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FROM "NOBODIES" TO "SOMEBODIES": IMMIGRANTS' STRUGGLE BETWEEN SURVIVING AND POLITICAL AGENCY IN TIMES OF *CRISIS GOVERNANCE*

abstract

Immigration has become one of the most discussed issues in global political agendas and presents several criticalities. Such criticalities span from immigration management by local, national and transnational institutions, to the enormous flow of people moving across the globe without any certitude about their situation, and the repercussion of this phenomenon on each State's both internal and foreign policies. All of the above-mentioned crucial situations pose questions which cannot be avoided, yet, don't have any simple answers. However, for political-philosophical discourses, immigration also exposes in a very critical way what appears to be the inner limits of political analysis, which doesn't take the complexity of such phenomenon into account. This complexity is not something conjunctural, as various rhetoric of "crisis" would suggest, but it is rather structurally part of the system itself in which it manifests: the contemporary immigration form is namely one of the many faces of what is known as "globalization", which is essentially connected with the so called "Neo-liberalism"* in politics and "Advanced Capitalism" in economy. In a general framework, impersonal dynamics seem to rule the world by the exercise of global governance that appears to put into question the same political capacity of classically conceived "National States" as primary political actors. Here, uncountable flows of human beings are put in extreme conditions that, on one hand, urge politics itself to elaborate new strategies and, on the other hand, make visible the inner political attitude of these people, who in most of the cases resist, refuse to die, and claim for a decent life.

keywords

crisis, governance, immigration, security, political agency

* Although it would be very hard to give an exhaustive definition of "Neo-liberalism", given the still controversial nature of this phenomenon, it would be useful here to refer to Michel Foucault's definition. See: Foucault M. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2008, pp. 131-132: "Neo-liberalism is not Adam Smith; neo-liberalism is not market society; neo-liberalism is not the Gulag on the insiduous scale of capitalism. *So, what is this neo-liberalism?... The problem of neo-liberalism was not how to cut out or contrive a free space of the market within an already given political society, as in the liberalism of Adam Smith and the eighteenth century.* The problem of neo-liberalism is rather how the overall exercise of political power can be modeled on the principles of a market economy. So it is not a question of freeing an empty space, but of taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on to a general art of government. (..) *Neoliberalism should not therefore be identified with laissez-faire, but rather with permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention*." See also: Harvey D. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

Introduction   Immigration, and labor immigration in particular, is certainly not a new phenomenon, especially if it is contextualized in the broader dynamic of human mobility through history. Nevertheless, each case of those flows of mobility has always presented certain specificities, derived from the specific historical, geographical, social, economic and political context where they show up. Abstracting from these latter extremely important conditions, what looks like a sort of invariable constant is the ambiguous fact that migration flows usually seem to have their origin from situation of "crises"[1], that in turn often seem also to be originated by them. The latter is based on such complex factors which nature is always more often difficult to decode, due to the inner multiplicity of conditions in which it takes roots. Nowadays, political and socio-economic crises may spark basically everywhere in the world (even if, obviously, on totally different terms and by different start-points) due to the globalization process. Such globalization process is currently at the same time advanced and perennially *in fieri*, which first characteristic is the total lack of certitudes, that is from time to time exploited by both politics and financial markets in terms of a ceaseless "risk"[2]. However, while markets usually assume this term as synonymous of "bet", politics understand it under the meaning of "danger". Therefore, if "risk" is the permanent form of what for financial capitalism can be an "occasion" in first place, the sense of incertitude that is co-essential to his own mechanism spreads a certain anxiety through societies, and especially through the so-called "advanced" society, that finds her immediate counterpart, and her apparent antidote, in a global request for more safeness. Furthermore, such safeness is translated in political terms in a demand for more "security"[3], which leads automatically a consistent part of the mainstream political discourse to focus on searching a way to "exorcise" this widespread sense of anxiety by identifying a "scapegoat" in certain social categories.

Migrant people are one of the latter. While the phenomena of the "enemy-identification"[4] is

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1 For a very masterly analysis and genaology of the term, see: Koselleck R. *Krise,* In: Brunner O., & Conze C., & Koselleck R. *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1972-1997. Italian Translation: Koselleck R. *Crisi. Per un lessico della modernità*. Ombre Corte, Verona, 2012.

2 Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* In: Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli,. Rubbettino, 2008, p. 13.

3 Chignola S., & Mezzadra S. *Fuori dalla pura politica. Laboratori globali della soggettività*. In: *Filosofia Politica,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, p. 18-19.

