

Understanding New Geographies of Central and Eastern Europe

PoSCoPP: Research Group Production of Space in the Context of Polarisation and Peripheralisation (collective authors)¹

1. Introduction

This book arises from empirical observations of recent spatial changes in CEE and from our engagements with current shifts in geographical thinking that prompt us to reconsider how we research and explain them. Both, the complexity of changes in Central and Eastern European geographies and the paradigmatic shifts in geographical research raise questions about the ways we register, survey, and conceptualize spatial phenomena, such as the emergence, persistence and transformation of spatial disparity and socio-spatial inequality in and beyond CEE.

The volume engages with the concepts of polarization and peripheralization to grasp these phenomena, which have become highly pronounced in CEE over the last two decades. In doing so, we want to direct attention towards the different methodological and conceptual perspectives through which we understand processes of spatial differentiation and their connections to wider inequalities. We suggest to understand peripheralization and polarization as analytical concepts that facilitate process-based relational understandings of spatial differentiation and supplement structural research approaches. Although our focus lies on the regional scale we suggest a multi-level conceptualisation of the phenomena under observation. As the relation of core and periphery is immanent to the concept, peripheralisation implies processes of centralisation and thus forms of socio-spatial polarisation at various scales: Such forms of polarisation are intrinsically connected to discourse which places higher value on particular regions and developments and thereby devalues others. Some authors define regional peripheralisation as the growing dependence of disadvantaged regions on the centre (e.g. Komlosy 1988, Bernt, Liebmann 2013); hence, it is not only the simultaneity of a number of features constituting the formation of peripheries such as distance, economic weakness and lack of political power (cf. Blowers and Leroy 1994). It is often also the dynamic formation of core and peripheral regions overlapping at different spatial scales (regional, national, European and global). This multi-faceted, multi-level understanding of peripheralization and polarization has the potential to define novel starting points for research on current regional development issues in CEE. Applying these conceptual notions allows for a process based, relational understanding of up-to-date forms of spatial differentiation in CEE and offers opportunities for spatial research circumventing dichotomous ideas of urban and rural, of central and peripheral, of 'leading' and 'lagging' or

¹ The following persons contributed to this introduction: Kornelia Ehrlich, Sebastian Henn, Kathrin Hörschelmann, Thilo Lang, Judith Miggelbrink and Wladimir Sgibnev. The authors are very much indebted to Erika Nagy for her detailed and insightful comments.

growing and declining which tend to determine our methodological, theoretical and normative approaches to regional studies.

Up until recently, spatial development in CEE has mainly been researched through the lenses of post-socialist transformation and modernization. Within this introductory chapter, we aim to suggest additional conceptual approaches useful for grasping spatial processes and their contextual groundings. We further argue that adopting these approaches enables new comparative perspectives to similar phenomena in other parts of Europe and the world. This is particularly true since the 2007/8 economic, financial and national debt crisis has shown similar economic, social and spatial impacts as well as political forms of response across Europe as a whole.

In the following section we have collected various empirical snapshots which we understand as showing increasing socio-spatial polarization in CEE. This is based on statistical analyses of core indicators as well as a literature review about spatially relevant social, political and economic processes in the past 20 years indicating the emergence of new forms of spatial differentiation. In section 3 we review a number of conceptual and theoretical approaches to regional polarization and peripheralization and propose a relational perspective for grasping their contemporary complexity. The final section of this introduction gives an overview of the issues and themes discussed by individual contributors to the book.

2. Polarization and peripheralization in Central and Eastern Europe

In Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on processes of polarization and peripheralization provides an important starting point for critical analyses of the assumptions on which the Washington Consensus of the early 1990s was built, such as the claim that radical privatization and the swift introduction of unimpeded market-economies would right the wrongs of state-socialism most effectively and would (eventually) deliver prosperity to, if not all, then at least a majority of people. What we have witnessed since is a much more diverse and problematic picture: Whilst in terms of GDP growth, many parts of the macro region – in particular the capital regions - have indeed embarked on an upward trajectory after the initial crisis of the early 1990s (Lang 2011), the success of market reforms to improve living standards and to ensure a more even spread of wealth amongst wider populations has been limited (Heyns 2005, Alber et al. 2007, Smith et al. 2008, Smith and Timár 2010, Stenning et al. 2010). Analysts of the causes, effects and dynamics of spatial development in CEE have pointed to a pronounced increase in socio-economic disparities between regions, places and populations, in CEE in particular (EC 2010). While differences in national rates of GDP growth have been decreasing for some years, regional economic and social disparities *within* CEE countries have grown considerably (Schürmann, Dubois, Glørsen et al. 2008).

