



Peripheralization. The Making of Spatial Dependencies and Social Injustice

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Fischer-Tahir, A. and Naumann, M. (Eds.): Peripheralization. The Making of Spatial Dependencies and Social Injustice, 320 pp., ISBN-13: 978-3-531-18332-9, numerous figures and tables, Springer VS, Wiesbaden, €39.95, 2013.

“Is peripheralization just another word for – spatially structured political and social – marginalization and dependency?” (p. 10). In order to answer this provocative question, the editors of the book aim at a conceptualization of “peripheralization” questioning (a) the analytical applicability and value of the term in the analysis of the context-specific production of spatial differentiation on various scales and (b) its potential to link to wider debates and theories dealing with unequal development such as Wallerstein’s World System Theory and dependency theories. They base these objectives on their observations concerning the current deficits of the application of the concept, especially in terms of its regional and theoretical limitations. As Fischer-Tahir and Naumann state in their introductory section, the current debate on peripheralization has been limited so far to rather apolitical studies within urban and regional research looking at processes of decline in rural areas and small towns in the former East Germany.

In compiling 14 articles all dealing with processes of spatial differentiation but differing in regional focus and theoretical approach, the editors want to highlight the conceptual potential of peripheralization, its applicability in different regional contexts and the highly political issues it influences. Therefore, the anthology is also an attempt by the editors to re-politicize the so far rather apolitical debate on unequal spatial development and the decline of rural regions. Drawing on Marxist approaches within human geography, the editors claim that the making of peripheries is a constitutive element of capitalism tied to asymmetric power relations and territorialization tied to social injustice.

The volume *Peripheralization: The Making of Spatial Dependencies and Social Injustice* is the outcome of a workshop with the same title held during the International Conference of Critical Geography (Frankfurt a.M., 2011). It is structured in three sections. Part one, “Peripheralization and Development”, deals with the impact of development policies on the production of peripheries and contains case studies from Turkey (Düzgün), Pakistan (Bouzas) and India (Zachariah). Part two, “Peripheralization and Regional Decline”, focuses on regional processes of peripheralization in various areas of the former East Germany (Naumann/Reichert-Schick, Bürk and Lang), Iraqi Kurdistan (Mahzouni), the western border of Russia and Ukraine (Müller) and rural Hungary (Leibert). This section comprises in total seven articles and is therefore the main part of the book. The final part of the book, titled “Peripheralization and Urban Fragmentation”, includes case studies from Brasil (Hutta and Maia) and Romania (Banica/Istrate/Tudora). The contributing authors link peripheralization to heterogeneous theoretical perspectives and concepts such as praxeology (Müller), governmentality linked with questions of queer citizenship and agency (Hutta), discursive stigmatization (Bürk) and fragmented development (Leibert).

The book contains two conceptual contributions concerning the interplay between discursive and material processes in peripheralization (Müller/Miggelbrink) and a review of various concepts of peripheralization (Kühn/Bernt). Nevertheless, a conceptual-theoretical section or at least a concluding contribution which discusses the presented studies in light of the questions raised by the editors in their introduction is missing. Against this backdrop the highly diverse articles remain somewhat disconnected, and the reader is left alone with the task to find answers to the questions concerning the heuristic potential of a more political application of the concept of “peripheralization” and its connectivity to existing theoretical debates on unequal development

and dependency. The heterogeneity of contributions therefore appears mainly as theoretical inconsistency.

The volume nevertheless is an important step to revive the conventional debate on centers and peripheries developed within a Marxist structuralist research framework. Its value lies in indicating new research approaches within critical human geography that criticize essentialist and static understandings of spatial hierarchies and dependencies, and shift towards questions of representation and social practice. The current global crisis of capitalism and the struggles over its future make it all the more important to highlight that spatial inequalities are produced socially and that these processes are deeply embedded in capitalist modes of production. In this context the volume can be recommended to anyone interested in diverse approaches concerning the critical empirical analysis of processes of peripheralization.