

Neoliberalism: a Foucauldian Perspective

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Abstract: The contemporary investigations on power, politics, government and knowledge are profoundly influenced by Foucault's work. Governmentality, as a specific way of seeing the connections between the formation of subjectivities and population politics, has been used extensively in anthropology as neoliberal governmentalities have been spreading after the 1990s all over the world. A return to Foucault can help to clarify some overtly ideological uses of 'neoliberalism' in nowadays social sciences.

Keywords: *governmentality, governance, ethnography, neoliberalism*

'The market is in human nature' is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged; in my opinion, it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time.

Frederic Jameson

There is no alternative.

Margaret Thatcher

Governmentality or ideology?

Neoliberalism has become – alongside or, sometimes, replacing 'globalization' – one of the buzzwords in public and academic discourses on the 'form of the world-as-a-whole' (Robertson, 1990). It is used to forge new academic alliances and to identify new political, moral and epistemological enemies. It works, many times, as an umbrella concept or a badge that helps to create

some kind of vague and simplistic political alignment: anti-neoliberalism on the left and pro-neoliberalism on the right.

In this article I propose a way out a narrow ideological meaning of neoliberalism, by a close reading of Foucault's research on governmentality, of Nikolas Rose's governmentality studies and of some ethnographical case studies.

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Governance or governmentality. A question of truth

The 1980s were the period when Theda Skocpol, Juan Linz, P. Rueschemeyer or Alfred Stepan (Evans & Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985) were urging social scientists to 'bring the State back in', but, also, the time when the critique of welfarism and all state centred approaches to public and social policies brought the field of 'governance' to the fore front of social sciences investigations. The political power was not seen anymore as a hegemonic, thoroughly structurant, state dwelling power. The analyses of modern control systems were, gradually, disentangled from state centred theories. Non-state authorities, expert systems (Giddens, 1990), quasi or non-governmental organizations, informal power systems and new forms of citizenship were seen as augmenting, subverting or competing with the centrality of state power. Governance emerged as another umbrella concept referring to any 'strategy, tactic, process, procedure or programme for controlling, regulating, shaping, mastering or exercising authority over others in a nation, organization or locality' (Rose, 1999: 15). Used in this way, governance could be applied to a huge area of expertise, starting with business and getting to universities, environment or cyberspace. Compared to the notions of administration, management or reglementation, this notion seemed to be more flexible, less ideological and more adapted to the modifications of the modern control systems brought by the global spread of neoliberalism.

Besides this wide semantic field, governance has, also, two more precise

meanings. There is a normative one, usually spelled as 'good governance' - implying also the existence of 'bad governance', less used, though, in this negative form. One of the most important texts that introduced this meaning was *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector* (1992), written by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler that was used during the neoliberal attacks on 'big government' in USA and coincided with the emergence of the 'Washington Consensus' (Rose, 1999).

There is also a less normative, more descriptive and sociological meaning that has to do with the new 'sociology of governance' or 'social-political governance' (Kooiman, 2003; Rose, 1999). Jan Kooiman defines governing and governance as connected concepts. Governing is 'the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as contexts for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities' and governance 'the totality of theoretical conceptions on governing' (Kooiman, 2003: 4).

There are quite a few resemblances between governance and governmentality: both bring a critical stance towards classic sociology dichotomies: state versus market and public versus private, both try to find new ways of describing the ways political power is developing outside the state, without ignoring, in the process, the importance of the state and the doctrines and legitimacies connected with it. Both distance themselves from

an image of a state that is a continuous process of expanding, centralizing and colonizing the 'life worlds' (Habermas, 2000). Still, governmentality has far more ambitious theoretical aims. Scholars working inside the 'analytics of governmentality' perspective are critical towards 'governance' as they believe that, under the appearance of a good connection to present day world and its new political forms, there still lingers on, an anachronistic, XIXth century concept of the state that sustains a fragmented state/ market/ civil society model (Rose, 1999).

Governmentality tries to dissolve the very roots of this compartmentalization. The borders between public and private, state and non-state, politic and non-politic are created and defined inside the governmentality field through historical series of conflicts, continuities and new constructions that combine ideologies with practices and technical knowledge. A change in governmentality signifies a change in the ways state and life worlds are being defined and separated; the borders between state, market and social society are created by governmentality and not the other way around. The neoliberal governmentality is very active and interventionist even when it is a 'minimal' one. The interventions are going on, and power seeps through various crisscrossing capillaries in the social body: heterogeneous networks of actors and technologies; new fields of knowledge like social sciences, economy, management or the sociology of governance; old micro-fields of power and expertise that are being connected in new ways. The government that emerges is founded on heterogeneous networks of activities,

knowledges, technologies and experts relatively autonomous from state and public institutions.