4 See: Schmitt C. *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Dunker & Humblot, Berlin, 1932. English Translation: Schmitt C. *The Concept*

nothing new in political history, what seems to be new is the fact that this global incertitude and the following anxiety appear to be a structural essential component of the so called neo-liberal and advanced capitalistic economic and financial system. At the same time, the political claim for security seems to be structurally connected with this anxiety, and in turn immigration is a factual result of the same dynamics of neo-liberal capitalistic system consisting of land-grabbing, massive soil exploitation, relocation of firms on low-taxation sites, request of low-cost labor, as well as financial debt, and therefore proliferation on private financial interest in each sector of production.[5] These latter are just few of the many factors, together with climate change and war (which are notwithstanding respectively strictly connected with what just mentioned above, war in particular)[6], that lead, if not most, surely a considerable part of world people to migrate in search for a better, if not "bare life"[7]. Thus, the connection between "risk", "incertitude", "anxiety" and demand for "security" on one side, and immigration on the other, appears to be essential and strictly related with neo-liberalism and advanced capitalism in itself. This relation leads to inscribe each of those terms in a sort of "vicious circle", from which there seems to be no way out. And these terms are in turn just the more evident distinctive marks of a global "crisis[8]", which is made upon several crises, each with its own specificity, showing the necessity to be "governed".

If "Crisis" is the unavoidable and essential mark of contemporary globalized and advanced capitalist society, "Security" is his co-essential and immediate political counterpart. Starting from this point, it is essential for politics to govern such crises by means that notwithstanding don't belong exclusively to a not quite thinkable *pure politics*[9]. In this sense, States and respective governments need to continuously confront themselves with other decision instances that come from other "parts in question", each of them in a certain way takes part in the extremely complex mechanisms that advanced capitalism puts unceasingly on the move through societies.[10] States have to confront themselves with supranational and transnational entities, some of which have specifically political and administrative competences (like United Nations, EU, etc.) and others which have economic and financial competencies, but somewhat indirectly also very political influence (like IMF, WTO, Central Banks and even rating agencies). These latter are joined also by multinational corporations, lobbies and so by private financial capital.[11] In this context, political decision-making processes are necessary influenced by each part's own interest. For a long time, *government,* in its classic political sense, had to open the path to *Governance.* Such practice indicates a structural multi-level decision-making mechanism, which assumes a "plural connection" (and often competition) of interests as its proper field of action, naively, like something given, that is in turn steadily crossed by a restless movement

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of Political. Translation, Introduction and Notes by George Schwab With Comments on Schmitt's Essay by Leo Strauss. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1976.

5 Sassen S. *A Massive Loss of Habitat. New Drivers for Migration.* Sociology of Development, Vol. 2, Number 2, University of California, 2016, pp. 205-210.

6 Sassen S. *A Massive Loss of Habitat. New Drivers for Migration.* Sociology of Development, Vol. 2, Number 2, University of California, 2016, pp. 223-224.

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8 See above.

9 See: Chignola S., & Mezzadra S. *Fuori dalla pura politica. Laboratori globali della soggettività.* In: *Filosofia Politica,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, pp. 18-19.

10 Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* In: Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?,* Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 1-6. See also: Chignola S., & Mezzadra S. *Fuori dalla pura politica. Laboratori globali della soggettività.* In: *Filosofia Politica,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, pp. 66-67.

11 Ivi. See also: Sassen S. *Regulating Immigration in a Global Age: A New Policy Landscape.* Parallax, Rutledge, Taylor and Francis Group Ltd, 2005.

composed by countless flows of capitals, goods and, of course, people. The "vertical" process of decision-making, that was typical of the old National States' logic and political praxis has been replaced. Before, the decision-making process was articulated on the double binary movement between "government" and "governed", in terms of a more or less explicit "popular-electoral warrant" from the "governed" in order to justify the executive decision taken by the "government", made upon the classical juristic "contractual fiction" , whose other side was the obligation, for the latter, to obey to the former. Today, the governance assumes instead the structural "ungovernability" of individual and collective subjects who should be governed, which is the main character of contemporary neo-liberal democracies. In fact, if neo-liberal capitalistic system needs a "free-subjectivity" field in order to make possible a free game of action for free agents, from which derives the necessity of a free capital and human mobility, democracy, which is political other-side, needs in turn to assume the always current and immanent possibility of resistance by whom should be governed.[12] Neo-liberal Democracy assumes structurally this "risk", so that it makes use of governance as a technique in order to shift the decision-making axis from the vertical to the horizontal and elliptical level, within which the same decision is made-up on a perennial negotiation between parts and "stakeholders"[13], each of them , then, contributes to it.

