Sovereignty, Governmentality, Globalization and the Crisis of the State. Re-Telling the Story Backwards: A FoucauldianAnalysis

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Abstract

This article proposes a conceptual reassessment of the paradigm of the crisis of the State by reformulating this issue from a dual analytical perspective, asserting first that this crisis cannot be considered new in the narrative of State transformations, and highlighting how, when and for what purposes this same discourse has been thematised in the theoretical debate. Thus, this approach analyses how rhetorical works within this theoretical framework discourse of the crisis. The foucauldian genealogical approach (i.e. biopolitics and governmentality) allows us to address the topic and problematize the main arguments in the field, i.e. the transformations of State caused by globalization processes (namely the phenomenology of the contemporary State ranging from state sustainability to state failure), the burgeoning emergence of governance without government as a model of policy-making and the reshuffling of the balance of power between neoliberal economy and politics, namely the redesigning of hegemonic relations between the two.

Keywords: state, crisis, governmentality, governance, biopower, neoliberalism, hegemony

1. Governmentality and the Paradigm of the Crisis of the State: Setting the Scene

Thirty years ago, when the political and theoretical debate about the crisis of the State reached its climax, thereby showing the complex nature of both the concept and the phenomenology of the 'crisis' of the state, this was also the time when Foucault, during his public lectures on 'Security, territory and population' and the 'Birth of biopolitics', asserted that the state should be more properly regarded as a 'composite reality', a sort of 'mythical' abstraction whose 'political nature' was in need of reassessment.

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Thus, according to Foucault the centrality of "the governmentalization of the state" as the main characteristic of political modernity should be acknowledged. In this context, he argued that governmentality could be regarded simultaneously 'more' and 'less' influential than sovereignty, or at least, 'less' "formal": less because it acts at the 'micro' level in societies and politics, namely in the 'day-to-day' routine of governing, and more because it permeates the entire 'body of society' not just the political domain (i.e. informal, but enfolding the entire society). The main difference between these consists in the different objectives of 'power': the aim of sovereignty is "to make die or let live", while "bio-politics" is devoted to allowing 'individuals' to live or letting them die. The radical difference between biopolitics and sovereignty, lies in what power is at stake. When "bare life" and its 'augmentation', that is, when human bodies, individually and collectively, become the specific target of political power, then we have bio-politics and governmentality, namely the specifically modern 'rationality' of government which is aimed at exercising power by constructing opportunities that enable or rather dis-enable a person to take action. In this sense a more precise definition of governmentality would be the 'conduct of conducts'.

It is possible to disaggregate this dimension of the governmentalization of the State into four distinct but overlapping components: a) the dissociation of government from sovereignty; b) the formulation of government practices and rationalities; c) the transformation of the exercise of sovereignty by government; and d) the emergence of a distinctively non-political sphere built from processes that are seemingly external to government but nonetheless vital for the fulfilment of government objectives.

According to the "double-reading scheme", these aspects can also be regarded as the main 'pathologies' of contemporary states. Therefore, while the *discourse* on globalization pronounces the diagnosis of the crisis of the state, which consists in the disaggregation of state-sovereignty and the dis-assembling of state power and functions, what is actually at stake are the governmentality techniques of power at work; 'governance without government' being the macro-framework within which these processes unfold. The state is expected to perform a series of acts from the straightforward but highly strategic task of maintaining order, to more complex ones e.g. contrasting economic decline, seeking remedies to redress uneven economic development, coping with security risks while ensuring human rights and the rule of law.

