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INTERVIEW

Globalization and Power - Governmentalization of Europe? An Interview with William Walters.

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Associate Professor of Political Science and Political Economy at the Carleton University, Canada, *William Walters* is one of the leading researchers of governmentality in the globalising world. His recent works, *Global Governmentality* (edited with Wendy Larner, 2004) and *Governing Europe* (with Jens Henrik Haahr, 2005), concern the different kinds, forms and rationalities of international governance. Walters and his associates refuse to take international institutions and forms of power as given, but carefully follow the development of different genealogical processes. Governmentality does not mean any universal form of power, but occurs differently in different contexts. For example, the European Union is not a product of evolutionary development; rather, Walters approaches it as a heterogeneous entity, formulated through – at least partly – contradictory practices. The European Union does not have a direction of development that could be known in advance. The following interview was held in September 2006 in Tampere, Finland where William Walters was a guest lecturer in the summer school of the Finnish Doctoral Program in Social Sciences (SOVAKO).

Q: *Your latest texts have concerned the usefulness of a governmentality approach in analysing the globalising world and its manifold phenomena. By focusing on the dispersion of government you have tried to grasp the contemporary transformations of power from the perspective in which the state is not the necessary centre of all "art of government". What do you think are the major benefits of this concept?*

WW: Well, I could of course mention the many things that I found attractive in this literature, but if I confine the answer to the area of international affairs, I think a big part of its promise could be thought about in terms of a wonderful essay by the

French historian Paul Veyne, "Foucault Revolutionizes History". Veyne argues that Foucault's great revolution conceptually is to place practices at the centre of analysis. With the great majority of social scientists there is a focus on objects and subjects. They are always asking: What do these subjects do? Why did they do it? Why do states act like this? How does the economy function and how do societies function? Veyne says that what they neglect, what they fail to see is the world of practices that constitute subjects and objects. The subjects and objects that social sciences are often obsessed with are themselves the effects of practices. And Foucault's innovation is to place the practices first, to reveal in very concrete and empirical terms how practices are constitutive for objects and subjects. By doing that he is able to denaturalize and historicize whole sets of things that are simply assumed to be stable entities: Citizens, individuals, states, corporations, parties, and classes, just to mention a few.

There is great potential in pursuing that kind of insight within the fields of international politics and globalization studies. We could then begin to see the state as an effect of practices rather than a given, self-evident entity. For instance, rather than focusing on development as either a policy or process, one would see development as a space of practices or as a *dispositif* – a whole complex of practices and knowledges. One would then ask: how does the emergence of this thing called "development" give rise to particular knowledges of states? How does it give rise to particular accounts of international space? How does it encourage or produce particular ways for states to act, to position themselves, understand themselves and others, advance and contest particular forms of politics.

I think that some of these insights are emerging from other theoretical directions. For instance, Judith Butler's ideas about performativity are proving helpful in thinking about the ways in which states and international affairs are enacted. There are different pathways along which to move international relations in a more constructionist direction. I would see Foucault as having developed one of the most, for my purposes, useful and significant set of insights for that kind of enterprise. He changes the way in which one thinks about development. As Arturo Escobar has shown in his book *Encountering Development*, the work on the question of international development, people have more recently began to ask, how might civil society and global civil society be considered as technologies in their own right or how might they be understood as sets of practices? How are they particular territorializations of international and transnational space?

Q: *Many people argue that international networks or international organisations like the European Union are displacing or replacing nation-states, which earlier were seen as the ultimate organisers of social forces and networks? Do you see this kind of approach fruitful?*

WW: I am not sure if it is very productive to formulate the question in that way. There is actually a strand in international relations of this way of thinking that asks: is the European Union a sort of supranational future in the sense that it ultimately

absorbs the nation state into something bigger. At least that is one possible way that Europe has been thought about – often by people who want to problematize or to politicize European integration in respect of a European superstate. So, the question is certainly valid in that kind of context. But it does not seem to me a very likely scenario. It seems that most of the time when we are looking at these international organisations they are not in the business of replacing states. It is more a question of how they reorganize and link states in new ways. It is not a kind of evolution from one state to another. This kind of evolutionary approach includes a problematic assumption. Genealogy as a method or an attitude tries continually to expose these kinds of evolutionary and teleological assumptions that work in many different areas and in different ways. And one of those assumptions is about the progression of political forms and spaces – from a world of small communities and localities like towns and villages to nation-states and then on to to superstates and regions. I think Foucault's idea of governmentality should not commit us to any assumptions about the necessary direction for political and social change, so there is no particular reason why we should assume that such states are merging and that these larger entities are rising. Instead we might take a more empirical attitude and ask what exactly do these organisations do. In many cases what they are doing is harmonizing the relations between states or regulating transactions between states so that perhaps extended economic and social spaces become more viable.