The above mentioned shift implies also a direct consequence, in terms of relevance, from politics as the field of decision-making based on sovereignty of the traditional State to policy, which, instead of being a mere instrument of the first, becomes so the extremely relevant element of the frame. In fact, "policies" in neo-liberal democracies have to be built on that aforementioned continuous negotiation; a negotiation that is grounded essentially on the capacity, from each part-in-question, to ensure efficiency[14], i.e. on their credibility: on the trust and the credit they inspire to their partnerships.[15]

In short, Neo-liberalism inner logic, which innervate the same weave of contemporary western liberal democracies, produces a significant shift from politics as the field of the rule of Sovereignty to policy as the field of the rule of the management, or - as it was - from the *Herrschaft* to the *Verwaltung*.[16] This latter assumes as structural the "unavailability" of subjects as mark of their essential "ungovernability", exactly because they are, as they shall be, free-subjects.[17] Yet, "free-subjectivity" is not something given for this political, economic and policy-maker power. Inasmuch it needs it to its mechanism's functioning, it also has to produce it. Or better, this latter is assumed by the aforementioned "management" as something given, i.e., it works so that it could always be available for its punctual, actual exercise.[18] Free human mobility pertains exactly to this logic. But, if in principle all human being are, or should be,

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12 Cfr. Chignola S., & Mezzadra S. *Fuori dalla pura politica. Laboratori globali della soggettività.* In: *Filosofia Politica,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, pp. 68-69.

13 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 11-12.

14 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, p. 10.

15 About a very interesting semantic analysis of terms like "trust" and "credit" in relation to the financial market, see: Derrida J. *Du sans prix, ou le juste prix de la transaction.* In: *Comment penser L'ARGENT*, de Roger-Pol Droit, Le Monde Editions, Paris, 1992.German Translation: Derrida J. *Über das Preislose. Oder the price ist right in der Transaktion.* B-Books, Berlin, 1999.

16 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 4-6.

17 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 16-18.

18 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008 , p. 17.

able to move free across the globe, in concrete it doesn't happen as they can't be assumed as all equal, particularly in connection to the necessity, from the side of the aforementioned "management", to make them able to act as free and as productive, i.e., to put them to work.[19]

Among different migration flows across the world, a significant diversification through the most recent sociological studies has been noticed, in particular for what concerns labor migration and immigration to western countries or in general to advanced-capitalistic countries. It has been observed first of all a difference between flows of people moving outside their countries of origin in order to reach better economic-employment conditions and people leaving to escape extreme life conditions, in order to survive.[20] Another differentiation overwrites itself yet to this latter: most of the people in search for a better employment or a better education are those considered, statistically speaking, "high-skilled" or "high-educated" people. Instead, most of the people escaping from extreme conditions would be included in a "low-skilled" or "low-educated" level ensemble.[21] This without any regard to the fact that many of these latter could have had a good educational level or a high-level employment before being forced to leave their countries. According to these data, it seems that the aforementioned neo-liberal political multi-level governance operates through a "management of migrant subjects", a skimming between those subjects who can efficiently be put to work, according to market's needs, and those subjects who instead cannot be put efficiently to work, according to the same criteria. This differentiation has as its immediate result that of a re-inscription, in terms of job-eligibility, of classic canons concerning racialization and gender-discrimination in first place, translating them in the very same time in a class-discrimination logic.[22] In accordance with this very logic, these people would do unconditionally most of the — considered as such — degrading jobs, or —at least — would probably be unemployed in arrival countries. This further social degradation would then probably lead them to crime and/or radicalization, making them a potential "danger" for society. The aforementioned structural "anxiety" of neo-liberal societies would be "exorcised" by making those people a "scapegoat" for political claims of "security", which are just very "popular" in today's *populist* political discourse.[23]

In order to respond to this demand, the policy-making governance would make space also to a *police*-making governance.[24] This is translated immediately in another form of "anxiety", i.e. that of "control", which probably is the wellspring of the proliferation across the world of discourses, and of course practices, about more or less new boundaries and *borders.* Paradoxically enough, the globalized global-society, field of action for the contemporary neo-liberal advanced capitalism, which needs essentially, as mentioned above, an at least theoretically "universal freedom of movement", is nowadays prey of a fresh outbreak regarding a rhetoric about borders. Here, the multi-level governance looks like making space for national States in order to define a security policy, according to which each State could -or at least acting like they could - carve out his margin of action.[25] But also in this last case, the

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19 Cfr. Chignola S., & Sacchetto D. *Le reti del valore. Migrazioni, produzione e governo della crisi.* DeriveApprodi, 2017. pp. 5-11.

20 Sassen S. *A Massive Loss of Habitat. New Drivers for Migration.* Sociology of Development, Vol. 2, Number 2, University of California, 2016, pp. 223-224.

21 Chignola S., & Sacchetto D. *Le reti del valore. Migrazioni, produzione e governo della crisi.* DeriveApprodi, 2017 pp. 7-10.

22 Ivi

23 See: V.V. A.A. *Il pretesto populista. Appunti del lavoro seminariale svolto dal collettivo di redazione dell'Archivio Luciano Ferrari Bravo.* http://www.archiviolfb.eu/

24 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?,* Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008 ,p. 70.