Looking at forms of peripheralization at a global scale, it is notable that CEE regions play a negligible role when world city hierarchies are analyzed, such as by the 'Globalisation and World Cities Research Network' (GaWC) focussing on financial services and globalisation indicators. Following Friedmann's (1986) and Sassen's work on the world or global city (1991), a number of authors have argued that worldwide economic activities have become concentrated in a small number of city-regions. In the globalized economy, only a few global cities and metropolitan regions are said to be the 'control points of the global economic system' (Beaverstock, Smith and Taylor 2000). One could argue that CEE cities and their

functional regions are being peripheralized by the dominance of world cities in the global economy. European and national policies add a further dimension to this, as they frequently copy the model of the global city in regional policies by focusing on the promotion of growth in metropolitan areas (Brenner 2009). This has been witnessed particularly in the aftermath of the most recent economic crisis, as decision makers have been led to concentrate scarce resources on supporting development in larger cities, hoping that disadvantaged areas will profit from core-periphery spillover effects. Such policies, however, carry a major risk of further increasing socio-spatial polarizations and the peripheralization of disadvantaged areas (for example due to disinvestment in transport infrastructures or centralization of service provision). It is in this context that metropolitan regions attract economic and political interest to the disadvantage of the rest of the country. In addition, in CEE, prevailing negative experiences from the period of centrally planned economies have led to a skeptical perception of public sector interventions and to a general turn towards neoliberal policies during the transition period (Bohle 2006, Dragos Aligicia and Evans 2009).²

Paralleling the concentration of economic activity in metropolitan areas and further exacerbating problems of deepening polarization and peripheralization are current demographic developments (Filipov and Dorbritz 2003, Steinführer and Haase 2007). CEE population is increasingly concentrated in a diminishing number of prosperous areas, particularly the capital regions, in contrast to a growing number of regions suffering population decline. Thereby intra- and inter-regional migration patterns overlap with international migration on the basis of age-selectivity, stratified labour mobility and an overall decline of birth rates which is particularly sharp in CEE. The decrease in population has been particularly pronounced in structurally disadvantaged rural and deindustrialized regions as well as many inner-city and high-rise, edge of city areas (Tsenkova 2006, Steinführer and Haase 2007).

These demographic developments combine with other processes of social differentiation to produce highly uneven social geographies at regional, sub-regional, intra-urban, and micro-geographic scales that intersect but do not necessarily overlap. Whilst on a local level, the rapid growth of gated communities and of smaller enclaves of redeveloped, expensive housing in post-socialist cities shows an ongoing attempt of carving out, demarcating and safeguarding privileged spaces of wealth in otherwise disadvantaged regions and places (Hirt 2012, Smigiel 2013, Kovács and Hegedűs 2014), other regions, places and groups of people have, however, become radically disadvantaged and displaced (Hörschelmann and van Hoven 2003, Smith and Rochovská 2007). This affects particularly rural and deindustrialized regions such as rural parts of eastern Slovakia and its small towns (Michálek 2004), high-rise estates that were built along the perimeters of many socialist cities in the 1970s and 1980s, and inner-city pockets of low-quality housing that have not become redeveloped (Nedović-Budić et al. 2006, Tsenkova 2006, Steinführer and Haase 2007). Processes such as migration for work, homelessness and the discrimination of cultural minorities are further leading to forms of peripheralisation that no longer map onto specific regions, cities or urban quarters but

² There are differences between the regional policies of CEE countries, however, and some have adopted strategies for increasing national and regional level cohesions and the reduction of socio-economic disparities.

that are nonetheless often a result of, and a contributing factor to, socio-economic and spatial disparities in Europe (cf. O'Neill 2010, Smith 2007).

The empirical observations summarized above show that various processes lead to and interlink with socio-spatial polarization and peripheralization at different intersecting scales. Also apparent, however, is the need to look critically at our approaches to researching these phenomena and processes and to consider how and why different insights are produced from different perspectives. Thus, while helpful for the identification and assessment of the scope and reach of polarization and peripheralization as *phenomena*, conventional indicators such as rates of inward investment, GDP growth, availability of key infrastructures and services, distance from metropolitan centers, or poor accessibility rarely capture the wide range of causes and dimensions of polarization and peripheralization as *processes* that intersect with other aspects of inequality, uneven development and power, and that breach conventional territorial boundaries. There is a need therefore to ask more carefully what our descriptions and analyses are based on and which aspects, practices and spaces we perceive and explain differently from different perspectives.

These considerations lead us to review, in the next section, a number of conceptual perspectives that have been developed over several decades to grasp the complexity of polarization and peripheralization processes. Instead of seeking to develop a one-size-fits-all model for how to research the topic, we conclude this review by proposing a relational approach which requires the application of diverse methodological and conceptual perspectives as well as reflexivity on the performativities of these perspectives themselves, i.e. their effects on what we are able to observe, how we understand it, and how our research intervenes in the processes under investigation (Paasi 2010, 2013).

