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AMBIGUITY OF THE NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING SELECTIVE INCLUSION AND RE-TERRITORIALIZATION

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Abstract

The deep crisis of the representation regime open to the winning instance of *presenting* the dynamics of reality in an absolute immanence: the neoliberal discourse is capable of producing subjectivations adapted to the global transformations of capitalism. But it is also a way of representing the ontology of the present, highlighting the individualistic and deconstructed fragmentation that makes it governable in the neoliberal modus. Governance is held together with the incoherent fragmentation as its presupposition. Since the Eighties and under the pressure of euphoric globalization, neoliberal governmentality manages the double instance of government and self-government through a functional, operational organization, based on an unlimited inclusiveness of principle that is however regulated and made selective through the universal law of competition.

Keywords

Neoliberal discourse, selective inclusion, self-government, infra-governmental territorialisations.

Resumen

La profunda crisis del régimen de representación se abre a la instancia ganadora de presentar la dinámica de la realidad en una inmanencia absoluta: el discurso neoliberal es capaz de producir subjetivaciones adaptadas a las transformaciones globales del capitalismo. Pero también es una forma de representar la ontología del presente, destacando la fragmentación individualista y deconstruida que la hace gobernable en el modo neoliberal. La gobernanza se mantiene junto con la fragmentación incoherente como su presuposición. Desde los años ochenta y bajo la presión de la globalización eufórica, la gubernamentalidad neoliberal maneja la doble instancia de gobierno y autogobierno a través de una organización funcional y operacional, basada en una inclusión ilimitada de principios que, sin embargo, está regulada y es selectiva a través de la ley universal de competencia. No obstante, tanto a nivel subjetivo como a nivel de formaciones políticas complejas, estamos siendo testigos de la traducción de los procesos de inclusión en instancias identitarias que producen nuevas territorializaciones infragubernamentales sin precedentes.

Palabras clave

Discurso neoliberal, inclusión selectiva, autogobierno, territorializaciones infragubernamentales.

1. The neoliberal discourse

As always, everything depends on the angle chosen to represent things. It is even the case when the crisis of the representation regime, as it stands nowadays, is profound, and the winning instance is that of *presenting* live the dynamics of reality, in absolute immanence.

The neoliberal discourse has been dominant since the eighties and is capable of producing subjectivations adapted to the global transformations of capitalism. It is also a way of representing the ontology of the present, highlighting the individualistic and deconstructed fragmentation that makes it governable in the neoliberal modus. The latter in fact responds to a reality that it helps to define, based on risks or potential, from the perspective of governability. Governance, or rather regulation, is held together with the incoherent fragmentation as its presupposition.

A giant governmental device organizes coexistence through a double clasp that is blatantly contradictory. On the one hand, it exerts a government – in the name of efficiency and production optimization – which is evidently active. This is so especially in the Ordoliberal version, which regulates the space of coexistence in an alternative to market competition, directing it in a functional way to the growth of capitalist profits that will assumedly benefit subordinates. On the other, it is by withdrawing from the social and protective functions of work in favour of the unequal productive potentialities of social powers. Upstream, it shifts control to the processes of subjectivation of the living. The typically *liberal* thrust to self-realization is oriented towards an ethic of competitive performance and accountability over its fate. We are, therefore, talking about a singular self-government that enters into an imitative-competitive relationship with others. The inequality of social powers and subjectivities is interpreted as an index of dynamism and is functional to the competition itself, which is the principle intended to organize it. It constitutes – if we can say so – the positive horizon endorsed ontologically by the inequality of biological and genetic heritage, of cultural investment, of performance commitment that legitimizes and confirms it (Burchell, 1996; Arienzo, 2007).

Since the eighties and under the pressure of euphoric globalization, once identity belonging has been declassified, neoliberal governmentality manages this double instance – government and self-government – through a functional, operational organization, based on an unlimited inclusiveness of principle that is however regulated and made selective through the universal law of competition. Everybody, regardless of identity connotations, can participate in the competition and the economic valorization

that are the distinctive signs of the market, of *doux commerce*, in spite of the rigidity and the violence of borders and political and state territorialization. The anarchy that is generated, which is a harbinger of productivity and creativity, is organized in the market model (Miller & Rose, 2008).