Q: *Let's speak of the development of what Blair and Anthony Giddens call the 'third way' and what Nikolas Rose analyses in his texts of the late 1990s as a continuum of the process that Foucault calls 'the governmentalization of state'. How do you see that this development influences the traditional trichotomy of the state, economy and civil society and how is this governmentalization of the state perspective possible to adopt in observing the EU?*

WW: The prominence of community kinds of themes comes partly as a reaction to a certain perception of the limits or excessiveness of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism of the 1980s turns out to raise a whole set of problems in its own right, so that many things bundled under the heading of the 'third way' or community seem to be attempts to rectify some of these excesses without going back to the strong state of social democracy. So we have all this talk about partnership, third sector, communities, networks, participation and those sorts of things. At one point Nikolas Rose talks about ethopolitics, which I think is a more useful, a more general heading under which to think of many of these things associated with the 'third way', because it emphasizes that there is kind of governmentalization of a new kind of territory, which partly explains the prominence that things like values or community came to have, all of these kinds of warm words. These warm words like community and individual have become central to political dialogue today. So it is a sort of ethopolitics, a domain that has become governmentalized: the promotion of community, the promotion of trust. Consider certain attempts by social scientists to

quantify these things: the social capital movement, with its theories and policies, seems to connect to this theme of ethopolitics, because it says that prior policies and approaches have largely ignored trust and association, and it is a way of bringing them in. It is partly by saying, we can quantify them, measure them, we can prove that they have beneficial economic and social effects. So the idea is that the more trust we have and more associations we have, the less crime, the less unemployment, the less unhappiness we have.

I think that the context in which Foucault is talking about the governmentalization of the state is one of an argument with people of a more conventional bent. Perhaps he was thinking of Habermas's thesis about the "stateization of society" or "colonization of the lifeworld"; the idea that the state is extending its power ever further into the pores and capillaries of society. So in a certain sense Foucault is being a bit polemical or playing off that kind of image. On the contrary, governmentalization of state is not a process that originates within the state, but has more to do with the way that the state becomes connected to the networks, techniques and programs of government that are in a sense already there. The phenomenon of social insurance offers a nice example of this governmentalization of the state. It reveals how the state will be reinvented according to the diagram of the insurance method, a method that long predates the existence of the welfare state.

So I think Foucault's idea was to show how the state is remade on the basis of an encounter with these already existing, or already in some way developed techniques and practices of governing. In a way the state co-opts them. It might be the question of state officials wilfully appropriating them, copying them, borrowing them or modifying them by making them universal, as in the case of social insurance. Or it might be a case of these techniques being forced upon the state by political struggles by political actors who demand that the state must take on some of these functions. You know, it is necessary to consider the field of political struggles in order to understand how the state becomes governmentalized and then becomes a kind of site that will coordinate these practices, rationalize them, perhaps strengthen them, spread them – and the outcome is a new kind of state, a governmental state, a social state.

In the book *Governing Europe* we talked about the governmentalization of Europe, which is again, and among other things, a way of distinguishing our project from the mainstream of EU studies where the theme of the Europeanization of government or state has become so popular. Of course, there is a large literature on the history of the idea of Europe, but to speak of the governmentalization of Europe is to think about the way in which it becomes possible to identify or to name something as Europe, which is a very political act, because what Monnet and others started to call Europe is obviously not Europe, but a particular combination or club of states who want to speak in the name of Europe, as though they are its destiny or embodiment.. But to speak of the governmentalization of Europe is to consider are

the practices, technologies or techniques that made it possible at a certain time for an organization to govern key dimensions of social and economic life in the name of Europe. So Europe – which has long been an idea, a geographical idea, cultural idea, civilization idea – at certain point begins to acquire a much more positive existence. And here I mean positive in the sense of positivity, not in the normative sense. It is a positivity because it becomes a domain of statistics, calculation and projections - the object and the subject of a whole range of policies. The governmentalization of the Europe is the process of making Europe practical.