3. Conceptual Perspectives

The analysis of spatial disparities has been at the centre of regional science for more than 50 years. It is thus not surprising that aspects of polarization and peripheralization have been considered in many areas of economic and social geography as well as in related disciplines like economics and spatial planning. While in this section, we aim to give a short overview of concepts and explanatory frameworks that have played an important role in the debate, the choice of approaches presented is necessarily selective and does not cover the literature as a whole. Nevertheless, our review demonstrates that issues of regional polarization and peripheralization have been approached from a range of perspectives, considering different scales, their intersections as well as diverse factors and effects. It also confirms that, as Paasi (1995 and 2010) has explained, research on the production of regions requires attention to numerous factors, relations, discursive constructions, agencies and materialities that constitute a spatial entity as an assemblage that, while never completely stable, has none the less acquired a certain durability.

Modelling and explaining processes of spatial polarization and peripheralization

Early regional development theories did not pay attention to processes of spatial polarization and peripheralization. Rather, neoclassical approaches (for example Solow 1956, Borts and Stein 1964) argued that regions with different factor endowments due to unrestricted movements of factors and commodities as well as flexible prices would gradually converge

over time. While neoclassical theory thus expects an external shock to bring about forces that will bring an unbalanced spatial system to a (new) equilibrium, *polarization theorists* since the 1950s have argued that spatial disequilibria lead to circular cumulative effects that finally result in a state of spatial polarization. In the model developed by Myrdal (1957), such cumulative processes may be initially triggered by changes in interdependent economic factors, such as demand or income, and may occur within a single country and/or between different ones. According to Myrdal, the extent of interregional and international imbalances depends on the type and the intensity of the centripetal backwash effects and the centrifugal spread effects. While backwash effects refer to negative changes that occur as a corollary of the expansion of a centre (for example selective outmigration from agrarian areas to growing centres), spread effects denote positive effects triggered by growing centres but affecting other regions (for example the spread of technical know-how). Under certain conditions, the latter effects may stimulate development in lagging regions without challenging the growth of the centres. Myrdal (1957), however, expects backwash effects to typically prevail the spread effects and therefore suggests government intervention to reduce disparities in income. Though being 'criticized for its qualitative nature and lack of econometric substance' (Haggett 1972: 398), Myrdal's model endowed the debate with new impetus: it directs attention to problems of deepening differentiation and it focuses on micro-causalities in situation of increasing interregional contrast (in terms of income, investment, migration and so on). Moreover, Myrdal already addressed the importance of socio-cultural categorization and stigmatization in processes of the socio-spatial differentiation and marginalization (Myrdal 1944). Since then, it has almost become a commonplace to understand centre and periphery in their reciprocal conditionality deriving from the nature of relation between two established/establishing poles that are rooted in discursive (communicative) conditions and social structures.

Hirschman (1958), in a different albeit somewhat similar approach, distinguishes positive trickling down and negative polarization effects. In his model, polarization effects initially exceed the trickling-down effects. However, he also expects economic and political counterbalancing forces to arise aiming at reducing interregional and international income disparities. As a consequence, trickling down effects will gradually reinforce and finally exceed the polarization effects thus bringing about a spatial equilibrium. Even though the models by Myrdal (1957) and Hirschman (1958) bear major shortcomings (for example the fact that the generation of cumulative processes remains external to the models as well as a lack of a formal framework), the idea of polarized spatial development gained strong interest in the scientific community. In fact, in the aftermath of the publication of these basic works, numerous approaches were designed that further developed the original ideas. According to the idea of spatial growth poles (Boudeville 1966, Lasuén 1969) for example, growth impulses from big cities will be transferred along the system of central places (Christaller 1933, Lösch 1944), which itself is interpreted as an outcome of past processes of adoption of innovations. As put forward by Lasuén (1969), less dynamic regions (for example rural areas) face difficulties in absorbing innovations spreading from the centres and thus find it more difficult to keep up with development. Urban regions, by contrast, are seen to be in a position to easily absorb innovations and to spread them to their peripheries.