25 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* in Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?,*

ambiguity is rather evident: in spite of this widespread rhetorical outbreak, the global policy-making governance defines anyway its spaces, cutting out them even inside of the so called "natural" National States' borders. In fact, it creates rather new spaces with new borders inside which it tries to govern also migration phenomena by inscribing it in sorts of "free zones" or even "enclaves" inside States' borders, in which the absence, or better the suspension of the mainstream policy-making, especially concerning human rights, makes space for a very concrete *police*-making, under the claim of the "emergency".[26] National States obviously, and especially for what concerns possible exceptional measures justified by "emergency-cases", are not simply abdicating to their demand for sovereignty. They are rather trying to re- inscribe this latter in these new governance-logics, again by constantly negotiating their spaces for action with that aforementioned plurality of partners/competitors.[27] In that sense, by a broader understanding of the global governance-phenomenon, they act both as receptacles for global-policies and as the most important "performers" about these latter.[28] From this point of view, National States are very far from being simply expropriated of their decision capacity.

3. Conclusion: beyond Security

Apart from these considerations about neo-liberal policy — and *police* — making governance, but essentially belonging to its very logic, is the aforementioned question about whom, beyond what, should be in this way governed. Governing global risk, global anxiety and global demand of security means immediately governing also the "scared" people, and the "scary" people. Due to several reasons, immigrants are perceived as the latter from the first group. As underlined above, they are currently "scapegoats"[29] on which fear and request for security are projected on. But apart from this, or rather, maybe just for this, they represent quintessentially the *ungovernable*[30] that neo-liberal democracies assume as structurally inherent their field of action, for they essentially and constantly exceed their inner logic. Starting from their own *bodies*, and the disciplining of their bodies that the government of their lives, inside the broader frame government of emergence and fear, requires, they embody exactly that absolute resistance to the act of governing.[31] Discourses and practices of *subjection*, to which they're restlessly exposed to, produce immediately a resistance to them that takes the form of an absolute act of *subjectivation*.[32] They are not rude available material for policies and polices, nor for political rhetoric; they are essentially what is unavailable to them: they *act* and *live* like *living bodies*.[33] The recent facts from Cona Temporary Stay Center, just as an example, show unequivocally this pure fact: i.e. a group of immigrants has taken a voice, has marched through Padua and Venice and has confronted directly, basically without any mediation, with local and national institutions.[34] By the sole act of free-willingly

Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, 9-10. See also: Sassen S. *Regulating Immigration in a Global Age: A New Policy Landscape*. Parallax, Rutledge, Taylor and Francis Group Ltd, 2005. pp. 37-39, and,Chignola S., & Mezzadra S. *Fuori dalla pura politica. Laboratori globali della soggettività*. In: *Filosofia Politica*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, pp. 79-81.

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27 See above.
28 See above, and in particular footnote 25.
29 See above.
30 See above.
31 See above. For a very interesting analysis about *Body* and *Resistance*, see, among several others: Onfray M. *Politique du rebelle*. Grasset, Paris, 2017. Italian Translation: Onfray M. *La politica del ribelle*. Fazi, 2008.
32 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo*. In: Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 14-19. About the topic, among Michel Foucault's endless production , see in particular: Foucault M. *il faut défendre la société*. Hautes Etudes, Seuil-Gallimard, Paris, 1997. Italian Translation: Foucault M. *Bisogna difendere la società*. Feltrinelli, Milano, 2010.
33 Cfr. Onfray M. *Politique du rebelle*. Grasset, Paris, 2017. Italian Translation: Onfray M. *La politica del ribelle*. Fazi, 2008.
34 Cfr. Della Rosa A., & Tabar O. F. *Cronache da una fuga costituente. Ovvero come cinquanta richiedenti protezione*

moving and speaking out loud, those people have ripped the weave of both pure politics and governance.[35] This is not only the evidence about their absolute resistance, it is also the signal of what they primary want: not only survive, but *act like human beings*, and so they demand directly for *political agency*.

Beyond security, there is what security-policies cannot for a long time hide, i.e. the basic fact that human beings as such are essentially unavailable to be simply governed. Two facts are indeed clear, that people ask increasingly for a more direct participation in what concerns their primary interest, their *lives*, and that the demarcation line between governing rulers and governed is never net, and cannot so be taken as something given and obvious.[36]

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35 Cfr. Chignola S. *In the Shadow of the State. Governance, Governamentalità, Governo.* In Fiaschi G. *Governance: oltre lo Stato?*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 20-21. See also: Chignola S., & Mezzadra S. *Fuori dalla pura politica. Laboratori globali della soggettività.* In: *Filosofia Politica,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, pp. 68-71.
36 Ivi.