The analytics of governmentality, as it is practised, following Michel Foucault, by Nikolas Rose, Barry Hindes or Thomas Osborne is not the same thing as the sociology of governance. It is not about describing the organization and operationality of systems of governing and control, of political relations that appear between public and private actors or of the constitution of self governing networks. At its best, the object of investigation for governance is 'an emergent pattern or order of a social system, arising out of complex negotiations and exchanges between intermediate social actors, groups, forces, organizations, public and semi-public institutions in which state organization are only one amongst many others seeking to steer or manage these relations' (Rose, 1999: 21; Kooiman, 1993)

The most concise definition of governmentality that Foucault ever produced, states that governmentality is the '*conduct of conducts*' (*conduite de conduits*) (Foucault, 2008). This definition is not as simple as it may seem. Governmentality analysis - and that differentiates it, radically, from governance - a special stratum of discourses and practices of knowledge and power (Rose 1999: 19). It is about the emergence of specific 'regimes of truth', exploring the ways in which various modalities of speaking the truth are formed, authorised truth speaking persons designated, and areas in which, about whom and from where, statements, discourses and practices rooted in truth are generated. Governmentality does not fetch a

new theory or paradigm as much as a new perspective, a new area of research. The starting point consists of a basic set of questions: how is it possible to utter true statements about persons, their behaviour and ways of intervening on these? How were the truths put into practice and by whom, through which conflicts, alliances, blackmails, violences, seductions and subordinations, as alternative to what other truths? The area that is thus opened by the analytics of governmentality is that part of the 'history of the present' created by the invention, contestation and operationalization of various rational programmes and techniques that try to conduct behaviours so that specific results can be obtained (Rose, 1999: 20). The main focus is not so much on the significance of fundamental texts and concepts but on bringing to light the possible 'enunciation fields', the practices that connect and make visible the relationship between words and concepts, the emotions that are mobilized, the conditions of possibility for enouncing 'serious statements' (Foucault, 1996b; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983).

Back to Foucault

Foucault's research on neoliberal governmentality does not take liberalism as a political theory, ideology or theoretical standpoint on modernity. Liberalism and neoliberalism are seen as practices, reflexive modes of action, and special ways of rationalizing the governance. (Neo)liberalism differs from the disciplinary governmental pattern, based on the

state reason principle and on the older knowledge and ordering techniques embodied in the police sciences (*Polizeiwissenschaften*) and the state sciences (*Staatswissenschaften*) (Foucault, 2007: 291).

The French author uses a nominalist methodology, which presupposes that there are no such things as the universals usually employed by social sciences and historiography: 'state', 'civil society', 'people', 'sovereign' and 'subjects'. By dissolving these, Foucault tries to understand how practices, discourses and events are formed around that 'something', that empty place, where 'state', 'politics' or 'economy' used to reside.

From this point of view, 'economy' does not appear as a kind of organization or an organizing process outside or against the state. Foucault considers that the emergence of 'economy' means the appearance of new forms of knowledge and power that are best understood as transformations of the former disciplinary regimes. The liberal art of government shows the „reason of least government as the principle organizing *Raison d'État* itself" (Foucault 2008: 28). When the bourgeois Le Gendre answers Colbert's question: 'What can I do for you?' by saying: 'What can you do for us? Leave us alone' (*Laissez-nous faire*) (Argensson apud Foucault, 2008: 19) this does not mean he was placing himself outside of government. It is just that the state reason was articulated on a new truth regime: *the political economy*. The government was, for the first time, being confronted, from the inside, with a place of its truth: the market, which became a natural mechanism through

which the practice of governing could be, rationally, designed. If, beforehand, during the regime of cameralist *Raison d'État*, the market functioned as a place of *jurisdiction*, a place of justice, of reglementations, 'fair price', equity and correct distribution of goods, it became, in liberal and neoliberal times, a space of *veridiction*, of enouncing the truth and of verifying the government.

