

SILVIA ARU, MATTEO PUTILLI

## FORMS, SPACES AND TIMES OF MARGINALITY AN INTRODUCTION

*Introduction.* – A particular form of handicap, a place of deviance and deprivation, a no man's land (Sierra, Tadić, 2008), a no-go area, a lawless zone (Waquant, 2007), but as well a space of (and for) resistance (Hooks, 1990), possibility and opposition to the mainstream (Shields, 1991; Pileček, Jančák, 2011).

Within the international debate, multiple different (and sometimes conflicting) definitions of marginality are possible. This plurality is confirmed by a plethora of studies that decline marginality both theoretically and empirically, at different geographical scales and according to diverse domains (not just economic and social, but political and cultural as well).

Similarly, marginal subjectivities (that is, those who live in the margins) have been depicted in several modalities. The condition of marginality is generally associated to the show up of modernity, either to underlie the processes of alienation, segregation and domination associated to it or, in alternative, to evoke forms of sociality and traditions considered as lost in modern times. Thus, marginality usually refers to conditions of disadvantage and exclusion but, on the other side, it may sound captivating if intended as a place of hybridity, variety and alterity.

In its vast plurality of possible meanings, terms and definition (marginalisation, exclusion, segregation, ...), dimensions (social, economic, political, ...), scales (districts, cities, regions, ...) and spatial allusions (areas, spaces, places, territories, ...), any tentative to define and systematize marginalisation risks to be unsatisfactory. By the way, this condition and difficulty does not extinguish, but further stresses, the urgency for studies on this issue, principally in a period of global economic crisis that, since 2008, seems to have produced new and deeper forms and conditions of marginality.

For all these reasons, this special issue of the Bollettino collects a selection of papers upon the topic of marginality, resulting from the VI Italian-French Seminar of Social Geography, held in Cagliari on May 9-10, 2013. The seminar was titled "Social justice: marginality, isolation, citizenship" (1).

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(1) The seminar is part of a list of meetings promoted by the Italian-French network of Social Geography. Previous seminars have been organized in Parma 2008; Napoli 2009, Caen 2010, Roma 2011, Nantes 2012). In Cagliari three thematic

The seven papers included in this issue address the topic from different perspectives: the meanings of the term “marginality” in different schools of thought in social studies (Amato); the condition of spatial isolation of the city of Saint Malo according to its historicity (Marengo); the cultural alterity of urban practices within the margins (Madoeuf); the margin as a socio-spatial enclave within the city (Pfrish); the relation between the condition of marginality and the processes of neoliberalisation (Florin; Semmoud, Troin) and post-industrialization (Ruggiero).

By way of introduction, this contribution proposes a synthetic itinerary in two steps. The first one focuses on the different ways and modalities to look at the margins according to the most recent international literature. The second one moves from the critical debate upon the marginalization effects of neoliberalism to conclude with some reflections and suggestions for future research on the issue.

*The condition of marginality.* – According to Gremek (1979), marginality should be intended as the social cost of modernization as it is inextricably connected to the processes of capital accumulation. In fact, it is a common opinion that marginality is a typical modern phenomenon, unknown in pre-modern societies. Within these, marginality could be intended as a delimited and circumscribed phenomenon, related to specific categories of person (homeless, vagabonds or people discriminated for their ethnicity or religion) and forced to spatial forms of segregation (ghettos). In modern times, instead, marginality becomes an economic, social and political condition, generally diffused thorough society and generated by the advancement of industrialization and urbanization. According to Waquant (1999, 2007, 2008), the different conditions and situations of marginality reveal the intrinsic contradictions of modern capitalism. In this perspective, the margins have been also defined as the wild zones or the black holes of international capitalism (Castel, 1995).

But as long as the definition of marginality has changed, also the way to study it within social research evolved at the same time. In the last years, social theories have strongly contested the idea of marginality as a given and inevitable condition, usually defined on a strict economic logic (Cullen, Pretes, 2000). In this perspective, being marginalised was intended in terms of a lack of economic resources and, consequently, as an inferior social condition. This interpretation was transferred and applied to the most different economic and social contexts, and permitted to conceptualize the margins throughout a series of opposite dichotomies: centre/periphery (above all the others), but also inclusion/exclusion, justice/injustice, and so on (Giugni, Hunyadi, 2003). Following this perspective,

the relationship between what is considered as marginal and what is not can be described as a continuum of different stages of integration, from the complete exclusion to the full inclusion within society. Moving along this continuum permit to “evolve” from a condition of marginality and to become part of the community.

