

Border as Method or the Multiplication of Labor

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The current globalization of university systems needs to be rethought in the wider context of changing forms of mobility, the production of geographies that project themselves across the limits of modern political spaces, and the forms of policing that emerge with the proliferation of borders within as well as beyond such limits. We have in mind not only the transnational mobility of students and academics but also the increasingly elaborate systems of higher education export, outsourcing and franchising that are emerging with the penetration of Anglophone universities into market contexts such as India and China. What interests us about this is not so much the emergence of education as a commodity subject to GATT and WTO rules of trade like any other, but rather how the intricate geography implied in the production of education as a global commodity involves the continual remaking and redrawing of the borders that classically separate universities from their outsides.

One aspect of this is the crisis of the 'university of culture' so effectively described by Bill Reddings over a decade ago. Yet the loss of the university's mission of safeguarding the national culture is not the only factor at play in this transition. It is also necessary to consider, in a transnational frame, how the value-form of knowledge is being repositioned not only with respect to labor market positions (of students, graduates, researchers, etc.) but also with regard to funding arrangements, knowledge transfers, intellectual property regimes, and so on. These changes imply a complexification of the filters and gate-keeping functions that control access to the university for students and other figures insofar as they are the bearers of labor power. In the first round of edu-factory discussion, this remaking of the borders of universities was referred to as a system of differential inclusion. This involves an elaborate system of assessment, patronage, trade, language skills, visa issuance and border control that places universities in a transnational frame and produces and reproduces labor market hierarchies at different scales.

It is no accident that the concept of differential inclusion has also been used to describe the filtering of migrants at the borders of the EU, US, and other continental, subcontinental and national spaces. But to recognize that the processes and technologies of differential inclusion are also at work in the context of global higher education is by no means to draw a simple homology between say international students (or other university workers) and undocumented and/or other labor migrants. The situations of these subjects are clearly disparate, even if they can also overlap. Nonetheless, it is important to note and analyze the commonalities and diversities of these border-crossing practices and experiences to map the effects of the concurrent processes of explosion and implosion that characterize the interlinked and heterogenous geographies of labor extraction today.

In this post we want to make two main points:

1. That it is insufficient to model these multifarious and interlinked systems of differential inclusion using the concepts of governmentality and the international division of labor.
2. That any possible escape from the commodified global university must also involve political practices of translation that question the dominance both of international English and/or national languages.

To turn to the first of these points, we can remember Toby Miller's valuable contribution to this list a couple of weeks back. Toby's post traced the tendency for US universities to transfer costs away from governments and towards students, who are regarded more and more as consumers who must manage their own lives. Contrary to many other writers working in the governmentality tradition, Toby argues that this situation requires an analysis that mixes Foucauldian theories of liberal governance with Marxist critique. We couldn't agree more. But when we begin to map the ways in which the global expansion of US universities sets up patterns of subsidy and investment on the transnational scale, we need a new set of concepts and methods adequate to the analysis of the borderscapes that emerge.

We are less interested in a critique of governmentality that finds its impetus in the current forms of exception than one that explores governmental techniques and modalities of rule in their normative moments. The concept of governmentality can only account for the infinite repetition of nuanced variations on the same theme of a given model of liberal subjectivity. Furthermore, despite the dispersal of governmental mechanisms across the prismatic geography of global/local dynamics, there are moments of excess implied in the continuous production and reproduction of the unitary and coherent conditions that make the workings of the technological and legal mechanisms of governmentality possible. Consider the establishment of US universities, in which liberal education and English language instruction are practiced, within specially designated zones in China (for a strictly delimited period of time). The deployment of zoning technologies is a crucial character of development in post-reform China (one needs only to think of special economic zones as the one established in Shenzhen): whatever the practices within these higher education institutions, zoning technologies cannot be reduced to the logic of governmentality. Rather their deployment points to the intertwining of governmentality and sovereignty as a necessary feature of the emerging transnational production system in higher education.

In this case, the borders between the university and its outsides obtain a complexity that cannot be fully explained by the concept of the international division of labor or the correlate spectrum of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. What we face is a situation where labor continually multiplies and divides with the global proliferation of borders, in this instance the internal borders of China. Multiplication, we should emphasize, implies division, or, even more strongly, it is a form of division. But, when it comes to the globalization of university systems, division

works in a fundamentally different way than it does in the world as constructed within the frame of the international division of labor. It tends to function through a continuous multiplication of control devices that correspond to the multiplication of labor regimes and the subjectivities implied by them within each single space constructed as separate within models of the international division of labor.