This social coexistence without substantialistic boundaries assumes and exalts the differentiation as the key to society. It is in harmony with the libertarian thrust, in defence of the differences of the sixties/seventies, marked by the antiauthoritarian claim and by the refusal to be represented by abstract institutions such as the state, the union, the parties, the church and the family, which govern and endorse the anarchic individuality of the wishing-being.

Naturally, that powerful destructive libertarian push refused (and rejects, in its recurrence even today) all forms of evaluative comparison. This referred to a Spinozian and Deleuzian legitimacy and value of everything that exists: life, or rather lives, is a norm in itself.

It dissolves the ontological consistency of the subject in an *essence opératoire* (Deleuze, 1986), defined in the flow of its actions and choices. Post-Fordist capitalism, which in the eighties radically revolutionizes its productive mode, collects it and completes it through an organization by reversing its original meaning. The disjunction and the anarchic, which is destitute of roles and an identity subject, become functional to the transformation of the new globalized and digitized capitalism. It is not possible to fully understand the unfolded power of the neoliberal revolution that began in the eighties and that was pushed dramatically into the decades that followed if we do not fully grasp the depth of change that affects the production system. And this is not because neoliberal governmental reason is reducible to capitalism—in function of which it models its exquisitely political action—, but because the *new spirit of capitalism* produces forms of life that are extended to fields that were removed from economic management, in a corporatization of the whole human existence (Chicchi, 2012).

In this dynamic, it is interesting to underline how the axis of profit moves more and more in recent years from *production* to the *organization* as a lever of the increase in value. Production, albeit creative, immaterial and communicative, had characterized the new *artistic spirit* (to use the term of Boltanski and Chiapello (1999)) creative of capitalism of the last years of the millennium. The logistic organization, along with transnational chains of valorization of products that use *territorial differences and disparities* of work, and of political and social conditions; taken this, as we shall see, immediately

allows us to identify the ambiguity that gives the title to this essay and the function of current territorializations as internal to the system.

The centrality of this type of organization, as a primary source of value, signals the difficulty of class division based on the primacy of production, on the work goods in its material and physical dimensions, which had been the reference of political struggles until the seventies. This change too was reported early by Deleuze (1990) in his writings on controlling companies.

2. Selective inclusion: selection criteria

Let us try to deepen the fragments of this discourse.

For neoliberal governmentality, organizing the differences after having freed the individual entrepreneurship with respect to one's life, means subjecting them all and in every domain, to the evaluative hierarchy whose model is the market – obviously understood in an abstract sense that is neither historical nor concrete.

The generalized inclusion that acts as a premise to the market space – especially to that of work – is constitutively selective, regulated by an economic-organizational *ethos*: optimization through competition. The modal nature that makes it extensible to non-economic fields supersedes the other logics: not only procedural, legal-administrative, political and media, but also affective, educational. The objective of increasing profit (or rather, of increasing value, of *empowerment* both of people and of goods) opens up a generalized and incessant competition and offers itself to the logic of managerial governance (Bazzicalupo, 2016, pp. 36-48).

The latter is not limited as in the past to organizing corporate frameworks and workers' people to produce that *plus* that marks the capitalist mode of production, but generates surplus value by working on algorithmic aggregations of data and on strictly mathematical differentials of valuation, that are blind to lives themselves. It is a paradoxical outcome of a process of a biopolitical nature, and therefore concrete, embodied, and *embedded*, which had invested the traditional forms of modern, abstract and blind powers with vital differences. It leads to an algorithmic and impersonal management of the lives of producers, consumers, and *prosumers* de-subjectivized, decomposed into aggregates of data that are relevant only for specific processes of increasing value. The living persons whose subjectivity breaks down into segments of preferences, risk, potential, habits, long polarisations that are conflicting with each

other – their eventual denunciation of unease or voices of protest become evanescent and ghostly.

