Martina Tazzioli’s book *The Making of Migration: The Biopolitics of Mobility at Europe’s Borders* develops a string of inspiring ideas through an investigation of the political, legal, and racializing mechanisms through which some people are labelled and governed as migrants. It can be read as part of the wider move towards a constructivist understanding of migration in critical and reflexive migration studies which conceives of migration and the bordering practices of nation-states as co-constitutive. To reproduce itself as a (bounded) people, territory and jurisdiction the nation-state constantly has to draw, police and enforce distinctions between those who belong to the national citizenry and those who do not. Nicholas De Genova (2015: 4) aptly captures this observation in the formula: ‘Borders make migrants’.

Tazzioli contributes to this body of scholarship by showing how migration operates as a constituent force – through the formation of collective political subjectivities and safe spaces – in the contested reconfiguration of European space. To highlight this ambivalent meaning of the making of migration, Tazzioli draws on E.P. Thompson’s (1963) work on *The Making of the English Working Class*. While Thompson conceives of the English working class as something that ‘made itself as much as it was made’ (Thompson, 1963: 213), Tazzioli’s book highlights that the making of migration refers to both the fabrication of migration through practices of bordering and the doing of migration, that is, the social transformation processes and political upheavals that migration creates.

To analyse both the making and the makings of migration Tazzioli draws on a Foucauldian framework and studies the processes of subjectivation and objectivation that are involved in the making of migrant multiplicities (collective subjects) and migrant singularities (individual subjectivities). While subjectivation focuses on the material, legal and discursive practices through which individuals are governed as migrants, the study of processes of objectivation attends to how migrants are constituted as objects of government through discourses and knowledge practices. Based on this framework, Tazzioli uses migration – or more precisely: the making of migration – as an analytical lens to rethink some of the central categories of political theory like biopolitics or dominant conceptions of collective political subjects.

Within the scope of this comment I have to limit myself to three remarks on some of the ideas advanced in Tazzioli’s truly original book. These remarks are inspired by my research interest in what I call *The Politics of (Non)Knowledge in the (Un)Making of Migration*. This research is concerned with two interrelated questions: How is migration enacted as an intelligible object of government through the production of knowledge and various types of nonknowledge? And second, how do particular enactments of migration inform and shape the rationales and practices of contemporary border and management?

My first two remarks concern the notion of *multiplicity* and its conceptual distinction from ‘the population’. Tazzioli introduces the notion of multiplicity to account for ‘collective formations that do not fit into the referent “population” as they are non-homogenous, highly precarious and temporary’ (p. 5). I appreciate Tazzioli’s objective to highlight the ‘fleeting dimension [of migrant multiplicities]’ (p. 6) in order to rethink existing notions of collective political subjectivities through alternatives like that of the ‘mob’ (Chapter 1). Yet, Tazzioli’s attempt to conceptually distinguish
migrant multiplicities from populations is haunted by two issues.

First, populations are essentially multiplicities. Hence, populations also tend to be non-homogenous, mutable and precarious. Rather than stable realities ‘out there’, populations are – like migration – abstractions that do not exist independently of the knowledge practices that are mobilised to know them. Populations need to be enacted as objects of government through knowledge practices (most notably statistics) and related inscription devices (censuses, surveys, registers etc.). Hence, populations also tend to fragile and mutable for two reasons: First, the size and composition of a population changes depending on the methods and inscription devices that are used to know it (Scheel, 2020). Secondly, and this is more important for Tazzioli’s argument, statisticians continue to struggle to produce reliable accounts of migration (Scheel and Ustek-Spilda, 2019).

According to the last population census in Latvia, conducted in 2011, the population of Latvia was, for instance, 155,000 people or 7% smaller than previously published figures. The main reason for this divergence is that emigrants often do not inform authorities about their departure (CSB Latvia, 2015). What this example shows is that populations tend to be elusive and fragile objects of government because migrant multiplicities often ‘exceed any arithmetic counting’ (p. 6), as Tazzioli rightly notes. This is especially the case in times of increased levels of mobility, including that of migrant workers, transnational families and other migrant multiplicities. This intertwining of the making of migration with the enactment of populations as intelligible objects of government calls for a broader understanding of migration beyond the cases of illegalised migrants and asylum seekers investigated by Tazzioli – and this is where I see ample opportunity for future research on the making of migration.

Second, I doubt that the migrant subjects that feature in The Making of Migration – illegalised migrants and asylum seekers in borderzones like Ventimiglia or Calais – always ‘resemble what Foucault defines as subjects that resist being part of the population’ (p. 5). While it is true that the enactment of populations as legible objects of government through statistics is intertwined with attempts to form ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 2006) on a national, and more recently, a European level, the impetus of most migrants struggling in Europe’s borderzones is to become a part of these populations, if only for strategic reasons, as a way to find a safe place with better life opportunities. If illegalised migrants resist the regulation of the (European) population and try to elude the apparatuses of security by which this population exists and is supposed to be preserved at an optimal level, to paraphrase Foucault (2007: 44), they do so to become part of the European population and part of the social contract of the people of Europe, even if that means to alter the terms and conditions of that (racial) contract. These ‘biopolitics from below’ are a crucial element of the biopolitics of mobility invoked by Tazzioli, turning them into a battleground of intense political struggles. This observation underscores how important it is to distinguish conceptually between populations, understood as objects of government, and people, in the sense of imagined communities and related politics of belonging, in any inquiry that studies these struggles as a way to ‘unsettle and stretch the borders of the political’ (p. 12).

My third remark returns to the central role that knowledge practices play in the making of migration. Tazzioli frequently attends to the ‘politics of counting’ (p. 28) involved in the making of migration. She also analyses related processes of objectivation to expose how migration and particular individuals are problematised as objects to be known (p. 51). Thus, the making of migration happens not only through practices of bordering. It also happens through knowledge practices. What is known and targeted as migration is mediated by a plethora of data practices that rely on various information technologies, inscription devices, definitions, bodies of expertise, categorisations and so forth (Scheel et al., 2019).

Moreover, the enactment of migration as an intelligible object of government through the production of knowledge is often intertwined with the production of various forms of non-knowledge. A recent
study shows, for instance, how the enactment of migration as precisely measurable and therefore manageable reality through visualisations of organisations like the IOM is intertwined with the production of nonknowledge about the known limits of quantifying migration (Scheel and Ustek-Spilda, 2019). Regarding these Politics of (Non)knowledge in the (Un)making of Migration, Tazzioli’s book, and in particular her analysis of the production of migrant multiplicities and singularities through data practices (chapter 3), raises an important question for future research: How can critical and reflexive migration studies scholars theorise and study the relationship between the enactment of migration as an object of government through the production of (non)knowledge and the making of migrants in through practices of bordering?

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