970s, followed by the so-called ‘Russian’ Germans in the 1980s and 1990s. Call centres and shopping malls now partially fill the urban spaces left by the declining factories, and new high-technology engineering is found at greenfield sites in the south of Bavaria. Yet ‘traditional’ blue-collar metalworking still employs thousands of people in the area, repeatedly threatened by
factory closedown conflicts such as at AEG in 2006. This chapter traces these developments through a historical analysis of the shifting national and regional contexts in Germany since 1945. It maps the changing social and spatial landscapes of Nuremberg’s industrial region, raising questions about the ‘problem’ of working-class identity in the German context, while mapping out the implications of change for established identities and community cultures with a distinct regional base.

‘Contrasting trajectories: cultural identity in “old” and “new” towns’ sees our next chapter explore a French case, the engineering and paper-manufacturing area to the South-East of Paris in the Essonnes River basin where that river flows into the Seine. This area is now organised around two adjoining towns of around 50,000 inhabitants each, about 5 km apart. The first town, Corbeil-Essonnes, was an important industrial centre from the nineteenth century up to the 1980s, based on textiles, paper and printing. These industries began to decline in the middle of the twentieth century (earlier for textiles), and were replaced by big engineering companies: Snecma (aircraft engines) and IBM. Corbeil-Essonnes had a communist town council majority between 1959 and 1995, and a powerful trade union movement throughout the twentieth century. Yet from 1995, the Right has headed the town council. Industrial transformation and political and social change have gone hand in hand (Contrepois, 2003). In the middle of the 1960s, the administrative and political leadership of the département was handed over by the French government to nearby Evry, the second town in the area. It had only 7000 inhabitants in 1969 and very few industries apart from the Decauville enterprise (trains and locomotives). Working-class culture was weak in Evry and the conservative national government of the day chose it as the site for one of five experimental ‘new towns’. From this time, therefore, the industrial decline of Corbeil shaped the context for the development of Evry.

Several prominent companies have relocated to Evry since the 1970s: Arianespace, the Genopôle, and also the headquarters of big groups like Carrefour, Accor, Courte Paille and Snecma. Currently, Evry is dominated politically by the Socialist Party, and an important range of local ‘solidarity associations’ have a key cultural influence. Industrial decline in Corbeil-Essonnes is relatively recent, echoing in some respects that of South Yorkshire, Upper Silesia and Northern Bavaria; but there is somewhat greater continuity (as with the German case), since engineering (metalworking), although not as closely tied to a fixed locality as mining, is not as volatile as the textile industries – particularly when leading firms have made huge fixed investments in plant and equipment. The
two towns’ different trajectories in terms of the cycles of development and social history and their geographical proximity offers an illuminating comparison of different facets of French reality. Their history is thus strongly interwoven, as the transformation of one of them impacted the other and vice versa.

The fourth chapter, ‘The future will no longer be the same: changing worker identities in the Spanish Levante’, investigates identity continuities and transitions in an area that produced 9.8 per cent of the Spanish GDP in 2005. In this highly differentiated Levante industrial region, the textile and tailoring industry embraces approximately 2000 firms and 40,000 employees, and the shoe industry some 2000 firms and 30,000 employees (Generalitat Valenciana, 2006). Geographically distinct, textile manufacture is located in the area of Alcoiá-Comtat (Alicante) and Vall d’Albaida (Valencia), whilst the shoe sector is located in the area of Vinalopó (Alicante). The chapter shows how several generations of these communities have been socialised and qualified into the productive skills characteristic of the different sectors. This kind of labour socialisation provided the basis for social integration and also stimulated strong identity formations. Both industries were composed of mainly small and medium firms in every productive stage, and characterised by important levels of women working from home and intensive use of the workforce. They endured profound restructuring at the end of the 1970s, which provoked the social and political mobilisation of the strong and traditional regional labour movements. However, these actions could not put an end to the closure of many firms and a rapid increase in unemployment.

From the 1970s both industries responded to global competition with a continuous process of restructuring. The chapter examines the consequences of these ‘transitions’ for the dominant artisan-like and trade-based identities, identifying a key social development: wariness of a future that will ‘no longer be the same’ (Obiol, 2007). It concludes by considering the prospect and the implications of the eclipse of the collective identity traditionally built around the textile-cloth sector in the last century and a half (Carpi et al., 1997), and how such identities survive in new material conditions.

