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FROM BORDER AS A METHOD OF CAPITAL TO BORDERSCAPE AS A METHOD FOR A GEOGRAPHICAL OPPOSITION TO CAPITALISM

Introduction. – Capitalism and territoriality. For a critical reflection on these two words and their connections it is important to become aware of the relationship between capitalism, as an operative and historicized expression of capital, and geography as *fabrica mundi*, as creation of worlds. This also implies to take on the responsibility for developing a critical reflection that is still missing on the ways in which capitalism engages with territorial processes and tries to take advantage of territoriality, making it a device to construct its particular geography of the world.

David Harvey's work gives us a relevant opportunity to initiate this problematization of the link between capitalism and territoriality. In particular, I would like to start my reflection by referring to a volume written by a geographer, Neil Smith, who studied under the supervision of Harvey. The book is *«Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space»*, which contains an interesting preface by Harvey in its third and more recent 2008 edition. By giving account of the multiple intellectual and political meanings of the spatial dimension of capitalism, Smith writes that capitalism has been able to survive the XX Century thanks to its peculiar production of space essential to the configuration of the unevenly developed landscape, which is the keystone to the operationalization of capitalism. Thus, capitalism survived and is still surviving, as it is a fundamentally geographical project. Not only is therefore important to question what capitalism «does» to geography but also what geography «means» for capitalism.

If the geo-political answers to this question reveal that the geography of capitalism originates from the unevenly developed landscape, my reflection starts considering political borders as a structuring element of the unevenly developed landscape of the geography of capitalism, or, as a method of capital following the interesting conceptual approach recently proposed by Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013)¹. Beginning with these considerations, the article goes further in the reflection discussing the potential of a critical rethinking of the concepts of «border» and «landscape», as well as of their heuristic intersections, to cope with the contradictions of capitalism and to search for strategies able to face them at both theoretical and practical level. If capitalism has always been a fundamentally geographical project – as Smith argued taking up the perspective of his teacher who was himself inspired by the seminal contribution of Henri Lefebvre – it seems suitable and needed to think of a geographical alternative to capitalism. Such an alternative cannot help but question some themes in the heart of geographical knowledge (in this article the themes of borders and landscape) to encourage a revolution to capitalism that become possible, as it is an essentially geographical project. Such a revolution would also be able to inspire a new (geo)political imagination, which can compensate the lost of political imagination that supported and still supports Margareth Tacher's slogan *«There Is No Alternative»* (TINA) to capitalism by practicing a geographical opposition to capitalism in this way.

Border as a method of capital. – Although they are not geographers, Mezzadra and Neilson contribute to critically interrogating geographical knowledge through their interdisciplinary reflection on border as

¹ Mezzadra and Neilson's conceptualization is well expressed by the English title of their volume, *«Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor»* (2013). The Italian translation of the title, *«Confini e frontiere. La moltiplicazione del lavoro nel mondo globale»* (2014), does not so clearly convey the originality of their conceptual perspective that is intended to problematize the border as method.

method². What makes Mezzadra and Neilson's argument particularly interesting is that they consider the «border as a method of capital» and «as epistemological method». This double meaning that they give to the border highlights how their reflection is by no means a descriptive account of concepts, moving from the role of bordering processes in ordering the modern world and in allowing the appropriation of parts of it to «the ontological sense in which borders are involved in making or creating worlds – their role in the scene of *fabrica mundi*» (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2013, p. 30). This represents a significant shift in perspective for a critical reading of the foundation and working of the global geography of primitive accumulation and exploitation, in which borders had and continue to have a crucial role through the mapping of the modern world. Specifically, this perspective fosters a critical investigation of the complex relationship between the modern State and capitalism. In this regard, it is worth considering Harvey's words (2014, p. 155) in Part Two of the volume «*Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*» devoted to «The Moving Contradictions» and precisely in Contradiction 11 «Uneven Geographical Developments and the Production of Space»:

«The state is a bounded territorial entity formed under conditions that had little to do with capital but which is a fundamental feature of the geographical landscape. [...] As a bounded entity, the question of how the state's borders were established and how they are patrolled in relation to the movements of people, commodities and money becomes paramount. The two spatialities of state and capital sit awkwardly with and frequently contradict each other. This is very clear in the case, for example, of migration policies.»

