SSOAR

Open Access Repository
www.ssoar.info

Rezension: Pavel Poljan: Territorial'nye struktury, urbanizacija, rasselenie: teoretičeskie podchody i metody izyčenija

Frost, Irina

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Rezension / review

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Frost, I. (2017). Review of the book *Territorial'nye struktury, urbanizacija, rasselenie: teoretičeskie podchody i metody izyčenija*, by P. Poljan. *Europa Regional*, *24.2016*(3-4), 95-96. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-57385-2

Nutzungsbedingungen:
Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.
Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:
This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.
By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Rezension

Павел Полян: Территориальные структуры – урбанизация – расселение. Теоретические подходы и методы изучения. Москва 2014, 788 страниц, приложéния с. 636–682, использованная литература и библиография с. 685–713, библиография П. М. Поляна с. 717–783. (Pavel Polyan: Territorial Structures – Urbanization – Settlement Patterns. Theoretical approaches and research methods. Moscow 2014.)

The book is a fusion of theoretical and empirical studies on the entity of Russian space arising from a Soviet school of economic geography. Spatial organization of the biggest country in the world is a subject of interest for a wide range of readers. However, so far, both theoretical and empirical research shading a light on this issue is quite limited. The book presents a portfolio of selected studies written over the last two decades by one of those Russian geographers whose scientific interest is focused on theoretical and methodological issues in spatial analysis. Thus the book delivers a singular view on theory and methods of spatial analysis that have dominated in Soviet and post-Soviet scientific schools of economic geography. The main question addressed in the book is the comprehension of territorial structures of space through the lens of system approach. The problematic nature of the volume includes, on the one hand, the conceptual definitions of spatial systems and territorial structures and, on the other hand, theory and methods used in spatial analyses. Encompassing scientific research conducted in different time periods, this multilayer volume challenges a system-structure paradigm based on spatial – territorial analysis.

The book brings together eight parts. Representing an independent piece of knowledge, each book chapter could be read separately. However, the internal logic of the book covers consistently several problematic notions: theory, methods and practical approach to analysis of spatial systems and territorial structures. The book opens up with a theoretical chapter, which provides a contribution to metaphysical aspects of spatial analysis. Elaborating upon the system approach to spatial analysis, the author questions the integrity of settlement system and drifts from systems to geosystems and from geosystems to territorial structures (spatial systems). Consequently, he challenges the system-structure paradigm and provides a theoretical lens on the comprehension of spatial systems through physical parameters of the territorial structure. However, his inferences are based on a static approach, which leaves out of sight the dynamic nature of systems. Chapter 2 embraces methods for analysis of territorial structures including methods for estimation of spatial concentration and diversification, the potential method and the centrographical method. The sum of these methods provides a unique perspective on spatial analysis rooted from the central-planned economy. As a result, the methods for structural analysis consider space as a static surface leaving behind the role of various factors influencing space production.

Chapters 3–6 present a mix of practical extensions where proposed theoretical and methodological issues are applied through an analysis of settlement patterns and city systems in Russia. This part of the book could be the most interesting for European scholars, mainly because it arranges a distinct view on urbanization process in comparison to Anglo-American scientific schools. The third chapter of the book discusses an icon of Soviet-Russian school – "a basic framework of settlement" (*oporniy karkas resseleniya*). Embracing all types of settlements and various types of infrastructure, it is considered as the advanced form of territorial structure. Chapter 4 explores various perspectives on urbanization processes including different approaches and methods for analysis of urban systems. Such concepts like the urban concentration, the urban index and the 'Polyan' coefficient provide new prospects on the analysis of urbanization processes. Consequently, chapter 5 is dedicated to the analysis of transport infrastructure as one of the component of the basic framework of settlement. Chapter 6 emphasizes the process of urban agglomeration considering it mainly from the geographical point of view and leaving behind market forces stimulating agglomeration economies. In the next session, the book turns to a particular case of analysis, the Caucasus region. Indeed, chapters 7 and 8 propose the extended review of the settlement patterns of the Caucasus, which pretend to embrace all aspects of the spatial analysis, including urban and rural settlements. These chapters are the result of numerous scientific expeditions, which have allowed author to 'feel' the territory and to see it structural elements from inside. One of the undeniable advantage of the book is a significant amount of unique empirical information and facts about the settlement patterns in Russia.

The presented research provides a bridge between economic geography and system approach to spatial analysis, however, a basement of the bridge is originated by the central-planned logic of space construction. Indeed, comprising scientific outcomes written for around last two decades, this prolific research portfolio has to be critically interpreted with regard to contemporary conditions and academic debates. Usually, five main approaches are used to study spatial (urban) systems: the characteristics of nodes, the nature of interactions, the

effect upon spatial forms, the forces of growth and the role of the surrounding society. The author is more interested in structural aspects of the system, material parameters of space rather than socio-economic processes, and relational thinking beyond boundaries. This view correlates deeply with the Soviet logic of space construction.

Without denying the uniqueness of this book, some limitations are evident. The book has a descriptive character, and, to some extent, it lacks an intensive scientific discussion. However, the author's style of writing opens up valuable scientific facts and outcomes and, simultaneously, provides some personal insights to the subject of analysis. Presenting the descriptive and unique approach to understanding the structure of the territory, however, the author underestimates the dynamism of spatial systems. Even if he argues that, processes inside territorial structures are important, his analytical lens to territorial structures is characterized by a very static nature and leaves behind both the factors changing the structure and the dynamic of the system. However, it should be mentioned that the author agrees that proposed theoretical and methodical approaches for an analysis of territorial structures requires an adaptation reflecting contemporary market conditions. Moreover, he claims that relational thinking on spatial systems as well as understanding the factors influencing territorial structures are significant and have to be incorporated into spatial analysis. Nevertheless, the presented view on the analysis of spatial systems makes an impression of a snapshot of the situation without a comprehension of a constellation of forces behind the existing structure. Despite the shortcomings, the book provides a robust theoretical base for those searching to grasp system concepts, those who would like to understand the Russian spatial patterns, and finally all those who would like to enrich the perception of the system paradigm in geography.

The reviewed book is valuable for a wide spectrum of readers, from professionals to students who are interested in understanding of the organization of a national (bounded) space through the complexity of system approach. Taking into account that research on comprehension of the territorial organization of Russian space is scarce; the incorporation of knowledge provided in this book into international scientific community dealing with the complexity of contemporary spatial systems could enlarge the modern views on the topic. Definitely, some methods provided in the book are based on specific logics of space production in a central-planned economy. However, the book could be a fruitful scientific source for scholars who deal with comparative perspectives of different scientific schools on spatial analysis. Even if the book contains a retrospective portfolio of previous works, it opens up new horizons for a further research on post-Soviet spatial transformation, as it provides solid theoretical grounds and practical aspects of spatial analysis. I would recommend considering this book as 'food for thought' for a comparison between Anglophone scientific schools of spatial analysis. The logic of space production in market economy and space construction in central-planned economy as well as the logic of spatial analysis differ significantly, thus opening fresh prospects for comparative studies.

Irina Frost