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The Autonomy of Migration within the Crises

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Introduction to South Atlantic Quarterly special issue

Their "Crisis" and Ours: The Proliferation of Crises and "Crisis" Formations

There has been an unrelenting proliferation of official discourses of "crisis" and "emergency" over the last several years. The historical era for our concerns may be understood to properly commence with the enunciation of an effectively global state of emergency with the promulgation of the War on Terror in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, which marked a watershed in the reconfiguration of the global geopolitical landscape of the post-Cold War world order. Those events have served as the authorizing pretext not only for paroxysms of "antiterrorist" securitization, surveillance, and political repression but also for unnumbered major and minor military invasions, wars, occupations, civil wars, proxy wars, remote-control (drone) wars, (pseudo-)revolutions, palace coups, covert operations, psy-ops, and counter-insurgency campaigns on a global scale. In the midst of that protracted and massively destructive series of politico-military disruptions of the world geopolitical order, the systemic convulsions that have wracked the world capitalist economy, especially since 2008, subsequently became perhaps the premier and dominant referent for "the crisis" everywhere. Then, in 2015, alarmist reactions to an ostensible "migrant" or "refugee crisis" in Europe lent an unprecedented prominence to the veritable and undeniable autonomy of (transnational, cross-border) migrant and refugee movements, replete with their heterogeneity of insistent, disobedient, and incorrigible practices of appropriating mobility and making claims to space (Bojadžijev and Mezzadra 2015; De Genova

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2017b; De Genova, ed. 2017; Garelli and Tazzioli 2017; Kasparek 2016; New Keywords Collective 2016; Scheel 2017; n.d.; Tazzioli 2014).

Amidst so many global-scale disruptions, we have witnessed a multitude of ensuing political spectacles of "crisis" choreographed within the frameworks of nation-states, reanimating nationalist projects, and commonly articulating themselves in the idiom of one or another reactionary populism — from the genocidal pogroms against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar/Burma to the unabashed mass murder of alleged "drug addicts" in the Philippines, from the recurrent assassination of Vladimir Putin's political rivals and critical journalists in Russia to the sweeping repression following the attempted coup in Turkey, from the anti-refugee show trials in Hungary to the Kenyan government's moves to forcibly evacuate and shut down the Dadaab refugee camp near the Somali border, from Britain's referendum vote to exit the European Union (EU) to the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. In various forms, state authorities or those aspiring to state power have promulgated "emergency" measures as authoritarian remedies for one or another "crisis," by means of which "the people" must be protected (see De Genova, this volume).

Interlaced with these hegemonic discursive formations of "crisis" and the effective staging of "crisis" across the world, and resulting more or less directly from the manifold states of exception that they have unleashed, countless real crises for the preservation and social reproduction of human life have ensued. These human disasters themselves have been rendered apprehensible to varying extents within hegemonic "crisis" formations as irruptions of one or another "humanitarian crisis" (Tazzioli et al. 2016). Such "humanitarian crises" are not uncommonly produced as cynical spectacles of misery for the further authorization of political manipulations and military interventions, even as they are derisively deployed to obfuscate other parallel human catastrophes altogether.

In this special issue, we are interested in interrogating this proliferation of crises and "crisis" formations from the specific critical vantage point of the autonomy of migration. As the broad conceptual rubric for a heterogeneous field of critical inquiry and debate, pursued since the late

1990s largely by activist-scholars and scholar-activists primarily (but not exclusively) in the European context and explicitly challenging the overly deterministic rhetorical emphasis on control and exclusion that tended to be recapitulated even by critiques of the dominant discourse of an emergent "Fortress Europe," the autonomy of migration has supplied a framework for advancing perspectives that foreground the subjectivity of migrant mobilities. Navigating the perilous course between the objectivism of economistic models in migration studies that treat migrants as effectively inert objects at the mercy of the "push" and "pull" of structural forces, on the one hand, and the humanitarian reason that has long dominated refugee studies by which refugees or "asylum-seekers" are treated as pure victims, on the other, the autonomy of migration perspective has consistently insisted on the analysis of migratory movements as exercising a significant measure of autonomy. Importantly, this concept is not reducible to any liberal notion of the pure "autonomy" of migrants as free and sovereign "individuals," nor is it a romanticization of the migrant exercise of the freedom of movement as a purely subversive or emancipatory act. Largely inspired by more general autonomist Marxist positions, the autonomy of migration has been conceived in terms of historically specific social formations of human mobility that manifest themselves as a constitutive (subjective, creative, and productive) power within the more general capital-labor relation. Moreover, advocates of the autonomy of migration perspective have therefore frequently advanced the proposition that migration can itself be understood to be a social movement in an objective sense (see, e.g., Bojadžjev and Karakayali 2007; 2010; De Genova 2010a,c; Mitropoulos 2006; Mezzadra 2001; 2004; 2011; Mezzadra and Neilson 2003; 2013; Moulier Boutang 1998; Papadopoulos et al. 2008).

If, in this special issue, we are interested in interrogating the proliferation of crises and "crisis" formations from the specific critical vantage point of the autonomy of migration, therefore, we seek nonetheless to reassess the critical traction of the concept of the autonomy of migration from within the specificity of this extended historical conjuncture of a proliferation of co-constituted and interconnected crises and "crisis" formations. Specifically, rather than a mere "application" of