It is essentially through its borders that the State contributes to the composition of the unevenly developed landscape of capitalism. Therefore, starting from its borders it is possible a critical (re)reading of the contradictory but constant and essential relationship between the spatiality of the modern State and of capital. The modern geopolitical imaginary is based on the idea of State borders regarded as naturalized and static lines that territorially mark the limits of political sovereignty and jurisdiction of States, at the same time defining what John Agnew (1994) has called «territorial traps». These territorial traps – on which the dominant state-centric epistemology of modern geography is based, putting at stake of its functioning the idea of territorial fixity and a set of binary oppositions (centre/periphery, internal/external etc.) – represent the original element for the creation of the unevenly developed landscape produced by capital. In this way, territorial traps also highlight the close relationship between the constitution and development of the economic space of capitalism and the political and legal spaces that have for a long time corresponded to the political-territorial form of the State throughout modernity. What emerges is the tension and dense articulation between «political borders [...] and what we call the *frontiers of capital*, traced not only by capital's expansionist drive but also by its need to organize space according to multiple hierarchical criteria» (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2013, p. 66). However, this relationality between the State and capitalism has not been critically problematized for a long time due to the overlapping that was once possible between the political map of the modern world and the global map of capitalism.

Yet, today's forms and practices of global mobility and the relevant transformations of symbolic and material borders and frontiers – which have caused their present post-colonial and post-Cold War reconfiguration – inexorably reveal the complexity of the link between the State and capitalism that has been for a long time invisibilized and naturalized, as well as the interweaving of the State and capitalism in the regimes of capital accumulation³. Thus, it is necessary to rethink borders as a funding element

² For a geographical reading of the English edition of Mezzadra and Neilson's volume (2013), see contributions by Ugo Rossi and Joshua Kurz in the forum published in «*Dialogues in Human Geography*» (2013) and devoted to a collective review of the book.

³ Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2002) has argued that the homogeneity of space, time and experience that dominated *Weltgeschichte* has been called into question by globalization processes and contemporary human mobility. These processes draw attention to the urgency to move away from any «geometrical simplification», as it is highlighted by Franco Farinelli in geographical reflection, with particular regard to the «critique of cartographic reason» (2003, 2009).

through which the State and capital get into a relationship and are related to each other within the unevenly developed landscape in order to show the tense, conflicting but fundamental relationship between the State and capitalism. Specifically, this means to rethink borders «beyond the line». From this viewpoint, what emerges is the importance of considering the border as epistemological method. Not only highlighting its feature of funding element of the capitalistic project (border as a method of capital), but also revealing its nature of laboratory in which it is possible to search for and find the interpretative tools that are needed to cope with the political, socio-cultural, economic challenges of the globalized world, as well as to critically understand the functioning and contradictions of contemporary capitalism. This is possible by considering the border not only as an institution defining the territorial and legal limits of the Nation-State, but it is also important to recognize borders ontological multidimensionality (legal, political, cultural, social and economic) that frees the border from any exclusive correspondence to the geopolitical lines of separation between States. This multidimensionality of borders emerges indeed looking at the complex interactions between the multiplication and stratification of borders and global processes, and among them particularly migration and transnational flows. What emerges is a new heterogeneous geography of the global space, where borders can be regarded as a vantage point of observation to theoretically and empirically understand contemporary capitalism. To this end, it is important to recognize that in contemporary political life State borders are not necessarily where they are supposed to be according to the modern geopolitical imaginary. Thus, focusing on the proliferation and heterogeneization of borders in the global and globalized contemporaneity is a crucial step to move towards a new geographical imagination alternative to the modern and capitalistic one.