Recently, this “deterministic” and linear idea of marginality has been shifted towards more complex and differentiated definitions that consider the multiplicity of forms through which marginality may be lived, perceived and experienced by people. Being marginal is no more a given and external condition, but it is (also) an internal and personal experience that results from a continuous negotiation between actors, society and places. The condition of marginality is the product of material relations as well as symbolic ones.

New questions arise: how marginality is perceived by people? Is it possible to clearly distinguish between what is marginal and what is not? How to describe the myriad of forms and dimensions of marginality, and the multiple ways into which these can be experienced? And, finally, who decide whom and what is marginal or not? (Graham, 2006; Balibar, 2012). Answering these questions, marginality appears as a multidimensional and multi-scalar issue, strictly connected to people’s positionality. Actors that experience marginality in a particular situation, may result integrated in others. People that are marginal within a particular social system, may recover a position of power in some others (for example, males belonging to an ethnic minority in relation to the women of the same minority) (Sibley, 1995).

Such a flexible and variable definition of marginality is social and spatial at the same time. Spatial marginality results from processes of social, economic and political exclusion and stigmatization (Mohan, 2002). Ghettos, enclaves, slum, favela etc. are a spatialized form of marginality (Cullen, Pretes, 2000) which strongly influences the quotidianity of people at the margins.

Because of its centrality, stigmatization deserves a particular attention. It can be conceived as that particular process through which places obtain the stigma of the people who live into them, and people are stigmatized for the place from which they belong (Mohan, 2002). The spatial stigma is a territorial mark, a blemish of place (Waquant, 2007) that directly impacts the quotidianity of people belonging from stigmatized places, following them during the time of their life and invading their social relationships and reducing the differences among different people to categorize them under a unique stigma (Sierra, Tadić, 2008; Garbin, Millington, 2012).

The processes of stigmatization permit to reflect upon the different discourses and representations that, in different times, define the condition of marginality. Which are the practices, which the images, the words, the symbols that, within specific systems of power, concur to define who and what is

marginalized? Why in different periods, different places are stigmatized? (Spaek, Graham, 2000). Every historical period and every political and economic system produce internal logics and practices of marginalization and stigmatization, as well as specific definition of inclusion and exclusion, center and periphery, and so on. According to Cullet and Pretes (2002), every society produce its own marginality.

*Marginality and neoliberalism.* – In the last years, social studies upon marginality have gained a new impulse in relation to what has been defined as the "neoliberal turn" that invested the transition towards post-Fordism and the uncertain phases of economic globalisation (Jessop, 2002; Peck, Theodore, Brenner, 2009). The reinforcement of neoliberalism either as a new conceptual orthodoxy (Peck, Tickell, 2002) or as a technology of government (Ong, 2007) is considered, within the international debate and the papers here collected, a generator of new forms and conditions of marginalisation (Wacquant, 2006). Rather, the most critical positions refer to marginality as an intrinsic feature of the neoliberal project, founded on the retreat of the State and the contextual advance of the markets through processes of privatization, deregulation and accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2006).

The neoliberal turn is variably defined as the advancement of markets as a rationale for government (Peck, Theodore, Brenner, 2009), a political and economic project that favour the logic of the accumulation of capital (Harvey, 2006), a form of anti-politics and de-democratization (Brown, 2003), into which the State is submitted to the rule of the market (Aalbers, 2010; Balibar, 2012).

While neoliberal policies redefine the boundaries between private and public as well as between State and markets or society and capital, they also redesign margins and marginalities by the imposition of new forms and processes of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion.

The social cost of neoliberalism has been described in terms of an accentuation of economic polarizations, inequalities, social and environmental injustices at different geographical scales (Castree, 2005; Harvey, 2006; Springer, 2008). Insecurity, instability, social fragmentation and precariousness assembly together in what Loic Wacquant (2007) calls the "advanced marginality" of the neoliberal times.

In spatial terms, the city is the elective place in which the effects of neoliberal policies are the most evident. (Castel, 1995; Sager, 2011). From the one side, through the strategies of privatization and liberalisation that produce a favourable environment for the economic capitalization and valorisation of public and private spaces within the city (Weber, 2002; Peck, Theodore, Brenner, 2009; Ruggiero, in this issue). From the other side, in terms of growing spatial inequalities. Urban policies in western countries seems to increase (instead of reducing) the boundaries and the disparities between privileged groups

and (variously marginalised) minority groups (quite often identified on ethnic base) (Van Eijk, 2010).

The most recent studies on the processes of gentrification (Peck, 2010; Lees, 2012), on the revanshist city (Smith, 2002) as well as that on the various interventions of urban renewal, regeneration, valorisation and touristization of different parts of the city show well such a structural contradiction.

