

Chapter 2

Marginality and Marginalization

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2.1 Introduction

Marginality was recognized a relevant topic of geographical research in early nineteen-nineties when the Study group on Development Issues in Marginal Regions started to work within International Geographical Union. The same issues have been studied long before that, but with the formation of a study group and the following commissions all addressing marginal regions or marginality, we focused our attention on areas and regions that all face similar problems due to their position at the edge (fringes, border, ...)—i.e. on the margin of something. That something may be spatial, social, economic, political etc. A ‘marginal’ position is therefore the starting point of marginality research in geography. When we are talking about regions or certain areas being in such position we would normally use a notion marginal regions (areas) and the process of putting them in such position is therefore marginalization. Finally the basic characteristic of such regions (areas—social groups, societies) is marginality. It all seems pretty simple and logical as long as we do not try to precisely define all mentioned notions. Leimgruber first defined marginal regions (Leimgruber 1994) more than two decades ago. He came to a conclusion that marginality is so wide notion that we cannot define it in a simple clearly distinct way. Besides, he also emphasized the importance of scale. Altogether that means that the definition of marginality can only be a very complex one. That may be the reason that, despite Leimgruber’s first definition from 1994, and his book *Between Global and Local* (Leimgruber 2004), that is devoted to marginality and marginal regions and to globalization, we still continue the debate about the meaning of marginality and about the forms in which it can be observed. In this chapter I would like to present some of the basic ideas about understanding

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the notion of marginality from existing literature. I intentionally do not analyze the meaning and the definitions of globalization as my intention was to focus as much as possible on marginality and marginalization, although the relation between marginality and globalization is also very important.

Globalization per se is a very vague term. The use of the concept, as observed by Robertson almost a quarter of century ago, diffused enormously during 1980s “... across large number of areas of contemporary life in different parts of the world. By now, even though the term is often used very loosely and, indeed, in contradictory ways, it has itself become part of ‘global consciousness’, an aspect of the remarkable proliferation of terms centered upon ‘global’” (Robertson 1992, p. 8). Globalization undoubtedly plays major role in the process of (de)marginalization. Marginal areas, regions, social groups are this way or another influenced by the effects of globalization. In this chapter we present the broad meaning of the term marginal (marginality, marginalization) as it is explained in dictionaries and then come to some of the definitions presented by different authors and finally try to compile them in a way that we believe that could be useful for geographical research of marginality and marginalization.

2.2 Marginality from Different Angles

2.2.1 *Explanations of Words Marginal and Marginality*

The first question that we need to ask, when we are talking about marginality is what kind of noun is that. There is no doubt that it derives from adjective marginal. So it should be in similar relation to the word as popular is to popularity or actual to actuality etc. Dictionaries explain this relation as “the state of being” or in case of marginality “the property of being marginal” (American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. S.v. “marginality.” 2011). Therefore somebody who is popular is experiencing popularity and somebody who is marginal is experiencing marginality. It may also be something and that something is showing characteristics that can be seen as marginality. So when we are talking about marginality we are talking about the noun that includes things, actions, characteristics etc. that all together manifest the state or property of being marginal or in case of popularity the state or property of being popular. Popularity of a movie star is characterized by the numerous fans that watch that star’s films, buy different products promoted by that star, follow the star on social networks, read media news about the star etc. On the other side the popularity brings movie star several opportunities for well-paid work, influence and power. Popularity is not limited to persons, it can also be attached to things and ideas. It is, however, always connected with a large number of people all liking the same person, group, thing or idea. Marginality on the other hand is much more complex because the adjective

marginal has numerous meanings and therefore marginality may be understood in many more ways than popularity.

Let us see what are the common explanations for the adjective marginal in four different dictionaries cited at TheFreeDictionary.com.