the autonomy of migration perspective to recent events, we propose to take seriously the dire lived circumstances of millions of people who reap the poisoned harvest of the multiple calamities of our global sociopolitical regime as a crucial opportunity for the reevaluation and recalibration of this particular analytical perspective on human mobility. In other words, in the spirit of Walter Benjamin's famous dictum that "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (1968:257), we aim to reassess and reinvigorate the critical purchase of the concept of the autonomy of migration from within (and against) the plurality of crises. Dedicated to an analysis of migration from the standpoint of migration rather than that of state power and the perplexities of border control or "migration management," an autonomist perspective on migration reinvigorates the sense that migration has always entailed, to various degrees, acts of desertion from the regimes of subordination and subjection that migrants objectively repudiate through their mobility projects, and thus may be understood in terms of "escape," or indeed, flight (Mezzadra 2001; 2004; 2011; Papadopoulos et al. 2008). Indeed, every act of migration, to some extent — and in a world wracked by wars, civil wars, and other more diffuse forms of societal violence, as well as the structural violence of deprivation and marginalization, perhaps more and more — may be apprehensible as a quest for refuge, and migrants come increasingly to resemble "refugees," while similarly, refugees never cease to have aspirations and projects for recomposing their lives, and thus never cease to resemble "migrants" (De Genova 2017b; Garelli and Tazzioli 2013a; 2017; Tazzioli 2013; 2014). This elementary insight has long been one of the distinctive features of the autonomist repudiation of the customary governmental partition between "migrants" and "refugees." Likewise, we are reminded of the fundamentally exclusionary juridical reification and rarefication of the status of "refugee" (Chimni 1998; 2009; Malkki 1995; Nyers 2006; Scalettaris 2007; Squire 2009). However, the current conjuncture, characterized by its multiplicity of crises, commands a fresh intervention that can address the precise sociopolitical conditions of refugees as refugees — taking seriously the claims and demands of those who emphatically and insistently identify themselves as refugees —

and interrogate the governmental particularities of asylum regimes as such. In other words, we are interested in the epistemic disputations and political contestations introduced into the governmental purview of the refugee protection regime by those who make assertive claims for their own condition as "refugees" and demand that asylum regimes recognize the legibility, credibility, and legitimacy of their autonomous appropriations of mobility as such. By directing our attention to the increasing centrality of struggles over refuge/asylum that characterizes the present migration context, we emphasize the need to re-politicize asylum beyond its institutional and juridical framework, starting instead from the radical practices of freedom enacted by migrants/refugees. The stakes and ramifications of this intervention are plainly global in scope. Our particular socio-spatial and political point of departure in this introductory essay, however, is the EU-ropean asylum regime and the protracted "crisis" of borders, migration, and refugee movements across the amorphous space of "Europe."

Without retreating into the uncritical complicities of humanitarian reason or the normative liberal complacencies of "human rights" discourse, we aim to reformulate the autonomy of migration thesis — now re-posited from within the multiplicity of crises — and emphatically understand this move to also make a critical/ autonomist intervention into the scholarly field of refugee studies. However, we expect that such an engagement reflexively compels a critical reevaluation of the autonomy of migration thesis itself, and promises to re-situate the question of asylum and the struggles of refugees as critical counterpoints to the conceptual centrality and epistemic stability of the figure of "migration" within autonomist debates around human mobility. Thus, we propose a double move: to rethink asylum through the critical lens of autonomy and migrants/refugees' practices of freedom — indeed, to reconceptualize "forced migration" from the standpoint of the freedom of movement — while simultaneously rethinking autonomy through the lens of asylum and from the critical standpoint of the refugee predicament. This is the urgent demand we confront for theorizing the autonomy of migration from within the actuality of the crises. Therefore, our proposition is that any question of the autonomy of migration must now be

posited simultaneously as inextricable from a concomitant question concerning what we will designate here to be the autonomy of asylum.

The stakes of this intervention are multiple. On the one hand, to formulate a problematic of autonomy that subsumes simultaneously the parallel but always interrelated phenomena of migration and refugee movements is to reaffirm the primacy and subjectivity of the human freedom of movement as an elemental and constitutive force in the ongoing unresolved struggles that are implicated in making and transforming our sociopolitical world. This is plainly not a matter of "rights" adjudicated, granted, or honored but rather one of a power exercised, a prerogative taken and expressed as freedom. Notably, especially in the context of refugee protection and petitioning for asylum, such a freedom in and through movement is nonetheless a freedom that operates only within and against what Michel Foucault (1976[2007]) memorably depicted as the "meshes of power"; it is not an abstract, essentialized, or absolute autonomy but one that is necessarily limited, compromised, contradictory, and tactical. As Foucault instructively contends:

> "Power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free.… Thus, in order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides. … This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were
> no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all" (1994: 292).

The freedom of movement is situated always in relation to outright violence and heterogeneous formations of hierarchy and domination, as well as within the constrictions of various transnational regimes for governing mobility, and consequently operates continuously within definite and diverse constraints on its room for maneuver (cf. O'Connell Davidson 2013).

On the other hand, even while emphatically attending to the particularities of refugee struggles and the mobility projects of asylum-seekers, we seek to foreground the profound affinities and continuities between diverse categories of people who move across state borders, variously labeled "migrants" and "refugees" — very notably, including the complementarity of their illegalization, securitization, and criminalization — despite the sedimented and ossified legacies by which these forms of mobility have been disciplined into apparently separate and distinct realities.

Thus, we underscore furthermore and uphold yet again the radical instability and incoherence of any rigid partitions between the figures of migration and refugee movement, which underwrite and authorize the bifurcated governmentalities that manage migration and superintend asylum. Indeed, it is not uncommon to encounter refugees who repudiate the restrictive encumbrances, constrictions, and humiliations of the asylum system altogether, and prefer to retain the relative freedom of maneuver that comes with migrant "illegality" (Black et al. 2006; Collyer 2010; Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Papadopoulos et al. 2008; Picozza 2017; Scheel and Squire 2014; Spathopoulou 2016). Nonetheless, we argue that asylum, produced always a scarce resource, has become one of the main stakes in the global geopolitics of mobility control. Consequently, we also seek to trouble the concomitant institutionalization of academic research and scholarship into segregated fields of inquiry under the pronouncedly separate and distinct rubrics of migration studies and refugee studies. Finally, we contend that the human freedom of movement, manifested as both the autonomy of migration and the autonomy of asylum — or perhaps more precisely, the autonomy of migration-as-asylum — is an indispensable analytical counterpoint through which to apprehend the numerous reaction formations of "crisis" and "populism" (see De Genova, this volume).

