

American political science professor Stephen Crowley is doing research at the Political Science department

The Center for East-Central Europe of the Department of Political and Social Science is glad to announce that a specialist on Russia, Professor Crowley, is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Bologna. He is working on a book on deindustrialization impact on Eastern and Western Europe.

Prof. Crowley is currently chairing the Department of Politics of the Oberlin College (USA). Recently, he was visiting fellow at Aleksanteri Institute/ Finnish Center for Russian & East European Studies, University of Helsinki in June 2019 and a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, in 2016-17.

His current research interests include Comparative studies of deindustrialization and right-wing populism; Russian political economy; the comparative study of labor in post-communist societies. Recent publication are:

Putin's Labor Dilemma: Russian Politics between Stability and Stagnation, (Cornell University Press, forthcoming 2021).

“Global Cities versus Rustbelt Realities: The Dilemmas of Urban Development in Russia,” *Slavic Review*, Volume 79, Issue 2, Summer 2020, 365-389.

The research project that prof. Crowley is going to develop during his stay in Bologna is shortly presented in the following lines:

Deindustrialization and the Populist Challenge: Comparing East and West

What connection is there between deindustrialization and the rise of right-wing populism? What explains the political ascent, in such disparate places, of Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Jarosław Kaczyński, and Brexit? This project will seek to answer that question by exploring the social and political impact of deindustrialization in four very different settings.

The link between the loss of industrial jobs, and the grievances and resentments that process generates, is often hypothesized as a major – if not the primary -- force behind the current wave of right-wing populism. Yet there have been few attempts to explore this connection through structured cross-national comparison.

The project examines deindustrialization and its impact in four rust-belt regions: Tolyatti in Russia; Tyneside in the UK; Cleveland in the US; and Katowice in Poland. The sites themselves are quite distinct. Tolyatti is Russia's largest “monotown” – single-industry cities left from the Soviet era – where the giant AvtoVAZ car factory has now been greatly downsized. Katowice is home to a major steel plant, and the center of the Silesian industrial region. The Tyneside region has suffered the loss of major industries, and the city of Sunderland struggles to hold on to its Nissan plant. Cleveland is an archetypical rust-belt city, though some industry remains, including the steel mill still visible from downtown.

Interestingly, these far-flung sites are connected through economic globalization. Cleveland and Katowice are linked by ArcelorMittal, a conglomerate based in India (though

formally headquartered in Luxembourg) that owns the steel plants in both cities. Though AvtoVAZ was a Soviet-era plant (built originally with Fiat technology), it is now owned by the Japanese firm Nissan (in alliance with French automaker Renault), as is the much newer car plant in Sunderland.

Yet the differences remain substantial. AvtoVAZ (and the city of Tolyatti along with it) arose in Brezhnev's Soviet Union, and the Katowice steel mill (Huta Katowice) was built in communist Poland around the same time. Tyneside first developed with the start of the industrial revolution, while industrialization in Cleveland began over a century ago. Deindustrialization started in earnest in the US and UK in the late 1970s, whereas it began in Russia and Poland only in the 1990s, when both adopted a "shock therapy" transition to capitalism. Both the US and the UK are considered "liberal market economies," whereas Poland has been called a "dependent market economy" with "embedded neoliberalism" while Russia's economy relies heavily on commodity exports and a version of "state capitalism".¹ Poland and the UK were – until very recently -- tied by membership in the European Union.

Despite considerable differences, these four countries – or more precisely, these four locations – share the experience of substantial deindustrialization. The similarities across difference, not least in terms of political outcomes, deserves to be explored.

Deindustrialization -- as the term suggests -- is a process.² Steel making and auto production still take place in each of these communities, but that form of employment has been increasingly eclipsed by other types of work (and nonwork): service work, informal work, contingent work in the "gig economy," as well as unemployment.³ The decline of industry is not merely an economic question, but a process that often leads to "social trauma."⁴

Regarding political responses, all four cases have witnessed the weakening if not the outright collapse of parties and organizations of the traditional political left. Under a variety of governing parties, all four countries engaged in neoliberal globalization. The populist politics in all four cases is backward-looking – in Russia the watchword is "stability"; in Poland it's a call for traditional Catholic values; the demand in the UK's successful Brexit campaign was to "take back control"; for Trump, it was to "make American great again."

Such narratives play on regional as well as class divisions: major metropolitan centers that are globally competitive and cosmopolitan, and deindustrialized and rural regions that are

¹ Peter A Hall and David W Soskice, eds., *Varieties of Capitalism the Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Andreas Nölke and Arjan Vliegenthart, "Enlarging the Varieties of Capitalism: The Emergence of Dependent Market Economies in East Central Europe," *World Politics* 61, no. 4 (October 2009): 670–702, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109990098>; Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Chris Miller, *Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

² Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

³ Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, electronic resource (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

⁴ Bert Altena and Marcel van der Linden, *De-Industrialization: Social, Cultural, and Political Aspects* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Tim Strangleman and James Rhodes, "The 'New' Sociology of Deindustrialisation? Understanding Industrial Change," *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 4 (2014): 411–21, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12143>; Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

not.⁵ In all four cases, right-wing politics feeds explicitly on resentments connected to ethnic nationalism, immigration, and white-working class masculinity.⁶

Yet there are reasons to believe that the explanation of blue-collar anger leading to right-wing populism is rather over-simplified. Survey data and studies of voting patterns in Poland, the US and the UK reveal complications to this standard narrative.⁷ In my own study of Russia, despite Putin's posturing as a shirtless *muzhik*, support for the president among workers is much more instrumental and provisional.⁸ Given that, the provisional hypothesis for this study is that working-class political support acts as a swing group in these cases, rather than one locked in to the appeals of populist nationalism.

