

Boundary Zone between Cultural Worlds or the Edge of the Dominant Culture?

Two Conceptual Metaphors of Marginality

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis Group in Journal of Intercultural Studies on 10/12/2012, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07256868.2012.735111>. Please use the published version of the article for all citation and reference purposes.

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Abstract: Two notions of marginality are distinguished. The polycultural notion implies the existence of a boundary zone between cultural worlds. Its roots lie in Robert Park's notion of 'marginal man'. The unicultural notion assumes a single referent culture that has a normative centre and a periphery to which the 'social outcasts' are relegated. This usage is common in the public and policy discourse and in studies of crime and poverty, e.g. in Loïc Wacquant's theory of regime of advanced marginality. Conceptual theory of metaphor is used to work out this distinction and to explore the metaphorical foundations of the concept, connecting it to the basic metaphor of society or culture as a bounded entity. The issue of margin is thematized as principal for the notion of marginality. These findings are discussed in light of John Urry's and others' post-societal concepts of social and cultural life as well as Homi Bhabha's postcolonial notion of hybridity.

Keywords: boundary, culture, hybridity, marginal man, marginality, metaphor

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Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Svetlana Bankovskaya, Maggie Campbell, Vince Marotta, Vladimir Nikolaev, Jaan Valsiner, and the Kitchen Group at Clark University, for their comments on earlier versions of the manuscript. This research was supported by Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies Studentship (2009-2011).

‘Sociology Noir’ and the Invention of Marginality

The history of human sciences is laden with interest in various phenomena ‘on the fringes’ of the social fabric. For example, sociology has very often been a science of social groups that inhabit the lower strata of society. Roger Salerno aptly characterized the work of the Chicago School of Sociology as ‘Sociology Noir’ (Salerno 2007), arguing that in the United States of 1920s-30s there was an overarching cultural interest in the life of the social bottom, or the ‘subterranean’ social life hidden behind the middle and upper class urban facades. Since the works of these originators of institutionalized empirical social science, our enquiry with all good intentions was focused more often on the life of people who are poor, excluded, (im)migrant, alienated, oppressed, disempowered... Sometimes some of these populations are marked with the label ‘marginal’.

The present paper offers an analysis of this last label. Today this notion and its various versions and derivatives, such as ‘marginality’ and ‘marginalization’, are widely used to denote social phenomena that have to do with being ‘on the fringes of society’—with poor people, youth gangs, members of unorthodox religious sects, or the homeless. Sometimes, however, ‘marginality’ is used in a more positive sense—to denote people and groups considered creative and innovative, such as non-mainstream artists and thinkers. Feminist and postcolonial discourses advance the notion of marginality as a space of resistance against dominant discourses and forces, a space of critical interrogation and reflection. These discourses function in academia as well as outside it, and sometimes the margin and hybridity are celebrated as providing a disruptive perspective on dominant representations: “locating oneself in a hybridised space of in-betweenness allows a unique perspective to emerge from artists who claim mixed race ancestry” (Bolatagici 2004: 82).

A distinct version of ‘marginality’ is known in the history of sociology as the ‘marginal man’. This concept was introduced by the Chicago School of Sociology founder Robert E. Park (1928, 1937) and developed by his student Everett V. Stonequist (1935, 1937) to denote a specific social type, the person who lives *between* different social and cultural worlds, such as the migrant or mulatto. Admittedly, this is a gendered and racialized concept rooted in the patriarchal sociology of Park’s time (see Deegan 2005 and Marotta 2006 for illuminating analyses of this rootedness). And today this version, with the exception of acculturation research, particularly in cultural anthropology and psychology (Berry 2008, Rudmin 2003), is more or less abandoned as a discrete concept, with the wider notion of ‘marginality’ entering a host of other notions such as the already mentioned ‘disempowerment’, ‘alienation’, ‘subaltern’, ‘Other’, ‘oppression’, and ‘exclusion’. More often than not all these notions are used interchangeably in rhetorical chains to underscore the plight of the people in question.

Marginality as a concept, however, warrants specific investigation and, among other things, this concept is interesting because of the recognizable basic spatial metaphor that lies in its foundation. This metaphor is indicated by the root of the word: ‘margin’.