These are just a few of the 'outputs' asked of a state that performs well and does not "fail". Thus, while the impact of globalization disaggregates state sovereignty[2]and leads to government being replaced by governance, the state becomes the object of appraisal by economic power, in terms of its performance as far as governing societies is concerned (cf. Foucault, 2005 a, b; Procacci, 2006; Sassen, 2008). In view of these issues, it seems worthwhile to revisit the 'timeline' of the crisis of the state and retrace its steps in modernity and specifically in the XVII century when, according to Foucault, governmentality and biopolitics defined "The Political" and subordinated the concept of state sovereignty to the idea of government. It is also possible to introduce and thematize the present crisis of the state in terms of a crisis of "democratic regimes", starting from the 'paradigm shift' from government to governance, and by reconstructing an ongoing "drama" in three acts, playing out the neoliberal 'narratives' of globalization and governance without government. Thus, retelling the story backwards entails the deconstruction of the theoretical paradigm of State crisis/ democracy crisis, focusing on the forms and dynamics of the transformations of both, in the aftermath of the Keynesian/Fordist/Bretton Woods order.

The first act of the drama, set in the aftermath of the second world war, celebrates and shares as its main goal the "reconstruction" of the lost international (dis)order. This aim being achieved by starting from the reconstruction of 'global' economic institutions, namely the 'embodiment' of Bretton Woods, "born and raised" under the influence of American hegemony.

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[2] Foucault "insists that power does not only originate from an abstract centre such as the sovereign, the state or the people, but from a variety of discrete domains concerned with individual behaviour and the manner in which it may be evaluated with respect to autonomously generated norms. The emergence of normalizing sciences in the19th century illustrates the progressive dissolution of state power throughout increasingly specific, self-sustaining fields of human activity. Individuals are thus defined more by their objectification within different normalizing practices than by their juridical status in a political system. In such a context, resistance can no longer be solely conceived through the assertion of individual rights against a central power but rather through the assimilation and refusal of local modes of objectification. My view is that sovereign power remains integral to the deployment of governmental power and that we are constituted by our juridical position in a political system to a greater extent than Foucault would have admitted. On the other hand, in agreement with Foucault, the citizen/state game of conquests and defeats is far from telling the whole story. Games of power are played on a daily basis by individuals acquainting themselves with the present conditions of subjection intrinsic to both political and extra-political realms" (Fournier, 2008: 2-3).

On theoretical grounds, the rationale of this construction lies in functionalist theory which subordinates politics to economics, and defines the regulation of both in a 'bureaucratic' version of the *laissez faire, laissez passer* paradigm, which can be considered as the implementation of the biopolitical/liberal imperative. The second act of the drama, set at the time of the global cold war, is acted out in the last part of the "Trente Glourieuse", when the crisis of contemporary democracies is diagnosed and the neoliberal age announced. The final act is when the "neoliberal global hegemony" emerges, at least for those who give credit to this version of the story, i.e. the genealogic 'history of the present' which attacks neoliberal 'ideology' as having subordinated the reasons of politics to the objectives of economy. The most recent part of the drama depicts states as the targets of technocratic evaluation, procedures which may appraise them as being able or unable to meet the criteria of good governance, namely by examining the efficient or not efficient performances of states as the suppliers of first instance of regulations and norms for the smooth and profitable functioning of the market economy. Similarly, economic actors, while disposed 'to absolve' states for their ineffective performances, still call on them to resolve their problems, e.g. for taking on the debts produced by banks, private investors and entrepreneurs.

Thus, in the very same decade we have seen states being asked to be disposed not only to do away with "big government" but also to help private economic actors, by intervening in economic decisions when necessary. Hence, we have also seen states providing assistance to economic actors when they fail in the tough game of market competition, thereby adapting the concept of 'welfare state' to a quite singular interpretation. But that is not the whole story; the last part to complete the picture, is the one showing that intergovernamental policy arenas, namely the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade Organization (both established in the Bretton Woods Era), are the institutions in which these kinds of 'political decisions', subordinating politics to economics, are taken, thereby assigning an ambiguous and multiform role to states; a role that can be etched into the complex rationality of neoliberal governmentality, one specular to the 'discourse' of the 'crisis of the state' (Burchell et al 1991; Dean, 2010; Foucault, 2005 a, b; Larner, Walters, 2004; Palumbo, 2011; Simoncini, 2012).

