

Peripheries – the agenda

Regional Studies Association/pemabo Network

Peripherality, Marginality and Border Issues in Northern Europe

The periphery and its host economy: Symbiosis, exploitation or burden?

University Centre of the Westfjords, Ísafjörður, Iceland, 03.09.2012 - 05.09.2012



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WEST of SCOTLAND

The status and ambition as we saw it....

- The status of the field of peripheral studies were defined as lacking ...
- We also used the term underresearched.
- “At the same time, the scientific-analytical dimension has a clear orientation towards generalisable knowledge with broad possibilities of applied dimensions... The definition of 'applied' and 'benefits' will also contribute and be privileged by an action-orientated approach”.
- The search for a more stringent conceptual discussion and development, creating a foundation for conceptual stringency and future interaction on a general although mutual platform.

Part of what we found....?

- The field, is not only underresearched, it is also, in many aspects, misdirected
- **Controlled by a dominant paradigm, (in a broad interpretation of the word) and its methods, ways to measure, choice of problems/cases that is not capturing the complexity of the new (and old) structures and processes that characterize the periphery in its further development? This paradigmatic dominance is so decisive that it seems to reduce most regions to passive by-standers in an urban driven, center-dominated, interest-based merrygoround, exploiting the periphery, margins and rurality to a degree that enhances/exploits and transform regions actual position and role without a well argued basis for the benefit of society in general.**

The negative!

- A general description of the treatment of the periphery in scientific and popular contexts today gives a reading of trends (structures and processes) that has been, is, or at least seems to have or focus on a clear negative tendency or profile.
- The first and basic question is whether we can be satisfied with the way that traditional theory is used in relation to the periphery?
- Are the methods of analysis adequate? What is being measured? How is it measured? What is concluded?

Reflections on theory....

- What is described here as a still unsubstantiated fact, is that what happens in the periphery, is neither examined or explored with the same emphasis as urban, high-tech structures and processes. Depending on this, we cannot discuss the situation in the periphery with the same kind of assertiveness as the dominant tradition is doing when approaching the theory of development, particularly in its growth and urban orientation.
- Growth mechanisms are traditionally connected or explained by a focus on the accumulation of factors of production, the relation between these supported by descriptions of **efficient redistribution functions, such as financial and labor markets. Density, as a positive, is taken for granted.**
- Theories of localisation and spatial interaction!

Leading up to

- Alfred Marshall – Principles of economics

Agglomeration theory

"In both academic and policy circles the mechanisms underlying the learning and innovation benefits of agglomeration remain poorly understood." ([Crowley, 2011, p. 18](#))

And to a much lesser extent:

Disglomeration and deglomeration.

... and clusters

- A starting point for discussion of theory in terms of clusters, innovation systems, triple helix, learning regions, etc., is whether these are actually theory construction in themselves, parts of a larger theoretical construct or primarily policy development/offensive, given an aura of academic polish on their/its way to becoming established theory?
- There is still much to say or ask for when it comes to empirically defining the structures and processes that constitute the basis for the claimed benefits of these theory and policy packages.

Clusters extended version

- **Where are the studies that focus on what happens in the shadow or in the tail end of the cluster, and the actual dynamical nature of incomplete networks?**
- **What is happening outside of the cluster? The rest, in the periphery, the small, traditional, craft and the way this has an impact on the cluster.**
- **What are the strategic implications of this aspect of the business.**
- **What happens outside as a consequence of the focus on clusters and other policy-defined systems.**

The urban vs ?non-urban, non-centre, peripheral

- What constitutes the urban?
- **To question the claim whether the universal and constant success of economic growth where centralization/urbanization takes place, is consistent with reality? That the urban/center is a consequence of or a prerequisite to it?**

Measuring what, how.....

- Starting out from the proposition already raised in the introduction, one of the fundamental being that the core, center, capital, urban dimension sets the agenda in analytical as well as policy terms as a general system-defining collection of characteristics. This bias, of being a model for development and growth, will have its direct bearings on choice of theory, methods and analytical variables, and, through this have weighted implications for the analytical outcome and evidently on policies and implementation.
- the relationship between the statistical/empirical base and its role in defining the bounded entity or place and further on in specific spatial categories.
- What is easily quantifiable is given priority.
- Choice of variables and ways to use them.

