Spaces of Governmentality: Autonomous Migration and the Arab Uprisings by Martina Tazzioli (review)

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MARTINA TAZZIOLI, *Spaces of Governmentality: Autonomous Migration and the Arab Uprisings* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). Pp. 224. $130.00 cloth, $43.00 paper, $40.50 e-book. ISBN 9781783481033.

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Michel Foucault did not tackle migration in his works. Yet, there have been very fertile encounters between migration studies and governmentality-oriented research.[1] Martina Tazzioli's book is one of these encounters. The focus of the book is on "the interplay between migration movements and [the] revolutionary uprisings" (x) that started late 2010 in Tunisia and spread across the Arab region. Taking migration from Tunisia as a case study, it pays attention to "the ways in which migration brought upheaval to the northern shore" (x) of the Mediterranean Sea. The author intends to highlight the fundamental struggle between two perceptions of cross-border and especially, cross-Mediterranean movements: that of the European state-centered "migration regime" and that of the migrants themselves (and citizens of the "South"), who see mobility as a freedom they won by the revolutionary uprisings.

Migration, a "contested strugglefield" (xii), is approached by the author from the North and from the South, from the angle of policies and associated actors, and from the point of view of migrants. The "governmentality" of migration, or "the multi-layered and heterogenous set of technologies, discourses and policies concerning the production of borders . . . and at the same time the regulation of people's movements" (xi), responds to and evolves with the creativity and agency of migrants. The book is indeed a vibrant advocacy for an "autonomist" perception of migration. Tazzioli defends the idea that mobility patterns are not a mere reaction to, but precede—hence, impose the design of—migration control strategies to policy actors. As "autonomous," migrants are neither victims of abusive contexts, nor security issues or globalized laborers; they are agents, driven by an

[3.15.221.146] Project MUSE (2024-04-26 03:45 GMT)

urge to exert their freedom of movement. Furthermore, when challenging borders, defying control dispositives and administrative channeling and categorizations, migrants produce new social realities and shape new "spaces of governmentality."

In effect, bringing to the fore "the struggle over (in)visibility upon which migration governmentality is predicated" (xiii) is another of the book's ambitions. The "counter-mapping" perspective highlights how the shaping of "contested sites of movements, politics, governmental interventions and struggles" (xii) is echoed and challenged by migrants' "other maps" and "unexpected geographies which cannot be encoded into the cartography of government" (xiii). Therefore, the demonstration stresses the embeddedness of the production of knowledge on migration (especially, but not only, through maps) in structures of power. The author claims to perform a "militant research approach" on migration, thus breaking with the disciplining effect of existing categories, which aim to "manage bodies and movements in spaces." The author claims that migration research is, indeed, yet another manifestation of this "disciplining" of bodies: it reiterates the methodological nationalism that "takes the space of citizenship as the vantage point against which migrants' practices are assessed," "tames" migration by ignoring the heterogeneity of practices, and singles out the phenomenon, hence detaching it from the "contested strugglefields in which practices of migration always happen" (xvii–xviii).

The six chapters that follow this substantial introduction are linked together by methodology, yet each tackles migration governmentality and its interactions with migrants' "spatial upheaval" from a different angle or set of questions. Chapter 1 discusses the relevance of Foucault's concept of governmentality to the study of migration. Foucault's reformulation of politics in terms of power relations and resistance actually allows "shift[ing] away from a sovereign-centered reading of migration" (9) and emphasizes the complexity and temporariness of the border and migration regime. Nonetheless, these "dispositives" work as a "technology for producing subjects and governing populations" (6), especially by "shaping and fixing identities" within set categories (13) that ignore migrants' projects, diversity, and fluidity of circumstance. As an illustration of the "regimes of truth" (22 onward) underpinning migration governmentality, the patterns of refugee selection by UNHCRs demonstrate how a would-be refugee's "storytelling" works as a "normalizing technology." This process paradoxically coerces the

asylum seeker into concealing his/her real life story ("confession without truth") and locks migrants into productive administrative categories and profiles of mobility.

Chapter 2 assesses "the productivity of the migration regime" (35): the various governmentality strategies hampering, restricting, rerouting, and channeling migrants' mobility, in space (through borders and security apparatuses, administrative regulations, and conditionality of access to "conditional spaces," for instance) and in time (interruption by capture or deportation, stranding, fragmentation of time, and acceleration of movement). By highlighting the limits of the migration-government nexus, the author emphasizes Tunisian migrants' "practices of freedom" (54), which manifest their "autonomy in migration." Migrant agency here is introduced as a new form of politics. Migrants do not aim to find a different way to become a political subject, as is often assumed in citizenship studies (56), or to be included in the boundaries of European civil society; hence their refusal to remain stranded in Italy, with special permits.