Following Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual theory of metaphor (2003, see Kövecses 2010 for an overview of the current state of the field), the central argument of the present paper is that the foundational metaphor of margin has long-ranging consequences for the use of the concept of marginality and for the implications drawn from using it. In particular, at least two distinct versions of the concepts can be traced in human sciences, one emphasizing an ethnocentric, *unicultural* approach to marginal population from the standpoint of dominant culture, the other accentuating the process of *polycultural* contact and interaction.

The proposed distinction is in some aspects parallel to the distinction between ‘Western European’ and ‘American’ concepts of marginality developed by Vladimir G. Nikolayev (2006), who employed a bibliographical approach to the comparison of uses of these concepts, focusing on contemporary Russian sociological literature (where, according to him, ‘Western European’ concept has an almost universal currency). I approach this comparison from a different standpoint, focusing on the metaphorical structure of the concepts. My labelling of the concepts is guided by this intention.

Methodologically, this paper offers a *conceptual and logical analysis* of the notion of marginality. Therefore, I will focus on analyzing and clarifying the possible ways of structuring the concept, using history of sociology and some of the current research on marginality as starting points. The emerging distinction between ‘polycultural’ and ‘unicultural’ notions—what could with some reservations be called ‘ideal types’ of these concepts,—therefore, should be considered a logical and heuristic device for examining existing theories and constructing new theories and methodologies for cultural and social research, and not an argument about the history of the concept in different traditions of social science, or an argument (such as the one advanced by Nikolayev 2006) about its current prevalence and use in different disciplines and countries. Although this distinction may be a possible start for such comparative and historical-bibliographical research, these issues fall outside the scope of this paper.

Polycultural Notion of Marginality in the Work of Robert Ezra Park

The process of migration was the theoretical cornerstone for the Chicago-style urban human ecology. Robert Park and his colleagues’ interest in migration was fuelled by the principal role it played in Chicago urban processes of the early XX century, as well as, more generally, by the centrality of migration in American cultural experience. Theoretically,

migration was one of the principal forces of social change, the impetus for processes of competition between populations which form the basis of human ecological processes. On a different level, Park's central focus was on how multitudes of people engage in organized collective behaviour—that is, on the mechanisms of social control, particularly under conditions of constant social and cultural change (Park 1936, Turner 1967; Tomasi 1998 underscores how this focus was rooted in Georg Simmel's sociology).

Groundbreaking explorations into the social type of the migrant, their personality, and the process of their adaptation to the new environment, were made by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki in their famous *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918), but it was only in 1928, in *Human Migration and the Marginal Man*, that Robert Park introduced the concept of the 'marginal man' (1928). This person (e.g. a migrant) or group (e.g. the mulatto) has already left their native culture but has not yet gone completely through the process of acculturation in the receiving culture and society (for the purposes of this paper I will use 'culture' and 'society' interchangeably).

For Park, among the most important influences in civilization were "migration and the incidental collisions, conflicts, and fusions of people and cultures which [competition, conflict and cooperation resulting from cultural contact] have occasioned" (Park 1928: 882). At the core of this contact was the marginal man, whom Park defined as

"a cultural hybrid, a man [sic] living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on

the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused.” (Park 1928: 892)

The concept was developed under influence of Georg Simmel’s ‘Stranger’, although there are notable differences in the two concepts (Levine 1977, Marotta 2006, Tomasi 1998). One relevant difference between the concepts is that Park’s ‘marginal man’ lives in two worlds while Simmel’s ‘Stranger’ does not aspire to assimilate (Levine 1977: 17). Simmel’s notion is closer to unicultural marginality discussed below.

Everett Stonequist (1937) examined in detail the social type of the marginal man (the ‘mixed-blood’) and elaborated on personality traits and life cycle of the marginal man, introducing the psychological dimension to such an extent that Robert Park, in his introduction to Stonequist’s book, emphasized that the issue of the marginal man is less an issue of a psychological, or personality, type than an issue of a specific *social process*, the process of acculturation (Park 1937: xviii). This remark is of central importance: marginality for Park (and for the purposes of this paper) is a *sociological* concept, denoting a specific social and cultural type related to processes of social-cultural contact and change. In that sense, it may or may not necessarily correspond to personality traits of a ‘marginal person’. Correspondingly, Park glosses over many important sociological and psychological issues, such as whether a particular person can become completely acculturated, and what is the ‘moral career’ of the migrant or racial hybrid.