2. Governmentality and Power. Genealogy and the History of the Present: An Overview

As regards the question "what do we mean by governmentality", we may support the hypothesis that it is the "genealogy" of the institutionalised forms of power in societies and politics, which allows us to investigate the 'mentalities' of government, i.e. the ways in which governing is conceived, conceptualized, represented and based on the body of knowledge that defines its scope, *modus operandi* and characteristics. Thus, the concept of governmentality is defined by Foucault in these terms: "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security" (Foucault, 1991: 102).

The analytics of government exemplifies the study of governmentality, which is identified along three axes of governing: the cognitive, technical and ethical elements of a given "mentality" of government, which shape a specific power or *dispositif/apparatus*, e. g. truth regimes (the collective discourses that construct social reality), modes of control (technology, devices, practices), and forms of subjectivity (collective and individual identities) (Foucault, 2005 a, b). To clarify, it should be emphasized that no strategy or mechanism of power may properly function or rather operate, without a complex 'apparatus' of cognitive, ideational and material resources, that enable 'power' to exert its constitutive influence in the "microphysics" of societies, and in the "macrostructures" at the level of political institutions. Different 'governamentalities' from different historical eras, may combine, functioning simultaneously or else in different 'combinations' whereby a part of the *dispositive* predominates to foster the operating of a specific mentality of governing. Hence, it is possible to consider an interpretative approach in the study of institutionalised forms of power that traces a long-term analytical design which coincides with the definition of the political sphere in Western civilization.

Foucault traces the genealogy of governmentality thus: from the concept of citizenship in classical civilizations to the early Christian pastoral guidance, from the rationality of a liberal government which is 'limited' in its 'productive' actions on society when "life" becomes both the target and the purpose of governing, i.e. biopolitics (the political economy restricts the actions of a government as an internal limitation on the actions of government itself, according to the principle of *laissez faire*), to the forms of 'neoliberal' governmentality of which 'governance without government' is a constituent part (Foucault, 2005 a, b). According to Fournier (2008: 6):

Proceeding from a typically extensive historical overview and in a somewhat experimental fashion, Foucault retells the troubled emergence of the constructs of sovereignty and nationhood. Instead of analysing the history of political relations from the perspective of succeeding central powers, he exposes the tensions and omissions intrinsic to the conquest of sovereignty as an ordering principle for Western polities. However, more importantly for us, he also suggests that discipline, biopower and sovereign power come together in the identification of elements, either internal or external, deemed threatening to the biological integrity of a national population. Following Foucault, [it is possible to] consider sovereignty as an expression of ongoing modes of subjection inside the state and as the basis from which exceptional measures are enacted when the constructs of order and security are deemed threatened. Considered in this way, it is at once ontologically prior to power relations because it establishes territorial units in which the latter relations become possible, and is manifest in the disciplinary and securitizing objectives of government. […] The incipient manifestation of repressive power is still actual in social relations and sovereignty is perpetually re-inscribing itself 'through a form of unspoken warfare… in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and everyone of us' (Foucault, 1980: 90). Furthermore, in spite of the later Foucault's insistence on the ubiquity of biopower as a means to make and preserve life, the sovereign's right to take life or impose discipline never entirely disappears. In the domestic realm, biopolitics can be also said to exercise violence on the subjects whose lives it decides not to preserve by exposing them to greater risks than the rest of the population […]. Biopower can therefore also 'let die' through its internal processes as opposed to 'make die' through an unwavering external power […].

According to the complex nature of power portrayed by Foucault, different accounts and different combinations of power techniques may be reviewed, in order to identify the 'dominant' mentality of governing be that sovereignty, discipline, biopolitics or governmentality or anintricate mix of these. It is thereby possible to deal with the issue of power in the different societal and political configurations, using the governmentality approach as a prominent analytical tool. In this context, it can be argued that 'the spirit in the machine' which animated the process of reconstruction of international order during the post-second world war period is to be found in the architecture of "embedded liberalism", a complex structure built from the bricks of liberal economic rules on the foundations of welfare states. The general rule being: Keynes at home but Smith abroad, that is make economies work according to the rules that states decide, protecting domestic societies from the impact of transnational economic competition, a competence that can be considered the "epitome" of 'national sovereignty'. Nevertheless, the two faces of biopower, just like the two sides of the same coin, are a constant in the history of governmentality, i. e. productive power conducive to freedom of individuals on one side, and the coercive on the other. And scholars (not only 'foucauldians') do not dispute that the Welfare State is an example of this (e.g. Bazzicalupo, 2013; Dean, 2010; Foucault, 2005 b; Habermas, 1975; Harvey, 2007; Held, 1997; Marzocca, 2007). In this framework, *Ordo-liberalism* and *Neoliberalism* as instances of the nascent episteme in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the Seventies in the 20th century, have been pinpointed and recognized by Foucault to be the new spirit in the machine of governmentality, that is the new rule of power game.