The first and the second explanation in three out of four dictionaries (American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language 2011; Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged 2014; Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary 2010) explain marginal with the position at the margin or close to the margin. Some explanations are more detailed as well as wider like the first explanation in American heritage Dictionary: “*Of, relating to, located at, or constituting a margin, a border, or an edge*”. The other two are “*of, in, on, or constituting a margin*” and simply “*pertaining to a margin*” in the third of the above cited dictionaries. The second explanations are “*being adjacent geographically: states marginal to Canada*”, “*close to a limit, especially a lower limit: marginal legal ability*” and “*situated on a border, edge, or fringe*”. All these explanations have in common that marginal designates position or location. From this point of view we can consider them as spatial or geometric. That is why these explanations are the closest to geography.

The next set of explanations that is similar in the above cited dictionaries is from the field of economy. Marginal from economic point of view is “*... enterprises that produce goods ... at a rate that barely covers production costs*” and “*... commodities thus manufactured and sold*” (American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language 2011), “*... produced and sold at the margin of profitability: marginal cost.*”, “*... small change in something, such as total cost, revenue, or consumer satisfaction.*” as well as “*... agricultural land on the margin of cultivated zones*” (Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged 2014) or “*selling goods at a price that just equals the additional cost of producing the last unit supplied.*”, “*...goods produced and marketed at margin: marginal profits.*” (Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary 2010). What all these explanations have in common are costs and profitability. Margin in these cases is a line between profit and loss and marginal is the situation of being just above this line. The only case that has to do with objective space is the explanation from the field of agriculture—land on the margin of cultivated zones. In this case the margin is spatial as well as economic. The land that is so unproductive that it can provide only minimum resources for bare survival is usually at the edge of settled area, close to the line that delimits inhabited and uninhabited areas and far from densely populated areas.

In politics marginal can be “*...designating a constituency in which elections tend to be won by small margins: a marginal seat.*” according to Collins English Dictionary (2014) and “*A constituency in which elections tend to be won by a small margin and may therefore be likely to change hands.*” according to Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words by Diagram Group (2008).

From the field of sociology surprisingly only one out four dictionaries have single explanation “*having contact with two or more cultural groups but not fully accepted in any of them*” (Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary

2010). One would expect many more explanations as the first association connected with the word marginal would probably be the image of persons and social groups at the edge of society being partly or completely excluded.

Marginal as a synonym for insignificant can have variety of uses such as “*barely within lower standard ...*” (American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language 2011) and “*at the lower limits; minimal for requirements: marginal ability*” (Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary 2010). In both cases the margin is close to the line that is delimiting important from not important and acceptable from unacceptable (satisfying the requirements from not satisfying).

The rest of the explications are “*... written or printed in the margin of a page.*” (American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language 2011), (Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged 2014), “*A plant that grows with its roots submerged in the shallows at the edge of a pond or stream.*” (Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words by Diagram Group 2008) and the last one from the field of psychology “*Relating to or located at the fringe of consciousness.*” (American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language 2011).

As we can see from the above presented explanations, marginal is always “... at the edge (fringes, border)” of something, so it designates the position. In most cases this is not a position within physical world. Nevertheless this is not crucial for geographical interest in marginality, because geographic research should focus on spatial distribution of “marginal ...” and spatial consequences of “marginal ...”. The question that we have to resolve next is what do the three dots stand for! With other words who or what are we interested in when we are using the adverb marginal. Are this marginal individuals or marginal social groups or maybe marginal areas (regions, nations)? Or is it maybe all of that?

2.2.2 ISSMR and PIMA—Initiatives Interested in Marginality in Developed Countries of North Atlantic Area

When reviewing the history of the IGU Commission Marginalization, Globalization and Regional and Local Responses it is apparent that its work stemmed from the research of physically marginal areas, mainly of northern Europe, North America and of remote mountain areas. However, it was not only geographers who focused on the problems of these areas. At the beginning of the nineteen-seventies when Great Britain and Ireland were joining the European Community, academics from different fields and government officials from Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Norway met to discuss the problems of marginal regions in North-Western Europe. They started biannual seminars in 1972 and formally established the International Society for the Study of Marginal Regions (ISSMR) at their ninth meeting in Scotland in 1987. As stated on the webpage of the 2007 conference “*The purpose of the Society is to ensure the continuity of ...*” their “*... hitherto informal efforts to bring together*

people with a common interest in the problems of marginal areas in industrialised countries in the North Atlantic region, notably Canada, Norway, Ireland, Scotland, Finland, Wales and Sweden.