Autonomy of Migration / Autonomy of Asylum

Our intervention arises from a particular sociopolitical context, that of the European space of migration, which has long been distinguished by a migration regime in which asylum operates as a machine of illegalization (De Genova 2013a; 2016; cf. Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Scheel 2017), but which — in the current historical conjuncture of warfare and refugee movements, globally — has come to be newly defined by the centrality of (struggles over) asylum. The European "refugee crisis" in particular has verified that the "crisis" of EU-rope is co-constituted and inextricable from a "crisis" of asylum.

Migrant/refugee struggles in EU-rope are polarized around two ongoing phenomena: on the one hand, the increasing criminalization of refugees as refugees, and on the other, the refugees'

politics of "incorrigibility" — particularly their disaffection and defiance in the face of the exclusionary criteria of asylum, even as they petition for international protection as refugees. This incorrigibility has otherwise been glaringly at stake in many migrants' counter-normative and sometimes anti-assimilationist practices of freedom (De Genova 2010c). Notably, we do not use the word "refugees" only as a rarefied and exclusionary legal category. Irrespective of migrants' status, we mobilize the term "refugees" here as a strategic essentialism, so to speak, to the extent that many of the migrants who arrive in Europe—who are predominantly refused recognition as refugees by legal standards—appropriate and twist this juridical category, claiming simultaneously the "right" to receive protection and insisting on the "right" to choose where to receive protection—which is to say, where to go in Europe, where their European refuge should be, where to reside and live. Even more than from their discrepant claims, however, their incorrigibility arises from their practices of spatial disobedience (Garelli and Tazzioli 2017; Tazzioli 2014), in the face of the geographical restrictions imposed by the moral economies of asylum and enforced through the legal-enforcement economy instituted by the Dublin Regulation.

The Dublin Regulation is the particular feature of the Common European Asylum System that provides for the insulation of the wealthier (and for many refugees, the most desirable) destination countries. First enacted in 2003, the Dublin accords deploy a fixed hierarchy of criteria with regard to the asylum-seeker's petition in order to quickly determine which state should be considered the "competent" state charged with the assessment of an asylum claim. Although the existence of family ties in a particular member state officially designated to be the premier consideration, in practice such crucial details are seldom actively solicited from asylum-seekers. Consequently, the most commonly applied criterion ordinarily tends to be the last one: the assignment of responsibility to assess the asylum claim to the European state where the petitioner first set foot on the physical territory of the EU. In this way, the Dublin Regulation allows for European signatory states[2] to deport refugees back to whichever signatory country was first to

[2] This includes all EU member states, as well as Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

register them as asylum claimants. Of course, as Fiorenza Picozza argues, this framework "is based on a twofold falsehood: that there are equal standards of protection and welfare access in any signatory state; and that it is physically possible to illegally enter any of them, so that the distribution of the asylum 'burden' would be equal throughout Europe." (2017:234). In practice, this means that the Dublin convention legitimizes the commonplace deportation of "asylum-seekers" from the wealthiest western and northern European countries back to the first country where they were registered, usually the poorer eastern or southern European border states where they first arrived on EU territory. Notably, the Dublin convention broadens the purview of the European deportation regime, allowing for European states not only to deport migrants back to their countries of origin, but also to a so-called "safe third country," literally bouncing them back from one place to another, and coercively reversing migratory trajectories, turning them into transnational counter-flows of expulsion (Picozza 2017; cf. Mezzadra and Neilson 2003:8; Nyers 2003:1070; Rigo 2005:6; see also Drotbohm and Hasselberg 2015; Khosravi 2016). Here, moreover, it is crucial to recall that deportation itself is perhaps the premier (and most pure) contemporary form of "forced migration" (Gibney 2013:118; cf. De Genova 2017a; Tazzioli 2017), and thus, through the coerced mobility of "Dubliners," the involuntary repatriation of refugees (Chimni 2004), as well as the more general expulsion of rejected asylum-seekers and other illegalized migrants, the European asylum regime itself actually becomes increasingly implicated in producing refugees.

More broadly, and beyond the legal and spatial restrictions of these regulations, the dominant politics of asylum is predicated upon a moral economy that institutes a nexus between protection and non-freedom. The moment they file for international protection, migrants/refugees are immediately figured as people who, as an effect of their vulnerability, victimization, and presumed desperation, cannot but accept the conditionality and the limitations of the asylum regime in a sort of "losing game" dynamic: the price of becoming an asylum-seeker is presumed to involve a sort of forfeiture of migrants' autonomy of movement and freedom of choice. To seek protection

is fashioned as a voluntary submission to a regime that authorizes itself to decide for and dispose of "refugees" as its docile supplicants. Any residual manifestation of autonomy by those who petition for asylum thereby becomes suspect, presumptively indicative of a more properly "migrant" will to opportunistically "game the system."