In the theoretical framework of *Ordo-liberalism*, academics and politicians assert that the requirements of economic competition and societal needs can be "adjusted" through legal means, the effect of which is not to "prevent or reduce social imbalances that would result from economic freedom, for example, by policies of income redistribution […]", but, on the contrary, to avoid any deviation from or distortion of the smooth functioning of competition in market economy. In this sense, " […] the state's role and function of government are deeply affected by this reconsideration of the concept of competition. It is not to limit the state intervention in the market, but it is the government which is expected to actively work for the market, for the simple reason that all this never occurs as a spontaneous realization.

The market is not given in nature, so it is necessary an active policy that tends to produce it indefinitely" (Marzocca, 2007: 155). In direct contrast with *German Ordo-liberalism*, *American Neoliberalism*[3] claims the opposite:

the market takes on the role of a tribunal, an arbiter who supplies the rule to be followed, the benchmark for the action of governments (Foucault, 2005 b). This benchmark being the system of appraisal used for different social domains, from individual conducts to the performances of states. Thus, the analytics of government, i.e. the exemplification of genealogy in foucauldian analysis, reveals the long term operation of 'market ideology' which re-writes the Keynesian code within the rationale of democratic governments. The Fordist-Keynesian formula which brings together economics and politics, competitive markets and electoral competition between political parties, has been questioned both in domestic and international policy arenas.

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[3] According to Lemke (2001: 199-200), "classic liberalism and neo-liberalism, Foucault suggests, differ above all on two points: The first difference is the re-definition of the relation between the state and the economy. The neo-liberal conception inverts the early liberal model, which rested on the historical experience of an overly powerful absolute state. Unlike the state in the classical liberal notion of rationality, for the neo-liberals the state does not define and monitor market freedom, for the market is itself the organizing and regulative principle underlying the state. From this angle, it is more the case of the state being controlled by the market than of the market being supervised by the state. Neo-liberalism removes the limiting, external principle and puts a regulatory and inner principle in its place: It is the market form which serves as the organizational principle for the state and society […]. The second difference stems from the basis of government. Neo-liberal thought has a central point of reference and support, namely *homo oeconomicus*. By encoding the social domain as a form of the economic domain, cost-benefit calculations and market criteria can be applied to decision-making processes within the family, married life, professional life, etc. The economic individual who rationally calculates costs and benefits is quite unlike the *homo oeconomicus* of the 18th century liberal thinkers. In the classical-liberal version, the freedom of the individual is the technical precondition for rational government, and government may not constrain such freedom if it does not wish to endanger its own foundations. Now, neo-liberalism admittedly ties the rationality of the government to the rational action of individuals; however, its point of reference is no longer some pre-given human nature, but an artificially created form of behavior. Neo-liberalism no longer locates the rational principle for regulating and limiting the action of government in a natural freedom that we should all respect, but instead it posits an artificially arranged liberty: in the entrepreneurial and competitive behavior of economic-rational individuals. Whereas in the classic liberal conception, homo oeconomicus forms an external limit and the inviolable core of governmental action, in the neo-liberal thought of the Chicago School he becomes a behavioristicallymanipulable being and the correlative of a governmentality which systematically changes the variable "environment" and can rightly expect that individuals are characterized by 'rational choice' " (cf. Burchell et al, 1991; Foucault, 2005 , b).