Another approach to polarization and peripheralization, put forward by Richardson (1980), seeks to combine the neoclassical ideas with the polarization approaches. Richardson (1980)

argues that spatial development is characterized by a stage of polarization, before a turning point ('polarization reversal') is reached and a process of reversed polarization sets in (Bähr and Wehrhahn 1995). According to his concept, the industrial growth process of a country due to a scarcity of investments initially affects only a limited number of regions. Internal and external economies as well as immigration of labour from other regions will lead to a spatial concentration of economic activities thus generating centre-periphery-relations in terms of significant disparities in regional per-capita income. In the further process of development, central regions, that is the centres and their hinterlands, exhibit strong growth rates resulting in great numbers of immigrants that exceed the number of locally available jobs. As a result of these agglomeration disadvantages, processes of intraregional decentralization (for example establishment of new firms in satellite cities due to high production costs in the centres) will gradually transform the central region. At an advanced stage, subcentres will emerge at certain locations in the periphery. While the latter are characterized by agglomeration economies, increasing disadvantages in the central regions will result in a deviation of the investment flows (for example through relocations or the establishment of branches) to the subcentres. This process will be accompanied by outmigration of labour from the centres to the subcentres and thus result in an interregional decentralization of economic activities. At subsequent development stages, processes of intraregional decentralization will also occur in the catchment areas of the subcentres. In total, these processes of intra- and interregional decentralization will result in a stable, urban hierarchy as well as in harmonization of per-capita incomes (Schätzl 2003).

Another widely noticed and more recent centre-periphery model has been offered in the framework of the *New Economic Geography* by Krugman (1991). Similar to Hirschman (1958), Krugman (1991) views spatial structures as being shaped by centripetal and centrifugal forces. Whether the former or the latter prevail, depends on the transport costs, economies of scale as well as on the industry's share in income. In case a location is characterized by low transport costs, scale, high economies of scale and a high share of industry in the overall income, industrial production will concentrate in this particular region.³ In general, Krugman develops a formalized model which affirms the earlier (albeit non-formalized) polarization approaches.

The fact that capitalism is characterized by disparate spatial developments is also common to more recent theoretical approaches of uneven development that are inspired by early Marxist theorists and explicitly focus on spatial aspects. The approaches which have been developed in this context do not make up a homogenous framework but share a particular focus on power structures and their critique (Wissen and Naumann 2008). The by far most influential approach of uneven development was developed by Harvey (2001 and 1982) who views capitalism as being characterized by a 'capital surplus absorption problem' (Harvey 2010: 2), that is a tendency to create 'a surplus of capital relative to opportunities to employ that capital' (Harvey 1982: 192). Harvey identifies different forms of capital mobility that may help to spatially fix these crises, at least for a limited period of time. As a by-product of this

³ In the last 20 years, many approaches were developed that deal with different types of spatial concentrations of economic activities (for example innovative milieus, regional clusters, learning regions and industrial districts) (Moulaert and Sekia 2003). Since these models, however, typically focus on cores of economic activities while neglecting developments in the peripheries of the cores, they will not be dealt here.

'spatial fix', new spaces are being produced that may also result in the creation of core-periphery relations and accompanying dependency-relations, for example when productive capital, for example firms, relocate from unprofitable locations to more profitable areas.

Another approach towards polarization and peripheralization has emerged in the context of *dependency theory / world system theory*. Large parts of the conceptual ideas, though explicitly developed with a focus on different countries, can be applied to the regional scale as well. The basic idea of these models can be summed up in four main hypotheses (Schätzl 2003: 194): (1) Fundamental interregional structural differences can result in the emergence of centres and areas which depend on them. (2) Centres and peripheries form a closed spatial system. (3) Centres and peripheries are characterized by dependency relations. (4) In order to overcome the dependency-relations, peripheral areas have to achieve attributes of the centres. Evolution and revolution are viewed as apt strategies for reaching this aim. An early centre-periphery model was developed by Prebisch (1959). His model is based on the assumption that there are structural differences in terms of income elasticity of demand as well as in the technical progress and its spread between developed and developing countries. These differences result in a deterioration of the terms of trades of the periphery and a transfer of real income from the periphery to the centres. This result is remarkable since it strongly contrasts with the classical and neoclassical trade theory. Another approach has been offered by Friedmann (1973). According to his model, the relations between centres and peripheries are characterized by four features: (1) Peripheries are characterized by institutions installed by the centre which makes them dependent on the latter. (2) Centres consolidate their domination through reinforcing mechanisms of polarization. These so-called feedback mechanisms involve different types of effects (domination, information, psychological, modernization, linkage and production effects). (3) As a result of this domination, innovations developed in the centres will be introduced in the peripheries thereby further intensifying the information flows in the dependent areas. (4) As a result, conflicts may occur which can be met by local or national elites, who, for example, take measures of limited decentralization. Furthermore, elites are in a position to accelerate the spread effects thus contributing to shared decision-making powers between old and new centres. As a consequence, the dependency relations between centres and their peripheries will gradually disappear. According to Friedman, however, such reconciliation of interests can only be expected in highly developed countries like the US or Germany (Schätzl 2003).