The Society aims to encourage an informed and interdisciplinary approach to an understanding of the problems of marginal regions in these countries, to promote active research on these problems by professional and academic practitioners, to disseminate the work of the Society as widely as possible through seminars and publications, and to seek funds to enable these aims to be carried out.” (OM Høgskulen 2007). The Society is open to any individual or organization that wishes to participate.

Another group of researchers and practitioners held annual meetings in nineties under the name PIMA (Consortium for the study of Perceived Planning Issues in Marginal Areas). It was established in 1989 and focused on “*various aspects of marginal areas defined either in locational or developmental terms. Members of the core group ...*” represented “*... universities in the United states, Sweden and Ireland ... subgroup within PIMA*”... *has focused attention on studies of areas located between urban centres and rural peripheries.*” They named these areas as “*Intermediate Socio-economic Regions—ISER*” (Persson and Wiberg 1995).

2.2.3 United Nations University Definition of Marginal Areas

The name marginal areas was also mentioned in United Nations University’s publication from the beginning of eighties about natural resources for human development (Ruddle and Rondinelli 1983). Interesting enough authors did not consider the definition of marginal areas as a problematic one:

The term “marginal area” is a convenient shorthand that defies simple definition. The term has come to be used for convenience to refer to an area that is distinguished by some or all of the following characteristics:

- *geographical remoteness (peripheral to the most highly developed and populous areas of a country);*
- *high levels of ecological fragility or extreme or recurrent man-made or natural hazards;*
- *dispersed, heterogeneous populations of minority ethnic groups living at subsistence levels;*
- *actual or perceived lack, or low levels, of physical and social infrastructure;*
- *lack, or low levels, of access to the towns and cities where services, facilities and economic opportunities are usually concentrated;*
- *economic backwardness or depression;*
- *“low productivity” of economic activities using current technologies and techniques, which fail to return the profits on investments that could be realized elsewhere; and*
- *populations with little or no political influence on the decisions affecting their lives.*

Marginality from this point of view derives from physical remoteness (low accessibility to services and working places), ecological fragility, low population density, ethnic structure, having an underdeveloped economy, the unavailability of resources or inability to use them and isolation from political influence. The definition is simple and covers the main characteristics of marginal areas. However, in geography we use the concept of the region from the micro to macro level. So we definitely have to consider the scale. That is one of the important things pointed out by Leimgruber in his book: *Between Local and Global* (2004, p. 15). He gives an example of Saar-Lor-Lux transborder region (Saar, Lorraine, Luxemburg) stating that “*Looking at its location within the European Union, the Saar-Lor-Lux region is doubtlessly central. From an economic and traditional resource perspective (coal and iron ore, steelmaking), on the other hand, it is rather marginal. Similarly, the politico-administrative heterogeneity of the three countries involved constitutes significant drawback. However, the existence of peaceful and intensive transborder contacts since World War II speaks in favor of centrality.*” Marginal or not is therefore dependent from the “spatial” scale. However, the time dimension is also very important and Leimgruber considers “time” scale as equally important. There are numerous examples of once prosperous regions that have fallen into decline because the resources that their success based upon were depleted or lost importance because of the change in technology.