Simultaneously, with the intensification of the crises, we have witnessed a fundamental unsettling of this customary state-based narrative on migration, framed around the (misleading) binary opposition between genuine "refugees," on the one hand, and "bogus" asylum-seekers or "fake refugees" ("economic migrants"), on the other. Indeed, the overall effect of the "refugee crisis" has been an escalating criminalization of refugees as such. Indeed, while the migrant-refugee opposition still informs the official rhetorics through which the effective production of "abject subjects" (Nyers 2003) is not only enacted but also legitimized through the increase of an illegalized population of "rejected refugees," in reality even those who have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection are increasingly decried as job stealers or fraudulent welfare beneficiaries, and thus as an economic burden for "hosting countries" (Anderson 2013). Moreover, in the tumultuous frenzy of "crisis" management, refugees have increasingly been racially stigmatized as social deviants, sexual predators, and outright criminals, or targeted as potential terrorists (De Genova 2017b; New Keywords Collective 2016). In this regard, further critical research on migration is challenged to unpack and disentangle the migration-terrorism nexus, which has by now come to be deployed as a standard securitarian lens for framing "terrorist attacks" as inextricably linked with migrant turmoils and casting the ostensible moral credibility and political legitimacy of refugees into doubt. In any case, the "crisis" of EU member states instigated by the presence of refugees seeking asylum in Europe ultimately comes to be about refugees as refugees: it is precisely the figure of "the refugee" that is currently under heightened scrutiny. Beyond the exclusionary partitions between supposedly "fake" and "genuine" asylum-seekers, however, what triggers the "crisis" more than ever is refugees' mere physical presence on a mass scale and their

incorrigible practices of freedom enacted not in spite of claiming protection but precisely from within the struggle for asylum.

From this vantage point we suggest that it is crucial to extend and re-elaborate the Autonomy of Migration literature's criticism of the divide between ("economic") migrants and (genuine, "political") refugees (Balibar 2015; Scheel et al. 2015; Scheel and Ratfisch 2014). Our goal is not to reject that critique. On the contrary, our aim is to push it further in the direction of a more thorough and profound engagement with the contested politics of asylum. The asylum regime took shape historically only as a reactive governmental framework for containing, taming, and domesticating some of the excesses of cross-border human mobility. In this respect, asylum has always been a contested political stake in the struggles over refugee and migrant movements. Far from downplaying the freedom of movement as the leading principle of critical analysis, we suggest that it is a question of resolutely reconfirming this freedom, but that it is nonetheless important to do so by starting from the historically specific and socially substantive coordinates of human mobility's non-autonomy: that is, the freedom of movement should be reconceptualized through and dialectically articulated with the myriad particular forms of its constrictions and its negation. Thus, autonomy and non-autonomy emerge as co-constituted and mutually conditioned but antagonistic figures within the meshes of power that temper the possibilities for specific struggles over human mobility. Hence, the question of asylum (and the asylum regime's government of migrants' abject and illegalized presence within the spaces of sovereign power) becomes a paramount site for examining the autonomist perspective (see Altenried et al., this volume). Rethinking freedom (of movement, and of choice) and asylum (and protection) together, in terms of an inherently contradictory autonomy of asylum, is therefore a productive way to reformulate analyses on the autonomy of migration.

In this respect, asylum and refugee movements, classically associated with discourses of "forced migration," paradoxically emerge anew as sites for the investigation of questions of the freedom of movement. This does not mean disregarding the historical legacies and the juridicial

restrictions upon which the asylum regime is predicated, but rather, starting within and against those contradictions and limitations, reversing our analytical gaze by redirecting critical scrutiny toward: a) the changing composition of migrant movements, marked by an increased presence of asylum-seekers; and b) the integrity of migrants/refugees' claims, which increasingly appear impudent and outlandish to states and even to humanitarian actors, whereby asylum-seekers petition for protection and at the same time refuse to accept the spatial traps and restrictions imposed by the asylum regime's "rules of the game." Thus, there is an urgent need to decouple the image of "the refugee" from the dominant ideological equation of refugee-ness with non-choice and the governmental distribution of refugees as subjects who cannot but accept any and all obligatory forms of relocation and conditions of hosting, converting their forced displacement with a subsequent condition of less violent but no less coercive emplacement and immobilization. Rethinking the autonomy of migration through asylum, and starting from the exclusionary criteria that underpin the rationale and functioning of the asylum system, therefore involves engaging with asylum and protection beyond — and in friction with — the sanctities of humanitarianism and the complacencies of human rights discourse. Our goal is not to propose a new formulation of refugee law, nor to invoke the renewed urgency or pertinence of asylum in the name of the respect for human rights. Rather, we suggest that it is vital to reconsider the politics of asylum through the critical lens of the autonomy of migration, beginning from what the EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker[3] depicted as the "outrageous" claims of refugees/migrants who refused their mandatory relocation, and in light of the full panoply of their heterogeneous practices of spatial disobedience and incorrigibility.

This criminalization of refugees within the derisive parameters of a "migrant crisis" is a phenomenon that also concerns citizens who have mobilized to enact solidarity with migrants and refugees by actively supporting and extending the logistics of migratory border crossing, particularly in France and Italy. The "crime of solidarity" (delit de solidarité in French) concerns

[3] https://www.rt.com/news/365674-eu-turkey-deal-juncker/

both practices of humanitarian support — such as giving food to the migrants in transit or hosting them — and the facilitation of border crossing. Hence, forms of solidarity have recently become counter-conducts enacted against the illegality of states, in protest of the practices of border guards pushing back migrants and refugees and hampering their possibilities of claiming asylum. Notably, such attacks against solidarity initiatives in support of migrants' logistics of crossing are carried out by European states and Frontex (the EU border policing agency) by prosecuting not only self-organized activist networks or individuals, but also well-established humanitarian projects such as Doctors without Borders and other organizations that have launched search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea with independent vessels.[4] Beyond the mere depiction of migrants/refugees as suspect and "risky" subjects, therefore, what is targeted is the logistics of migration as such, as well as emergent collective organizations and transversal alliances between migrants/refugees and others acting in support. States' strategies for dividing and dispersing migrant/refugee multiplicities into governable categories of juridically partitioned subjects and also the criminalization of citizens' solidarity with migrants and refugees — especially in these examples of support for the logistics of autonomous border crossing — should both be seen as strategies for neutralizing or preventing the emergence and consolidation of new collective political subjects.