It should be noted that, according to Vince Marotta (2008), Park’s account of hybridity was ‘organic’ in that hybridity and hybrid personality was seen as the outcome of a multiracial or migrant situation ‘unintended’ by the person. Today many poststructuralist accounts of hybridity

suggest an ‘intentional’, aware, active and creative persons, an issue to which I return in the concluding part of the paper.

Following his sociological focus, Park employed the concept of ‘marginal man’ in a functional way to account for the role of the migrant as a social type in the process of cultural contact. Thus, in addition to the emancipated Jew, Park extensively discussed the mulatto: a racial hybrid, a person of ‘mixed blood’, whose existence is possible, again, due to migration and mobility (Park 1931: 534). The mulatto is a social type that occupies a position between the stable, hierarchically organized racially defined social positions with distinct cultures. Hence the mulatto’s (assumed and described by Park in a stereotypical way) distinctive personality traits such as enterprising character, resulting from the peculiarity of the demands of the hybrid position. The mulatto “is, so to speak, a cultural as well as a racial hybrid” (Park 1931: 540).

Although Park clearly devalues the ‘Negro’ culture and considers the white culture—contact with which assumedly grants the mulatto ‘superior’ traits—‘superior’, this ‘culturally racist’ attitude should not obscure the fact that for Park the primary interest here is in the mechanisms of cultural and social change, and in the mechanisms of social control (Turner 1967). Consequently, as Vince Marotta observes, the mulatto’s superior traits, for Park, are of interest not because of their superiority by itself, but because for him “it is cross-cultural interaction per se and not the interaction with any particular culture that is paramount” (Marotta 2006: 426).

In a nutshell, already in late 1920s Park was concerned with what enables different groups and communities (and thus cultures) to come into contact that will rise above the purely symbiotic level of interaction without personal and cultural contact, to the upper levels of his ecological hierarchy of levels of social organization—economic, social, and moral (Park 1936).

Marginal persons—such as migrants and mulattoes—thus emerge as vehicles of cultural interaction.

For the sake of clarity this notion of marginality—the notion that has cultural interaction, mobility, and social change at its core—could be called *polycultural*. It implies the existence of multiple cultures that can come into contact, interact, and to various degrees change and even fuse. Correspondingly, people can become cultural hybrids—belonging to multiple cultures at once. This notion is quite far from the common use that the label ‘marginality’ has today: it does not emphasize ‘fringes of society’ so much as it emphasizes diversity, innovation and flexibility, and it could hardly be applied to those populations that usually are branded ‘marginalized’, such as homeless people.

Outcasts at the Fringes of Society: Unicultural Notion of Marginality

Today marginality is seldom employed in Park’s sense. It is rather used in what could be called *unicultural* fashion: in what is probably an outcome of the structural-functional paradigm in social theory, the label ‘marginal’ is often applied to those people and groups that deviate from the normative centre of society. In today’s usage the most obvious example of marginalized population is what in social sciences and policy discourse for many decades was called the *underclass* (infamously, Auletta 1982): extreme poverty coupled with reproduction of social status over generations is very often characterized as being on the margin of ‘good society’. Not surprisingly, there have been multiple attempts to link crime and deviance to these populations. The unicultural nature of this notion of marginality stems from the fact that its definition always implies a *mainstream*, a normative ideal of social living that the marginal people deviate from—wilfully, as the youth countercultures, or against their will, as the redundant workers in times of economic crises. In this sense, as Vladimir Nikolayev (personal communication, June 14, 2009;

cf. Nikolayev 1998) observed, it is an ‘ethnocentric’ concept reflecting a view from the inside of a space with well-defined normative set of reference positions. In other terms, there is always an implication of the societal centre—in terms of social structure, social norms, values, and behavioural patterns. The notion of centre was most famously discussed as a central macrosociological concept by Edward Shils (1975, see Hannerz 2001 for a review). And difference is established *from* this centre. Hence also some of the glorifying and celebrating uses of marginality, when marginality is portrayed as resisting the mainstream cultural and political conservatism, the dominant establishment, and the normative behaviours and lifestyles.