2.2.4 *Leimgruber’s Understanding of Marginality*

When Leimgruber first defined marginal regions (1994), he proposed four different approaches:

- **Geometrical.** *In this sense, marginal regions would be those at the geometric periphery of a larger area (e.g., a State, a Continent or an otherwise territory)*
- **Ecological.** *This view is ambiguous: it can either be taken as the natural potential of an area for human survival, or as the state of the environment.*
- **Economic.** *Marginality in this case would be defined by the production potential, accessibility, infrastructure, attraction within a space economy.*
- **Social.** *In this case we would focus on minorities and socially marginal groups, according to various criteria (ethnicity, language, religion etc.).*

These are not all of the possible approaches, he also mentioned political and cultural approach, but he further elaborated only on the above-mentioned four. A decade later, in a more recent work, he only kept the *geometrical* aspect in combination with newly included *systems* and *processual* one (Leimgruber 2004, p. 56). Systems aspects could be simply explained as being outside the system (economic, political, social). The system does not need the marginal “part” and it

has to survive on its own at a subsistence level. Of course only being outside the system from one point of view does not necessary mean marginality. Leimgruber gives the example of Switzerland. This country is not a part of EU and is therefore, in a way, outside the system, but it is impossible to say that it is marginal in any aspect (Ibid., p. 61). Processual aspect of marginality encompasses types of marginality that derive from different processes: (un)intentional human activities. After Mehretu and his co-authors Leimgruber quotes four types of processual marginality:

- contingent,
- systemic,
- collateral and
- leveraged.

The first one is an outcome of market competition, where some actors are uncompetitive and thus marginalized. Systemic marginality is produced by hegemonic forces within political and economic system that generate inequities trough the distribution of social, political and economic benefits. Collateral is a kind of a byproduct of certain process or simply: somebody living in a marginal neighborhood otherwise not marginal may be considered marginal due to the fact that he lives among marginal neighbours. Leveraged marginality is more intentional and can be described as a pressure on the labor force in developed countries because of the competition of low paid workforce in the countries of the global South. The first are thus becoming marginalized (Leimgruber 2004, pp. 61–62).

Leimgruber’s understanding of marginality, as presented above, is a very broad one and requires aspects and scale to be considered in order to approach marginality as a geographical research topic. In their 2012 article Leimgruber with co-authors (Dery et al. 2012) states that geographers did not pay much attention to what sociologists have to say about marginality and vice versa. We devote some more attention to social aspect of marginality that has been mentioned when we were presenting the definitions of marginal.

2.2.5 Park’s ‘Marginal Man’ as an Example of a Sociological Viewpoint of Marginality

Probably the most common use of the adjective marginal: “to characterize a person’s or social group’s position in society” is often overlooked in geographical research. In sociology marginality is more or less a synonym for social exclusion. The concept of marginality as constructed by Robert E. Park a sociologist from Chicago school of Sociology is closely related to migration and immigrants. He is writing about the “marginal man” (Park 1928, p. 881):

One of the consequences of migration is to create a situation in which the same individual—who may or may not be a mixed blood - finds himself striving to live in two diverse cultural groups. The effect is to produce an unstable character - a personality type with characteristic forms of behavior. This is the “marginal man.” It is in the mind of the marginal man that the conflicting cultures meet and fuse.

Six decades later Adam Weisberger reconstructed this concept “*in order to yield a more complex general theory of marginality*” (Weisberger 1992, p. 425). Marginality was in this case defined by Park as “*a state of limbo between at least two cultural life worlds*”. Marginality is therefore within this theoretical framework determined by socio-cultural factors. Weisberger’s reconstruction tends to produce an improved structural analysis of marginality that would be valid for investigation of different empirical cases. His argument is that marginality is constituted of different social coordinates. A man that no longer fully belongs to his old culture (i.e. of the area of his origin) and is not integrated into the new one constructs the responses to his situation within these new coordinates in order to alleviate or resolve his double ambivalence. Weisberger’s typology is designed of four divergent responses:

- assimilation,
- return,
- poise and
- transcendence.

Marginal man may use one or more of these possible answers in his attempt to resolve the ambivalence and crosscutting pressures that he experiences.

Weisberger states that Simmel’s “*Stranger*” influenced Park when he was constructing his image of a “*marginal man*”. Simmel views on spiritual conflict and instability, according to Weisberger, embodied in many ways what the conventional Park’s marginal man should be. “*The Stranger*” is one that is near and far at the same time, the one who comes today and stays tomorrow. These characteristics are showing basic instability, unsecure social position that makes life complicated and unsatisfactory.