The Queer Politics of Asylum

To comprehend the autonomy of asylum, we necessarily must foreground the subjectivity of refugees and migrants engaged within and against the asylum regime. While migrant/refugee subjectivity is plainly at work within and against the exclusionary politics of protection that inform more strictly juridical approaches to regulating and administering asylum, subjectivity also introduces a political excess, as refugees claim and re-imagine their new lives (in refuge) beyond the confines of citizenship, the politics of human rights, and the frontiers of humanitarian

[4] http://www.libyanexpress.com/italy-to-investigate-private-rescue-vessels-off-libyan-coast/

approaches. When we speak of the "autonomy" of asylum, therefore, we refer to an "autonomy" from the normative and regulatory frames through which international protection is adjudicated and implemented and, secondarily, an autonomy from the discourse of humanitarianism, which tends to dominate the debate about the politics of asylum. Here, we recall Nicholas De Genova's conception of a "queer" politics of migration, distinguished by the unreserved and unapologetic assertion by illegalized migrants not only of their irreversible presence within a given (nation-)state space, but also of an intrinsic "incorrigibility" that "seeks not to be integrated within an existing economy of normative and normalizing [juridical] distinctions, but rather to sabotage and corrode that hierarchical order as such" (2010c:106) and may therefore be understood to be counter-normative and anti-assimilationist. This approach to the politics of asylum allows us to develop three critical interventions.

1) Enlisting a "queer politics" in the debate about asylum means approaching asylum from the horizon of freedom. This is an important critical point. The idea of "freedom of movement" underpins the agenda of critical migration studies. Yet, its articulation in terms of the struggles of those who flee wars and destitution has not hitherto been powerfully articulated. Such a lack of a politically and theoretically rigorous discourse connecting refugees' movements to autonomy leads to a seemingly self-evident but deeply problematic conceptual tension — which commonly even appears to be an absolute opposition — between "freedom of movement" and "forced displacement."

An autonomous politics of asylum counteracts the essentialization of forced mobility as the political subjectivity of pure victimhood and the compulsory ethos of strict compliance assumed for those to whom international protection is owed and granted. Such essentialized victimhood is at the heart of policy frameworks for refugees, where the disbursement of protection is discursively and politically tied to various types of borders imposed on refugee's freedom: first, the freedom to take a safe and cheap carrier to reach their desired refuge is prevented by policies in the wealthier and

more powerful receiving countries, which leaves the overwhelming majority[5] of refugees no other escape routes than those provided by smugglers; second, within the dominant policy framework, refugees are also denied the freedom to choose where they want to start their new life in refuge; finally, upon resettlement, there are often numerous restrictions imposed on refugees' access to housing and other social welfare benefits, as well as rights to work, family reunification, relocation, or mobility (sometimes even within the country of asylum). Visa policies force refugees to zig-zag toward their aspired destination, often leaving them stuck in countries that they deem to be merely temporary and tentative spaces of transit, which are then forced upon them as obligatory spaces of asylum. Through resettlement programs, refugees are heavily screened and eventually selected by receiving countries and have little say as to where they may end up. Finally, relocation programs impose a destination on the very few who are selected as eligible, hence linking the possibility of refuge to the acceptance of its institutionally mandated location. The queer politics of asylum reveals that most refugees (and others to whom some form of international protection is granted) reject and more or less actively work against such forced settlement routes imposed on them.

2) Approaching the politics of asylum as a queer politics of autonomy also implies that we recognize a politics of refusal in refugee movements — not only a refusal of the violence and disruption of life from which refugees flee, but also a rejection of the structural violence of the juridical order of international protection. Hence, the autonomy of asylum leads us to document refugees' flights from capture within the meshes of power enacted by the asylum regime itself. For instance, when refugees refuse to undergo fingerprinting procedures in countries such as Italy or Greece — or any country of first entry in the EU where, according to the Dublin Regulation, they would thereafter be forced to claim asylum — they assert their freedom into the process of protection, initiating a discrepant politics of asylum that starts from their actual experiences, extant social relations, desires, aspirations, and political subjectivity. Similarly, when some refugees refuse to participate in the EU Relocation scheme, which would transfer them from Italy and

[5] Resettlement programs serve fewer than 1% of forced migrants worldwide.

Greece to another European country other than that of their own choosing, they enact their freedom to choose where to settle in Europe and thereby stage their refusal of the coercive refuge forcefully mandated by EU agencies. Likewise, consider the example of hundreds of Libyan war refugees who saw their asylum claims rejected by UNHCR on the basis of their having been migrants in Libya who could ostensibly return to their countries of origin, and found themselves stranded at the Choucha refugee camp at the Tunisian border (Garelli and Tazzioli 2017). When these refugees from the civil war in Libya publicly demanded to be resettled as refugees in Europe, they counterposed a geography of (often long-term) migrant residence to the citizenship bind that underpins the rules of asylum, and thereby repudiated the structural violence that notions such as "safe country" of birth introduce into the government of refugees' lives. In spite of the citizenship inscribed in their passports, which served to blindly allocate them back to a "safe country" of birth to which they were instructed to return, the people fleeing violence and persecution encamped at Choucha insisted that they were in fact "Libyan" war refugees. These are all instances of a queer politics of asylum, where "freedom is taken" (rather than given or granted) (De Genova in Abram et al. 2017) and activated against the juridical borders instituted by asylum procedures and regulations and the disciplinary (corrective) structures embedded in its administration.

Refuge tends to be mapped along the coordinates of the host country's juridical order. Refugee claims to protection that clash with these coordinates are ordinarily removed from the picture altogether. However, the ethical dimension of "giving" refuge (mobilizing solidarity/hospitality) and the normative-juridical dimension of "adjudicating" refuge (the exclusionary regime of asylum) do not exhaust the politics of asylum. The queer politics of asylum also refers to the appropriation of political spaces where the borders of asylum's institutional politics are contested, and where refugees' subjectivity breaks out of the "forced mobility" trap through their efforts to exercise the freedom to choose their own pathways for life in refuge, demanding an alternate variety of protection that differs from and exceeds the official humanitarian pathways that they are offered. Thus, a "queer politics of asylum" perspective brings into focus the

pathways to refuge claimed and practiced by refugees, within and against the humanitarian regime of protection.

