The Production of Structured Coherence through Energy Transition

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### Research Problem

Scientific research on the peripheralization of regions emphasizes the difference between spatial and socio-economic peripheries (Kühn 2016). Nevertheless, there is a high congruence between peripherality as a description of locality and as a socio-economic condition (see map). The project explores how economic remoteness can be counterbalanced through energy transition projects. The preconditions for new regional accumulation (Harvey 1985) in peripheral regions are:

- low land prices
- agricultural resources
- low population density

### Aims of the project

Even though all peripheral regions do have the capacity to build the mentioned new regional accumulation regimes, not every peripheral region can benefit economically from projects of energy transition. Within a region, different economic imaginaries compete for a hegemonic position in the regional development processes. Accordingly, this study aims at a more detailed understanding of how an economic imaginary becomes hegemonic and leads to a structured coherence. This will be analyzed by particularly applying the following perspectives.

- The concept of economic imaginaries will be introduced to analyse the development of structured coherences that is often referred to by politico-economic approaches
- Special attention will be paid to processes of variation, selection and retention of competing imaginaries that can be observed in the regions
- Empirically, leading imaginaries of green energy transitions in Germany’s peripheries are at the core of the project

### Guiding questions

- How do economic imaginaries compete in processes of regional development?
- How do different scales influence the decision-making processes?
- What are the leading imaginaries in recent regional development processes?

### Theoretical approach

The project builds upon two theoretical assumptions (see left table). First, it uses the concept of structured coherence within political economy that is referred to as a precondition for intraregional accumulation. Secondly, the cultural political economy approach is applied to understand the genesis of economic imaginaries that fix (Harvey 1985) a structured coherence. By combining both approaches that share the strategic-relational concept of state and politics (Jessop 2004) and becomes more influential in the decision-making process by the amount of social areas it holds a hegemonic position in (see right table).

### Methodology

Critical Semiotic Analysis (van Leeuwen 2005) allows to enquire the semiotic system of an economic imaginary. This system is defined as “a specific configuration of genres, discourses and styles” (Jessop 2004: 70) and becomes more influential in the decision-making process by the amount of social areas it holds a hegemonic position in (see right table).

### References