Focusing on different spatial, scalar and social logics of differentiation, a couple of empirical studies have aimed at identifying relations between centre and periphery systematically, typologically and comparatively (Rokkan 1980, Vorauer 1997, Schürmann and Talaat 2000). One of the most elaborated analysis in terms of statistical underpinning was undertaken by Rokkan, Urwin, Aarebrot, Malabe and Sande (Rokkan et al. 1987) who integrate economic, political and cultural conditions in a quantitative approach of so called territorial systems. They assume that 'territory building' is based on three capacities of centres that 'can be minimally defined as *privileged locations* within a territory' (Rokkan et al. 1987: 25): 'military-administrative, economic and cultural' (ibid.: 41). These 'types of territory extension' (ibid.) lead to 'three distinctive forms of peripheralization: by *military conquest and administrative subjection*; through *economic dependency* and through *cultural subordination*' (ibid., emph. orig.). Though processes may overlap, they do not necessarily bring about a single and coherent pattern but different types of peripheries, among them peripheries suffering from

all three types of peripheralization and others that, for instance, managed to escape from economic deprivation. Given the opportunities of computational modelling and processing of large volumes of data, spatio-temporal comparisons as they were blueprinted by Rokkan and his colleagues (Rokkan et al. 1987) seemed to allow for a systematic approach towards territorial differentiation and structural dependency.

Problematizing socio-spatial categories and dichotomizations

Though many of the scholars named above underline the necessity to investigate the relation between 'centres' and 'peripheries' at various spatial scales, there are remarkable differences in defining and locating this relation, as well as the driving forces behind the emergence and persistence of 'centres' and 'peripheries'. By transferring post-colonialist approaches to the regional level, some researchers have drawn attention to the fact that hierarchy and dependency are not only established in terms of 'outer relations' and as a result of an increasingly globalized world, but that they are also internally produced and reproduced. This phenomenon is addressed as 'internal peripheries' (Nolte 1996), 'internal colony/periphery' (Hechter 1975, Walls 1978) and, more recently, 'internal orientalism' (Jansson 2003).

In addition to recognizing that the formation and persistence of 'core' and 'peripheral' regions plays out at different, intersecting scales, recently, a more relational understanding of spatial disparities has emerged in regional studies that mainly aims at detecting concrete processes that lead to social and economic disparities. As the relation between center and periphery is immanent to the concept, peripheralization always also implies processes of centralization and thus forms of socio-spatial polarization: The logic and dynamics of spatial centralization determine the peripheralization of other spaces by attracting populations, economic productivity and infrastructural functions to the disadvantage of other regions (Keim 2006). Polarization is enhanced by national discourses which place higher value on particular regions and developments and thereby devalue others.

Recent critical scholarship has further emphasized the important role of geographical imaginations, discourses and diverse socio-spatial practices for producing, as well as contesting, the marginalization of certain places, regions and populations (Cresswell 1996, Massey 2009, Shields 2013). It has been recognized that terms like 'polarization' and 'peripheralization', 'centre' and 'periphery' themselves are markers of socio-spatial realities commonly used to *describe* these realities and that semantics are never mere representations of reality but are actively involved in shaping and explaining reality. Many scholars in geography and cognate disciplines have been arguing for a closer and critical examination of the ways in which knowledge productions in research and politics are informed by spatial and social categories and terms (see Schoenberger 1998, Clark 2001). Spatial semantics, as vague and ambiguous as they may be (Miggelbrink and Redepenning 2004: 582), often represent societies as spatially ordered and divided into discreet units and, thereby, partake in *producing* those very orders and divisions (Rose and Gregson 2000, Marston and Jones 2005).

John Agnew brought these problems to the attention of geographical scholars as early as 1982, in his critique of three methodological reductions that he argued were inherent to *spatial(ized)* research: First, identifying certain spaces as centre or periphery leads to reifying spatial categories instead of reconstructing social, political and economic relations of

domination and dependency that produce certain spaces. Second, (as an effect of reified spaces) spatial categories once identified are all too often being ascribed causal effects; spatial patterns that echo a multitude of decisions and events (investment, migration, death and birth ...) and that are based on manageable statistical categories and procedures, on methods of measurement and so on are (mis-) understood as offering *explanation*. Agnew calls this moment of explanatory in-distinguishability 'pattern-process-inference'. Third, focusing on fixed and bounded spaces restricts analytical capacity to only one scale of social action instead of taking into account scalar interference. As consequence, again, explanation tends to take a dichotomized form: Cause and effect are located *inside* or *outside* a/the centre and its periphery.