3) The notion of "autonomy of asylum" may also be a helpful lens to think about value extraction mechanisms that are performed through migrants' bodies and that do not necessarily pertain to the dimension of labor. While refugees' differential inclusion in domestic labor markets is certainly part and parcel of what labor scholars have called the "continuum of unfreedoms" (Lewis et al. 2015; McGrath and Strauss 2017; Waite et al. 2015; see also Altenried et al., this volume) and of global circuits of value extraction (see Neilson, this volume), it is also true that many refugees are not even adversely incorporated in labor markets. In refugee camps, upon landing, and in transit points, refugees are often not channeled toward exploitative laborscapes: their lives are often not "put to work" as labor, but rather remain stalled indefinitely. But even if refugees' lives are not directly exploited on the labor market, these lives are nonetheless valorized as part of information, financial, and consumption circuits. In this sense, we might contemplate the question of a sort of "biopolitical value" that is extracted from migrants' mobility and from the circuits of heterogeneous data that are collected from them.

This approach involves refocusing the attention from value conceived in strictly economic terms to a conceptualization of value that stems from modes of capitalization over human life and mobility as such, as Brett Neilson also suggests (this volume). Migrants can be denied international protection and excluded from the channels of asylum while at the same time being included in circuits of finacialization and biopolitical value extraction. This directly relates to the financialization of migrant mobility controls and asylum-seekers' and refugees' hosting procedures. For instance, electronic vouchers for refugees' services or humanitarian credit cards for refugees (e.g. the Humanity Ventures initiative for Syrian refugees, developed by Mastercard and George Soros)[6] are examples of financial products used in hosting centers across Europe as well as in refugee camps in the Middle East region, which produce databases on refugees' consumption

[6] http://fortune.com/2017/01/19/george-soros-mastercard-humanity-ventures-refugees-migrants/

behaviors while also mapping their movements. These innovations produce a potentially constant traceability of asylum-seekers. Simultaneously, they raise the question of the modes of value production and value extraction from refugees' mobility as such, beyond the profit made on migrants as commodities tackled by the literature on the migration industry (Andersson 2014). The ongoing multiplication of refugees' apps (apps that can be downloaded on a smartphone to facilitate migrants/refugees' crossing of borders) by transnational corporations such as Google and Apple, offers another case in point. These apps are double-edged tools: while they certainly support migrants/refugees' border crossing and may prove to be vital for survival, they also work as mechanisms for potentially monitoring migrants' traceability. Beyond merely keeping track of individual displacements, however, border enforcement agencies such as Frontex are interested in collecting and elaborating data about migrant trajectories and modus operandi, in order to produce risk analyses about migration routes and prospectively divert human mobility. Hence the relationships between the financialization of mobility, data circulation, and forms of biopolitical value extraction affecting migrants command further investigation. Likewise, they raise important new questions about the relationship between governmentality and logistics (see Altenried et al., this volume).

Spatial Disobedience, Crisis Management, and "Hotspot" Europe

What has been designated unanimously by European authorities as a "migration" or "refugee crisis" is not a zero-sum game: that is to say, the putative crisis, as we have argued elsewhere (De Genova, ed. 2017; New Keywords Collective 2016), signals an impasse for the effective and efficient government of multiple cross-border mobilities that is figured as "crisis" only inasmuch as it signifies a crisis of control — a crisis of the sovereign power of the European border regime. Nonetheless, it has also been a protracted crisis for the migrants and refugees fleeing crises of conflict, structural violence, and persecution who find themselves stranded at the amorphous borders of Europe and thus subjected anew to an unforeseen and often unfathomable crisis arising

strictly from the stalemate inflicted upon the border regime itself by the confrontation between migrants' and refugees' autonomous movement with the feckless reactions of enforcement authorities. Thus, rather than speaking of a singular "crisis", we must more accurately refer to a plurality of "crises." After all, the administrative crisis for authorities provoked by asylum-seekers' refusals to be fingerprinted is an altogether distinct problem from the material crisis of a shortage of adequate reception facilities and services for migrant and refugee families who find themselves detained in a border camp. Indeed, the crisis for border guards of a thwarted police power confronting a mass migrant/refugee charge against a border fence or checkpoint, likewise, is an altogether different matter from the terror of tear gas, truncheons, rubber bullets, and even live ammunition that those same migrant and refugee families are met with in the very same encounter. Therefore, thinking through the autonomy of migration and asylum involves drawing attention to the constituent spaces that are opened up by migrants' and refugees' movements and the diverse forms of their spatial disobedience. Moreover, beyond the production of ephemeral spaces of transit, struggle, and control, it is important to take into account the temporalities of these constituent spaces. When and how, for instance, do spaces of "waiting" and "transit" become spaces of tentative and indefinite "settlement"? In Greece as in Turkey, migrants and refugees stuck in "transit" (sometimes for years on end) inevitably become incorporated into informal labor markets, simply as a matter of enduring the protracted and uncertain migratory "journey."

On a larger scale, the pluralization of "crisis" allows us to more readily discern the co-constitution of the economic crisis, the political crisis of the European space of free mobility ensuing from the EU's internal re-bordering, and the epistemic crisis at stake in the governmental labelling and administration of migrants' and refugees' heterogeneous mobilities. In order to destabilize the dominant discursive and political framing of "the crisis," we must repudiate the image of a passive Europe that is made to appear as always somehow disconnected from the spaces of conflict and misery where trouble originates, whereby the migrants and refugees become the pitiful or loathsome embodiments of a traveling contagion of "crisis" (De Genova et al. 2016:20),

and instead re-situate Europe itself as a decisive source, both historically and in the present, of so much violent (postcolonial, post-Cold war) upheaval.