A recent example of unicultural conceptualization of marginality is the theory of ‘regime of advanced marginality’ introduced by Loïc Wacquant (1996, 2008). Combining statistical and ethnographic research on Parisian banlieues and ghettos of Chicago, he sketches the emerging regime of advanced marginality:

“the novel regime of sociospatial relegation and exclusionary closure (in Max Weber’s sense) that has crystallized in the post-Fordist city as a result of the uneven development of the capitalist economies and the recoiling of welfare states.” (Wacquant 2008: 2-3, footnote removed)

He outlines six distinctive properties of this new regime of urban poverty (Wacquant 2008: Ch.8, list adapted):

1. Dissolution of wage labour as the basis of household survival
2. Functional disconnection from macroeconomic trends
3. Territorial fixation and stigmatization
4. Spatial alienation and the dissolution of ‘place’
5. Loss of hinterland of social connections, relations, and webs of support

6. Social fragmentation and symbolic splintering of population

The unicultural character of this conception is evident already in this list of properties: this list is *negative* in that it defines advanced marginality as a loss of belonging to the normative centre of social structure. This centre is characterized by wage labour, connectedness to the economy at large, freedom of movement coupled with belonging to distinct homely places ('healthy' neighbourhoods and local communities), availability of social networks and community support, and social and symbolic wholeness of population.

While this theory has clear analytical and conceptual merits, it allows approaching a notable property of the unicultural conception of social marginality: it is barely distinguishable from the notion of social exclusion. Indeed, as is suggested by Svetlana Bankovskaya (2008, cf. Germani 1980: 49), there is a negative basis for functional definitions of marginality that follow Georg Simmel's (1950) account of the Stranger, and this basis is the lack of participation in social institutions, political structure, economic relations, dominant culture, and the deprivation and exclusion from the social whole. For example, following a cultural-structural-institutional approach, Manuel Castells draws on UN International Labour Office documents to define social exclusion as a

“process by which certain individuals and groups are systemically barred from access to positions that would enable them to an autonomous livelihood within the social standards framed by institutions and values in a given context. Under normal circumstances, in informational capitalism, such a position is usually associated with the possibility of access to relatively regular, paid labour, for at least one member of a stable household.”

(Castells 2010: 72, italics and footnote removed)

Operating in such terms opens up the possibility of discussing deviations from these standards—and when these deviations are localized in specific social groups or strata, which in turn can be localized in social structure (e.g. as ‘underclass’ in reference to the societal core of ‘middle class’ surrounded by ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ classes), the notion of marginality often emerges as unicultural—defined in relation to the cultural normative centre.

Given this mutual affinity of concepts of marginality (in unicultural formulation) and social exclusion, and in light of concerns of lack of construct validity voiced with regard to the notion of marginality (Del Pilar and Udasco 2004, Rudmin 2003), it appears that a *proliferation* of the concept is occurring whereby it loses its analytical power to distinguish and define specific and distinct phenomena. If people living in poverty are pooled together with LGBT activists and assistant professors under an umbrella notion of marginality, there seems to be little analytical sense (apart from pure rhetorical considerations) in retaining the concept in the vocabulary of theory construction and methodology of social sciences.

The polycultural notion of marginality, however, might still have some merits especially in light of the contemporary situation of global mobility and increase of cultural contacts in conditions of globalization. To better understand the properties of the two notions and to thematize, as Marotta (2008) suggests, the notion of boundary as constitutive of hybridity and marginality, I turn to examination of the metaphorical structure of the concept of marginality.

Marginality as a Conceptual Metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), human conceptual systems—including, of course, scientific conceptual systems,—are to a large extent organized by metaphors (my analysis here is inspired by the work of Kaspe 2008 and Urry 2000, who also draw on this theory). In simple terms, we understand some things (target conceptual domains) in terms of

