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On the Correlation of Center and Periphery

Edited by Frank Jacob

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Inhalt

Editorial 7

Receptions

Henner Kropp
Halfway around the World:
Russian America as a Part of the Russian Empire 13

Ingo Löppenberg
Their Knowledge about Arctic Nature:
The Utility of Indigenous Knowledge for German Polar
Exploration and Knowledge of the Inuit in Imperial Germany 24

Dina Mansour
Stirring the "Mix":
Gender and Religion within Islamic Contexts in Europe 41

Exchanges

Oliver Schlenkrich / Christoph Mohamad-Klotzbach
Open and Closed Electoral Autocracies in the (Semi-)Periphery
from 1996 to 2010: Democratization and Foreign Aid Flows 57

Evangelidis Vasileios
Centers, Peripheries and Technical Progress 78

Jeffrey M. Shaw
Self-Transcendence in Thomas Merton,
Reza Arasteh, and Daisetz Suzuki 89

Exploitation and Stereotypes

Julia Harnoncourt
Labor-Relations and the Periphery :
The Example of *trabalho escravo* in Pará (Brazil) 105

Liony Bauer
Can German Nationalism after WWII Be Characterized
by the Concept of 'Economic Securitization'?
Case Study: Securitization of the Roma Minority 115

De-Valera N. Y. M. Botchway
Defiance, Rhetoric and Ideologies of Order, and the Rewriting of Colonial Historiography: An Exploration of Cultural Nationalism in Colonial and Post-Colonial Ghana 131

Constructions

Solveig Lena Hansen / Cathrin Cronjäger
Transcending the Spatialized Other in and through Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* 157

Kyle J. Wanberg
Disrupting the Center: Toward a Theory of Global Aesthetics 170

Julia Brühne
A Revolutionary Myth: Border Crossing, Nostalgia and Identification in Robert Rodríguez's *Machete* (2010) 186

Reviews 211

Table of Figures 225

Editorial

In his structural theory of imperialism, Johan Galtung underlined the unequal division between center and periphery:

> The tremendous inequality, within and between nations, in almost all aspects of human living conditions, including the power to decide over those living conditions; and the resistance of this inequality to change. The world consists of Center and Periphery nations; and each nation in turn, has its centers and periphery.[1]

His theory followed other theories of imperialism, e. g., John A. Hobson's[2], which claimed that imperialism was an expression of industrialized nations' fear of international competition, which led to the exploitation of the colonial sphere and a growing antagonism between the great powers. Galtung observed this antagonism during the Cold War and the victimization of the so-called Third World, the global periphery[3], which was doomed to suffer from this conflict between superpowers.

For a long time the center-periphery model remained "a spatial metaphor which describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan 'centre' and a less developed 'periphery', either within a particular country, or (more commonly) as applied to the relationship between capitalist and developing societies."[4] Sociological studies in particular focused on "economic underdevelopment and dependency."[5] However, other research questions were also increasingly relevant. What were the characteristics of the distinguishing process between center and periphery? What was exchanged and what was the nature of this exchange?[6] It also became clear, that "a purely relational center-periphery model is insufficient as a conceptual tool for understanding the historical dynamics of center-periphery

1 Johan Galtung: A Structural Theory of Imperialism. In: *Journal of Peace Research* 8,2 (1971), pp. 81–117, here p. 81.

2 John A. Hobson: *Imperialism: A Study*. London: Nisbet 1902.

3 Frank Jacob (ed.): *Peripheries of the Cold War*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2015 (in print).

4 Gordon Marshall: Centre–periphery model. In: *A Dictionary of Sociology,* 1998. http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-centreperipherymodel.html (accessed 12.01.2015).

5 Ibid.

6 E. Spencer Wellhofer: Core and Periphery: Territorial Dimensions in Politics. In: *Urban Studies* 26,3 (1989), pp. 340–355.

dominance."[7] Both spheres create independent variables, and even if Western capitalism still dominates the states of the so-called Third World[8], postcolonial studies in different disciplines have shown that the colonial periphery was not passive in this relationship. Many centers were highly influenced and impacted by the colonial periphery.[9] Some fields also highlight the need for a borderless approach, without any cultural prepossessions to study both spheres on an equal footing.[10]

The different humanities disciplines have a lot to gain by researching this correlation, especially with regard to interdisciplinary research projects. Research in various fields, e.g., urban studies[11], literary studies[12], or economic geography[13], has been based on the concept, but there is still sufficient room for a higher level of interdisciplinarity, especially in the 21st century, which is the most 'global' century in human history. Mass communication, mass media, and big data[14] are available almost everywhere. As a consequence, research has also become global, expressed through international conferences, research cooperation, and transnational projects. Opening this research to interdisciplinary approaches is not a new goal, but I believe the academic community can do more in this regard. Consequently, this new interdisciplinary journal was established to provide a broader insight into the different humanities

7 Jon Naustdalslid: A Multi-Level Approach to the Study of Center-Periphery Systems and Socio Economic Change. In: *Journal of Peace Research* 14,3 (1977), pp. 203–222, here p.203.