Pervasive references to “hot spots” and “trouble spots” are telling reminders of how state authorities and governmental policy-makers refer to the pathologized spaces of conflict and “crisis” (elsewhere) that threaten to contaminate social order and civility “at home,” and therefore require prompt interventions, if not “emergency” measures, to be implemented at border-crossing “hotspots” (Antonakaki et al. 2016; Garelli and Tazzioli 2016a,b; Sciurba 2016; Spathopoulou 2016; Tazzioli 2016). The officially designated “hotspots” encompass a continuum of closed prisons, (semi-)open detention and processing (“reception”) camps, as well as makeshift migrant/refugee camps. In fact, hotspots are not narrowly reducible to detention infrastructures or spaces but rather refer, more broadly, to a series of procedures put into place by EU member states for quickly identifying and partitioning migrants and refugees, by preventively illegalizing the majority of them. More precisely, the hotspot nomenclature hints at modes of governmental intervention that are predicated upon the discursive register of the “crisis” and contribute to reshaping the very image of what a border is — shifting from a linear conceptualization of the border as a national frontier towards a mobile and punctual constellation of critical border-zones. From this perspective, the European space can be remapped according to the fabrication of such border-sites of crisis, which eventually appear as “trouble-spots” due to the recalcitrant presence of migrants, and consequently are securitized into “hotspots” through the implementation of dentition infrastructures and identification procedures. Here, again, the autonomy of migration as well as the autonomy of refugee movements can be readily recognized as veritable catalysts for instigating a reconfiguration of the border regime, while also re-confirming the global postcolonial connections that otherwise tend to be suppressed. In this sense, highlighting such spatial and temporal connections against the tendency of dealing with migration through episodic and unidirectional snapshots of the ostensible incursions of “outsiders” into “receiving” countries requires re-situating the analysis on a global scale.

If we aim to apprehend anything of "the crisis" as it presents itself "in" Europe, therefore, we inevitably have to "jump" scales and turn our critical attention beyond the space of what is conventionally imagined to be "Europe." Rather than imagine a besieged Europe surrounded by beleaguered border "hot spots," then, we must begin to apprehend the ongoing production of "Europe" through the "hotspot" regime with which European sovereign powers meditate their live interconnections with the formerly colonized world. Rather than a merely comparative analysis of putatively separate and discrete cases, this means mobilizing a method that considers how certain political technologies resonate and are diversely enacted in different spaces. In this respect, "the global" should not be taken to refer here to a monolithic and homogenized representation of "the" crisis of the world capitalist system, for instance, but rather to the transversal connections through which that global regime of capital accumulation is sustained and convulsively enforced through a variety of contingent and contradictory sociopolitical relations enacted between heterogeneous spaces of crisis and spaces of governmentality.

Nonetheless, the discursive formation of "crisis" that has been mobilized to shore up EU-rope against its unruly constitutive "outside" also has had repercussions inward. Indeed, EU-ropean internal free mobility, which until recently was considered a fundamental pillar of the European Union, has been radically repudiated by the British campaign to leave the EU (Brexit) while at the same time, in the face of the "migrant"/"refugee crisis," many member states have reintroduced "emergency" border controls, effectively suspending the Schengen system. Such re-borderings of and within Europe are inseparable from various articulations of a reactionary backlash against the mass arrivals of non-European migrants and refugees, but also increasingly against the re-migrantized mobility of other Europeans as well (Bhambra 2016). Consequently, the multiplicity of crises must inevitably be analyzed in connection with the variety of emergent right-wing populisms throughout Europe and indeed across the world (see De Genova, this volume). Refashioned as a destabilizing and threatening "security crisis," the figure of the refugee has been re-purposed, inverting the politics of protection as antiterrorist suspicion. Whether in the post-Trump United

States or EU-rope in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris, Brussels, Nice, London, and so on, the figure of the refugee now serves as an always potentially nefarious one, against which "the people" or "the nation" must be protected, and against which sovereign state power seeks to inoculate itself.

Toward the De-Migrantization of Migration and Refugee Studies

What is designated by state powers to be a "migration"/ "refugee crisis" is actually a crisis of the transnational government of populations on the move across state borders, whom we tend to continue to label "migrants" or "refugees" (New Keywords Collective 2016). The conventions by which such labels persist in regimenting how we understand human mobility and its partitioning into bordered categories and identities, however, are ensconced in the epistemic conceits and complacencies by which knowledge itself has been disciplined and institutionalized (De Genova 2013b; Garelli and Tazzioli 2013b). Thus, migration studies, as a professional intellectual field, tends to reify and fetishize such epistemic objects as "migration" and "migrants" just as refugee studies similarly cultivates the specialization of an often rarefied and rather technical object of knowledge that is labeled "refugee." The multiple crises in and of Europe, and the inextricable connections between migration and violent conflict, therefore confront us with the urgency not only of continuing to repudiate the ossified partition between migration and refugee studies but, furthermore, of "de-migrantizing" migration and refugee studies altogether (see also Bojadžijev and Römhild 2014; Dahinden 2016). In other words, approaching migration and refugee movements from within the crises underscores the necessity of analyzing these heterogeneous mobilities through the prism of the full panoply of their multifarious and simultaneous connections to both political and economic dynamics. Hence, our call to de-migrantize means refusing to approach migration or refugee movements as separate and discrete fields of research and instead taking human mobility as a constitutive force within the global restructuring of capitalism and therefore as a critical vantage point for understanding capitalism as both a regime of accumulation and a sociopolitical order (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; see also Neilson, this volume). Nonetheless,

enunciated from within the crises, such an analytical prioritization of mobility cannot afford to disregard or trivialize the fact that such mobility is, to various extents, significantly impelled by circumstances of turmoil and conflict. While the autonomy of migration could be posited during the 1990s and early 2000s as a clear-cut contestation of the normative/ juridical profiles of people on the move, however, we are now compelled to resort to deploying the categories of "refugees" and "asylum" as strategic essentialisms. This is a necessary methodological re-orientation of the autonomist perspective because it allows us to take stock of the fact that many migrants now forcefully posit their right to presence in Europe as refugees and resolutely insist on being included in the normative and administrative system of asylum. Thus, the autonomy of migration must be rendered better apprehensible as also the manifestation of an autonomy of "forced migration," an autonomy within and against the myriad constraints of people in flight — seeking refuge, demanding protection, and claiming asylum.