Agnew's arguments connect strongly to other critiques of knowledge construction. Postcolonial and feminist scholars have pointed out, in particular, that hierarchical logics underpin distinctions in the status of knowledge produced by different agents from different locations. These scholars have sought to challenge such problematic constructions by examining how relations of power and knowledge change when dominant perspectives are provincialized (Timár 2004, Kuus 2004, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008). For the topic of peripheralization, this is a particularly significant issue as the coincidence of marginalized knowledges with socio-spatial peripheralizations restricts the ability of research to account for diverse life-worlds, practices and perspectives, thus in turn restricting its responsiveness to different needs and the ability to inform policy accordingly.

It can be argued that the *relationship between knowledge and power* in constructions of space and populations is overlooked in much research that seeks to map and model polarization and peripheralization processes. Spatial semantics including those marking 'centres' and 'peripheries', 'cores' and 'margins' inform (political) government and, all too often, (scientific) explanation likewise. They are, nevertheless, based on a host of problematic assumptions, reductions and reifications that may unwittingly lead to the creation of new, and the entrenchment of existing peripheralities. The division of the world into ordered categories, and the management of the world as though it was or ought to be ordered in this way is, for instance, a fundamental reason for the identification of some groups and practices *as problematic* because of 'where' they live or which characteristics are ascribed to them because of 'where' they live (O Eriksson 2010, Wacquant 2007, Kuus 2011, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013).

People are often seen as almost naturally tied to certain places or regions and therefore as generalizable, classifiable and governable through those spaces. As a result, they are figured as 'populations' rather than as diverse social actors engaged in dynamic practices that may be difficult to predict or measure (Agnew 1994 and 2003, Jessop et al. 2008). Governmental strategies on risk and crisis response then frequently entail the 'management' of groups that are seen to pose particular risks to welfare and security interests. Such governmental strategies increasingly involve what some scholars have called 'biopolitical' techniques for the management of populations through the promotion of certain behaviours and 'subjectivities' that are frequently related to expectations about spatial development and the agencies of places in relation to particular goals (for instance the promotion of growth and resilience through 'community') (Brassett et al. 2013, Dzudzek and Strüver 2013, Painter 2013). With regards to CEE, the discursive construction of the region as peripheral itself has

also been argued to be a problematic factor that needs to be critically interrogated (Hörschelmann 2002, Kuus 2004 and 2013, Timár 2004, Stenning 2005, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008, also see Todorova 1997).

Hierarchies between 'central' and 'peripheral' or 'marginal' populations are further related to different estimations of agency, where the capacity to act and to effect socio-spatial change is attributed to certain (groups of) agents, at certain scales, and from particular locations, over others. The myriad practices of diverse social actors in the contexts of their everyday lives, and particularly those that are seen as inconsequential or 'taken-for-granted' (for example care and the work of social reproduction) remain overlooked, however, and are marginalized in political decision making (Katz and Monk 1993, Bondi and Rose 2003, Mitchell et al. 2004). These concerns are reflected in Beetz's argument that peripheralization can be defined as 'a loss of capacities of actors and institutions *to act*' (Beetz 2008: 11; our emphasis).

While the conclusion of these critical considerations may appear to be the need to avoid prescriptive (spatial) categorizations (such as not to unwittingly reproduce hegemonic interpretations and orders that, on the one hand, limit the analytical scope of research and, on the other hand, enshrine people), notions of peripheralization and polarization can none the less be seen as important starting points for unveiling relations of power and processes of socio-spatial inequality. This is not necessarily a contradiction, as Paasi states who underlines that the social construction of peripheries, that is 'peripheralization', has to be understood as 'social spatialization', a process during which

the visions of margins and cores, centres and peripheries are created on different grounds. Social spatialisation is a result of both discursive and non-discursive elements, practices and processes. It is always a blend of scientific analysis, local and non-local spatial experience, operations of media, political struggle and ideologies. These are manifested differently (on different spatial scales) (Paasi 1995:236).

Paasi's statement inevitably shifts the focus towards a thorough investigation of how peripheralization is communicated within society and, in turn, which effects notions of 'peripheralized' regions and people have with regard to political action. It also shows that abandoning a spatialized perspective to (analytically) avoid the 'territorial trap' (Agnew 1994) neither means that space does not play a crucial role in processes of peripheralization, nor does it mean that the very notion of peripheralization is automatically reductive and, therefore, has to be abandoned, too. On the contrary: Scholars from various disciplines have drawn attention to, and sought to dismantle (structural) dependencies, disparities, subjugation, marginalization and hierarchies, by applying concepts of 'centre' and 'periphery' (Senghaas 1974 a and b, Wallerstein 1979, Taylor and Flint 2000). What we wish to suggest instead is that *reflexivity* should be integral to research on polarization and peripheralization in order to remain attentive to the effects of our own interventions in the production of space. A plurality of perspectives and approaches is further required in order to adequately analyze polarization and peripheralization as multidimensional processes.