The market creates the exchange values and also the natural truth of economic and government processes; the utility principle creates the value of public power acts. The market and the utility principle converge to form the category of 'interest' and by doing so the government becomes real, effective and influences individuals, actions, compartments, discourses and properties (Foucault, 2007: 52). The governmentality is put into act, effectuated through the interests and values that things get in the 'veridiction place': the market. The people are governed by and through their own interests. It is not just an aggregation that happens at the level of political and economic theory. It is an intimate modification of knowledge, government and subjectivities.

A new art of governing is being formed by the transformation of liberal governmentality. In a way, neoliberalism opposes one of the main tenets of liberalism. The problem does not consist anymore in the absolute autonomy of the economy but in deciding how the political and social powers will articulate themselves in order to form the market economy (Foucault, 2007: 120). Neoliberalism is not endorsing a society totally ensnared by the exchange values. The soulless and inorganic commercial

society, based on social bonds created by the pure exteriority of exchange value, where the nefarious inversion of the human relations with relations among things is reigning supreme – commodity fetishism – may be society as Toennies saw it (*Gesellschaft*) or capitalism as Marx analysed it, or even XIXth century liberalism, but it is not the society neoliberalism tries to programme. At the core of this neoliberal society is not the *laissez-faire* commercial exchange but a concurrential mechanism. It is not about trying to create an exclusive area where the state cannot go, a kind of reciprocal tolerance or ignorance between state and market. Concurrence is a formal, regulatory, pure and perfect structure, but, in the same time, it is a historically fragile formation that must be protected in order to be able to exist and to exercise its influence on the whole social body. It emerges as the result of a continuous effort, of a relentless activity of governmentality. This is, in Foucault's view, the origin of 'neoliberal policies' – regulatory and ordering actions on the conditions of existence of this coherent but fragile structure of pure concurrence. The more the governmental intervention is abhorred at the level of the market, the more it is required on the technical, juridical, demographic and social levels (Foucault, 2007: 140).

The only sound social policies are, from a neoliberal point of view, economic growth, access to private property and individual insurance. Redistribution policies, social security or revenue equalization are the paragon of unsound policies. The neoliberal governance is not intervening on the market – as many of the Keynesian

policies of the welfare state did – but on the social tissue, so that the concurrential mechanism can expand and multiply at all levels and in all regions of the social body.

The concurrential society, that is the envisaged result of the colonization of this mechanism society wide, has as model and formative element *the enterprise* and cannot be equated with the old liberal society, seen, critically, as *Gesellschaft*, commodity-society, or ‘an immense accumulation of commodities’ (Marx, 1961). In Foucault’s view, neoliberal government, ‘which has now become the program of most governments in capitalist countries, absolutely does not seek the constitution of that type of society. It involves, on the contrary, obtaining a society that is not orientated towards the commodity and the uniformity of the commodity, but towards the multiplicity and differentiation of enterprises’ (Foucault, 2008: 149).

The transformation brought by the replacement of exchange with competition, of liberalism with neoliberalism, had important effects: while exchange was seen as a natural human characteristic, competition was understood – by the German neoliberals – as an artificial structure that must be actively protected. The economic and social concurrential mechanism presupposes a constant intervention from the state, not on the market, but on the conditions of the possibility of the market (Foucault, 2007: 139; Read, 2009: 28). As governmentality, neoliberalism governs by giving the impression that it is not governing. It does this remarkable feat by creating and consuming a regime of ‘freedoms’:

[T]his governmental practice [...] is not satisfied with respecting

this or that freedom, with guaranteeing this or that freedom. More profoundly, it is a consumer of freedom. It is a consumer of freedom inasmuch as it can only function insofar as a number of freedoms actually exist: freedom of the market, freedom to buy and sell, the free exercise of property rights, freedom of discussion, possible freedom of expression, and so on. The new governmental reason needs freedom therefore, the new art of government consumes freedom. It consumes freedom, which means that it must produce it. It must produce it, it must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the management of freedom, not in the sense of the imperative: ‘be free,’ with the immediate contradiction that this imperative may contain. The formula of liberalism is not ‘be free.’ Liberalism formulates simply the following: I am going to produce what you need to be free. I am going to see to it that you are free to be free. And so, if this liberalism is not so much the imperative of freedom as the management and organization of the conditions in which one can be free, it is clear that at the heart of this liberal practice is an always different and mobile problematic relationship between the production of freedom and that which in the production of freedom risks limiting and destroying it. Liberalism as I understand it [...], entails at its heart a productive/destructive relationship with freedom [...]. Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats (Foucault, 2008: 63-4).

