


# GLOBALIZATION, MARGINALIZATION AND CONFLICT. A REVIEW

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The volume *Globalization, Marginalization and Conflict* (the result of the IGU Thematic Conference: *Geographies for Peace*, held in 2017, in La Paz) comprises five parts: *Introduction*, discussing *Marginalization as the Dark Side of Globalization, Society, Conflicts and Marginality, Identities and Borders, Poverty and Disparities*, and *Conclusion*.

Although the book chapters focus on different, specific topics, covering various areas, including Europe, South Africa, India, Middle East, South America, etc., the volume succeeds to construct a unitary analysis, which has as main goal to draw on the negative sides of globalization processes. How and why globalization generates marginalization and how, through marginalization, various forms of conflicts are triggered constitute research questions, formulated in a form or another by authors in all book chapters. Specific responses are given by authors, considering the peculiarities of the tackled topics, of the focused on groups, of

cultural/historical embedded accumulations, of spaces and places.

The theoretical frame of the volume is clearly constructed, the editors of the volume making specific the definitions and understandings of globalization, marginalization and conflict, which are either implicitly or explicitly present in all book chapters; through these, the analytical background is well constituted, the book being unitary, when looking at it from this angle, too. Globalization is seen mostly in its mechanisms of generating marginality, and conflict is the

follow up of it – in brief, this is the intricate relation between these phenomena and concepts, seen in their logical array and conditioning. The ways in which the authors approach globalization and marginalization, underlining their relation are briefly presented in *Chapter 1. Marginalization - the Dark Side of Globalization*: “While economic globalization is often praised as being of benefit to mankind, it manifests many dark sides, although there are probably bright ones” (Fuerst-Bjeliš & Leimgruber, 2020, p. 5). The attempt to underline the negative consequences of globalization and to focus on how and why the process in itself put certain communities at social margins, deepening the vulnerabilities of already disadvantaged categories of people is clear. Another intention of the book editors is to explain how and why the polarization of the world is conducted, identifying the main agents of these processes, and the main discourses through which they are produced and reproduced:

“In global terms, but of course with inevitable regional, local and at the end also severe individual implications, perhaps one of the darkest sides of globalization is, in fact, the polarization of the world led by multinational corporations (MNC) within the philosophical paradigm of growth and development” (Fuerst- Bjeliš & Leimgruber, 2020, p. 5).

The second part of the book, *Society, Conflicts and Marginality*, is structured in three chapters: *Civil Society vs. Globalization and Marginalization: Polarized vs. Organic Thinking* (Walter Leimgruber), *Do We Need to Change the System? Think Global and Create a Local Alternative* (Kristjan Nemac), and *Armed Conflicts as Generators of Marginalization* (Stanko Pelc).

The first chapter of this part, authored by Walter Leimgruber, analyzes the ways in which individuals, ordinary people, and civil society are neglected, marginalized, put apart in the neoliberal economy frame, identifying strategies and ways in which the profit-oriented way of thinking, free trade agreements lead to these processes, depriving people of their basic needs and rights. The author not only demonstrates that the quantitative growth is a “phaseout model” but also explores the possibilities and necessity to turn it into a qualitative growth, suggesting paths to be followed:

“An alternative to the linear model is organic thinking (Wood 1987). It is based on the fact that everything is related to everything, that there is a mutual influence, even if at first sight it might not be obvious. Indigenous peoples are fully aware of this (UNEP 1999), but in the course of the development of civilization, such knowledge was forgotten or side-lined” (Leimgruber, 2020, p. 21).

The next chapter, authored by Kristjan Nemac, based on analyzing two specific cases of alternative spatial governance (in the hinterland of Slovene Istria, and the abandoned factory in Koper), approaches the potential of marginalized areas, underlining how and why good practice of demarginalization is created by the local community itself and how spatial governing has the good effect of empowering people in these circumstances. The necessity to encourage bottom-up models as properly working and being functional at local levels is also tackled, the main aim of the chapter being:

“to reflect some possibilities for achieving social change. We believe that no quantitative changes can be achieved through top-down actions because they require changes of social patterns and relationship between people. For this reason, we focused primarily on bottom-up changes” (Nemac, 2020, p. 44).