other things (source conceptual domains). A classic example is the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR (as is customary in literature, I use capitals to mark conceptual metaphors as opposed to the particular linguistic expressions, including concepts). That is, we understand what argument is by applying our understanding of what is war and how it is structured (e.g. “Mary attacked Sue’s arguments”). In Lakoff and Johnson’s original formulation, certain metaphors—orientational metaphors—organize systems of concepts according to another concept, especially when this has to do with spatial orientation. For example, we routinely associate MORE with UP and LESS with DOWN (e.g. when stock prices are ‘going down’, meaning that they are decreasing). “Such metaphorical orientations are not arbitrary. They have a basis in our physical and cultural experience” (2003: 14). Kövecses (2010: 40) clarifies that such metaphors provide coherence for whole sets of metaphors in our cognitive system. Scientific concepts are also often structured metaphorically: sociologists routinely discuss ‘high’ and ‘low’ statuses, even when low-income workers occupy upper floors in tenements and high-income managers live on ground level in spacious single-family homes. Lakoff and Johnson also discuss a subclass of ontological metaphors that they call container metaphors—those that delimit and contain phenomena into bounded spaces. This kind of metaphor is particularly salient in giving shape to purely abstract entities with no physical dimensions whatsoever:

“even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container, we impose boundaries—marking off territory so that it has an inside and a bounding surface—whether a wall, a fence, or an abstract line or plane. There are few human instincts more basic than territoriality.” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 29)

Svyatoslav Kaspé (2008) emphasizes that scientific concepts very often are spatial metaphorical concepts. Marginality is clearly one of them. This concept serves both the

ontological function, providing basic understandable ontological status to the phenomenon, and the orienting function, organizing it spatially. The very genesis of the word, from Latin ‘margo’, boundary or border, suggests that marginality is a spatial, territorial metaphor. ‘Marginal’ refers to something related to an edge, border, boundary, or limit: MARGINAL PHENOMENA ARE SITUATED ON AN EDGE (e.g. ‘the underclass consists of people on the fringes of society’).

To be more precise, it is an element of a more general container metaphor. Metaphor of marginality is a part of the metaphor SOCIETY (or CULTURE) IS A BOUNDED SPACE: something that has the inside and the boundary, something that we could *enter into*, or *get out of*. This could be compared to the analysis of the notion of ‘region’ in the work of Annemarie Mol and John Law: “objects are clustered together and boundaries are drawn around each particular cluster” (Mol and Law 1994: 643). A simple notion of society as a bounded, clearly defined space,—e.g. ‘Russian Society’ or what in the US public discourse is often called ‘the Nation’—permeates studies of social structure, demography, stratification. This notion is tightly connected to the idea and the practice of nation-state (Billig 1995, Urry 2000). Among the purest examples of such usage is the notion of census—a snapshot picture of whatever is inside the state borders at the given date. Even though such a notion of society has been challenged in social theory of the past two decades, it still has currency in public discourse, in basic education in social sciences, and even in methodology when ‘country’ serves as an elementary reference point for data aggregation.

One of the most important arguments of Lakoff and Johnson (2003) is that metaphors have *entailments*: the way a concept is metaphorically structured has consequences for our understanding of the phenomenon we describe using the concept in question. Cognitively, we use our knowledge of the source domain to understand the target domain. Hence, using a spatial

metaphor to describe society has consequences for our understanding of social life (e.g. knowing what an edge of a sheet of paper is helps us understand what a ‘fringe of society’ is). When marginality comes into question, it appears that the two distinct notions of marginality introduced above have two very different metaphors of society as their foundations.

Centres and Peripheries: Unicultural Metaphor of Marginality

A unicultural concept of marginality is founded on a metaphor of society and culture as a singular container that has a distinct centre and a peripheral zone bounded by the margin. The genesis of this conception can be logically traced to Simmel’s functional definition of the Stranger, a definition grounded in his sociology of space—which is different from the implicit sociology of space in Park’s work (Levine 1977, Marotta 2006). The single most important characteristic of the Stranger is the distance from the group (Simmel 1950). He states that the Stranger is characterized by a unity of closeness and distance, by Otherness of the proximate and the belonging of the distant. Simmel suggests a certain freedom of the Stranger, and this freedom has to do with the said distance. Bankovskaya (2008) argues that the final point of the Stranger’s distancing (and therefore the total possible distance) is undefined, and therefore ‘graphically’ the Stranger’s position resembles a “[one-dimensional] vector, which has the group as the starting point, but that is not defined in its direction. Substantially it represents the process of distancing itself; the Stranger could be at any point on the vector, including the starting point (within the group)” (2008: 382).