Within this framework, it is interesting to investigate the critical conceptual and methodological potential of the *borderscape* notion (Brambilla, 2015; dell'Agnese, Amilhat Szary, 2015), which allows a critical rethinking of the concepts of «border» and «landscape», showing the «borderscape» as a method for a geographical opposition to capitalism and a new (geo)political imagination aware of the relationship between capitalism and territoriality.

Borderscape as a method for a geographical opposition to capitalism. – This paragraph describes the reasons why the borderscape concept, and its Italian translation «paesaggio di confine», can represent a method for a geographical opposition to capitalism.

Above all, the borderscape allows a geographical opposition to capitalism as it fosters an essential and desired critical rethinking of the concepts of «landscape» and «border» in the heart of geographical knowledge. In this regard, the critical potential of the borderscape notion is linked to its relationship with the five dimensions of global cultural flows that Arjun Appadurai (1996) defines as *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes*. As shown by Appadurai, his choice of the suffix «-scape» is because it expresses the fluid and uneven form of the landscapes of globalization. The spatiality of globalization is characterized by multiple interactions, overlaps and disjunctions that question the binary oppositions by referring, instead, to a complex and transnational construction of contemporary landscapes at the intersection between global and local processes, between political borders and the frontiers of capital. Thus, the concept of borderscape enables a productive understanding of the processual, de-territorialized and dispersed nature of borders and their ensuing regimes and ensembles of practices (Brambilla et al., forthcoming 2015).

Appadurai's argument provides another important interpretation for exploring the critical potential of the borderscape concept. In fact, by detaching the suffix «-scape» from the prefix «land-», the anthropologist liberates the conceptual potential of new terms, which he coins with the same suffix (and in this way also the word *border-scape*), from restrictions imposed by the etymological ambivalence that characterizes the term «landscape». In English, as well as in other modern European languages, the word «landscape» is characterized by a particular ambivalence, for which the term means either «the (mostly visual) representation of a portion of space with aesthetic values, and “the thing itself”, or rather the territory in its concrete physical and anthropic reality» (Bonesio, 2007, p. 17). It is in this way that modern culture has gradually shaped its own idea of space, by structuring it through that particular

kind of artistic representation based on the rational presuppositions of modern science and the geometrical linear perspective. It is through a similar process that the vitality of the border landscape is concealed in the mapping of boundaries as dividing lines between nation-state sovereignties (Olwig, 2008). However, the reference to the etymology of the «-scape» suffix allows us to bring to mind another «original» meaning of the landscape term previous to the ambivalence with which it is burdened in the modern period. It is a meaning originated in the relationship between the suffix «-scape» and the term «shape», for which landscape refers to the act of «shaping» a composition of man-made spaces on the earth that work and evolve not based on natural laws but to serve a community, thus arising from the collective and political nature of the landscape. The landscape is the land «scaped», «shaped» or created as place and polity by people; it is a place of identification and transformation of the community, which allows the changing persistence of human relationships by at the same time showing the «cultural dimension of human practices of dwelling on the earth» (Bonesio, 2007, p. 156).

Deserving particular attention to this second original meaning of landscape, it is possible to understand landscape as «the first configuration of territoriality» (Turco, 2010). Landscape can be defined, in that sense, as a «mediator between human groups and territory», or, as a «cultural process» (Turri, 2008). Landscape is a «public space», a «socio-topia», taking up Angelo Turco's suggestion, who defines landscape as «a bottom-up geographical formation, where the legality of the established order is not only, and not so much, fixed, but where the legitimacy of social behaviours is also formulated, negotiated and developed above all» (Turco, 2010, pp. 127-129). What emerges is the potential of landscape as a «communicative capital» that can be regarded as «an extraordinary resource for the collectivity and common citizens» in an age of globalization (*ibidem*, p. 129). As a communicative capital, landscape is, on the one hand, a tangible expression of social conflicts that characterize the evolution of global capitalistic contemporary geographies. On the other hand, landscape – precisely because it is a mediator between social groups and territory – is capable of undertaking a relevant role in the production of innovative forms of identity awareness that are the outcome of a non-destructive but creative management of conflicts through a sharing able to move from the definition of common interests to that of common values (Turco, 2014).