Empirical findings....

- There is a composition of economic activities, of historical dimensions, where the urban development needs the periphery in absolute terms.
- Development of new economic activities, increasing value added in old branches in the periphery, is taking place.
- Development of new economic activities complementing and replacing existing economic structures.
- Arguing the rural/peripheral is not necessarily an exclusive economic issue.
- Depending on the definitions of central processes like innovation and entrepreneurship changes the perception of peripheral activities towards higher degrees of dynamism and achievement.
- Changes in different dimensions of transport and information infrastructures changes the preconditions of the local economy.
- Environmental concerns put the non-urban potential in the limelight.
-

Network ~ outputs

- **Regional Development in Northern Europe : Peripherality, marginality and border issues, *Edited by Mike Danson and Peter de Souza*, published February 2012, Routledge**
- Reports to RSA and in *Regions*
- Conference papers etc.



Periphery and marginality: Definitions, theories, methods and practice

- **Aims of the book** ~ dedicated to the theme *Peripherality, marginality and border issues*
- **concerns** over the position and attention given to such regions across the globe, but particularly within a Europe where cities and city-regions are dominating the research and policy agenda
- **Pemabo**: support the dissemination of research from across northern Europe, foster knowledge exchange and contribute to more significant cooperation across borders.



Primary objectives :

- **define** the state-of-the-art re concepts of periphery, marginality and border issues in theoretical, methodological and practical dimensions
- **promote** scientific discussions and contributions progressing theoretical and methodological issues in relation to peripheral, marginal and border region issues
- create a **platform** for the combination of intellectual discussion and practical endeavours in this special and specialised field of regional development, issues and practice
- develop this **discussion** directly and through the presentation of empirical studies creating a foundation for comparative research on a wide geographical scale
- further contribution to the **organisation** of scientists and regional actors and policymakers in this field and complementary to the organisation of a scientific and practical network.



Background

'Periphery' and 'marginality' ~ special dimensions, versions or variants of this framework :

- not many studies consider them generally
- they are, even as state-of-the-art, quite fuzzy concepts in spite of their noted presence
- offer the opportunity to improve understanding of what promotes and hinders growth and development, in the non-core regions but also more generally
- for better analysis and knowledge of the areas in the periphery themselves, although much of the interesting material describes uniqueness of each and every region



Structure of anthology

- Introduction
- Theory and concepts
- Case studies
- Conclusions and border issues



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Research network's conclusions

- All presenters live in and work in the northern **periphery** of Europe.
- **Counterfactual** is legitimate area for research
- Core sets **agenda** ~ misguided analyses, actions and policies; impose or encourage solutions to non-problems; coerced into adopting inappropriate approaches; attacks on property rights
- Gross and net **impacts**; leakages and spillovers



- **Dynamic effects and cumulative causation** often work to the detriment of the periphery and benefit of core
- **Social capital** within (bonding) and between (bridging) communities. Promote active links within the community of peripheral and marginal regions. Networking and partnerships between these regions ~ learning and dissemination
- **Work-life balance** ~ benefit of redefining respective roles and influence of the periphery and core
- Successful **role models** from regions, their actors and analysts are required to promote the voice of the periphery and the marginal



CHECK OUT www.pemabo.net A PLACE WHERE YOU MEET COLLEAGUES WHO ARE INVOLVED IN PERIPHERAL, MARGINAL AND BORDER REGIONS



<http://www.pemabo.net/news/item/welcome-to-pemabonet-3>



Next Steps

- Send report to RSA and publish article on this workshop in *Regions*
- Consider what (short) papers to include in Special Issue of FAI *Quarterly Economic Commentary*
- Upload this week's presentations onto website
- Share photos, experiences, etc.
- Plan next two meetings: in Aalborg and possibly Greenland in collaboration with Henrik Halkier's RSA Network on *Tourism and Regional Development*