Human capital. Reverted Marxism

By placing Marx and neoliberalism in the perspective of a similar problem – that of work or labour – it becomes possible to have a better glimpse on the functioning of neoliberalism that, by generalizing the models and ideas of ‘entrepreneur’, ‘investment’ and ‘risk’ at the level of day to day life, radically undermines the possibility of thinking exploitation as part of human relationships (Read, 2009: 32).

Labour is, Marx taught us, a commodity amongst other commodities that is sold and bought on the market. The wage is the pay due for buying the work-commodity, and is equivalent to the working time that is spent for obtaining enough commodities for reproducing the consumed working force. Nevertheless, when work, the working force, is bought by the class that owns the production forces – the capitalists – it will enter the production process and will engender plus product and plus value, being exploited and alienated (Marx, 1949). How does an exchange process, a selling and buying on the free market gives birth to plus-value? By grossly simplifying Marx’s analysis, it can be said that this ‘magical’ transformation happens because work is a special commodity that not only has value but also produces value and is organically bounded to the working-creative individual that transforms and creates nature during the working process. The working force is detached by the individual through an alienating process that stems from the intimate workings of the capitalist production mode (Marx, 1961). The workers competences - the living labour - are gradually alienated and incorporated

into the fix capital (factories and machines) and so, they are reduced to an indigent and unqualified working force – the proletariat – that is historically destined to destroy and replace capitalism by a global historical dialectic (Marx, 1961).

Human capital theories do not refer, explicitly, not even in a critical manner, to Marxism, but they look as if they were created as a radical alternative to the Marxist analysis of labour and commodity. The core model of these theories is the human-entrepreneur or the individual as entrepreneur of herself. Compared to Marxism, the analytical focus is translated towards the subjective rationality of individual choice, guided by interest. The place of ‘alienation’ is taken by that of ‘rationality’ – understood as the choice between rare resources. Work is no longer a commodity bought by wage, but a set of choices that constitute, reproduce and make competitive the human capital. Wage is, basically, a revenue, a flux of revenues more exactly, linked to a special kind of capital: the human one (Becker, 1976).

The problem of human capital, similar to the problem of work/working force in Marx’s theory, is that it cannot be detached – as a system of competences that can attract revenues – from the individual that bears it. The entrepreneur forms, together with his human capital, a ‘dispositif’, a mechanism for creating a flux of revenues. The human capital has, by its human ‘captivity’, inborn, genetic characteristics that enter into the overall mechanism of choice between rare resources. Genetic manipulation, the ways efficient genetic equipments are managed and reproduced is, gradually,

becoming a fundamental problematic of neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 2008; Rabinow, 1999).

In Foucault's view, the human capital theories have the role of expanding the neoliberal model of *homo oeconomicus* and of becoming a privileged partner for a type of governmentality that works on the environment. It is an *ambiental governmentality* that modifies the comportments of entrepreneur-individuals by changing the stimuli from the environment. This kind of governmentality has concrete effects in the new management strategies and techniques used for work organization. What used to be seen as a kind of beneficial effect - workers adaptation to big industry working cultures and schedules - of disciplinary technologies, becomes a problem under the label of the 'passivity' of employees. This passivity hinders the flux, change and development of new forms of capital - like human capital -, and calls for special kinds on interventions: the employees are sent to row in canoes on dangerous rivers, to climb rocks or to shoot at each other with paint bullets in order to be able to cope with risk and insecurity at the working place. Through audit techniques, quality management, financial standardization, participative management and private property ideologies, managers aim to transform the employees in 'self-entrepreneurs', individuals that self-regulate, self-direct and are continuously in a process of redefining their competences and of learning, in order to get the human capital considered necessary for the ever changing production conditions (Dunn, 2004: 20; Shore and Wright, 2000).

Political rationalities and government technologies

Michel Foucault used the notions of govern/ governing/ government with two meanings. The first is a general one, referring to a large area of human existence and experience, made up of ways of thinking and acting that have as their objective the transformation of human behaviour. Starting with late antiquity, stoic philosophy, Christian 'pastoralism' till modern 'disciplinary' regimes, the technologies of the self, the various modalities of transforming and controlling it, are part of a rather continuous effort of Self care. What makes these 'techniques of the Self', governmental and not just moral, religious or philosophical is their intrinsic technicality. The efficacy of the governing of the Self comes from the connection between ideas and principles on one side and apparatuses and physical, psychic, social and cultural procedures on the other side. 'Care for the self and for the other' enters into the everyday world by journal writing, daily meditation, nursing, confessionals, poverty and poor masses surveillance techniques, financial analyses, and bookkeeping forms (Foucault, 2000; Foucault, 2007).