In the following chapter of this part of the book, Stanko Pelc, on one hand, shows how marginalization, and its consequence, marginality, are drivers of conflicts, meanwhile stressing on and explaining why marginalized people are extremely vulnerable and become so often victims of conflicts, in the frames of the “violent world we live in”. The examples given are from different at-risk parts of the world, the author analyzing the increased number of displaced people and refugees from this angle as well:

“The above cases show that marginality can be one of the reasons for armed conflict, just as that marginalized groups and communities are often subject to one-sided violence of the authorities, which may provoke escalation into an armed conflict” (Pelc. 2020, p. 60).

The third part of the book, dedicated to *Identities and Borders*, includes four substantial chapters: *Relict Borders as Present Social-Cultural Divides in Czechia: An Example of Religious Landscape* (Tomáš Havlíček), *Environmental Response to Marginality: Between Borderlands and Littoralization in the Eastern Adriatic* (Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš), *Other and/or Marginal: Coexistence of Identities in the Historical Borderlands in Croatia* (Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš), and *Geography Education and the Borderlands: Using a Marginalized Discipline to Teach about the Margins* (Lisa Millsaps, Thomas B. Larsen, Mary Curtis and Maria Monakhova).

The whole part approaches the issue of boundaries, analyzing their persistence, viewing them as results of conflict, debating their multiple meanings, highlighting both their fixity and flexibility in various spatial and historical contexts, and explaining the processes behind producing, reproducing, and changing them over time.

Tomáš Havlíček discusses the meanings of the relict/phantom border, particularizing the role of religion (and generally of culture) in constructing and maintaining it, and its special significance in relation with more specifically constructed ethnic borders and political boundaries. He proposes a diachronic and synchronic analysis, reconstructing the time frame before World War II, then mentioning the incorporation of the German settled Sudeten region into the Third Reich. The author explains mainly how an ethnic border (between German immigrants, arrived in the area since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the Czech population) turned into a political boundary, which disappeared in 1945, and how and why it plays nowadays the role of a relict/phantom boundary, continuing a socio-cultural divide:

“In Europe, several major changes in political boundaries have occurred, especially in the twentieth century, but some ethnic borders, in particular, have survived and are still undergoing historical development also within the individual states” (Havlicek, 2020, p. 65).

The next chapters (6 and 7) of this part of the book are authored by Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš, who is also one of the editors of this volume. In Chapter 6, the author focuses on the Eastern Adriatic region since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, analyzing, on one hand, the environmental response to marginality and considering marginalization processes as given by the Mediterranean karst environment, littoralization, and the borderland position which triggered insecurity and discouraged sedentary life. The core of Chapter 7 is to analyze how and why the early modern Croatian Borderlands, being an area of insecurity, through the emigration of autochthonous sedentary population, became the living space of semi-nomad pastoral communities, called Vlachs and Morlachs, perceived and labelled as “others”. Being culturally and religiously different from autochthonous groups, they triggered a peculiar form of “othering” which is approached in depth in this chapter:

“Every border area experiences not only divides, but also maybe even more contacts of differences – from (political or administrative) systems to cultures, lifestyles and everyday practices of people living there” (Fuerst-Bjeliš, 2020, p. 97).

An approach of borders from a methodological and pedagogical perspective, considering borderlands as marginal regions is proposed by authors in Chapter 8. The authors deconstruct the intricacies of teaching borders and a geographical perspective, emphasizing their interconnectedness and multiple facets of “pairing disciplinary geography with border pedagogies” (Fuerst-Bjeliš & Leimgruber, 2020, p. 112), as well as the role and relevance of geography in understanding globalization and marginalization, although the domain has been

on the margins of American education for long periods. A specific framework for teaching borderlands, looking at them as historical documents, as places of convergence and in people's perceptions, with specific arguments, is well designed in the mentioned chapter.