This model illustrates the foundational metaphor behind the unicultural concept. Unicultural marginality is a corollary of the ontological metaphor SOCIETY IS A BOUNDED SPACE, where the container metaphor SOCIETY IS A TERRITORY is joined by the orientational metaphor SOCIETY HAS A CENTRE AND A PERIPHERY. This means that

society has a normatively defined centre and a periphery (Hannerz 2001, Shils 1975) with a continuum of positions in between. This centre could be defined in terms of social stratification (e.g. ‘middle class’—whereby TOP–DOWN status hierarchy is in fact a variation of CENTRE–PERIPHERY metaphor), social institutions and values (as in Castells’s discussion of social exclusion), or cultural practices. ‘Normal’ individuals and groups are those who participate (=are not socially excluded from) social institutions and values. Deviations from normality constitute the marginal populations of prostitutes, criminals, illegal immigrants, etc. This is the kind of populations Chicago School’s ‘Sociology Noir’ was so profoundly interested in (Salerno 2007).

An important tension arises with respect to the meaning of the ‘margin’. Two very different entailments of margin could be distinguished, the ‘EDGE’ and the ‘BOUNDARY’. Although they may sound similar, at a closer look the EDGE, in a unicultural concept, reveals that there is nothing meaningful, or more specifically, nothing ‘social’, beyond the edge of the ‘social’ (as paper ends at the edge of a sheet of paper; as opposed to what is behind a BOUNDARY, a notion meaningful in a polycultural concept of marginality).

Indeed, the ‘marginals’ in a unicultural conception do not live *ON THE EDGE* but rather occupy specific niches, or regions. It is evident in how stratification studies consider a society as a structure, with the poor occupying the lower *strata* in the social structure (not the undefined ‘outside’). In reality the ‘outclasses’ are not outside society, on the contrary, they could be characterized by variegated social life and profoundly complex social structure and identity (Duneier 1999), even if it does not correspond to the normative ideals of ‘good society’. In fact, the poor and the criminals are as well located in fields and spaces of Bourdieu’s (1985) social topology as university professors.

A well known geographical model—von Thünen’s isolated state (von Thünen 1966)—is an example of a very similar structure: a city (centre) located on an endless homogeneous plain with no other cities, with agriculture spreading away from the centre. This model was a very useful heuristic device for theoretical examination of spatial economy. A social topology founded on the metaphor SOCIETY IS A SPACE STRUCTURED INTO CENTER AND PERIPHERY is exactly von Thünen’s model applied to an abstract society instead of an abstract spatial economy. What is important for such social topology is that it does not logically presuppose the existence of *other centres* apart from the normatively legitimized unified centre of the given society, or the existence of an outer boundary or edge of economic/social space. In von Thünen’s model, there was no clear outer boundary either, only an undefined ‘uncultivated wilderness’ very far from the centre which cuts all communication with external world. Similarly, there is no other society that the Stranger could be attracted to.

A practical and political entailment of the unicultural metaphor is that marginal groups should either be gotten rid of, isolated, or returned into the normal society. The latter notion was analyzed by Michel Foucault who suggested that in modernity “a technique of normalization will take responsibility for the delinquent individual” (2003: 25). The unicultural EDGE is thus something that people and groups can move towards, but even if the public discourse rhetorically throws them out of society, sociologically we can only consider them as located ‘in the outer regions of social structure’.

Boundary Zones of Polycultural Marginality

A polycultural conception of marginality entails a very different founding metaphor. This metaphor is also a metaphor SOCIETY or CULTURE IS SPACE. However, the conception’s originator, Robert E. Park, explicitly wrote of the marginal man as “a man [sic] on the margin of

two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused” (Park 1928: 892). Here the metaphor is a container metaphor as well, and yet it yields MULTIPLE REGIONS that have BOUNDARIES between them. Indeed, this conception has more to do with boundaries than with margins, as it is possible to discuss margins without discussing what lies beyond them (as in case of an ‘edge’ or ‘frontier’), but it is impossible to do the same with respect to boundaries. This conception presupposes the existence of *at least* two, or possibly much more, centres, societies, and cultures, which can come into contact and interaction. Thus Park’s migrants occupied a transitional zone between cultures and societies, never belonging to either of those entities completely. Acculturation research (Berry 2008, Rudmin 2003) operates with a similar conception, although Park’s ‘marginal man’ would more often be discussed under the notion of ‘integration’, while ‘marginalization’ would be reserved for people who reject both their native and the receiving culture and society. This kind of research also often postulates the existence of a ‘dominant’ and a ‘minority’ culture, thus establishing a priority of one ‘centre’ over another.