It is obviously a matter of political management, which exalts the administrative tendency of modern power, but disconnects it from its original drive to manage the populations in order to strengthen them. Rather, it organizes and hierarchizes – coordinating it along processes of increasing value – a differentiation not of law but of fact. It no longer works to improve but to profit on differences, creating a mobile hierarchy with varying criteria of inclusion, sectoral and specific in its application, which crosses and divides the subject from himself (Deleuze spoke of a *dividual* that takes the place of the much-exalted individuality). In any case, it is always hard and marginalizing for the losers (or for the losing part of the Self) of the competition.

On the mythology of human capital and the individual entrepreneur of himself – mythology made of creativity that emerges out of nothing, out of creative innovation –, the filter hinges on the relays of competition: in a trivialized reading of sociobiological Darwinism, the universal law of the living human being.

In both stories, that of the individual as a creative entity responsible for himself and that of the law of competition, we find the naturalistic-biological basis that is typical of biopolitical devices, subtracting spaces of revisability and contingency to political action.

But it is not of nature, but of politics: no debate on the veracity of nature has been and is, as we know, of support to the acceptability of a political organization, whether it is to be claimed or guarded and defended. All modern government devices, starting from the biopolitical turn of power, pivot on a marked naturalization of the human, which determines a *naturalistic* policy in accents (thus defending the natural inequalities of endowment, talent, entrepreneurial skills, *appropriate* investment, and adjustable *iuxta propria principia* through the law of Darwinian-like competition), but it *mentally governs* in the organization of the same inequalities: strong and intrusive – differently from what is trivially believed in regard to liberalism – which not only takes on the task of guaranteeing a market that is not at all natural, rather a model of competitive play, but makes competitive regulation the guarantee of political democracy. This is because it extends the competitive management to social and solidarity institutions that would be foreign to it, such as health, education, social policies.

How are the selection criteria determined and what are the dynamics that make them so unassailable to politics?

Governmentality, we have said, means the persistence of authority, interweaving the authoritative power of politics with the economic-evaluation criteria of optimi-

zation. The latter operate through statistically recognized criteria or norms, standards that emerge from successful behavior and are not attributable to political responsibility (Levitt & Dubner, 2006).

The heterogeneous fields, while maintaining their disconnection and even accentuating it in the endogenous competition, are bent to a homogeneous modus of comparative/competitive evaluation whose norms emerge from the choices of the individual: as in the market model, precisely, where the *competitors* determine, in the blindness of the whole, the point of equilibrium that will be the norm of conduct and which are precisely those led to determine. In fact, on the recursive circle of statistically standardized preferences, production and economic re-production are oriented, influencing an effect that transcends the single choice and of which it is impossible to attribute *political* responsibility.

Even the *decision-makers* of public policies and the semi-public and private actors of the *governance* network direct the management intervention not on the basis of rights or criteria of justice, but in view of the criticalities susceptible of being adapted to the winning standard in the competition. Having recognized some generic objectives of the optimization process – objectives that rarely reflect constitutional *principles* and rather indicate a degree of functionality that favors the order of competition –, these formulate the numerical indicators that determine the positioning of the subjects with respect to statistical standards. These are what the norm become. The resulting hierarchical classification is the basis on which the governmental authority, public, state or community, transnational or global, proceeds to the disbursement of advantages: privileged access to sources of financing, tax incentives or reward incentives; or Disadvantages: sanctions, restrictions, obligations of compensatory or restitutive conduct that are subtracted from democratic political choice.

With an entirely political choice, the authority decides to make decisions through *evaluations*, organized by *expertise*, devoid of political investiture, downloading on it the weight of unacceptable choices at the political level that is procedurally controlled. The implications in terms of selection are heavy. They are all potentially conflicting in terms of rights.

This headless system – which, it is worth emphasizing, looks towards self-government and freedom of choice – produces from below, starting from the preferences and the performances statistically detected from the social arena, the standards that will guide the conduct: the price of a product or the indicator for the comparative assessment of individuals, institutions, and states.