Let us now return to the constitutive elements of the process of governamentalization of the state, summarized as follows: a) the dissociation of government from sovereignty; b) the formulation of government practices and rationalities; c) the transformation of the exercise of sovereignty by government; d) the emergence of a distinctively non-political sphere built from processes that are seemingly external to government but nonetheless vital for the fulfilment of government objectives. Within this framework we can recognize the complex nature of neoliberal governmentality, namely the productive face of biopower on the one hand and its coercive attitude on the other. While in the Fordist Keynesian age the 'productive' face of power was 'dominant', as states were called on to intervene to preserve societies from economic risks, in the present age of globalization states may 'fail', falling down the ratings of 'functional' performances to a lower position. These ratings being the product of the findings of analyses and research collected from the various institutes and think tanks.

According to scholars it is possible to devise "an interdisciplinary combination or qualitative research and quantitative methodology", in order to detect and define "problems that may be festering below the data". In constructing the "failed states index produced by the Fund for peace", this analytical device operates as "a critical tool in highlighting not only the normal pressures that all states experience, but also in identifying when those pressures are pushing a state towards the brink of failure. By highlighting pertinent issues in weak and failing states, the FSI — and the social science framework and software application upon which it is built — makes political risk assessment and early warning of conflict accessible to policy-makers and the public at large" (The Fund for Peace, 2014: 9). The report continues by outlining the different analytical dimensions under which the performances of the states can be assessed. These comprise six social and economic criteria and six political and military indicators, subdivided[4] into different dimensions, which reconstruct the variegated nature of global politics, ranked to form a 'hierarchy' of states, whereby the winners have the lower scores and the losers the higher.

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[4] These different criteria refer respectively to social and economic indicators i.e. demographic pressures, group grievances, uneven economic development, refugees, human flight and brain drain, poverty and economic decline; and political and military indicators, namely state legitimacy, public services, human rights and rule of law, security apparatus, factionalize élites, external intervention (Fund for peace, 2014: 10).

Thus the *dispositif* of neoliberal governmentality, functions as a dual-track system one which by aiding target states also shapes them into "dependent", underdeveloped, failed states, the overall aim being to instantiate hegemonic security globally. In the words of Dean: "consequently the notion of dependency is understood as an ideological 'keyword' that changes its meaning in relation to broad institutional and social-structural shifts" (Dean, 2010: 79); a social-structural shift now recognizable in the neoliberal hegemonic – albeit contested – global order. We can consider that the paradigm of modernization and the studies on political development (regarded the most 'prestigious tradition' in political science studies), have given form to an interpretative paradigm which may be claimed to betray its ideological neutrality by prescribing a particular mode of political development, while claiming to be objective at the same time. Such a framework being just another way to claim that social, cultural, political and economic institutions should have been 'inspired' by the American model.

2.1 Neoliberal Authoritarianism and Governance: The Double Reading Scheme

Foucauldian genealogy, which for the most part here coincides with the analytics of governing, may offer more than a critical attitude to the deconstruction of the complex diagram of 'neoliberal' power. On highlighting how different rationalities of governing may combine and interact in the same framework, it is Dean (a foucauldian scholar) in particular, who problematizes neoliberal governamentality. Thus, by invoking the double reading scheme, it is possible to distinguish two 'ages of neoliberal globalization'. The first can be called the age of "advanced liberalism" which celebrates the clear victory of liberal democracy and capitalism over all their enemies, internal and external, while the second phase, is the one in which the 'coercive' face of biopolitical governmentality seems to prevail. First can be identified the displacement of the 'arts of governing' in the paradigm shift from liberalism to neoliberalism. Thus, from sovereignty to governance, from hierarchies to networks and flows, from totalizing social processes to individualizing processes, from territorializing politics to the deterritorialization of political space, from the establishment to the erosion of political borders, from centralized government to polycentric "spheres of authority", from command and law to choice and agency, from state to heterogeneous actors, from national to transnational civil society, from citizens to cosmopolitan (self-governing actors), from society to community and regions.