Vladimir Kaganskiy, who expanded the standard distinction between centre and periphery into a more complex geographical scheme ‘centre—province—periphery—boundary’ (2001), argues that “in real environment there is always a distinction between its inner and outer parts” (2001: 62), and thus a boundary always presupposes a defined outside, a neighbouring territory. The boundary could be a barrier boundary precluding communication and mobility (e.g. the demarcation line between North and South Korea) or a contact boundary (e.g. the state borders within the European Union), but it always “consists of elements that simultaneously belong to two or more neighbouring systems and/or are situated between them without belonging to either” (2001: 86; see Kaganskiy 1983, on the distinction between barrier and contact

boundaries). The issue of belonging is a key issue for Kaganskiy: the “Periphery is a zone of underdetermination, half-belonging, the Boundary is a zone of overdetermination, double-belonging” (2001: 86). This geographical conception is vastly different from von Thünen’s model, and it could be used to clarify the metaphor underlying a polycultural conception of marginality. For Robert Park, the margin is structurally between multiple cultural and social worlds, and functionally it connects them, enables cultural contact, and opens the possibility for relations between cultural communities/populations to rise above the basic biotic (non-social) relations to complex economic, social, and moral relations (Park 1936).

To sum up, the polycultural conception of marginality is founded on a metaphor SOCIAL WORLD IS A SPACE, SOCIETY IS A REGION, THERE ARE MANY REGIONS, REGIONS HAVE BOUNDARIES, BOUNDARIES ARE SPECIAL EXTENSIVE ZONES, PEOPLE AND GROUPS CAN LIVE INSIDE BOUNDARY ZONES. Moreover, if the unicultural conception of marginality principally has the centre as the basis of its reference, definition, and meaning (a la Shils 1975 and Wacquant 2008), the polycultural conception of marginality is defined by the margin itself.

Beyond Centres and Bounded Societies

According to conceptual theory of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, Kövecses 2010), metaphors perform the cognitive function of systematically organizing our conceptual thinking. Thus, thinking in terms of unicultural metaphor of marginality is structured *differently* than thinking in terms of polycultural metaphor. Operating with either of the concepts involves conscious or unconscious invocation of the source domain of our bodily experience with physical objects that have centres and/or boundaries to understand the complexity of the social world. Using the notion of marginality to delimit distinct phenomena of social structuring

essentially means locating marginal people and populations in what Bourdieu (1985) aptly called social space. Moreover, as John Law and John Urry (2004) emphasize, our inquiry is performative, that is, it contributes to the creation of the very worlds it aspires to describe and study. Thus, using a certain metaphor (as the story of the ‘underclass’ in American policy shows) can lead to very tangible practical and political consequences. Metaphors matter.

Thus far I traced the notion of marginality to the basic metaphor SOCIETY IS A BOUNDED SPACE, following the language of ‘societies’ and ‘societal centres’ and exploring two different idealized ways of conceptualizing the boundary of social space, as EDGE and BOUNDARY. Even in the Chicago School, this admittedly structuralist conception had primacy, as evidenced, for example, by Stonequist’s formulation that his ‘marginal man’ was set against the “great majority of individuals in the world [who] live and have their being within a single cultural system” (1935: 1).

However, in the past two decades such conceptions have been criticized as rooted in the European post-Wesphalian conception of nation-state, and correspondingly, of the organization of the entire social world into a system of nation-state-territory-society complexes (Billig 1995, Urry 2000). A number of authors have proposed alternative conceptions of the social organized around metaphors such as mobility (Urry 2000), network (Castells 2010), fluidity and liquidity (Bauman 2000, Mol and Law 1994). All these authors suggest that even if conceptions of stable societies with well-defined normative centres had some validity in the past, today social worlds should be analyzed through conceptions of the social that do not presuppose the existence of bounded social structures. Our worlds are now populated by mobile individuals, such as tourists, expatriate businessmen, informational workers, transnational migrants, refugees, all of whom

may, in the course of one life, traverse much more than the two cultures presupposed by classical acculturation models.