From the one side, these processes stand as an opportunity for some advantaged social groups (above all for that creative class that represents the main target of most neoliberal urban policies) (Peck, 2005). From the other side, they are marked by increasing signs of securization, normalization, social control, discrimination and segregation (Rossi, Vanolo, 2010; Castels, 2007; Hubbard, 2004).

The spatial stigmatization of urban suburbs or places to demolish and to rebuild and renew is the first step towards the alienation and the privatization of public spaces, the imposition of new social norms and the introduction of new ways of life (Weber, 2002) with the effect to impose the displacement of residents to urban suburbs where prices are lower.

According to Balibar (2011), then, inclusion may be as violent as exclusion, if acted in terms of forced assimilation and conversion. Thus, the institution of normalized and protected spaces within the city redesign the boundaries and criteria for those who can access, and automatically excludes those who have not. The private use of urban spaces produces the confinement and the marginalization of people that do not possess the requisites to be part of them (Hubbard, 2004).

Intended as such, urban policies may have the indirect effect to increase social and spatial injustice, in form of social inequalities, processes of ghettoization (Soja, 2010) and negation of the “right to the city” of people (Lefebvre, 1968; Attoh, 2011).

Thus, the urban landscape resulting from the critical literature upon neoliberalism is fractured in a plethora of conflicts between opposites (Davis, 2007): public and private, citizenship and economic value, gentrified and marginalized spaces and so on (Salzano, 2012; Lussault, 2009; Wacquant, 2007).

*The margins beyond the critics to neoliberalism.* - Even if critical studies are used to consider marginality in terms of a social and economic cost of neoliberalism, other readings are possible.

From the one side, margins may also represent the place into which neoliberal policies are contested and contrasted by movements of resistance and protest. A growing body of literature is recording cases in which people at the margins show up, raise their voices and claim their rights (Florin, in this issue; Harvey, 2013; Brenner, Marcuse, Mayer, 2011; Dufaux *et al.* 2011).

From the other side, margins may be described according to their alterity and diversity. People living in the margins are sometimes capable of reinterpreting and redefining social norms and rules

(Madoeuf, in this issue). In the margins, forms of auto-organisation and auto-regulation may spring out and provide for the lacks of the State (Florin and Semmoud, Troin, in this issue).

In such a diversified (and somehow confuse) landscape, it is our opinion that margins need a new investment in terms of research within geography and, broader speaking, social studies. This is particularly true in a moment in which critical studies are beginning to come back to the debate upon neoliberal policies and their socio-spatial effects. As Barnett (2005) and Ferguson (2010) point out, critical literature on neoliberalism has become a mainstream, with the result to block and to trap (rather than to free) social research within strict ideological schemes and bias. Within urban studies, for example, the evocation of the “neoliberal model” in critical terms has become a premise taken for granted, rather than a hypothesis or an opinion to discuss and to contextualise (Collier, 2012).

The same for the margins. The condition of marginalization and marginality should be investigated in its spatial and concrete form and manifestation, and not just in terms of aprioristic allusions to the unequal condition of neoliberalism. The recent return, within the international debate, of terms and concepts such as “right to the city” or “spatial justice” pushes in the direction of re-reading the margins in their relationship with public policies, social rights and citizenship. Attention should be paid to the specificity of the different social contexts and power relations that produce different and particular situations of marginality, injustice, stigmatization, etc.

In conclusion, we focus on two points that are, in our opinion, particularly useful to relaunch the debate on margins and marginality. The first is the crucial role of empirical research. Marginality should be investigated paying attention to the multiple ways into which it is perceived and experienced by people, as well as to the meanings, significations, resources and tensions that are connected to the condition of marginalization. As we can see from many of the studies reported within this special issue, fieldwork is a privileged observatory to unveil the meaning of marginality and to distinguish between external definitions (that is, the process of stigmatization) and internal perceptions.

The second point, at last, is the spatial focus of the studies on marginality and neoliberalism. As Robinson and Parnell (2012) point-out, the major mount of urban research upon neoliberalism is focused on a (relatively small) number of western and northern cities (mostly European and American). These are considered as the classical cases into which neoliberal policies were born and, as a consequence, their most significant expression. Anyway, other realities - think of the Mediterranean cities reported in this issue - not equally considered until now, are experiencing and implementing neoliberalism, sometimes in a quite original way and with consequences and impacts that need researchers' attention.

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[silviaaru8@gmail.com](mailto:silviaaru8@gmail.com), Università degli Studi di Firenze, Dipartimento di Storia, Archeologia, Geografia, Arte e Spettacolo

[matteo.puttilli@unica.it](mailto:matteo.puttilli@unica.it), Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche e Aziendali