This constitutes the first part of the globalization account, the one closest to the turning point at the end of the cold war when democracy and market economy were recognized as the uncontestable fate of all humanity. In referring to this first age of neoliberal governmentality, the mainstream account of global governance describes governance as a 'multilayered' structure, comprising state, sub-state, supra-state and transnational arrangements, claiming to have overcome the 'crisis' of sovereignty. It is also conceived as 'polyarchical' and pluralistic, which means that it is composed of multiple centres of authority, wherein the formal jurisdictions and the concrete decisions that they generate may not coincide. In these terms: "in global governance, institutions are nested vertically and horizontally. The vertical allocation of authority involves the level of social organization […] from the local to the global. The horizontal allocation of authority involves choices between market processes, political and administrative processes, judicial processes, and other governance mechanisms" (Shaffer, 2005: 140). The 'political style' which characterizes governance arenas may be hierarchical or cooperative, depending on whether states, trans-governmental organizations or civil society organizations, or businesses, may have a greater or even lesser role (Zurn, 2005).

The second part of the account relates how neoliberal (govern)mentality may be diverted towards the thanatopolitical face of biopolitics. According to Dean, power in contemporary democracies entails matters of life and death as much as ones of the "conduct of conducts"; of obligations as much as rights; of decisions on fostering life or its abandonment, of the right to kill "bare life" without committing homicide, as well as shaping freedom and choices' opportunities" (Dean, 2007: 96). According to the governmentality approach, the final stage in analysing neoliberal governmentalityentails highlighting the transformations of government rationalities shifting towards a logic of the state of exception, in an unusual interplay between exception and normalcy, resulting from a change of the 'dominant' party in the relationship between the different mentalities of government. If, according to Agamben (2005) in his theorization of detention camps (encompassing Guantanamo to immigration policies), the "state of exception" is understood as the new "*nomos* of world order" in times of globalization, and is configured as a single illustrative diagram of neoliberal governmentality, for Dean, this "state of exception" is "dispersed", broken down into many practices in which the logic of exception paradoxically becomes routine. In light of the above, Dean advocates the opportunity to address a new *problematization* of the art of governing.

Indeed, we may wonder under what terms the connections between the techniques and discourses of *softpower* (neoliberal governance) and *hardpower* in the so-called "authoritarian liberalism" are created, and how they are reshaped by a form of "liberal exceptionalism" in which "the vocabulary of emergency, exception, crisis and necessity" redraws the same neoliberal diagram. The great economic recession of 2008 which resembled the recession of 1929 with its devastating effects on economies, societies and politics, and the series of "new wars" starting from the one caused by the dissolution of Yugoslavia and from the global war on terror, are all related to the transformations states have undergone in the era of globalization, whereby the governmentality approach allows us to identify the different 'technologies' and 'strategies' of power at work (Dean, 2007; Kaldor, 2003; Simoncini, 2012).

2.1.1. Neoliberal governmentality: The importance of being called governance

Some of the most "influential" definitions of the concept, as elaborated by the community of scholars, claim that: "Global governance is governing, without sovereign authority, relationships that transcend national frontiers. Global governance is doing internationally what governments do at home" (Finklestein 1995, *passim*); or rather that it can be regarded as the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is the continuing process through which conflict or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken" (Commission on Global Governance, 1995, *passim*); and that "Governance…encompasses the activities of governments but it also includes the many other channels through which 'commands' flow in the form of goals framed, directives issued, and policies pursued[…] Systems of rule can be maintained and their controls successfully and consistently exerted even in the absence of established legal and political authority." (Rosenau, 1995, *passim*). Thesedefinitions have one aspect in common, in that they all refer to the possibility of *informal order*, understood as the achievement of social order regardless of the actions of a centralised political authority. The theoretical frameworks to which these definitions are attributable are those of liberal internationalism andfunctionalist theory. The first outlines the conceptual perimeter of governance starting from the importance accorded to the institutions in shaping cooperation between states, while emphasising not only the given 'rationality' of cooperation but also its legal basis (embedded liberalism; multilateralism).