It is important to stress that the governmentalization of Europe is not a singular process. It is not an evolutionary process of national economies becoming more integrated, which is one kind of interdependence theory version of European integration. Rather it would be about identifying discontinuous trajectories, and sites and events, each of which culminates in or gives rise to certain Europe effects. So, for instance, you might want to look at the history of thinking about and experimentation with common markets or customs' unions. That is an entire history in its own right, the way in which customs' unions were used as a practice of nation building, for instance, in Germany. All of that provides a background to and helps to account for the emergence of certain technologies of governing Europe being applied in other spaces, at other times, at other levels, for other reasons, but nevertheless it comes into existence as a certain technique which – by the 1950s – can be applied and taken up in that particular context. So there is a genealogy in a sense of European integration. But if we fast forward, as it were, to the Europe of Schengenland, you know, it is not in any way a kind of moment that you can read off extrapolate from that earlier history, there is nothing inevitable about it, it is not simply the result of spillover. Whatever Schengenland is or whatever wherever this area of freedom, security and justice is, it finds its particular conditions of emergence, its particular practices, its particular political opportunity in quite different circumstances from quite different places and it requires its own kind of history, its own genealogy of its particular techniques and ideas involved in creating this area of freedom, security and justice . So again when we were talking about the governmentalization of Europe, I do not know if we were clear enough about it in *Governing Europe*, but it is not a single line. It is more a question of these different lines and how they overlap.

How, then, do these recent developments affect the traditional trichotomy of state, economy and civil society? It is a common idea in political science that our political space can always be divided in terms of this trichotomy. But I think that this trichotomy is itself internal to certain liberal political discourse and one should not essentialize it or think that these are somehow transcendent political categories. I think it is more useful to attempt, especially when one is thinking about European integration or global governance, to be empirical and say what are the different ways in which political space or economic space are being imagined and classified and acted on. One needs to ask what is a "region". I tried to do that in a paper about

regionalism with Wendy Larnier. Or one can refer to Andrew Barry's work on technological zones. The zone is a concept that becomes more and more common in actual administrative discourse. For instance, governments talk about employment zones. So one should ask what is a "zone" or what is a "network" or what is an "area", for example, this area of freedom, security and justice? How is an area different from a territory? What is a sector? In all of these things it seems to me to be more useful to analyse those things than to try to keep squeezing reality with all its complexity and manifold aspects into this kind of pre-given trichotomy, which is a product of a particular historical moment. I think we have not paid enough attention to the actual novel spaces and arrangements that are coming into existence and have not asked what are the consequences of living with these kinds of things. Are they politically useful or are they politically dangerous?

When you think of the governmentalization of the state, you consistently think about the rise of the welfare state and welfareism in those terms. Does that mean that we are facing the de-governmentalization of the state today or is a sort of ethopolitics, social capital and community schemes and all of these things, a continuation of the governmentalization of the state? I think there are elements of both. I mean there's a kind of continuity in as much as the state tends to reinvent itself by forging connections and instrumentalizing these other spaces and these other projects. So there's a sort of continuity there with the social project, the welfare project. Except that the difference is that the aim is not to bring these directly into the fold of the state, but rather keep them at a distance. So things are rather more dispersed and decentralized. And it is not done in the name of the state. The image of a big state is not a positive thing here. A big state is a bad thing. A community is a good thing. So we will try to provide communities with resources or forge a partnership with it. But there is not a degovernmentalization of the state in as much as even when we have these most drastic schemes of privatisation – and this point is made by many political economists – what follows is regulation. We have more and more regulation, of private industries, for instance. So there are new kinds of connections established between the state and these other sectors. It is very important to study regulation and what is a regulatory state. Obviously the core feature of what the European Union is about is regulation. This is a theme emphasized by political scientists like Giandomenico Majone and also by Andrew Barry, who has written extensively about the governmentality of Europe and regulation.

Q: When we normally talk about the governance in the European Union we refer to European Union directives, which are hard labor-type legislative acts which require member states to achieve a particular result. In your book, Governing Europe, you deal a lot with the open method of coordination (OMC). The open method rests on soft law mechanisms such as guidelines and indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practices. This means that there are no official sanctions for laggards. Rather, the method's effectiveness relies on a form

of peer pressure and naming and shaming, as no member state wants to be seen as the worst in a given policy area. It seems to be a very interesting change at the field of modern governance.