The difference between Park’s marginal man and Simmel’s stranger, according to Weisberger, derives from different situation in Chicago and in Germany. Park was confronted with tremendous ethnic heterogeneity of Italian, Polish, Irish, Ukrainian and other ethnic minorities that were in transition from the old world to the new one. That is why Park’s marginal man “... *appears to be a bewildered foreigner who is on the road to successful assimilation, joining the dominant culture and sacrificing his ethnic peculiarities to the melting pot.*” (Weisberger 1992, p. 428). Simmel on the other hand was a Jew in ethnically homogenous Germany and as such was “*in society but not of it, unable to enter society in the way, many ethnic groups in America did.*” (Weisberger 1992, p. 428).

Weisberger claims that Park does not capture the full extent of the ambivalence that characterizes marginality and that he understands marginality as a single social position. While Park observes that the marginal man is unable to cut off from his original culture and to merge into the new one and therefore remains on the margin

of both, Weisberger states that he is also unable to return to his original culture or at least he is not able to do that without the influence of the new one. So if Park considers the marginal man's position between two cultures unidirectional, Weisberger speaks about a structure of double ambivalence. Within this marginal man wants to return, but cannot, wants to stay, but cannot, wants to assimilate, but cannot, wants to reject the new culture, but cannot. From this double ambivalence Weisberger extracts his four possible theoretically pure responses that we have cited above.

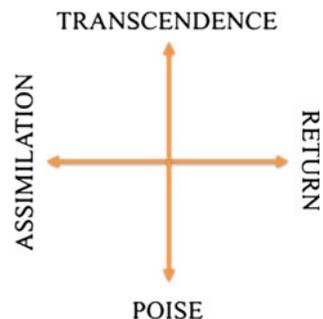
Assimilation means the absorption of the cultural standards of the host society. Of course that means that the former practices originating in his old culture have to be abandoned. Return means that the marginal man goes back where he came from and has to reconstruct what he has lost while he was confronting with the new culture in the host society. His interpretation of the culture of his origin can never be the same as before because of his new experiences. Transcendence is actually an attempt to find a third way that is supposed to overcome the opposition of both cultures. Usually this means that marginal man adopts radical political, philosophical or cultural ideas. Finally poise is nonresponse—meaning the abiding in ambivalence often causing loneliness and anxiety.

Within this concept marginality is the consequence of a process in which migrants from one culture encounter another. The products of such collisions are conflicts that may result in new combinations of elements of each culture, created by the most sensitive and creative among immigrants. However, there are many different factors influencing particular marginal situations that, change through time and space.

In graphic terms responses to marginality can be presented graphically as shown on Fig. 2.1. Of course ideal responses (those on both axes) are not common in real life. Usually the individual's response would be somewhere between the two axes closer to one or another within four possible combinations (four quadrants).

Presented revised sociological concept of marginality is without any doubt an interesting tool for the analysis of immigrant groups and their confrontation with the ambivalence situation that they are faced with in the host society. With the worsening political situation, instability and armed conflicts the urge for migration is growing not to mention the economic reasons.

Fig. 2.1 Directions of marginality [drawing according to Weisberger (1992, p. 432)]



2.2.6 *University of Bonn's Center for Development Research Approaches to Marginality*

Another concept that often tends to associate with marginality is poverty. Gatzweiler with co-authors from Center for Development Research, University of Bonn researched the roots of extreme poverty in connection with marginality (Gatzweiler et al. 2011). They start the presentation of their research with a statement that the number of poor globally grew despite economic growth quoting Grant and Shepherd saying that: "Policies that redistribute wealth from growth are often not in place." It is a statement similar to simplified definition of systemic marginality. "Proximate reasons for the exclusion can be that the extreme poor:

- live in unfavorable areas (poor agricultural asset base, poor or no transport infrastructure),
- can (for various reasons) only make minimal use of their labor and lack opportunities to acquire skills,
- spend most of their effort to achieve a calorific and nutritional minimum,
- are socially or ethnically excluded or lost their role or status in society, e.g. because the income earning household head passes away, because of disease, or as a result of remaining childless, or because of being born into a class of extreme poor,
- are excluded from public services or poverty reduction programs." (Ibid., p. 1)

These reasons are in a way showing different characteristics of marginality as can be seen from different perspectives (spatial, social, economic). The above cited authors are emphasizing the correlation between extreme poverty and physical remoteness (rural areas), low accessibility to all kind of services and the status of (ethnic) minorities. They define marginality as "*an involuntary position and condition of an individual or group at the margins of social, political, economic, ecological and biophysical systems, preventing them from access to resources, assets, services, restraining freedom of choice, preventing the development of capabilities, and eventually causing extreme poverty.*" The emphasis is on an individual or a group, but the reason for marginality (which is an involuntary position)—is not (practically) outside the system, as discussed by Leimgruber under the systems aspect of marginality—in this case it is the position at the margin of different systems. Gatzweiler et al. (2011, p. 3) are also emphasizing the role of spatial and environmental dimension of the concept of marginality. Their approach is multidisciplinary and based on complex adaptive system thinking, complexity and sustainability science in order to "... *shift from predominantly economic views toward examining multiple factors and their evidence as informed by systems-based analyses*". They also include ecological systems because they believe that the patterns of marginality emerge from the relations between casual variables from ecological and social systems (Ibid., p. 4). They observe marginality from the perspective of complexity and dynamic systems and therefore, according to Kay, they claim that they "... *no longer see systems as complicated and principally*

predictable, with answers to problems which can be correct with some degree of probability, given sufficient information is available. Instead, complex systems are characterized by irreducible uncertainty and scientists can arrive at possibly correct answers, at best. In a complexity setting, ‘being correct’ changes its value. When decisions directly affect people’s lives and their survival, being roughly right is better than being precisely wrong” (Ibid., p. 4). According to this they find different marginality patterns and claim that poverty may be explained by different types of marginality that cause it. Their categorization encompasses types with societal dimensions such as social, political, cultural economic as well as bio-physical categories with dimensions such as geographical and agro-ecological. However, they consider this only as one of several possible categorizations. They adopted another one from livelihood approach that consider identification of different kind of capital (social, financial, human, manmade and natural) as a starting point. They believe that different causal networks produce different types or patterns of marginality (Fig. 2.2).

Marginality according to Gatzweiler and co-authors can only be explained by networks of causal factors, not just by one of them alone. Different factors combined together lead to marginality. “Having a low income alone, for instance, is not a sufficient cause for qualifying as marginalized, as someone with no income could be cared for within a family or social group. That means, in combination with underlying causes of being excluded, experiencing discrimination or not having access to services and facilities, causality crystalizes to specific causal networks of marginality.”(Ibid., p. 7). Marginality is understood by cited authors as the situation in which a person or a (social) group is trapped. It is also involuntary and whoever finds himself in such situation tries to escape from it aiming to achieve better