Corollary to this, and relevant not only to the currently globalization processes in the university sector, is the presence of particular kinds of labor regimes across different global and local spaces. This leads to a situation where the division of labor must be considered within a multiplicity of overlapping sites that are themselves internally heterogeneous. To put it simply, to make sense of the characteristics of the contemporary global geography of production and exploitation, one has to consider at once a process of explosion of previous geographies and a process of implosion by which previously separated actors are forced into interlinked systems of labor extraction. While this intensifies modes of exploitation, it also leads to a multiplication of lines of flight and possibilities for new forms of transnational social and political cooperation and organisation. While capital divides labor in order to produce value added, the multiplication of labor provides opportunities for new practices of subtraction or engaged withdrawal.

This leads us to the question of auto-education and autonomous university experiences that emerged in the first round of edu-factory discussion. In his post to the list a couple of weeks back, Jon Solomon expressed what we think is a very legitimate worry: that the various attempts to construct alternative or nomadic university experiences might end up reproducing ossified forms of national and cultural resistance to the neoliberalization of the university. This is a real danger and we would be lying if we were to claim that we have not ourselves experienced situations where it is precisely this that threatens to occur. But we would also like to emphasize that this is not necessarily so. Indeed, an attention to what we have above been calling the multiplication of labor implies a practice of subtraction that must necessarily involve practices of translation that work against the retreat to national culture in the face of global English and the consequent inattention to the seemingly contradictory complicity of nationalism and neoliberalism.

The practice of translation we have in mind demands a new political anthropology of organization and a rethinking of the very notion of the institution which is a far cry from the trite calls for universal languages and transparent forms of discourse that have occurred on this list. What these polemics fail to recognize is that any practice of translation that attempts to flatten all meanings and affects onto a single plane of arbitration will imply incommensurabilities and miscarriages in communication, even if the conversation is occurring in a national language. We couldn't agree more with the Counter-cartographies Collective when they write about the tendency for critical intellectual and activist idioms to divide and separate. But we do not see this tendency as one that can or should be remedied by the imposition of a single mode of address that would close the differences at play. The task is rather to

work in and through translation and to join this work to a politics that recognizes that capital itself attempts to close such heterogeneity by abstracting all values onto a single plane of equivalence.

By rethinking translation outside the frame of equivalence and neutral arbitration between languages, it is possible to distinguish patterns of multiplication and proliferation of meaning that do not result in a politically debilitating dispersion of forces and alliances. Conversely, such a heterolingual approach to translation does not imply the reduction of political thought and action within a series of haphazard articulations which are nonetheless constrained by the existing institutional arrangements. To reconceive the political within this frame is not to obscure or abandon its conflictual dimension. The practice and experience of struggle is not incommensurable with a practice of translation that does not seek to level all languages onto an even field. Such translation, however, does lead us to ask how a politics of struggle in which one either wins or loses can be thought across a politics of translation in which one usually gains and loses something at the same time.

Since translation is a practice, we find it more useful to speak of it in practical rather than theoretical terms. For us, translation is never simply about language – it is a political concept which acquires its meaning within plural practices of constructing the common. On the other hand, it implies conflictual processes and struggles that constellate about the heterogeneity of global space and time. To return to our initial concern about borders and border-crossers, we might mention the work of the Frassanito Network. Founded after a border camp protest in Puglia, where a number of internees managed to escape from an illegal detention center, this network links a number of groups across Europe and beyond doing political work around movements and struggles of migration. Neither simply an autonomous university nor a group of activists, the practice of translation is fundamental to the modes of organization instituted by this network. We can mention, for instance, the transnational newsletter *Crossing Borders* (http://www.noborder.org/crossing_borders/), which has been published in up to ten languages.

At stake here is not simply the communication of a stable message to readers in different language groups but the entry of translation as a practice of political organization that is central to the constitution of the network. The production of these texts across languages necessitates a time and space of organization that is fundamentally different to that which would emerge in the absence of this practice. This is only one instance in which translation becomes a principle of political organization that constitutes new forms of struggle and movement that reach toward the global scale and question the division of activist from migrant that has plagued many political efforts in this regard. We do not want to celebrate this mode of organization or to claim it is without its problems. Nor do we want to forward it as a model for other attempts to invent new institutional forms. Political invention, to be short, cannot be cut and pasted. What we can state is that organizational forms that seek to move beyond the dyad student-citizen, which continues to animate many attempts to oppose the corporatisation of the university, will have to

involve translational practices that exceed the conceptual and political frame of governmentality.