Rethinking the autonomy of migration involves not only problematizing the relationship between the bordering of space and the bordering of identity through processes of migrantization, but also scrutinizing the production of racialized subjectivities and interrogating the racial question at large (or its occlusion) within the political projects of the Western Left. For this reason, scholars associated with theorizing the autonomy of migration have argued for the necessity of dealing with migration in light of the postcolonial condition (De Genova 2010b; 2016; 2017b; n.d.; Mezzadra 2006; 2008; Mezzadra and Rahola 2006). In fact, it could be argued that there cannot ultimately be something like a critical knowledge of migration governmentality without a thorough engagement with the legacies of the colonial past and the enduring inequalities of the postcolonial present. Importantly, such a methodological and political posture inevitably troubles also the iconic figures of "the migrant" and "the refugee" that we tend to reproduce in both academic and non-academic discourses — one customarily depicted as seeking economic opportunity and the other, equated with victimization and persecution, routinely represented as fleeing conflict and seeking refuge, but both always "arriving" from an "elsewhere" that appears to be radically external to the spaces of

wealth, power, and prestige that historically could never have been produced apart from their precisely colonial relations of domination to those same places of migrant and refugee origin.

The postocolonial critique that has been crucial for conceptualizing the autonomy of migration and theorizing the freedom of movement requires that we rethink the articulation between freedom and equality. In an interview conducted with the Euronomade collective, and building on his own theory on "equaliberty," Étienne Balibar points to the need for the Left to rethink equality through freedom, starting from the consideration that while equality in itself (as well as claims for civil or human rights) has signaled a fundamental struggle, it has nonetheless been articulated through struggles that have tended to be contained by disputes over (non)-discrimination.[7] What has been missing, according to Balibar, is the capacity to encompass both manifestations of difference and commonality within struggles for equality (see also Revel 2015). Such an argument suggests a fundamental critique of both the dominant discourse of "integration" and the politics of recognition, and more broadly, questions the rights-claiming framework through which migrant struggles are often analyzed. If we consider what we are calling the queer politics of asylum, refugees' spatial disobedience ought not be flattened to claims against discrimination within the horizon of minimal rights. Instead, they compel us to confront refugees and migrants' exercise of freedom — considered outrageous from the standpoint of state power — even from within the constrictions of the asylum regime. Hence, we propose to build an analysis of the politics of asylum on the basis of refugees' actual claims for equality, even as they make such claims through practices of freedom that exceed the parameters of any asylum regime. Refugees' practices of freedom, in other words, disrupt asylum's juridical and normative borders and cannot be subsumed or contained within the human rights framework. Their quest for protection cannot be severed from the exercise of their own freedom of movement — including the demand for a freedom to choose where to claim asylum, and thus where to move to reconstitute their lives.

[7] http://www.euronomade.info/?p=8672

But how is freedom to be understood in the context of asylum? And what does freedom mean if we do not understand it within the liberal paradigm and instead try to overcome approaches that limit themselves to methodolgoical individualism? We suggest that rethinking the autonomy of migration entails rejecting the presupposition of any fully autonomous space or condition. Instead, it means building on what William Walters and Barbara Lüthi have called "cramped spaces" (2016) to designate the often marginal leeway in which migrants or refugees exercise their practices of freedom. In other words, when speaking of the autonomy of migration (or, indeed, of asylum), we should be meticulous about not positing the notion of an autonomous individual subject in the liberal sense of the term. In this regard, we also fundamentally question the extensive use of the notion of "agency" in the migration literature as one of the dominant ways for conceiving migrant autonomy, which tends to remain within the confines of methodological individualism and, in its more romanticized articulations, commonly resorts to allocating to migrant non-citizens the political burden of performing the fanciful role of (virtual) "active citizens." In contrast, the analytical perspective of the autonomy of migration works to destabilize and unsettle the boundaries of what is commonly assumed to qualify as "resistance" in liberal political theory and political philosophy. That is to say, instead of analyzing migrant struggles for the sake of corroborating the liberal conception of the political subject (not infrequently idealized in terms of "citizenship," however metaphorically), the "gaze of autonomy" (Mezzadra, 2011) seeks to apprehend and theorize migrant struggles by asking what about them is irreducible to that liberal conception of political subjectivity, and thereby simultaneously contributes to reshaping the very meaning and sense of conventional political categories (Tazzioli et al. 2015).

Rethinking the autonomy of migration through the lens of asylum, in particular, involves pushing further the critique of methodological individualism that is already well established in the autonomy of migration literature. Indeed, putting aside debates over whether or not we can speak of a temporal or ontological primacy of the autonomy of migration in relation to border controls, what is more pressing is critical reflection about how to conceptualize together both how refugees

make claims for protection and seek asylum, and how they do so nevertheless without ever relinquishing their freedom. In other words, we must attend to the practices of autonomy that arise from within the constrictions of the marginal leeway in which migrants and refugees move, and thus from within while yet against the multiple, unevenly articulated modes of subjection and exploitation to which they are exposed. This is why we can only truly apprehend the autonomy of asylum with recourse to an appreciation of its "queer" (counter-normative) politics, and the manifestations of freedom that may seem incomprehensible to conventional political philosophy because of their sheer incorrigibility.

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