

Interactive comment on “Contributions to economical geography-making” by J. E. Van Wezemaal

Anonymous Referee #2

Received and published: 20 January 2006

The paper aims to show the significance of the theoretical and methodological concepts developed by Wolfgang Hartke, one of the pioneers in “action-oriented geography”. Furthermore, it wants to prove the empirical viability of these concepts particularly with regard to economic geography.

To be sure, the author gives a good overview of the development of how “action instead of space became the topic of human geography”. He elaborates the crucial concepts as well as the shifts in perspectives. It becomes clear to the reader that Hartke played an important role in this process. The author also proposes a stimulating approach to empirical research in the field of economic geography.

However, most of what is said in this article is not really new - although, as indicated above, it is valuable as a concise summary and overview. What is said about intentions of actions and unintended results, about “daily actions” constituting geography, about

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structuration theory, about “ideal type constructions”, about “explanatory theories” - all this is certainly not new and could already be read in a number of other publications available to the research community.

Partly, the reader gets the impression that the paper presents a variety of concepts that almost assume the form of “jargon” because they are introduced one after the other, as it were; they are even explained through each other (the jargon becomes - self-referential - system, so to speak) and - as a consequence - remain at a very abstract level. For instance, on p. 8 we read the following sentence: “The combination of action and structuration theory and the docking of explanatory theories allow the construction of a research framework (see figure 2)”. What this really means in terms of concrete research strategies remains intransparent. Figure 2 that is referred to in the above quote does not say much about this, it only repeats the jargon-like notions (“structuration theory”, “social systems”, “explanatory theories”, “instrumental-rational models”)

Sometimes it is not clear in which sense the concepts introduced, e.g., “investment landscapes” (p. 2), go beyond a purely metaphorical use of the word, that is - for instance - what actually are the (analytical, research, etc.) benefits in using the notion of investment landscapes.

The conclusions that the author draws from Hartke’s concepts remain very general - and the empirical case study in the second part of the paper has not become fully clear to the reviewer, i.e. it has not convincingly shown how the application of the general level of analysis to reality really works. I highly recommend that the author extends this empirical part of the article and includes more evidence on the plausibility of the concepts applied.

Although the claim is made for a “strong intersubjective pre-interpretation of action in economic fields”, the tools precisely for the question of intersubjectivity are widely missing. It seems that, finally, the duality between subjective meaning and objective

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meaning is predominant - as if there were not a huge corpus of works dealing with inter-subjectivity as a way of overcoming the subjectivity/objectivity dualism - particularly in the phenomenological tradition following Alfred Schutz and his disciples (cf. A. Schutz, Collected Papers I-III, 1962f.; P. L. Berger and Th. Luckmann, The social construction of reality. 1966 - just to name the classics). The author should at least include some references to this tradition that has become crucial for modern sociologies of action.

Nevertheless, the article deals with important shifts in the theories and research on agency and space. Its analytical language is well elaborated and the approach to economic geography sketched out is promising. All together, I suggest three major revisions:

(1) To reformulate parts of the "conceptual" section in the first part of the paper with particular attention to avoiding jargon. (2) To strengthen the empirical evidence by extending this part of the article and by including more data. (3) To extend the conclusions to be drawn from this application (e.g. for the formation of investment landscapes in Europe).

Interactive comment on Social Geography Discussions, 1, 1, 2005.