‘Post-communist transitions: mapping the landscapes of Upper Silesia’ is the title of Chapter 5. This chapter explores the impact of political transformation for the heavy industrial regions of Upper Silesia in Poland. There are several similarities with coal-mining areas like South Yorkshire. Upper Silesia’s industrial past took shape in the nineteenth century and came to be dominated by the coal-mining and steel
industries. After the Second World War this traditional industrial area was subjected to a further process of extensive development imposed by the Communist regime and based mainly on heavy industry. The region thus became the heartland of the country’s raw material and energy supplies and, for many years, this preserved a regional labour market dominated by relatively low-qualified manual work. Work in industrial plants and factories and in the mines continued to rise: up from 645,000 people registered working in industry in 1950, it rose a decade later to three-quarters of a million and from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s it remained close to 900,000. In this region the decline of these heavy industries started only after the 1989 fall of Communism and Poland’s achievement of independence from Soviet influence.

Transition to a capitalist economic system demanded rationalisation and privatisation. This led to a major contraction of the mining industry: between 1998 and 2002 up to 100,000 employees left Polish mining. In common with areas in the UK like South Yorkshire, the concentration of mining was geographically distinct and specific, and thus the impact is felt powerfully in terms of the collective identities structured upon occupation and region. Strong trade unions have played an important role in the life of this region, and still take a key role within the mining communities in post-1989 Poland. In 2004 the first women Polish coal miners’ trade union was founded. The Silesian Voivodship (region) concentrated on here has a long history of industrial work and associated cultural traditions, centred around Dąbrowa Górnicza (with its declining steel industry), Sosnowiec (coal and some steel), Ruda Śląska (coal) and Bielsko-Biała (textiles). This chapter, therefore, explores the significance of both political transition and economic restructuring for the concepts of identity and place. It examines the role, too, of cultural traditions and affiliations in a period of radical change.

The Turkish Black Sea Zonguldak Province, with a total population of just over half a million, is the focus of Chapter 6, ‘Surviving closure: the fate of Zonguldak mining communities’. The area is divided into six administrative areas, with Zonguldak being the historic centre. Already employing 10,000 temporary and permanent workers in the Ottoman period, the coalfield was the biggest employer in the region (Quataert, 2006). Coal mining remained central to the economy during the Republican period that began in 1923, and at its peak point it employed more than 70,000. The industry started to experience a decline from the mid-1970s as it largely failed to compete in international markets. Today, unlike the situation in South Yorkshire, but like that in
Silesia, the coal industry survives, but with a labour force of just 12,000 (Ersoy et al., 2000). As a mono-industrial region, the decline of coal mining has dramatically affected the overall economy in the area and one of the indicators of this decline is that almost all local towns, including the city of Zonguldak, have lost population over the last two decades. In the process of liberalisation in the post-1980s period, the strikes organised by trade unions found strong support in the local communities. Likewise, the attitudes of the political parties and governments towards the mining sector have always been highly influential in voting behaviours.

Coal remains the main employer in the region and coal-mining identities and experiences continue to have a deep-seated impact in the cultural and social life of the region (Kahveci, 1996). Following decline, however, local economic and political elites sought alternatives to mining, through regeneration: several were tried, ranging from textile to tourism (which is growing rapidly in Turkey), but with only limited success to date. This chapter investigates the processes and implications of de-industrialisation. It considers what happens to local identities, strongly (manual) working class in character, when the main pillar of the identity formation process, namely the coal-mining industry, undergoes an irreversible decline, but is not clearly replaced. In this context, a special emphasis falls on the role of the ‘old cultures’ and the practices of emerging ones.