The fourth part of the book consists of other four chapters (*Living on the Edge: Housing Challenges of the Urban Poor in Port Elisabeth, South Africa* (Leizel Williams-Bruinders and Anton de Wit), *Caste Rigidity and Socio-economic Condition of Dalits in India* (Sahab Deen), *Roma, Marginalization, Globalization and Conflicts over Water: The Case of Slovenia* (Alenka Janko Spreizer), and *The Circulation of Knowledge at the Time of the Agroecological Transition, the Case of Drôme Valley* (Sabine Girard, Pierre-Antoine Landel and Corentin Thermes).

The first chapter of this Part (Chapter 9 of the book) brings into discussion the living conditions of the urban poor in South Africa, highlighting the negative legacies of the apartheid. The authors analyze how and why the present infrastructural investments exacerbate social inequalities (discussing how South Africa's most ambitious top-down social housing projects manage to create marginality, perpetuating already configured marginalization processes). They document that the relocated residents felt marginalized in new locations, and did not have a home feeling there, explaining the reasons of these anxieties. Spatial dimensions of racism and discrimination and derived policies and practices ("The government is a far cry from not only providing dignified housing for all but from building urban settlements which are socially sustainable"; Williams-Bruinders & de Wit, 2020, p. 127) are also approached in this chapter, the foci being on understanding the causes and meanings of living in marginal locations, and especially in informal settlements situated at the city edges.

Sahab Deen (the author of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter) critically presents the caste system in India, deconstructing its economic, social implications, mostly emphasizing its negative consequences on the Dalits. The Dalits constitute the lowest stratum in the specifically constructed caste system, and, as the author points out, the history of creating such a hierarchical system and its victims and excluded categories is based on official interpretations of the Hindu sacred texts. Perceived as untouchable and impure, the atrocities against them are even nowadays social realities, being mentioned in the text that in 2013 the European Parliament has recognized caste discrimination as a global social problem:

"The pathetic socio-economic condition of Dalits is the result of discriminatory social laws and practices based on the hierarchical social order of Indian society" (Deen, 2020, p. 160).

Chapter 11 is authored by Alenka Janko Spreizer. The main aims of the text are to analyze the mechanisms of discrimination against the Roma people, to explain how and why Roma communities have always been pushed to the margins of society, and the forms of the process of "othering" in the specific case study the author proposes. She emphasizes the ways in which these communities became the target of racist discourse, being always put apart, never belonging to mainstream, presenting older and current forms of antigypsism in Slovenia:

"Similar to other eastern communist states, socialist Slovenia too exploited Roma unskilled or low-skilled workers, which can be interpreted, as racism of exploitation" (Janko Spreizer, 2020, p. 177).

The current agroecological transition in a region of south-eastern France, Drôme Valley, is the main topic of the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book, its authors pointing out how and why this process highlights the shifts of systems which are different in what concerns agricultural production and valorization, ways of production, and circulation of knowledge. Meanwhile, the coexistence of different models of agricultural knowledge and practices is systematically analyzed in this chapter:

“The transition to a sustainable agroecological system poses the question of a rearrangement of modes of production and circulation of knowledge. There are currently four co-existent systems” (Girard, Landel & Thermes 2020, p. 195).

Although the volume brings into analysis a considerable number of case studies, covering different spaces and places, different communities, it has very unitary theoretical and methodological frames and the authors make use of very similar definitions and understandings of globalization, marginalization, and conflict. They are seen in their array, interconnectedness, and determination: how and why globalization triggers marginalization (marginalization being one of the darkest sides of the globalization processes), why marginality triggers conflicts, why these phenomena are so deeply linked – are all very well addressed research questions and the texts respond specifically but also unitary to them. Meanwhile, the volume succeeds to construct a critical understanding of neoliberal economy, politics, policies and practices, emphasizing the ways in which they create inequalities and injustice in the world, the authors underlining the relevance and importance of local developments and community initiatives to fight against these negative consequences of neoliberalism.