The way Tunisian autonomous migration triggered a "spatial upheaval" on the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea is the topic of chapter 3. The author aims to "chart the effects of migration governmentality and the spatial disruptions generated by migrants" by applying the "counter-mapping" posture. The "spatial re-bordering of Europe," for instance, or "Europe at a distance" (71), is engineered by the Neighbourhood Policies and various partnership agreements and dispositives (to these we may add the "hotspots" created in 2015) passed with third countries bordering the EU territory, which de facto externalize EU borders to these non-EU countries. This illustrates the disconnection between space, sovereignty, and territory, a topic widely discussed and documented by EU specialists. The "counter-mapping" posture also challenges the very possibility of mapping spatial upheavals. Migrants who "enact a space," that is, seek to socialize on the basis of "shared geographies" of their migration experience ("le Collectif des Tunisiens de Lampedusa à Paris," the "Syrians blocked in Calais"), the "uneven geographies" which fragment collective perceptions and experiences of migration (the "conditional spatialities" designed by Mobility Partnerships, for instance), both design a "patchy Europe" of "spaces on the move" (83) which are, consequently, "unmappable." Ultimately, migrants' partial invisibility, in time and space, as well as from one category to the other, make migrants "subjects in transit" (84) who defy the spatial fix of the map and control apparatuses.

[3.15.221.146] Project MUSE (2024-04-26 03:45 GMT)

Chapter 4 turns to the "spatial upheavals" produced in the Mediterranean space by the Arab uprisings, focusing on how "the regimes of governments, truth and mobility have been created, transformed and resignified" (89). Democracy as a "best practice" to learn, alongside entrepreneurial rationality, are the main pillars of EU and intergovernmental agencies' economic development projects. These aim to curb (unwanted) migration from the South, using "development instead of migration" and by "tackling the root causes of—undisciplined—mobility." Democracy as a "discourse" is also "a technology for governing subjects and populations," a "strategy of containment" (93) associated with a moral normative ascription: "responsible citizens" staying in one's place are contrasted with "irresponsible" return migrants. In effect, the most incorrigible (those deported back to Tunisia) are excluded from reintegration programs. Disciplinary power and biopolitics articulate here at a spatial juncture between fixation to a place and regulation of transnational movements and parallel Foucault's situation of the government of unruly sexuality at the juncture between the individual and population. Yet, as also pointed out by other scholars associated with the "autonomous migration" approach, "current migration puts on the agenda a new form of politics and a new formation of active political subjects whose aim is not to find a different way to become or to be a political subject, but to refuse to become a subject at all."[2]

Chapter 5 first emphasizes the Mediterranean Sea as a "most monitored space" of governmental intervention, where legal frames may overlap at times or leave blank spaces of "partial invisibility." Yet, these are core elements of the governmentality of migration and cannot be considered "failures" to correct. On the one hand, overlaps signal migration governmentality actors' conflicting interests as well as lucrative "economies of borders" (122). Blank spaces, on the other hand, are spaces of "illegality production," that respond to the needs of "multiple economies of power" (120). Among these are the international labor markets, always in need of cheap and docile manpower: here, migrants in an irregular situation. The "total visibility" is thus not the ultimate aim of the governmentality process (127). The chapter further seeks to "disentangle the safety and control paradigm," whereby more visibility (control) is supposed to condition better safety, as paradoxically advocated for by human rights defenders. A shift is thus needed, the author argues, from focusing on migration control to a comprehensive critique of the visa system per se, which comprises migrants' insecure journeys, their partitioning

between regulars and irregulars, economic migrants and asylum seekers, legitimate and illegitimate migrants, and so forth—all "illiberal practices" that "sustain ordinary laws" (132). The "military-humanitarian politics of migration management" is said to have made violence constitutive of today's border, shifting biopolitics from technologies of protecting "the right to life" to "the right not to be left to die."