WW: One should be careful not to see the open method as any kind of evolutionary framework, or future of international governance generally. Maybe the open method comes into play in situations where you have already used binding agreements to create extended economic and social spaces. So the EU is a good case of that: you have a common market and unitary currency. The open method then operates in relationship to the spaces and policies that already operate in that context. But if we look somewhere else, we are probably going to see an even stronger push from some of the major players like United States to enlist, say, South American countries in new kinds of binding trade arrangements. The open method is one more expression of governance, understood in political science sense: networks, dialogue and coordination. Not that all things are inevitably moving in that direction. Again, if we change the focus to other parts of the world, we often got violent politics in countries like Mexico, we got trading arrangements, we got trade unionists who are still killed by paramilitaries in different countries that are caught up in these struggles about the future of their nations or constitution of their economies. And all of those things are going on, right. If those battles are lost by the trade union and so on, and their own economies are further liberalized, at some later point the open method may be relevant there. But one should not see that as a smooth, bloodless or inevitable process or anything like that.

I could not say how the balance between directives regulation and open coordination has changed in recent years. I think one interesting line to pursue would be to ask, what kind of assumptions lie behind this open method. I mean, what does the open method as technique presume about the nature of states, nature of economies and nature of regions - how is it imagining those things? What kind of world is it dealing with? One of its key motifs or themes seems to be that of "learning", a sort of ceaseless process of mutual learning. So, it seems to presume governmental systems that are already set up and capable of more or less managing themselves. It seems to presume that instead of organizing things around a strong central authority that gives instructions or directives, we can have a regime that is capable, to a large extent, of steering itself, that it can be constituted as a mutual learning machine.

I think it would be interesting to relate the open method to Deleuze's short paper about control societies. The control society concept is usually used for thinking about the transformations in domestic politics, for example, shifts in punishment – from prisons to more open forms of control. But it would be interesting to think about these logics of control at the level of interstate relations as well. Deleuze says that one of the features of control is modulation. It is an excellent little essay that opens up all sorts of things that have before been discussed as governance or the

network society, but I think it brings a slightly more critical edge to the idea of a network society and also tries to do so, or should do so, in a way that avoids lot of the evolutionary baggage of the idea of a network society.

Q: *Could the open method of coordination be seen as in some way a violent technology, in a way that it invites some of the actors to take part and leaves some others outside. Is there some kind of process to that direction? Or what kind of actors can be invited?*

WW: Of course this is an empirical question, but clearly it's a kind of process that selects. OMC kind of affirms the right of certain actors to speak on behalf of certain sectors or certain populations. And as you say it, it includes some and keeps others out of the game. When I was thinking of the question of violence, it was more on the lines of what was the kind of violence that took place and eventually cleared the space in which this thing could operate. In a same way that the Enclosure movement (forcible removal of peasants from the land) made possible some certain forms of capitalism. I think one could describe a traditional method of European Union as centralized, but again it is a question of context, because if we go back to the creation of the common market and we read the reflections of Monnet and the others who were the intellectuals of the common market. Then, from their perspective this was a promise of the kind of technology that would de-concentrate or ward off the possibility of a dangerous concentration of power. Because, after all, this goes back to the context of European integration, and how it takes place in the shadow of World War II, and in the shadow of fascism particularly and communism as well. They see the common market as something that is going to consolidate principles and procedures that will stop economic power for one thing becoming too concentrated, because competition policy is one of its prominent features. It is also supposed to ward off the possibility of one state's becoming hegemonic or exercising imperial power over the European space. So the common market itself was seen from that perspective as something that will keep monopolization and centralization away.

Q: *In *Governing Europe* (2005, with Jens Henrik Haahr) you write that in addition to Monnet's liberal, federalist and functionalist dreams of Europe, the twentieth century saw also authoritarian projects of European integration. By the latter you mean Europe perceived in terms of an "extended economic space" onto which the Nazi dream of German economic autarky, self-sufficiency and racial supremacy was projected. Is it possible to compare these two projects from a governmentality perspective? What are the differences between the problematizations and discourses of German-centered and liberal European integration?*