The second, narrower meaning of the term, refers to the ways in which the political elites, the ones who are governing a population and a territory, try to order 'the multitudinous affairs of a territory and its population in order to ensure its wellbeing, and simultaneously establishes divisions between the proper spheres of action of different types of authority' (Rose, 1996: 42). It is in this sense that the

concept of governmentality is used in this paper.

Governing and behaviour control regimes as well as resistance or subversive attempts, are forced to rationalize the behaviours using as reference a value of truth. Politics is usually seen as the area where pragmatism, or, at least, an absolute and healthy distance to scientific or academic rationalities and forms, is carefully maintained. The analytics of governmentality tries, counter-intuitively, to understand politics as a continuous process of rapport to truth. The perspective of 'governmentality' allows us to identify historical areas, and moments of emergence of political rationalities, that are interwoven with systems of thought, strategies, programmes and tactics. There are, in Nikolas Rose view, two dimensions of governmentality: political rationalities and governing technologies (Rose, 1999).

Governmentalities, as political rationalities, are like apparatuses that create a *programmable* reality. They are able to do this by introducing regularities into reality: moral forms, epistemological structures and specific languages. Moral forms are formed by conceptions on the nature and limits of legitimate authority, by the distribution of this authority over diverse expertise fields – pedagogical, military, family, politics and health – and by the ideals or principles of political organization that are supposed to guide and legitimate the exertion of power: freedom, equality, moral autonomy, representativity and so on. Political rationalities are formed in connection with specific scientific discourses and their related governable objects:

populations, nations, economies, societies, communities, citizens, individuals, and entrepreneurs. This forms the epistemological structures of governmentality. The specific languages governmentality uses are related to a set of intellectual technologies that have the role to create a reality that can be 'developed', 'modernised' or 'globalized' (Rose, 1996: 26; Rose, 1999: 42; Rose & Miller, 1992: 179).

Governmentality works through 'discursive fields characterized by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organized, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics, by commonly accepted facts, by significant agreement on key political problems. Within this zone of intelligible contestation, different political forces infuse the various elements with distinct meanings, link them with distinct thematics, and derive different conclusions as to what should be done, by whom and how' (Rose, 1999: 42).

The analytics of governmentality follow a different and more radical trajectory than the sociology of governance. From this perspective, all constitutive features of modernity – new subjectivities, ideas on human nature and self, risk and reflexivity, human ethics and freedom – are not outside or antagonist to power and its technologies. On the contrary, they are the results of power configurations, technological inventions, political rationalities and techniques of Self governance. Human subjectivity does not stand alone, outside the pale of power or liberty, outside technology; the freedoms we are enjoying inside the

present day neoliberal governmentality are ‘the mobile outcome of a multitude of human technologies’ (Rose, 1999: 55).

Ethnographies of governmentality

The interpretations provided by Thomas Osborne, Nikolas Rose, Barry Hindess or Ian Harding on Foucault’s work on government, power and ‘truth regimes’ develop themes that are, sometimes, on the level of intuitions or unfinished analyses in the work of the French scholar. Especially Nikolas Rose’s detailed work on ‘advanced liberal democracies’ (Rose, 1996) develops Foucault’s analysis of neoliberalism as governmentality, started with the 1978-1979 course at Collège de France, and can be used to unveil the features characterizing what has become, since the 1990s, a truly global way of governing the world.

There is, though, inside this ‘analytics of governmentality’ approach, a rather uncritical Eurocentric approach. Most of the research was done on the development of political rationalities in Europe and North America and, implicitly, takes as unproblematic the extension and transformations of ‘advanced liberal’ governmentality in the non-European or non-north Atlantic areas. There is an emphasis on ‘political rationalities’ and a rather vague imagining of the relationship these entertain with governing technologies. This has to do, probably, with a too close reading of Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* or with the influence of althusserian Marxism. Be as it may, discursive regularities and rules for the formation of discourses cannot

be treated as causal principles in the creation of discourses, without giving way to some kind of structuralism. Discursive regularities cannot be understood outside the institutional and non-discursive practices. What stands as of utmost importance is the social-institutional context in which regimes of truth are being formed and human behaviour governed (Rabinow & Dreyfus, 1983).