4. Towards a Relational Approach to Researching Polarization and Peripheralization in CEE

One way to bring the different perspectives scetched above into conversation without pressing them into one overarching framework that claims to explain it all is a relational approach. We return to Paasi once again here, as he develops a particularly clear and insightful heuristic framework for understanding spatial configurations, such as regions, as relational constructions. Paasi (2010) proposes to understand 'region' as 'normally in a state of becoming, assembling, connecting up, centring, and distributing all kind of things. Yet it has not been always there: it has been constructed and will probably eventually disappear [...] Whether or not they recognize it, numerous actors participate in this construction together with and in relation to a number of other actors' (2010: 2229). We find this approach helpful for researching polarizations and peripheralization because it recognizes the intersections between a multiplicity of discursive and extra-discursive things, actions, agents, materialities that are assembled in concrete networks through which spatial forms gain durability while also always being in a process of becoming.

Against the background of issues raised in this introduction and those analysed in the following chapters, we would highlight particularly the need to:

- survey the spatial divisions of labour through which peripheralities and polarities are constructed across scales and in concrete networks
- investigate how peripheralities and polarities emerge and are ascribed to social groups and individuals, and how these ascriptions are contested
- trace the circulation and use of scientific and administrative knowledge through networks of spatial policy and planning
- conceptualize how agency is accomplished in assemblages and networks
- consider the role of different political actors, institutions and perspectives in the construction and contestation of polarizations and peripheralities
- develop new approaches and indicators on the basis of a differentiated understanding of genealogies and effects of dependencies, inequalities and exclusions
- design and implement political strategies to address the socio-economic challenges that characterize patterns of polarization and peripheralization on different geographical levels.

The contributions of this edited volume address these points from a variety of perspectives. The first part presents a series of tools for grasping 'the fragmented complexity of agency and the multitude of actors related to region building' (Paasi 2010: 2300). This includes both reflections on the theoretical backgrounds of peripheralities as well as methodological considerations. We open with a chapter by *Ray Hudson*, who argues for a Marxian political economy approach as, in his eyes, the most convincing and most promising framework for analysing polarization and peripheralization processes. Discussing the role of the EU and new forms of political responses in the wake of the crisis, he frames uneven development as an integral part of a crisis-prone development of capitalist economies – with salient repercussions inside and beyond Central and Eastern Europe. *John Pickles* and *Adrian Smith* frame post-socialist regional economies in the context of global value chains, leading to a ritualization and narrativization of peripheralizing modes of labour division. The following

contributions in this part form a series of ethnographically grounded accounts of social constructions of peripheralities at the level of everyday lives. *Judith Miggelbrink* and *Frank Meyer* raise critical methodological considerations of the interaction between researchers and the 'objects' of their research. Their case study in rural Thuringia in Germany shows how hegemonic 'peripheralizing' discourses shape individual appropriations of social reality, which are back-coupled to actors' individual decisions and practices. The internalization of peripheralizing academic and political discourses, alongside with locational 'hard facts' and ever-changing border regimes form the main constitutive elements of peripherality, according to *Wladimir Sgibnev's* and *Aksana Ismailbekova's* comparative study of two peripheral regions in Central Asia. In the same strain as *Helen Carter's* case study of a proposed golf resort in Northern Ireland, they describe how peripherality serves as a frame for decision-making and legitimization. These cases are surely based outside the edited volume's focus area of Central and Eastern Europe. Still, they provide a series of transferable methods and insights going beyond a geographically limited scope of area studies.

The second part of the volume sets out to examine the role of diverse socio-political agents in the production of peripheries. The authors adopt an actor-centred perspective and elaborate upon ways of how peripheralization is being perceived, lived and reproduced. In this regard, the contributions take up the constructivist challenge of the volume's first part and provide dense accounts of peripheralization and polarization processes in Central and Eastern Europe. *Giulia Montanari*, *Karin Wiest* and *Tim Leibert* propose to read migration patterns in Eastern Germany from a gender-sensitive perspective, building upon discursive constructions of space with regard to gender issues. Not only in rural, but also in inner-urban areas, they argue, young men appear to be those 'left behind' in marginalized areas. This finding points to the emergence of new interrelations between social change, social inequality and gender. For *Judit Timár*, *Erika Nagy*, *Gábor Nagy* and *Gábor Velkey*, peripheralization appears as a process of making and entering various forms of dependencies, interwoven with weakening integrative social mechanisms. Peripherality and marginality, they argue, mutually support and strengthen each other through local actors' strategies. Based on rich fieldwork in rural Hungary, they give an account of institutional practices of neoliberal capitalism at work: the European division of labour and a shrinking state in the aftermath of the crisis forced local agents to enter relationships based on dependence. The framework of new domestic and international class divisions is also crucial for *Max Holleran's* study of post-socialist urbanization in Coastal Bulgaria. He describes how core-periphery relations are being negotiated through regulatory, environmental, and aesthetic battles, which both require and question new performances of 'Europeanness'. Negotiations of urban change in a post-socialist context also stand at the heart of *Carola Neugebauer's* and *Zoltan Kovacs's* comparative study of patterns and trends of socio-spatial development in metropolitan regions of Central and Eastern Europe. Finally, *Ibolya Török* proposes a study of migration patterns and core-periphery relations in Central and Eastern Europe and the role of Europeanization processes for the production of peripheries. She argues that migration has exacerbated existing core-periphery differences, not only at supra-national, but also at local level.