For its part, the functionalist matrix re-articulates the problematic relationship between state sovereignty and international cooperation, and between economic and political interests in technocratic terms: A 'complex' world "disaggregated" into a myriad of trans-governmental and intergovernmental 'networks', is regarded as the backbone of global governance. The link between regulation and governance is captured in these terms: "governance is […] about dense organizing, discursive and monitoring activities, that embed, frame, stabilize and reproduce rules and regulations" (Djelic, Sahlin-Andersson 2008, 7). The 'regulatory' essence of governance is structured and performed by fundamental actors in international politics namely the EU, the OECD, NATO, the IMF, the WTO and the G8/G20.The dynamics underlying the development of the global governance 'regulatory web' are identified in some 'institutional forces'. First of all, the hegemony of scientific discourse and 'expert knowledge' in the definition of the cognitive component of the global episteme; the second 'institutional force' is constituted by a 'marketization process' of society, that is the emergence of the market as a hegemonic institution (see Slaughter, 2004).

At a distance of slightly more than a decade, Adler, Bernstein, Barnett and Duvall (2005) pose the problem of the relationship between governance and power in an analytically explicit way in their study on the "epistemological construction of global governance". The reference to Foucault made by the authors is explicit in order to shape their 'research programme' aimed at a 'reformulation' of the concept of governance starting from the re-thematisation of its 'political' dimension. They argue that in this framework the concept of power can be understood in the *dispositional*sense since it 'orders' and 'controls' social subjects, namely in a 'productive' sense (*productive power*), given that, to paraphrase Foucault, it defines "the order of things" semantically, through 'discourse'. In this context, it may be worth considering that "problems of and challenge to global governance are not external to the governmental discourse but are constituted as problems within a particular mode of problematization, deployed in a specific diagram of governmentality" (Prozorov 2004, 268). In this sense, "there are thus literally no problems or challenges to government prior to the constitution of a certain form of problematization" (Prozorov 2004, 272).

The added value of the governmental approach for a 'critique' of the rationality of government inscribed in 'neo-liberal governance' thus lies in its ability to discern the forms of 'rationality' that are 'internal' to each power diagram, and in exercising a 'critique' on these forms of government rationality, starting from an awareness that the main characteristic of a given governmental epistemology is the "immanence" of the elements that constitute it. This means that the 'objects' that give shape to a given configuration of power are made of the same discourse that defines them. The 'discourse' on governance is an integral part of its own work, and not a means of legitimation 'external' to the rationality of governance, operating in a given configuration (see Dean 2010; Foucault 2005 a,b; Prozorov 2007).Ultimately, this articulated 'narrative' of governmentalityperformatively poses the same conditions for its feasibility, establishing a "regime of veridiction" which prescribes the delegitimization of the forms of conflict and protest (therebyexcluded from the semantics of politics) through the realisation of individual and collective forms of life consistent with this power 'diagram'.

3. Neoliberal Governmentality and the Crisis of Democracy: An Overview

As various scholars maintain (Dean, 2007, 2010; Palano, 2010; Palumbo, 2011), over the last decades a series of analyses have developed the topic of the 'ungovernability' of societies, identifying the crisis of the state in terms of the inefficiency of its performances and of the shortcomings of democratic legitimacy. In this framework, the well-known theory of the crisis of governability of democracies formulated by the Trilateral Commission at the start of the Seventies, gives an account of the crisis of liberal-capitalist democracies expressed in terms of 'the overload of demands' made on the political systems by the people (the input legitimacy),e.g. by interest groups, social movements and political parties, at the expense of the 'effectiveness' of the political system itself. For its part, the neo-Marxist account of the crisis of legitimacy of the democratic-capitalist state, calls into question both the welfare state as a model for regulating society and the legitimacy of a state when faced with 'contradictions' of capitalism. In the 1990s, different accounts came into play, these coinciding with the spread of the concept of governance in the social sciences lexicon. In response to the crisis of representative democracy (in its elitist-competitive version) (Held, 1997), regulatory frameworks in 'systemic governance' on the one hand, and participatory democracy on the other, were put forward as possible solutions to the crisis of representative democracy.