The influence of Foucault on social sciences has now entered the domain of the classical. The ‘Key Sociologists’ series, edited by Routledge, treats Foucault among Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Marx and Bourdieu (Smart, 1985). Nevertheless, the debate on governmentality started earlier when, in 1991, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller edited *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*. His works on governmentality, and especially on the neoliberal one were rather slow to be translated in English. ‘The Birth of Biopolitics’, the most important course delivered by Foucault on this subject, was translated in English only in 2008. This is probably one of the reasons why two of the most powerful contemporary accounts of neoliberalism were formulated in a parallel way: Michel Foucault’s and David Harvey’s.

For Harvey, the 1970s are the fateful moment when Fordism – the pact among nation state, corporate capitalism and syndicates based on mass production, consumption and democracy – has been replaced by post-Fordism, characterized by flexible accumulation, that: ‘it is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial

services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. It has entrained rapid shifts in the patterning of uneven development, both between sectors and between geographical regions, giving rise, for example, to a vast surge in so-called 'service-sector' employment as well as to entirely new industrial ensembles in hitherto underdeveloped regions [...]. It has also entailed a new round of what I shall call 'time-space compression' in the capitalist world – the time horizons of both private and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider and variegated space (Harvey, 1990: 147).

If we compare Harvey's story of postfordism and neoliberalism with Foucault's neoliberal governmentality, there are a few disimilarities. For the French scholar, neoliberalism as a governing art emerges as early as 1948, through a series of ruptures and displacements from classical liberalism. The series of European governmentalities start with *l'État de Police*, followed by classical liberalism and, finally, German *ordo-liberalism* and American *anarcho-liberalism*. Keynesianism, as a historical form, is understudied and seen, mostly, as the 'adversity field' against which neoliberal thinkers react. Sometimes, the analysis of successive and simultaneous governmentalities seems to give way to the study of theories and writings of neoliberal economists and politicians, of the 'episteme' (Foucault, 1996b) that creates the field of possibilities

for the emergence of discourses. Even if practices are frequently mentioned together with discursive formations, and their connection is lavishly stressed, the political economy part of the practices themselves is not analysed. Keynesianism is presented – with a strange lack of attention to its internal structure – as a homogeneous background against which the contours of neoliberalism are drawn. Keynesianism has, as Margaret Weir and Theda Skocpol have shown, a diverse, even heterogeneous, internal and external geography. There used to be a Swedish 'social Keynesianism' – an almost full employment economy, with a high level of redistribution of public revenues and social welfare – but also an American 'commercial Keynesianism', where the Federal government used to have tax cuts and 'automatic' financial readjustments of public spending, being more concerned with controlling inflation than with eradicating unemployment (Weir & Skocpol, 1985: 108). Not to mention that Keynesian policies, like the American agriculture policy during New Deal, can create neoliberal reactions, or strategies to colonize the public institutions by big business interest groups (Weir & Skocpol, 1985: 144).

In David Harvey's account, Fordism and Keynesianism appear also as a homogenous historical block – undermined by the essential tensions of capitalist crises – that has been replaced, in the 1970s, by flexible accumulation, neoliberalism and postmodernism. His focus on accumulation regimes and cultural policies intimately connected to these – like modernism for Fordism and postmodernism for postfordism –

leaves less space for the understanding of alternative 'arts of government'. There is no detailed analysis of the fields where government technologies emerge or of the transformations of sovereignty or the human models involved in the new 'modes of reglementation'.

The anthropologies and ethnographies of governmentality and neoliberalism can have an important role in understanding neoliberalism at work, and in deconstructing false dichotomies like state/ civil society/ market. The minute descriptions and interpretations of the daily life of governmentality, in marginal but also central social and political areas, are informed by previous theoretical positions. Nevertheless, ethnography can breed, modify, and enrich theory, as it happens in various ethnographies of the state, analyses of failed political bodies, withcraft, Georgian pickles, Polish women labourers, African migrants, development programmes, border controls, corruption, colonial bodies and internment camps (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997; Dunn, 2004; Mbembe, 2001; Ferguson & Gupta, 2001; Escobar, 1995; West, 2005; Geschiere, 1997; Hansen & Sepputat, 2005; Agamben, 2005).