8 Paul James: Postdependency? The Third World in an Era of Globalism and Late-Capitalism. In: *Alternatives* 22 (1997), pp. 205–226, here p. 205.

9 Ania Loomba / Suvir Kaul / Matti Bunzl / Antoinette Burton / Jed Esty (eds): *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. Durham, NC: Duke UP 2005; Francis Barker / Peter Hulme / Margaret Iversen (eds): *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP 1996. Sanjay Seth (ed.): *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge 2013.

10 Blai Guarné: The World Is a Room: Beyond Centers and Peripheries in the Global Production of Anthropological Knowledge. In: *Focaal* 63 (2012), pp. 8–19.

11 Adam Grydehøj: Constructing a Centre on the Periphery: Urbanization and Urban Design in the Island City of Nuuk, Greenland. In: *Island Studies Journal* 9,2 (2014), pp. 205–222.

12 Robin MacKenzie: Centre and Periphery in Lawrence Norfolk's *The Pope's Rhinoceros* and Christoph Ransmayr's *Die letzte Welt*. In: *Orbis Litterarum* 67,5 (2012), pp. 416–436.

13 Jiaping Wu: Between the Centre and the Periphery: The Development of Port Trade in Darwin, Australia. In: *Australian Geographer* 42,3 (2011), pp. 273–288.

14 Kenneth Neil Cukier / Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger: The Rise of Big Data. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139104/kenneth-neil-cukier-and-viktor-mayer-schoenberger/the-rise-of-big-data (accessed 10.01.2015).

from an interdisciplinary perspective. By combining history, political and social studies, media studies, and literature, along with performative arts studies and other subfields of the humanities into a single journal with a global and transnational perspective, the disciplines will hopefully be enriched by a broader exchange of concepts and ideas.

This first volume, which deals with the correlation between Center and Periphery, is a first attempt at using diverse disciplines to analyze such a global issue. In the first section, Henner Kropp, Ingo Löppenberg, and Dina Mansour analyze forms of receptions which exist between the center and the periphery. Kropp deals with the image of Russian America in the Czarist Empire, while Löppenberg focuses on the Inuit in Imperial Germany. Mansour adds a perspective on the role of gender and religion within the Islamic context of modern Europe.

The second section deals with forms of exchanges between the two spheres. Oliver Schlenkrich and Christoph Mohamad-Klotzbach investigate the interrelationship between democratization and foreign aid flows from the center to the periphery, while Evangelidis Vasileios describes the development of technological progress by analyzing center-core exchanges. Finally, Jeffrey Shaw shows how philosophical and religious ideas of self-transcendence come into existence via the exchange between intellectuals from distinct cultures from different spheres.

The third section explores how stereotypes which arise from the geographical and cultural distance between center and periphery also lead to exploitation. Julia Harnoncourt highlights the exploitation of workers in peripheral Brazil. Liony Bauer continues with an analysis of the consequences of 'economic securitization' for the Roma minority in postwar Germany. The section concludes with a study by De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway into the rewriting of colonial historiography in post-colonial Ghana.

The final part investigates the artificial construction of center and periphery stereotypes. Solveig Lena Hansen and Cathrin Cronjäger analyze how Jeanette Winterson transcended a spatialized Other, an artificial periphery, in *The Stone Gods*, and Kyle J. Wanberg offers a discussion of a theory of global aesthetics which could create a world literature, instead of one that is determined by the center based presumptions. Last but not least, Julia Brühne highlights the interpretation of Mexican border crossing, nostalgia, and identification in Robert Rodríguez's movie *Machete* (2010).

In conclusion, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the authors for their patience, the members of the scientific board for their support, as well as Denise Martinez and Tim Keogh for their invaluable help during the final days of editing. Special thanks are also due to Frank Schlöffel and Matthias Naumann for their belief in the project and their unlimited help during the whole process of conceptualization, planning, and editing.

New York, January 2015
Frank Jacob