Rethinking landscape beyond the modern preconception on it, there is a specific feature of landscape that particularly expresses its importance to interrogate the relationship between capitalism and territoriality through borders. It is the fact that landscape is a «liminal space», as suggested by Turco (2010). Landscape is able to fully express mobile social and cultural configurations of the contemporary world exactly because it functions as a liminal space that conveys an idea of processual movement and change. Conversely, what Turco defines as «para-tactical space» – on which the visible, or often invisibilized, articulation between political borders and the frontiers of capital has been founded – is called into question by mobile and shifting features of the contemporary world, as it is based on a static, fixed vision of reality. There is a creative dimension of the liminal space, which is never marginal and conveys a generative potential that allows us to «feel the world» and to «be awake». The liminal space does not demarcate indeed the end of something, but it indicates the beginning of our possibilities to construct «imaginable and possible landscapes» (Morelli, 2011, pp. 151-152).

As the etymological reflection on the suffix «-scape» reveals, the notion of «scape» is part of a political project of «making», at the same time enabling an understanding of the transition from a «*politics of being*» to a «*politics of becoming*» (Rajaram, Grundy-Warr, 2007). Thus, the borderscape concept is also relevant to draw attention to another key argument within our reflection, that is to say the notion of *becoming*. Hence, borderscapes show that borders are both «*markers of belonging*» and «*places of becoming*»⁴. Therefore, borderscapes originate in a complex web of conditions of possibility that are not immediately visible and inscribed in the relationship between space, lived experience and power. This shows the double meaning of borderscapes. On the one hand, they retain a derivative dimension from the relationship that they have with the exercise of power in space, being a political tool for ordering

⁴ On the political foundation of becoming, see Plato (1953). Deleuze and Guattari (before all 1980) have proposed interesting reflections on becoming that are particularly useful to support my argument in this article.

reality as well as an element through which the State contributes to the composition of the unevenly developed landscape of capitalism («hegemonic borderscapes»). On the other hand, they are a context from which discourses and practices of «dissensus» (Rancière, 2010) can originate, through which it is possible to think of alternatives to the static exclusivity of landscapes of dominant political and economic power («counter-hegemonic borderscapes»). In the light of this, borders are, on the one hand, an expression of the hegemonic spaces and times of global capitalism. On the other hand, borders are sites from which struggles against capitalism can originate, opening up the way to new forms of political subjectivity that challenge the intrinsic limits of modern political subjectivity in and through the border, while calling into question internal divisions of modern political subjectivity and revealing the relationship between the State and capitalism.

These considerations highlight the potential of the borderscape for a more articulated critical understanding of the contemporary spatiality of politics and for initiating a geographical opposition to capitalism. The political dimension of the borderscape undertakes an important role at the methodological level as well. In this regard, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013, p. 17) eloquently argue that:

«[...] for us the question of border as method is something more than methodological. It is above all a question of politics, about the kinds of social worlds and subjectivities produced at the border and the ways that thought and knowledge can intervene in these processes of production.»