The volume's third part is devoted to studies of a fragmented and relational construction of peripheralities. Authors provide dense quantitative analyses of peripheralization at national or supra-national levels, and discuss tools of measuring and assessing divergent processes of

polarization and cohesion. *Tobias Chilla* and *Markus Neufeld* analyse the EU cohesion policy and discuss its background, instruments and outcomes. Cohesion appears as a rather fuzzy and malleable notion, which, to a high degree, depends on the spatial reference framework. A detailed analysis of cohesion processes for Central and Eastern Europe is undertaken by *József Benedek* and *György Kocziszky*. Using multi-dimensional data, the authors test the hypothesis of convergence clubs, indicating that backward regional economies can be trapped in clubs with no chance of a way out. Turning to the Baltic Sea region, *Tomas Hanell* employs a broad variety of methods in order to assess territorial cohesion at a macro-regional level and provides an in-depth methodological critique of measuring this multi-faceted phenomenon. For the Czech Republic, *Martin Šimon* delivers a long-term analysis of the changing nature of periphery at multiple spatial levels. This allows him to elaborate upon regional trajectories, for example from a leading region with a high level of internal unevenness towards a lagging region with low level of internal unevenness. Leaving the EU framework, two more papers analyse polarization and peripheralization patterns in the successor states of the Soviet Union. *Kostyantyn Mezentsev*, *Grygorii Pidgrushnyi* and *Nataliia Mezentseva* elaborate upon challenges and consequences of post-Soviet development of Ukraine. They conclude with saying that polarization is caused by overlapping economic and demographic factors, and point to the roots of inter- and intra-regional disparities stemming from the Soviet era. For cities in the Russian Federation, *Oleg Golubchikov*, *Anna Badyina*, *Isolde Brade* and *Alla Makhrova* provide a study of inter-urban differentiation from the perspective of uneven urban economic resilience. They argue that new institutional practices are the main single explanatory argument for differentiating the cities' relative performance – in front of an otherwise very strong role of inherited growth patterns of the Soviet era.

The contributions in the fourth and final part of the volume discuss – on a slightly more positive tone – different modalities and relations between cores and peripheries. The authors describe how responses to peripheralization can be being devised, implemented and assessed. *Garri Raagma* insists on the importance of territorial governance for peripheralization processes. Employing an actor-centred approach, he describes how concepts as multi-level governance and new public management failed in Eastern Europe, for not being suitable for sparsely populated regions of permanent market failure. He recommends further policy measures which interconnect marginalized peripheral municipalities and strengthen the capacity of intermediate governance levels. *Maroš Finka*, *Tatiana Kluvánková-Oravská* and *Vladimír Ondřejčka* assess responds to challenges of globalization and European integration, and point to polycentrism, clustering and soft governance for fuzzy spaces as appropriate solutions. *Kornelia Ehrlich* and *Tobias Federwisch* discuss in their contribution if and in how far social economy and social innovation can serve peripheralized regions. *Joachim Burdack*, *Robert Nadler* and *Michael Woods* challenge the widespread assumption that rural regions play a passive role in designing core-periphery relations. They argue that with EU Eastern Enlargement, a new window of opportunity emerged, which allowed for a redefinition of the former Eastern German periphery towards a European centre. The study show that local actors have the capacity of actively responding to globalization, and can make a difference in determining how a rural locality engages with global economy. *Stefan Haunstein* and *Aline Hämmerling* explore whether return migration is an appropriate approach to confront peripheralization processes. They argue that entrepreneurs in peripheral regions make use of return migrants' human capital acquired

abroad for business development strategies, while return migrants bring back a stock of human capital that promotes their labour market integration upon return.

The wide range of problems, approaches and conclusions raised in the chapters summarized above reflects the complexity of spatial polarization and peripheralization. We have aimed, in this volume, to provide an overview of different theories and methods for researching both. While our focus is on Central and Eastern Europe, where these processes take place in a most salient way, we consider the insights of the volume as applicable to other regional contexts, too, and thus hope for vigorous future debates in academia and society on the causes and effects of polarization and peripheralization.

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