At the individual level of a single competitor on the labor market, then, each will urge the development of those personal qualities, talents or abilities that seem to be required by the market, while the braking traits will be severely governed and blocked. Using a few targeted drugs, a piece of oneself that suffers the anxiety of a future of incessant precariousness and contingency is silenced to euphorically exalt those parts of the imaginary that are deemed capable of creating new things that disrupt competition (think positive and self-realization are the mantra of juvenile education).

The strategic and competitive principle – which structures the individual and social imaginary – will push creativity into the bed of valorization that shifts from the classical form of production that once denoted capitalism, to a capitalism that organizes, which coordinates value chains that cross different territories of the planet, gaining on the differences of work, culture and social creativity, rather than aiming to optimize them. This crossing comes to terms with the territorializations and re-territorializations and can even solicit them.

There is not only an ambivalent coexistence of trespassing, but new borders are marked.

3. From inclusion/exclusion to geopolitical spaces of selective inclusion along the value chains. The re-territorialization

To better understand the paradoxical interweaving of boundless inclusiveness and territorialization – both under the sign of competitive selection –, we need to move from the geopolitical dimension that is the presupposition and effect of a globalized capitalism that gives rise to territorializations that are in an ambiguous relationship with neoliberal governmentality.

Our discourse on the forms of inclusion and selection has to unwind on two levels: that of the impact of the mechanisms of selection on the concrete lives of everyone and of each, the *layer* of behavior and microeconomic and subjective reactions. It is on this *layer* (that of the frustrations and discomforts of losers and winners) who install the reactive forms of defense of micro-countries and the revival of racist identity in a key of naturalized hierarchical inequality, since it seems impossible to translate the discomfort into class struggle.

The other mechanism is the inter- and infra-national macroeconomic and political one, of the general form of increasing value that has the market-world as its horizon. In it selective competition takes place between groups organized mostly at a state or

regional level, which are *crossed* and decomposed into significant segments, no less than what happens in individuals, based on potential or production risks. From this point of view, national or subnational, regional or niche infrastructures, all of them infra-governmental, are emerging, which may sometimes assume reactive identity and political characteristics, but which remain functional to the global capitalist economy, reconsidering, as anticipated, valuation chains (Bair, 2009).

The syntagma – the selective inclusion – that has marked the first decades of neoliberal management gets complicated.

That market-driven inclusiveness, which broke through ancient political barriers by opening up new emerging regions to the capitalist market, was originally conceived as a disjunctive relationship to the inclusion/exclusion of an identity brand that had characterized both modern state and national politics, the corresponding political economy. Excluding inclusion is the device of political unity, represented by the political theology of sovereignty. For Agamben, even the structural and original mark, biopolitical/Tanato-political politics tout court (Agamben, 1995).

Neoliberal inclusiveness breaks into this scenario, deconstructing the exclusionary inclusion of political and juridical sovereignty, whose logic – which survives and laboriously adapts itself to the new paradigm – was and is a form of formal, public inclusion that excluded non-citizens and was founded on the veil of ignorance spread on the differences between citizens, the included: biological, ethnic and economic afferent to the private. The formalism of this inclusion, theorized by juridical science, is, in historical reality, denied and translated, in the biopolitical turning point of modern power in a much denser inclusion/exclusion based on ethnic and blood belonging and on cultural ethos: the nationalization of the biological, the ethnic and often racial nationalism, re-propose the *reductio ad unum* of political theology with an emotional and material burden, dangerous and aggressive. The racial identification, the hierarchical devaluation of the other authorizing exploitation or even annihilation is outlined within or outside the boundary of belonging, and – to use a term of Agamben, which fits into this tragic and violent version of biopolitics – those that can be killed.