The seventh chapter, ‘Colliery closures, identity formation and cultural change in South Yorkshire’, maps transitions in the former South Yorkshire coalfield. With Barnsley as its main town, this region covers some 127 square miles and has a population of 230,000. It has mined coal for nearly 200 years. In the early 1980s it contained 16 pits, employing 15,000 people. South Yorkshire was never fully mono-industrial, however, with a manufacturing and industrial sector based around linen and glass making. But by 1994 virtually all of South Yorkshire’s coalfields had been closed. Much new work takes the form of call centres or other service-related activities, and by 2000 coal mining had all but disappeared. The same can be said for the nearby steel-making industry concentrated around Sheffield. A highly distinctive history and industrial culture characterised the area, and South Yorkshire was at the heart of the year-long miners’ strike to save jobs and communities in 1984–5, as well as the protests against the final wave of pit closures in 1992. In this region the question of class cultures and community identity has long loomed large (Orwell, 1937; Hoggart, 1957; Charlesworth, 2000; Kirk, 2006).
This chapter tracks some of the implications of these changes – in terms of working lives, identity formation and cultural practice. The discussion takes two main approaches: first it traces the development of mining in the area, placing these developments within a wider context of national economic policy in the UK since the end of the Second World War. The chapter then moves on to consider the cultural and social coordinates characterising mining life and culture. To do this it examines the significance of embedded cultural forms and traditions shaped through generational interactions and community settings, and considers how coalmining communities have come to be figured historically in a wider discourse around identity, work and place. The chapter then turns to the implications of de-industrialisation for communities, and the processes of regeneration – of both economy and ideas and experience of place – currently under way in these regions. There are two key objectives: first to outline the extent of socio-economic change in these former industrial areas; secondly, to consider the impact and ramifications of economic restructuring on specific regions in relation to notions of identity as a product of forms and practices established over time. Finally, in the light of regeneration discourses emphasising the ‘renewal’ – indeed, ‘reinvention’ – of the area, a further, and more difficult consideration will be examined – how, in the discourses of regeneration, can South Yorkshire’s industrial past be safely laid to rest?

∗∗∗∗∗

The impact of restructuring through processes of de-industrialisation and regeneration within the European context, particularly since the late 1970s, has been profound. Regarding identity formation in the light of changing working lives and community interactions is important too. As older institutional forms, alignments and traditions fall away, or as they are forced to re-orientate themselves in different ways, important questions emerge around notions of citizenship, civic action and political participation; around feelings of identification and belonging. Grasping the implications of such transitions on collective and individual identity and action is a central aim of the study, and a major strength of the book is its innovative and inter-disciplinary approach to addressing these issues, drawing on the fields of sociology, history, cultural and urban studies and narrative analysis. Employing a wide range of analytical approaches, then, the book addresses the historical articulation of regional and national identities in areas of significant socio-economic dislocation. In doing so it will develop new insights into
identity and livelihood in relation to community, work and place across key European regions.

Notes

1. There was also an ethnic dimension to this divide. Mainly the Laz were employed as surface workers, while the workers from the villages (the natives of the region) worked underground. On the other hand, Tuncer (1998), himself a union activist, argues that ethnicity has not played a divisive role in union activism.

2. Meanwhile Pettinger et al. (2005) have identified a series of themes for examining work change, including the blurred spatial and temporal boundaries of work and its embeddedness within social relations. This is linked to Glucksman’s (1995) development of the ‘total social organization of labour’ as a conceptual tool to describe the labour process and, more pertinently, the impact of the deep changes in economic organisation and form.

3. Collective identities around class coordinates are complex and in need of interrogation – a further aim of this book.

4. The notion of heritage as the historical documentation of such formations and traditions will form part of the arguments in the book around the core concepts of regeneration and representation.

5. The decline of collective class identities was felt strongly in debates within cultural studies and cognate disciplines, including sociology, in the UK. More recent research reflects and interrogates these earlier analyses around the ‘politics of difference’ (Reay, 1997; Kirk, 2003; Skeggs, 2004; Sayer, 2005), while recognising the acute effects of restructuring upon cultures (Charlesworth, 2000; Turner, 2000; Kirk, 2006) and the impact on both class and gender formations and ideas of place, belonging and community (Kirk, 2007; Kirk and Wall, 2010). This work sets out important arguments for understanding contemporary working-class formations.

6. This has taken the form of targeted aid to former industrial areas under European Objectives 1 and 2, aid that seeks to promote ‘business growth and entrepreneurship, connecting people to opportunities [while] funding physical developments that promote economic development’. UK government website: www.gos.gov.uk/goyh – both South and West Yorkshire, for instance, are recipients of Objectives 1 and 2.

7. There is a fascinating symmetry between Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ and that of ‘structure of feeling’ developed by Raymond Williams, and this will be explored later.

8. Mapping such landscapes from the distance of some 25 years demands an understanding of absence in these areas as much as an engagement with what is present, with what exists.

9. Our intention in future publications from this research is to move on from the macro developments mapped in this book, to an exploration of everyday life in a micro-sense, exploring social interaction in changing spaces and altered times. The oral testimony we have gathered will help us to understand how people remember what is gone and how this also remains and shapes what is present and implies a future.
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