James Ferguson's argument in his research on the Thaba-Tseko project, from Lesotho, financed by the World Bank and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), can be summarized like this: 'development' is one of the main values in the understanding and appraisal of the world we live in and guides the interventions that we consider possible and desirable. Development is not just a technical or rational project, but also

a central value in our worldview, much the same as 'civilization' use to be in the XIXth century.

A special discourse of development is created which constructs the object of development; a knowledge structure envelops the object (country, region or community) to be developed. 'Development' is, though, not just a conceptual apparatus but also an institutional one, which has real effects in social life through document and rapports but also through policies, programmes and projects (Ferguson, 1990: 73-74).

The rural development programme from Thaba-Tseko region, Lesotho, started in 1975 and was discontinued in 1984. The region to be developed was imagined as a traditional rural one and the project tried to produce economic growth by introducing commercial cattle raising. The population reacted slowly, even aggressively at times to the implementation of the project. The failure was explained, by the project team, as due to a lack of education or of entrepreneurial competences on the part of the population to be developed. Subsequently, more education programmes and competence building strategies were deployed in the region. In Ferguson's view, the cattle raisers from Thaba-Tseko – many of them migrant workers to the mines of South Africa, redeployed sets of alliances and conflicts, based on different categories of interests, alongside the project interventionist policies, embedding the project in local, national and regional politics. The development project acted as an 'anti-politics machine' because it considered government as a technical device and not as a way of governing men and women and, an instrument

used by some interest groups and social classes to control the conduct and choices of others (Ferguson, 1990: 225).

The development apparatus in Lesotho did not function as a device to eliminate poverty, that got, accidentally involved in local and regional politics, but as a „machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes ‘poverty’ as its point of entry’ (Ferguson, 1990: 255). By transforming poverty into a technical problem and by providing apolitical answers to the problem of the reproduction of subaltern populations, ‘development’ depoliticizes, in the same stroke, the poverty and the state. Development is a kind of governmentality that works in different ways than the classical, European variant, described by Foucault or Rose.

In Lesotho, Ferguson says, the growth of state bureaucracy power, intimately connected with the long-term development project, does not mean an enhanced centralization of political power. A neoliberal governmentality with its combination of entrepreneurial technologies of the Self and capilar power networks does not emerge either. The power relations are rearranged inside bureaucratic circuits. The ‘Development State’, that absorbs the worldview, programmes, education, practices and financial inputs of the global institutions of development ‘grabs onto and loops around existing power relations, not to rationalize or coordinate them, so much as to cinch them all together into a knot’ (Ferguson, 1990: 274). What kind of governmentality is this? What kind of fragmented governmentality

emerges in post soviet states like Georgia, where people imagine different political and bureaucratic orders, incongruent with the neoliberal ones imagined by political elites, by eating home made pickles, and dying from botulism? What governmentality is being formed in India on the trails of the big white jeeps of development programme officers? Or in internment camps from Africa and Europe? Or in the formation of new ethnicities in postsocialist, post structural reforms East European countries?

Western donors, Non-Governmental Organisations representatives, and international investors create the context for the emergence of new forms of neoliberal governmentalities that are transnational (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002). The homogeneous grid that seems to define foucauldian governmentality, even in its neoliberal, ambient guise, does not appear in former socialist Mozambique for example. There, the new government emerged unevenly distributed on the territory of the state: concentrated in spaces of commercial investment and resource extraction (graphite and marble mines) and NGO intervention but almost totally absent from the spheres of peasant agriculture (West, 2005: 262). Citizens were transformed into NGO or development programmes ‘beneficiaries’ or weak counterclaimants to denationalized resources and, as West puts it, ‘needing nothing from these rural residents, investors and their intermediaries had no reason to offer them anything – no cause to cultivate their deference and loyalty’ (West, 2005: 262). ‘Low-intensity governance’ (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001: 16), ‘privatization

of sovereignty' (Mbembe, 2001: 78), government through sorcery and counter-sorcery or international and transnational institutions that deploy state effects (IMF, World Bank and many of the big 'institutions of development') do not easily fit into the governmentality of 'advanced liberal democracies' (Rose, 1996).

There is, probably, no definitive answer to these questions and problems. Through an ethnographical

lens, neoliberalism becomes more plural and heterogeneous. The worlds that we inhabit are largely the product of other's visions, sciences, governmentalities and magic. Some ethnographical perspectives can adjust or partially deconstruct the analytics of governmentality, simply by seeing governing at work, in the capillarity of social life, in a truly foucauldian way. Even more, they can do, sometimes, a bit of counter-magic.

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