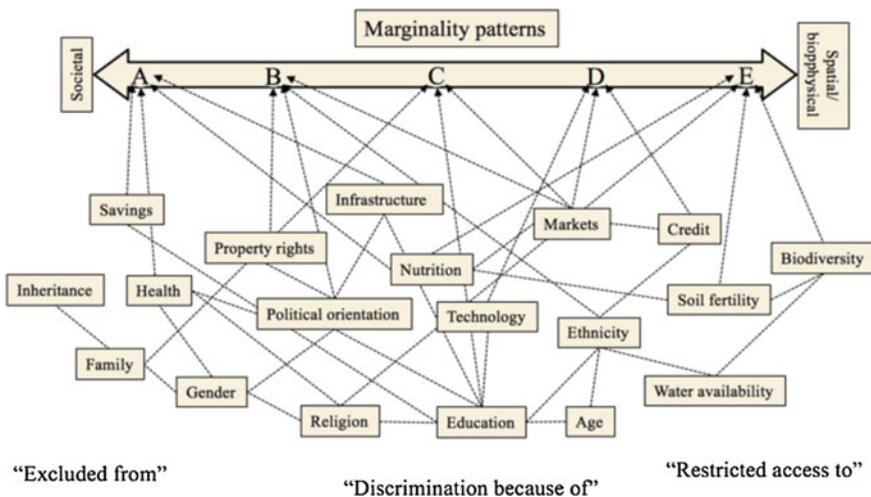


Fig. 2.2 Examples of causal factors underlying different marginality patterns (adapted after Gatzweiler et al. 2011, p. 6)

quality of life. They believe that every individual or social group is a part of multiple systems and marginalized are at the edge of more of them. To change their marginal situation they need to move from the edge in order to gain the access to the benefits that the systems provide (access to goods and services). Even though they consider spatial dimension as very important within the complexity of causal networks, they do not operate with the term marginal areas or marginal regions. The reason may be that their primary focus is on poverty.

2.3 Geography of Marginalization or the Geography of Marginal Regions

After presentation of the above considerably different notions of marginality, we need to consider how are they related to geographical research of marginality where the spatial aspect should play the most important role. The question is: “Do we practice geography of marginalization or geography of marginal regions when we research different aspects of marginality and marginalization from geographical point of view?”.

If we chose the later then we obviously practice a sub-discipline of human geography with strong emphasis on the regional aspect. It can be thus compared with rural or urban geography. In order to do our job we need to define the vital characteristics and the extent of marginal areas. That means that we need to delimit them from the rest of the territory. As in case of urban-rural division this is a more or less impossible task. No single definition of marginal areas can be so accurate and precise that we could simply draw a line between marginal and non-marginal areas. As we presented above, marginality is too complex and approaches so different and always at least partly subjective. Marginality is therefore, by my opinion, not objectively measurable. We can state that a certain area or region is (at least partly) marginal using appropriate set of indicators that can show the presence of certain characteristics of marginality in the area (region). However, it is not very common that researchers of marginality would first try to objectively define the case study area's marginality. Rather they choose it on the basis of their subjective judgment. Very often this includes only one or two aspects of marginality, such as remoteness, usually connected with lower economic status of the case study area (low economic output or high share of people living under the threshold of poverty etc.) . The majority of chapters in this book present the problems of case study areas that have been chosen in this manner. This may seem contradictory to the emphasized complexity of the topic and consequential need for an interdisciplinary approach to it. However, this is a subjective choice made by experts, knowing the topic is usually not problematic. Besides, through the research of the problem, their focus on the characteristics of marginality usually become more and more obvious.

The problem is that we do not have broader research enquiries focused on marginal areas, such as involving large team of experts from different fields. For now we have a lot of fragments revealing different faces of marginality in geographical space, but no overall, general study of the phenomenon of marginal areas. To do such a study we need to provide a basic framework in order to know how and what to research. We can do the research at different scales, but we need to choose the approach and to come to an agreement how are we going to define what is a marginal region/area in different regional/scale context.

If we consider marginality as the state of being marginal then we could say that a marginal region (country) experiences certain kinds of marginality. In the case of a region this could be correct statement as region may be understood as a system formed by society and environment. 'Region' has certain common characteristics and encompasses certain part of Earth's surface (i.e. a certain territory). In the case of an area, it would not be completely wrong, but we believe that marginality of a territory in a sense that it is far from something, can be equally well described with the adverbs like remote or distant. Use of the notion of marginal with an area or region should be limited to areas where marginality is experienced by individuals or social groups or society in general to such an extent that it can be considered as an important and noticeable issue. From that point of view we could classify regions according to their degree of marginality into regions with:

- no marginality,
- traces of marginality,
- clearly observable marginality issues,
- severe marginality problems and
- marginalized regional society.