According to the foucauldian governmentality approach namely the analytics of government, there are two different techniques of power which concur in reducing the opportunities to express and recognize any form of conflict or dissent in democratic politics. The first consists in 'purifying' decision making processes from the 'contagion' of political confrontations, and from ideology and 'mass politics' (Palumbo, 2009, 2011); the second consists in reducing the spaces given to 'politics' in deliberative governance arrangements by opening these up, at least potentially, to anyone – e.g. the application of the stakeholders principle – but only after having cleansed 'dialogue' from any conflictual, 'ideological' position regarding the social and political issues involved (Habermas, 1996; Marchetti, 2012; Pellizzoni, 2008). Moreover, the complex intertwining of domestic and international politics is part and parcel of the *dispositif* of neoliberal governance, according to which the profiles of democratic accountability of decision makers have been shifted away from domestic politics into international arenas, with the effect of reducing the 'responsibility' of national governments as a consequence. Despite this, the opposite still occurs, given that national élites use transnational governance arenas in order to impose or sustain 'unpopular' decisions (Palumbo, 2011; Prozorov, 2007).

Thus we can recognize the terrain on which the 'democratic struggle' for the radicalization of democracy can be fought, with the elitist Schumpterian version set against its technocratic restoration. The two 'neoliberal' strategies, consist in setting politics aside (at least in part) by detaching policy making (which becomes 'technocratic') from the dynamics of electoral competition (in the elitist Schumpterian implementation of representative democracy, political parties and the most influential social, economic and political actors, 'dominate' the public sphere thereby reducing opportunities to change social and political hierarchies), and resorting to a participatory version of governance arrangements in decision-making processes (de Sousa, Santos, Avritzer, 2005; Habermas, 1996; Palumbo, 2009, 2011; Vaccaro, 2009), opening up to participatory local politics based on the polycentric structure of governance arrangements. According to theorists of radical democracy, it is only by 'repoliticizing' democracy, namely by reintroducing conflict, dissent and critics, that democracy will be in a fit state to regain its 'radical' roots, i.e. to include those who are excluded (De Sousa, Santos, Avritzer, 2005; Mouffe, 2005; Pellizzoni, 2008; Rancière, 2007).

If at least we can agree that democracy should be the only way to take 'legitimate' collective decisions which determine opportunities and constraints for individual and collective entitlements to act, then we should also accept that different interpretations of the crisis of the state and of democracy, i.e. the conservative or rather progressive political interpretations of 'problems' and their 'solutions', can really make a difference. Moreover, since the end of the Cold War, a series of 'authoritative accounts' have set the epistemic scene of global politics, from Fukuyama to Huntington, from the paradigm of "the end of history" to that of the "clash of civilizations", showing how influential 'the power to define the situation' can be. Different forms of 'productive power' may shape the episteme of an epoch, constituting the different arenas in which social actors may perform their roles (Burnett, Duvall, 2005). Thus, establishing what is true or false (the game of truth in the foucauldian lexicon) in the interpretation of 'reality' exemplifies power *par excellence*; therefore the genealogical approach allows us to see how the different historical epistemes define the conditions through which events can be granted the status of real experience, showing that the definition of problems and their solutions are closely intertwined. Scholars participate in this process of the 'social construction of reality' by legitimizing some interpretations over others. By referring to a 'deconstructive' analytical approach, i.e. the foucauldian genealogy of governmentalities at work in current socio-political 'systems', it is possible to develop a critical view of the complex phenomenology of economic and political globalization. Thus, the 'added value' of this critical approach does not consist in denying the 'structural' impact of material reality or of the institutional constraints; on the contrary it shows that this very impact, mediated by 'intersubjective constructions', has been defined and posed as 'objective', and consequently maintained and reinforced as an undisputed component of social reality. In the face of this, it is the analytical approach of genealogy namely the "history of the present" which may uncover the "essentially contested" nature of social phenomena (Gallie, 1956).

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