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## Mobilizing politics

### Book Section

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## Part II

### Mobilising Politics

## **Mobilising Politics**

*Vicki Squire*

The essays in the second part of *The Contested Politics of Mobility* speak to the theme of mobilising politics. Each essay explores in its own way how the ‘irregular’ movements and activities of people entail a shift in what it means to be political. Focusing attention on how we might consider irregularity to be a stake within (as well as a product of) emergent struggles around mobility, the essays collectively put forward various suggestions in answer to the question of how resistances, contestations, appropriations and/or re-appropriations of irregularity might be conceptualised. Specifically, they provide insights into the different types of struggles that feature in a politics of mobility in which irregularity forms a stake. They also offer answers to the question of how such struggles are enacted against or in excess of a politics of control. As such, the essays in this part of the collection allow us to consider how our understanding and practice of politics might be mobilised through a consideration of struggles around irregularity that emerge within what this collection defines as the contested politics of mobility.

The ways in which these essays speak to the theme of mobilising politics are multiple, as is the case with the essays in the first part of the collection in relation to the theme of politicising mobility. Indeed, the division between the essays in the first part of the collection and those in this part of the collection is not in any strict sense a clear-cut separation, indicative of the mutual implication of the politicisation of mobility and the mobilisation of politics. Nevertheless, several key themes do emerge from the essays in this part of the volume, which speak distinctively to the theme of mobilising

politics. First, the theme of the *autonomy* of migration – already touched upon in Nicholas De Genova’s essay in Part I – is addressed directly here in the essay by Sandro Mezzadra. By focusing on the autonomy of migration, Mezzadra brings both migrant agency as well as the relation between migrant labour and capital to the centre of our analysis of irregularity. Irregularity from this perspective is understood neither as a condition of abjection nor in terms of relations of total domination. Rather, irregularity *qua* unauthorised movements and activities is addressed in terms of the creation of possibilities for new forms of political subjectivity through mobilisations of heterogeneous coalitions. A similar interest in autonomy and the politics of migration runs through the essays by Kim Ryziel, Peter Nyers and Enrica Rigo, though in slightly different ways in each case.

The second key theme that runs through the essays and that speaks to our more general concern with mobilising politics is that of *dislocation*. Kim Ryziel’s essay, for example, engages with this theme in various ways in her analysis of biometrics. She points both to the dislocation of migrants from their bodies, as well as to the dislocation of a discourse of rights in light of the discourse of authorisation that is associated with biometric controls. This prompts her to question the potential for an ‘insurgent’ politics of movement or migration in such a context, which Ryziel suggests requires the investment of irregularity by a feminist politics of embodiment. From a slightly different angle, Susan Bibler Coutin examines dislocation in terms of ambivalent, ambiguous or disrupted subjectivities. In her essay on the experiences of deported Salvadoran youths, Coutin not only shows how such dislocations result from compound exclusions that culminate in an individual migrant’s deportation. So also does she suggest that such dislocations create the conditions for new subjectivities,

which mobilise politics in so far as they exceed the limitations of a national frame and in so far as they invoke ambivalences that trouble our assumptions about what it means to be political.

Consolidating the themes of autonomy and dislocation as conditions under which the mobilisation of politics becomes possible, the essays by Peter Nyers and Enrica Rigo in particular speak to a third theme of *transformation*. This theme is critical if our understanding of mobilising politics is to do more than merely *imaging* new forms of being political.<sup>1</sup> Nyers does this by discussing ‘irregular citizenship’, which allows him to draw attention to the diverging ways in which citizenship is currently becoming irregularized. He shows how this can potentially occur both through exceptional state practices and through acts of disobedience in which citizens are ‘unmade’. Further developing the notion of ‘illegal citizenship’, Rigo examines the acts of ‘illegal citizens’ whom contest the hierarchy of territorial division through mobilisations that rest on their informal citizenship practices within a Europe of ‘free movement’. What Nyers and Rigo convincingly argue in their essays is that the way in which citizenship has conventionally been conceptualised is inadequate for understanding political subjectivities that are constituted through ‘irregular’ movements and activities. To focus on irregularity thus allows both for a critical re-thinking of politics through irregularity, as well as for a critical re-thinking of irregularity through mobility. Mobilising politics in this regard entails both a diagnosis of, as well as a critical intervention into, the politics of mobility; a politics in which irregularity is both produced as an object of security and also enacted as subject of citizenship.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to a passing comment made by Angharad Closs Stephens on this point, which articulates one of the key impulses of this project.