However, the biopolitical connotation of modern power – which affects sovereignty and state by governing both – is in truth something that goes beyond this line of blood: it is above all *government* and function of economic productivity. The biopolitical turning point is not only biology, *blut und boden*, but it is above all the economic government of the populations that disputes and redraws the boundaries between public and private, identifying (and including) spot objects, according to flexible lines of advantage and

convenience, open to new inclusions and to specific and differential intervention forms that break national and legal boundaries and formal and geographic ones within the sovereign power in which *erga omnes* general rules are given. The governmental fold, while continuing to coincide with the territory including/excluding of the state, in the social policies of the provident state as in the workers' struggles between the nineteenth and twentieth century highlights the biopolitical role of the economy. And, with economics, it opens the boundaries to colonial dynamics; as, in the late seventies of the twentieth century, it is always the social and political turning point in accepting the claims of gender differences that indefinitely extend the inclusiveness of the government. However, the border of the state remains. It persists in the politicization of the economy and welfare, as in feminist struggles, a view of citizenship and belonging to a territorially identified unit. The battles are indeed transnational, but with a territorial rooting for each conquest obtained. Territorialisation remains at the heart of inclusion (and exclusion) of citizenship rights and via it passes the protection of labor, welfare, social policies that bargain the coexistence of labor and capital and, not without aporia, the claims of *human* civil rights.

Heavy globalization and the transformation of capitalist production towards the immaterial, and financialization, instead aims at *deterritorialization* of the government.

Exalted as an opening to the world or denigrated as a loss of social bond, neoliberal management opens the boundaries, in the form of pragmatic and anti-ideological governance of the living in order to improve well-being. Being modeled on the market and its headless logic and launched at the overcoming limits, it tends to ignore or cross *nomoi*, and the borders. As Marx stated, the only space suitable for capitalist dynamism can only be the world-market, *Weltmarkt* (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013)¹.

The contraposition between (selective) deterritorializing inclusivity and territorializing inclusion/exclusion appears, therefore, solid and ideologically it is. But the representation of a liquid world, with obsolete borders, fluidized by the uninterrupted and uncontrollable passages of capitals, news, people, techniques and knowledge, made homogeneous by the evaluative/competitive *modus* they undergo, is it really a complete representation? Is it not rather functional to a euphoric narration of neoliberal and post-nationalist globalization that today – and probably always – shows the rope? Or, in a more intriguing and complex way, is it a *boundless* and deterritorialized globalization inadequate for a mechanism of valorisation that does *not* require a smooth but lucrative space on the persistence of some borders and marks new ones?

1. Starting from Marx's *Weltmarkt* (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013).

Perhaps the boundary lines move and re-propose themselves.

In fact, the new organizational and logistical capitalism puts into effect the inequality of the capacities and positions of power that the different geopolitical territorial and institutional structures (often nationalist and authoritarian) preside over and develop. It is a difference that the same political territorial organizations manage in order to be functional in attracting capital, to offer itself as a differential segment, productive of increase in value.

The unlimited neoliberal inclusiveness provides for and blends in with the organized coordination for the purpose of valorization. Territorial spaces of inclusion/exclusion politically nationalist and however perched in defense of borders that can represent a relative advantage for the local population as they offer opportunities for work and profit that would otherwise be non-existent. Some territories/states are therefore governed on the basis of an internal hierarchical selection that differentiates the juridical organization of sections and regions of the national space, to make them more competitive in the selection made by corporations: they are what Ong (2006) calls the *zonal sovereignties*, totally infra-governmental, internal to governance and functional to the *modus capitalista*. The effects are of encroachment and *at the same time*, of confinement or, to use a term of Saskia Sassen, of hybrid assemblages (Tucci, 2013). The algorithms of the current capitalist management modulate and scan flows, impose filters, channel currents of people and information, but along the path of valorization they also produce re-territorialization, functional closed spaces, and productive ghettos or finalized to control and finally *bidonvilles* to collect and control marginals.

The spatial inclusiveness/exclusion profile with its set of identity themes and nationalist populisms, therefore, bends to the selective inclusiveness of neoliberal governmentality in a coexistence, from a logical point of view, incoherent but pragmatic and very resolved on the level of effectiveness.

Territorial powers that are ideologically dense in culture, and ethnic and local material knowledge, provide segments of valorization in competition with what other territories can offer. At the expense of any global coordination of the rights of those who work.

A technical, organizational trait bends and contaminates territorializations and their sovereign logic, generating opaque plots of populist nationalism of various kinds, from the one overdetermined by the *Weltmarkt*, to the reactive and fragile ones that punctuate the penitential time of the long crisis. Forms whose logic is different from the dominant one, but which do not constitute an otherwise.

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