Correspondingly, the dynamics of personal and cultural life have become much more complex than assumed by the simple concepts grounded in understanding of cultural contact as proceeding through individuals socializing into a distinct ‘native’ culture and then ‘acculturating’ into a similarly distinct ‘receiving’ culture. In terms of personality and culture, the issue of “developing a cultural identity has become more complex, and it is no longer a question of becoming an adult member of one culture—but rather a task of navigating both local and global cultures” (Jensen, Jensen and McKenzie 2011: 289; cf. Berry 2008, Kim 2008). This is mirrored on community level as the ideals of ‘social cohesion’ and the customary idea of ‘community’ that had resurgence in public policy in a range of ‘developed’ countries fail to meet the conditions of individual development and life in contemporary world (Harris 2010). Thus exposure to cultural diversity through mobility and global media connectivity creates a condition which is polycultural ‘by default’. As Vladimir Nikolaev comments on Park’s ‘marginal man’, “with reference to today’s situation we can conceive of a *total marginalization*” (1998: 170) in that (contra Stonequist 1935) social differentiation and constant swift and often spontaneous reconfiguration of social worlds leads to a practical impossibility of always remaining completely locked in one’s own stable ‘lifeworld’.

On a more basic level, as postcolonial theorists, such as Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994), have emphasized in terms of ‘hybridity’, abandonment of Eurocentric colonialist discourse requires abandoning “our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People” (1994: 37). Any enactment of culture in any form (be it the most academic writing about cultures or the most

quotidian performance of some cultural practice) already involves hybridity—a productive although potentially destructive difference (as opposed to bland ‘diversity’). According to Bhabha, “it is the ‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (1994: 38, italics in original). Bhabha’s in-between, ‘Third Space’ of the margin thus becomes a primary site of activity of articulating cultural difference and resistance to domination and the lingering legacies of colonialism as well as the neo-colonialism. For example, Torika Bolatagici, an Australian multiracial artist, writes that in her own work she aims to

“subvert some of the ‘truths’ of modernity in relation to fixed identity and modern representation and production by exploring the possibility of ‘third space’ as an empowering concept for those of us who sit outside and in between essentialised notions of race in Western societies.” (2004: 82).

This formulation reveals the importance of conceptualizing the margin, or the boundary, as a basic phenomenon and a basic location of cultural processes. As Vince Marotta underscores, “the hybrid subject, and the cultural space that it creates, does not make boundaries obsolete, rather they are essential to its very constitution” (2008: 301). However, what is also important in exploring the properties of ‘being on the margins’ is that the margin (as Ahmad 1995 notes in his critique of Bhabha) cannot be completely outside culture. It thus cannot provide (somewhat contra Park 1928) a truly superior standpoint. “The hybrid is always embedded and never ‘beyond’” (Marotta 2008: 309).

Postsocietal and postcolonial work can be characterized as *poststructuralist* in the sense that it goes beyond prioritizing stable, massive social structures and value systems that order the social world according to a normative and dominant centre. However, and this, perhaps, is

pragmatically the most important corollary of metaphor analysis of marginality, truly accepting these positions requires understanding the possible *unintended consequences* of using a particular version of marginality concept (or, for that matter, any concept that has to do with imagining, conceptually, the ‘form’ and ‘shape’ of social world). These consequences may slip through the back door of our cognitive system employing our experience with sheets of paper and other bounded objects of the bodily, physical world to understand what the notion of ‘margin’ involves for a marginal and hybrid subjectivity and for the processes on cultural margins.

However, completely eliminating the notion of boundary between cultures can only happen at the expense of eliminating the concept of culture altogether—and this would lead to dissolving the very cultural difference that Bhabha (1994) highlights under some bland version of Disneylandish cosmopolitanism. That would also blind us as researchers to the darker, potentially explosive and conflictual sides of cultural identities and differences (Bhabha 1994, Kim 2008, Marotta, 2008). Rather than trying to close back doors we might engage in a search for different metaphors that would allow conceptualizing cultural difference and thematize the flexible boundary. Perhaps, as Bauman (2000) and Urry (2000) suggest, CULTURE IS A FLUID?

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