Considering scale from a global perspective there is no such macro-region (continent, nation), where there would be no marginality. Even if we go downward it is very hard to say that there are regions at the mezzo-regional level where there are no individuals or social groups that are experiencing at least some kind of marginality. Therefore it is possible to state that, potentially, regions without marginality can only be found at micro-level. They need to be small and homogenous enough to be without any marginal individual or group.

Regions with traces of marginality are those where marginality is not an important issue, but there are some individuals or social groups that are marginal. Again we have to consider the scale and, similar to what has been stated above, we can say for this regions that smaller scale means a higher probability that some regions can meet the criteria of having only a few individuals or social groups that find themselves in marginal position, despite the fact that the society tries to prevent marginalization.

Regions with clearly observable marginality issues cover all scales. Europe as a continent could be classified as this kind of region at continental level. It is a

continent with the lowest level of inequality, but even in the most developed European nations we have social groups that are obviously marginalized. This may be immigrants, jobless, and ethnic minorities such as Roma population in many European countries. At the level of single nations the situation may be similar or worse and in case that we consider Turkey as a European nation (being partly in Europe) then we could probably classify it even in the lower class as their challenges with the Kurd ethnic group can be considered as a severe marginality problem. With the rising problem of refugees and illegal immigrants Greece and Italy can also become nations with severe marginality problems, not to mention the regions within these countries with the highest numbers of these marginalized social groups. These regions are undoubtedly regions with severe marginality problems. All the humanitarian aid cannot change the fact that immigrants trying to enter EU are marginalized on their way to their final destination and many of them after they reach it too.

The last and the lowest class is again one that can be observed at smaller scale. It can be the type of region that is described by Leimgruber (1994, p. 6, 2004, p. 60) as Reynaud's 'angle mort' and 'isolat'. It is an area or region existing on its own, almost completely out of the system, existing at the margin of survival. That is of course the extreme example of completely marginalized society from economic, political, cultural and social aspects. However, a less extreme situation is also possible when only from some of this aspects the regional society as whole is trapped into a marginal position.

Marginality research can therefore take place almost everywhere, but it can focus on many different topics, considering the scale and the type of marginal region that the research is dealing with. The regions with traces of marginality, with clearly observable marginality issues and with severe marginality problems will probably attract the research interest for the following:

- who is marginal (identification of marginal individuals or social groups),
- what are the manifestations of this marginality (identification of the type of marginality),
- what are the consequences of this marginality (identification of consequences),
- what is causing this marginality (identification of marginalizing factors),
- what is the role of geographical (geo-spatial) factors in marginalization process (identifying the role of geographical factors).

Ideally a geographical research of marginality in certain marginal region would involve all of the above, but in practice, researchers usually limit themselves to just some of the listed topics as can be seen throughout this book too. In this sense we should probably talk about the geography of marginalization rather than the geography of marginal regions. In cases where the researcher focuses only on one problem, no matter how important its role in the process of marginalization is, we cannot talk about geography of marginal regions, it may only be considered as a partial study within geography of marginalization.

2.4 Conclusion

In this text we presented different views of marginality and the common denominator of most of them is that marginality is very complex and hard to define. It needs to be approached from different viewpoints observed from different perspectives considering the scale. Better co-operation between different disciplines that are interested in marginality would certainly bring better understanding of this phenomenon and of drivers of the process of marginalization. Marginality can be observed as an important cause of extreme poverty or at least as a reason for the lower quality of life of those that are trapped in marginal situation (that are marginalized by the rest of the society).

In order to achieve better research results in the field of marginality studies geographers should adopt a ‘geography of marginal regions’ approach. At present their efforts are atomized in numerous partial studies of different problems either connected with marginalization, either taking place in remote and underdeveloped regions or both. The examples of such studies are in the following chapters of this book. They reveal some important new findings, but we need to go further in future, and synthesize findings such as these into a broader theoretical framework of marginal regions, which draws on the insights discussed above. Hopefully we can overcome this insufficiency with a more holistic regional approach performed by an international team of experts. In this sense this book series may play important motivating factor.

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