This project adopts a "most different" comparative case method.⁹ In comparing cases that differ along a number of dimensions, one can focus on the remaining similarities in explaining the relationship, while excluding a number of other potential factors. While there have been broad studies about the current wave of populism,¹⁰ I am not aware of any studies that have made connections between deindustrialization and right-wing populism across such divergent locations.

While I have and will conduct fieldwork in each of the four sites – with much of that work to be completed before I would begin the ISA fellowship -- I rely considerably on the assistance of researchers in each of the case locations. I have active collaborations and contacts with the Center for Independent Social Research (TsNSI) in Russia; with the well-regarded

⁵ J. Lawrence Broz, Jeffry Frieden, and Stephen Weymouth, "Populism in Place: The Economic Geography of the Globalization Backlash," *International Organization*, forthcoming, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3501263>.

⁶ Don Kalb and Gábor Halmai, eds., *Headlines of Nation, Subtexts of Class: Working Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe* (Berghahn Books, 2011); Linda McDowell, *Redundant Masculinities?: Employment Change and White Working Class Youth* (Wiley, 2003); V. Walkerdine and L. Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community After De-Industrialisation: A Psychosocial Approach to Affect* (Springer, 2012); Lois Weis, *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class* (Routledge, 2005); Valerie Sperling, *Sex, Politics, and Putin: Political Legitimacy in Russia*, Oxford Studies in Culture and Politics (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015); S. Ushakin, *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). Immigration policies and politics connect these otherwise disparate cases in fascinating ways: immigrants from Eastern Europe came to Cleveland to work in its steel mills 100 years ago. Workers fleeing the industrial decline of postcommunism in Eastern Europe took advantage of EU rules to migrate to the UK in large numbers, prompting a backlash that contributed considerable support for Brexit. In Poland, Hungary and elsewhere, right-wing leaders now stoke anti-immigrant sentiment to consolidate their political positions.

⁷ Sławomir Sierakowski, "How Eastern European Populism Is Different," *The Strategist*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/eastern-european-populism-different/>; Gurinder K. Bhambra, "Brexit, Trump, and 'Methodological Whiteness': On the Misrecognition of Race and Class," *The British Journal of Sociology* 68, no. S1 (2017): S214–32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12317>; Lisa Mckenzie, "'It's Not Ideal': Reconsidering 'Anger' and 'Apathy' in the Brexit Vote among an Invisible Working Class," *Competition & Change* 21, no. 3 (June 1, 2017): 199–210, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529417704134>; Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, "The White Working Class and the 2016 Election," *Perspectives on Politics*, May 2020, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720001267>.

⁸ Stephen Crowley, *Putin's Labor Dilemma: Russian Politics Between Stability and Stagnation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

⁹ Arend Lijphart, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies* 8, no. 2 (July 1, 1975): 158–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001041407500800203>; David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, ed. Dankwart Rustow and Kenneth Erickson (HarperCollins, 1991).

¹⁰ Stephen Holmes and Ivan Krastev, *The Light That Failed: Why the West Is Losing the Fight for Democracy* (Pegasus Books, 2020).

Department of Sociology at the University of Silesia in Katowice; with the internationally-recognized University of Durham near Tyneside; and in Cleveland with Policy Matters Ohio, a progressive think tank on whose board I have long served.

This project is ambitious but fully achievable. I have carried out this type of fieldwork successfully in the past.¹¹ The Russian case study is largely done, and I have lived and worked in the Cleveland area for over 25 years now. I have carried out previous research on the politics of labor in Poland.¹² I am fluent in Russian, and have reading knowledge of Polish. (I intend to hire a graduate student at the University of Silesia as a translator.) I have experience living in the UK and teaching courses there, including: “Globalization: The View from London,” and (anticipating Brexit) “The UK and the EU.”

My research has always been explicitly interdisciplinary; while I am ultimately interested in political outcomes, I rely on the work of economists, historians, sociologists, geographers and anthropologists. Doing so allows me to make connections across disciplinary boundaries that too often go unmade. Moreover, my project is a comparative one, and my results will be strengthened by the opportunity to check my hypotheses with scholars who have deep knowledge of other cases, including Italy. While there are many positive attributes to working at a small liberal arts college, the teaching expectations are considerable and the intellectual community is limited by size. Thus, in many ways the multidisciplinary nature of the IAS and the cross-fertilization of ideas that interactions with scholars there can generate, is essential to my research. In sum, I would sincerely welcome the opportunity to join and contribute in some small way to the intellectual atmosphere of the IAS.

The project will result in a book. In the past several years two books (one I co-edited, one I authored) have been accepted by Cornell University Press, and I have a good relationship with the editor there. I am confident that this book project will appeal there as well.

¹¹ Stephen Crowley, *Hot Coal, Cold Steel: Russian and Ukrainian Workers from the End of the Soviet Union to the Post-Communist Transformations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Crowley, *Putin’s Labor Dilemma: Russian Politics Between Stability and Stagnation*.

¹² Stephen Crowley, “Explaining Labor Weakness in Post-Communist Europe: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspective,” *East European Politics and Societies* 18, no. 3 (August 1, 2004): 394–429, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325404267395>; Stephen Crowley and David Ost, eds., *Workers After Workers’ States: Labor and Politics in Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).