Getting towards a conclusion, it is worth pointing out a last relevant aspect to foster the argument proposed in this article: the borderscape is a method for developing a geographical opposition to capitalism as it reveals the close relationship, that is often eluded, between political and emotional dimensions, at the same time showing the interweaving between emotional geographies and the geometries of power. This is also linked to the fact that the borderscape can be regarded as a «common good» capable of fully expressing, in this way, its potential for initiating an opposition to capitalism. The political value of the borderscape as method pertains its collective character of communal space, of place of identification and transformation for the communities who construct and inhabit it. In so doing, the borderscape can be considered as a «common good», showing the role of landscape as a liminal space and of the border as a complex and multi-dimensional process in the politics of identity. What emerges is the deep relationship that human beings have with borderscapes, moving beyond a simplistic rendering of border landscapes as geometrical traits on which the uneven composition of the geographies of capitalism is based and through which capitalistic accumulation and exploitation are legitimized. Borderscapes are common goods because they can be viewed as «configurative territoriality» that is able to «fully express a sense of *communality*» as «the topical, landscape, environmental qualities, unlike other territorial qualities, belong to everyone without being owned by anyone» (Turco, 2014, p. 33).

Conclusions. – Considering the borderscape as a common good, through a critical rethinking of the geographic categories of «border» and «landscape», fosters «active steps by which our world can be remade in a different image» (Harvey, 2014, p. 200), thereby elaborating alternative (geo)political imaginations and practical strategies to pursue them. Thus, for a critical reflection on capitalism and territoriality, it seems to be suitable and necessary a particular understanding of the close relationship between capitalism and geography as creation of worlds. Furthermore, it is also worth considering that the production of new political spaces capable of opposing to those of global capitalistic geography cannot help but rethink the relationship between space and the political. Said differently, it is necessary to rethink the political, geographically (Featherstone, Korf, 2012).

It is important to consider that the drive to build and search for such a new geopolitical imagination alternative to that of capitalism can be achieved only through what Harvey, citing Aristotle, calls the «good life», which cannot help but be «an active life dedicated [...] to the perpetual search for novelty» (Harvey, 2014, p. 215). Following Harvey, this activation becomes possible through the «prior

experience of alienation and its contradictory possibilities» (*ibidem*, p. 215). In the light of this, it is possible to say that the construction of a geopolitical imagination alternative to the capitalistic one and able to call into question hegemonic discourses and policies of capitalism and its geographies can be found in «the dialectic between freedom and domination» and maintains an antagonist relationship with the hegemonic public sphere of the State and capital (*ibidem*, p. 215). Thus, «counterpublic» (Fraser, 1990), in its plural configurations throughout the contemporary global world, can not be regarded as a subaltern space, inhabited by marginalized and oppressed people, but it should be considered as a crucial space to develop a politics that is opposed to capitalism and alternative to it through active participation and engagement aimed to social change. To put it differently, initiating a geographical anti-capitalist revolution does not mean to withdraw from hegemonic geographies and construct a political space that is completely free from power relations. Rather it means to get going and to «first decide to wake up» – taking up Franz Fanon's expression that Harvey quotes in the Conclusion of «*Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*» – in order to imagine a political space composed by a plurality of processes that are concurrently connected and stand in tension with each other. From this viewpoint, such an alternative political space originates from the constant negotiation and dispute between the border as a device of capital and the borderscape as a common good for a geographical opposition to capitalism and the fulfilment of an alternative to it.

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FROM BORDER AS A METHOD OF CAPITAL TO BORDERSCAPE AS A METHOD FOR A GEOGRAPHICAL OPPOSITION TO CAPITALISM. – This article proposes a conceptual shift from political borders – essentially State borders in Modern times – as a structuring element of the unevenly developed landscape of the geography of capitalism, or, as a method of capital to «borderscapes» as a method for a geographical opposition to capitalism. Specifically, the article discusses the potential of a critical rethinking of the concepts of «border» and «landscape» by mobilizing the borderscape notion to cope with the contradictions of capitalism and to search for strategies able to face them at both theoretical and practical level. If capitalism has always been a fundamentally geographical project, as a number of scholars have argued, it seems necessary to think of a geographical alternative to it. Such an alternative cannot help but question some themes in the heart of geographical knowledge – in this article the themes of borders and landscape – inspiring a new (geo)political imagination for practicing a geographical opposition to capitalism.

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