

Geoculture: The Symbolic Aspects of World-Systemic Transitions

gelis-filho antonio g.

E-mail: antonio.gelis@gmail.com

Geoculture is one of the fundamental concepts in Wallerstein's world-systems analysis framework. In spite of that, it has been relatively less explored than other concepts. In this paper, I explore the nature of geoculture as a fundamental aspect of any world-system, and how knowledge about it has become even more important in our current times. In a period of crisis in the hegemonic structure of the Western world-system, the symbolic aspects of hegemony become crucial. In order to command legitimacy from the semiperipheral and peripheral areas of the world-system, the core must exert its power also at a symbolic-psychological level. And it is exactly at that level that the corrosion of hegemonic Western power is now more visible than at any time since perhaps the end of WWII. Understandably, that is also one of the hardest fought spaces in the current "phony cold war" moment. The consequences of further erosion on the West's symbolic hegemony has the potential to unleash processes that could accelerate the transition, revert it or de-stabilize the system. Understanding the importance of the symbolic-psychological space is therefore vital. I proceed in this paper as follows: first, I present Wallerstein's concept of geoculture, arguing that his definition takes a single species for the whole genus: geoculture, unlike his belief, is essential to any world-system, and not only to the Western one. I also present evidence to the fact that geocultural phenomena are particularly critical during transitions. Then I proceed to analyze how the weakening of the geoculture is an important aspect of the current turmoil in the semiperiphery and the periphery of the system. Finally, I present some scenarios for the unfolding of the current crisis of confidence in the world-system, from a semiperipheral perspective.