

Hauswedell, Tessa; Körner, Axel; Tiedau Ulrich: *Re-Mapping Centre and Periphery. Asymmetrical Encounters in European and Global Contexts*. London: UCL Press 2019. ISBN: 9781787350991.

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Scholarly debates about the globally uneven distribution of power in different social spheres across time, and the correlating frictions between centre and periphery, core and margin, metropolis and province, tend to follow one of two broad paradigms. The first sees the world as an interdependent system or a structure, in which the power of the core to influence development at the margin is considerable. The second paradigm pays more attention to multi-layered connections and networks, and sees peripheral development as less straightforwardly conditioned by the centre. In both lines of interpretation, centres and peripheries are relative, unstable concepts shaped by historically changing relationships of asymmetrical reciprocity. Most contributions in this volume are centred on the latter more than the former paradigm. The subtitle „Asymmetrical Encounters in European and Global Contexts“ accurately captures the book’s focus on a broad range of encounters between unevenly positioned spaces in Europe and the world. The focus is indeed on *spatial* asymmetries, although the book also clearly demonstrates the extent to which space is entangled with time, especially with regards to the notion of modernity radiating across the globe from a centre.

Many chapters in the book are concerned with tracing progress and innovation to non-dominant regions or highlighting the unfeasibility of adopting models from the centre without proper adjustment to local demand at the periphery. One of the strengths of the volume lies in its imaginative selection of cases that link these concerns to political, industrial, and agricultural modernisation, scientific, trade and municipal networks, nationalism and consumption, or the concepts of identity, margin and metropolis. The book thus makes a welcome contribution to ongoing efforts in the social and human sciences

to „re-map centre and periphery“, as the title indicates. While it suffers somewhat from the common limitation of collective volumes, where the contributions are held together by a relatively light interpretative framework, the introduction by Axel Körner does provide an excellent prelude, together with the discussion of centre-periphery models by Marta Petrusiewicz.

A closer engagement with for example the world-systems theory of the late Immanuel Wallerstein, briefly mentioned in the introductory chapters, could have provided a basis for more general reflections on different forms of hierarchy and ways of dealing with asymmetrical relations. In the macroscopic view of the world as a system or structure, the struggles to define the rules and values of global space in any given social sphere raise the crucial question of power and its different manifestations. Rather than being explicitly discussed or theorised in the book, this question is mostly present in the background, for instance in the two excellent contributions by Nicola Miller and Harry Stopes, who present a comparative approach to parallel asymmetric relations in different fields of social activity. Focusing on knowledge production, art, technology and city planning, theatre, opera and municipal networking, Miller and Stopes demonstrate how successful „centre-periphery“ transfers depend on finding the right balance between international form and local content. Both chapters underline the extent to which these transfers go beyond filling universal models with local substance. They also draw attention to the key role of mediators, as witnessed for example, in Stopes’ chapter, by the Paris-educated composer Émile Ratez, reconciling internationally recognised form with local content in turn of the twentieth century Lille. Reversing the perspective, it goes without saying that exporting ‘local content’ without a filter is rarely a winning strategy for the margins. Speaking directly to the world (universalising local debates) is a privilege of centres that can afford to be blind to the invisible structural inequalities of international space. But mediation is crucial in this form of hierarchical communication as well. When universal models are transferred to non-dominant

spaces without sufficient adaptation to local demand, they produce the kind of results that Miller demonstrates with her discussion of Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires. This port and costly engineering project sacrificed local expertise for the allegedly superior and universally recognised scientific practices of English engineering. Assessing the failure of the project, Miller points to the key question of what counts as proper knowledge in the republic of science.

Apart from the fine examination and quantitative analysis of the meaning of metropolis by Tessa Hauswedell, in relation to London as an imperial city, the view from the centre does not occupy a prominent place in the book. One cannot help but wonder how the overall picture that emerges from the volume's focus on the dominated part in centre-periphery relations would have been affected by greater attention to the centre – as a model, a reference culture and the locus of power struggles in an international space. As an example of the latter perspective, in her much-debated *La République mondiale des lettres* (1999) the late sociologist of literature Pascale Casanova presents a useful reflection on what the centre might mean. What Casanova in her account refers to as the 'literary now' or the 'Greenwich meridian' of international literary life constitutes a standard that is established in the centre by actors from the margins and the core alike. In cultural matters, symbolic capital related to primacy and prestige often determines the distribution of power. As two contributions to this book demonstrate, competition and conflicts serve to both divide and unite international space. By problematising the North-western centred view of European political history and drawing attention to liberal constitutional revolutions in the Mediterranean in the 1820s, Jens Späth highlights divisions created by political and symbolic rivalries.

In his discussion of nationalist discourse and Italian early nineteenth-century philosophy, Alessandro de Arcangelis examines diverse views of asymmetrical relations by the Piedmontese Vincenzo Gioberti and the Neapolitan Bertrando Spaventa. These men of letters advocated different solutions to the unfavourable position of Italy's post-

renaissance intellectual history vis-à-vis the new centres of European intellectual life. Where Gioberti mobilised past greatness for asserting Italian primacy and philosophical independence, Spaventa looked beyond the divide between nationalism and cosmopolitanism; he too was engaged in the pervasive symbolic struggles over classification and primacy – tracing 'modern' European philosophy to its 'Italian' origins – but resisted withdrawing into the isolationist position of cultural nationalists, insisting instead on the cosmopolitan and 'circular' nature of European thought. Gioberti and Spaventa, we could add, personify two strategies for dealing with the fact that national philosophies are embedded in a configuration described by Goethe as *Weltliteratur*. This space is also market 'where all nations offer their wares', which has its insides and outsides, where accumulated symbolic capital is the currency, and where, following Pascale Casanova, rivalries are entrenched in a global structure of power as it is constituted in any given moment.

This collection of essays brings new insights into the multi-layered and challenging subject of centre and periphery. The most ambitious attempts so far at theorising the relationship have been made by political geographers, world-systems theorists, postcolonial theory, and sociologists and historical sociologists working in the spirit of Pierre Bourdieu. While this book could have benefitted from a closer engagement with some of these fields of research, as such it provides a helpful addition to existing studies of asymmetrical encounters and to space, as not only the material setting for social relations, but also the sense historical actors have of space, their ways of being in the world.

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