WW: We drew our perspective from Keith Tribe's brilliant book, *Strategies of Economic Order*. Tribe has a chapter about the fascist's conception of European economic order and the centrality of principles of racial hierarchy and economic self-sufficiency. And he shows how there is a governmentality in this, right down to the

scale of how these different races, as the Nazis conceived them, were to have different levels of calorie intakes. Calculations about food, that a typical German would require – this many calories in a week – whereas the Jews and the Slavs could be given the absolutely bare minimum of food. The idea was to structure this economic system partly along those kinds of lines. There were still to be markets but they were structured, and often in a subordinate relationship according to these governing principles of race and nation. We thought it was useful to offer such observations about authoritarian mentalities of rule as something of a provocation to European Union studies and European integration theory, which say nothing about that. The history of European integration tends to start from the 1950s in EU studies. It is not something we do in the book. I think it would be useful to push further some of the possible comparisons between these different ways of imaging different sorts of integrated European space, because it would bring into better focus the liberal and neo-liberal nature of the European project. As long the focus is only on European institutions and the history of the European Union, there is a lot we take for granted. One could compare the liberal project with the authoritarian conception of integrated Europe. We can identify some of the peculiarities of the practices that are associated with or underpin the European community or European Union.

Q: Giorgio Agamben has written that we can approach “refugee” as a somewhat ontological and metaphorical figure of today’s biopower. How do you see the European Union refugee regime’s discourse on refugees as outsiders relate to it?

WW: I found Agamben’s writing on this topic very interesting, because I think he offers some concepts that are perhaps necessary or at least timely in a sense that they deal with the fact of social orders in which there is a certain permanent exception, and the ways in which certain populations find themselves in a kind of “in between” status: ‘captured outside’. I mean the discourse of social exclusion and inclusion is obviously very well established, it’s actually a part of official policy discourse in its own, but I think Agamben is saying something a bit different about this notion of being captured outside: it is not simply an inside or an outside: there is actually a space; he talks about it in different ways, but the ‘camp’ is one of the names for the space that is neither fully inside nor outside, but a kind of space in its own right. What I was saying about transit overlaps with that. I do not want to go and call everything ‘camp’, because the camp has become similar to panopticon. People find the camp everywhere. The Italian political theorist Sandro Mezzadra has written about some of the ways in which this is problematic, not least because this figure is derived from Auschwitz, and the idea of the generalization of the camp can trivialize that. Certainly it would make sense to speak about camps in relationship to refugee detention centres, while maintaining that obviously they are not concentration camps. But do we want to call gated communities camps as well? Or is it again the point that we need additional concepts that recognize that there are elements of the

camp that do materialize in these different ways. But they are not simply camps. We need a more sophisticated and variegated taxonomy perhaps.

Engin Isin and Kim Ryegeel have written a paper called "Abject spaces". They are talking about series of spaces, camp being just one of them. Frontiers, export processing zones – a lot of these interesting mutations in territoriality. I see an interesting question here, which I have not satisfactorily dealt with, but it is useful to talk about what Monnet was doing as a kind of security project, or to ask what kind of vision of security was embedded in or assumed by that kind of enterprise. It is not a million miles away from social security; it is not a million miles away from what Foucault sometimes says is governmentality, namely, apparatuses that try to enframe social and economic processes to secure them, to strengthen the state and to promote the increase of population. The common market is a version of that, but working on transnational level and linking itself also to the threat, as you say, of interstate conflict and providing a kind of security there. While that kind of project still goes on and when the word security comes up now it is referring to a different regime, a different set of practices, not that these are all coherent in their own right but when people think or talk about security it is often a security that is like home security. Security that is not so much related to governmental processes, but security that is often imagined in relation to concrete individuals and subjects and in relation to threatening personae. That is one of security's features. Another of its features is that it has a pronounced territorial dimension to it. Rather than playing itself out in a space of markets, it is about identifying actual territorial and, in some cases, geographic spaces. That is why border security is such a central practice within this version of security that's becoming more and more prevalent, more and more influential. So the European Union is now connected to this space of security as well, this territorialized space with its practices of security. This is one of the features of the area of freedom, security and justice. Not its only feature, but it is partly about security imagined in terms of the movement of people and goods and other mobile things, weapons, drugs, crime imagined as transactional moving things because crime can be imagined in other ways; in this discourse the movement of things is one of its key defining features. How can we govern those concrete movements in time and space? Free movement in the European Union is actually a flipside of this border control. Didier Bigo has argued that this version of internal security is the flipside of the project of freedom of movement. It is a kind of security practice. But border security is only one of its aspects.

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