This is why, to counter the "regime of the visible" (148–49), "counter-mapping" initiatives should adopt "non-cartographic practices" (chapter 6). Dissident cartographies emphasize the role of maps in the production of spaces of power, and even mapped "strugglefields of power": some show the "dark side" of migration governmentality (for example, marking migrants' deaths), highlight the many actors involved, or shed light on migrants' practices at borders (155). Yet, they still "freeze" "spaces of visibility,"—a clash with migrants' "strategies of (in)visibility" (156). The author thus calls for "shift[ing] the mapping gaze" toward the migrants' point of view: focusing on the spatial effects and "spatial upheavals" engendered by migrants, leaving migration routes partially (in)visible, and putting the map on the move to grasp spatial upheavals and transformations of borders performed by migrants' movements ("Spazi in Migrazione" project). The same deconstructionist methodology is applied to "self-standing categories of migration governmentality" (157), seen from the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea: borders, migration "routes" with Eurodac fingerprinting and biometric registration, "deportations" and "returns," Readmission Agreements, and border control. The analysis of Frontex Agency's history and practices illustrates a reflection on borders and border-crossing (167–68).

Though not always innovative (Foucault's governmentality-approaches and EU migration and spatial politics have been extensively used in the field of migration studies), the demonstration is undeniably brilliant and intellectually enriching. The binary oppositions employed by the author (truth/non-truth, visible/invisible, inter alia) aptly illustrate the struggle of migrants with the EU migration regime. More generally, the theoretical density, the radically deconstructive methodology, the systematic repoliticization of notions, and the uncompromising rigor of the analysis are thought-provoking and challenging. In addition, the book supports a very welcome, fresh approach to the Arab uprisings' political context, of the so-called "migration crisis," and of migration in general. It is an impressive and convincing contribution to the broad

[3.15.221.146] Project MUSE (2024-04-26 03:45 GMT)

conceptual approach of migration as "autonomous," best illustrated in chapters 5 and 6: to me, the most far-reaching sections of the book.

Yet, its conceptual subtlety and richness, and many digressions, also make the text extremely complex and dense. The organization of the argument between and within each chapter, makes it hard for the reader to follow. The author's debt to Deleuze and Guattari's "rhizomic" writing (and early reflection on "migrants" and "nomads" developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* which permeates *Spaces of Governmentality*) is clearly manifested in the succession of linear series of reflections, yet emphasizing the interconnectedness and mutual interactions binding together the many issues raised by the author.

Beyond this creative bias, the book is also not easily accessible to readers unfamiliar with social sciences (especially poststructuralist, constructivist approaches) and, more specifically, with Foucauldian approach and concepts. At times, the theoretical density of the text verges on jargon. Questioning concepts sometimes seems like a goal in itself. Some preliminary explanations would have been welcome, on the post-1990s' history of EU-South Mediterranean policies and measures, especially on the issue of the Readmission Agreements, Mobility Partnerships, neighborhood policies, and the like.

More importantly, the quasi-absence of empirical insight into the various actors of governmentality (except in chapter 6), and even more, into the migrants themselves, is a paradox for a book that claims to apprehend migration as a "strugglefield." The abstraction of the migrant figure, the deliberate ignorance of migrants' specific conditions, migration contexts, personal histories, and gendered experiences, for instance, is a criticism frequently directed at autonomous migration scholars.[3] Responses to such critics have argued that "the supposedly abstract and homogenizing category of migration does not attempt to unify all the existing multiplicity of movements under one single logic, but to signify that all these singularities contribute to an affective and generic gesture of freedom that evade the concrete violence and control of moving people."[4] Nonetheless, Tazzioli's book remains a very enlightening and useful tool, especially to apprehend the so-called migration crisis that has been ongoing in Europe since 2015. She has since pursued her reflection on migration with a new study, *Tunisia as a Revolutionized Space of Migration* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, with Glenda Garelli).

NOTES

[1] For a comprehensive overview of these, see for instance William Walters, "Reflections on Migration and Governmentality," *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015); and Didier Fassin, "Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries: The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011): 213–26.

[2] Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis Tsianos, "The Autonomy of Migration: The Animals of Undocumented Mobility," in *Deleuzian Encounters: Studies in Contemporary Social Issues*, eds. Anna Hickey-Moody and Peta Malins (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 229.

[3] For example: Stephan Scheel, "Studying Embodied Encounters: Autonomy of Migration beyond its Romanticization," *Postcolonial Studies* 16, no. 3 (2013): 279–88.

[4] Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis S. Tsianos, "After Citizenship: Autonomy of Migration, Organisational Ontology and Mobile Commons," *Citizenship Studies* 17, no. 2 (2013): 185.