8. GOVERNING WITH BIOPOWER THROUGH THE MILIEU

“The matter of politics and the politics of matter have never seemed so thoroughly entwined.”

8.1 Introduction

Whereas previous chapters described security, scarcity and materialization, this chapter tries to combine many of the insights that are gathered in these chapters by introducing the work of an author who seems to have written on all of them. In the security chapter, the risk literature discussed calculative metrics applied to populations to define the norm of acceptable behavior. In the scarcity chapter, the issue shifted from a securing of scarce supplies to the organization of the circulation of scarce supplies. In turn, the materiality chapter discussed materialization, the performativity through which reiterative discursive acts become material (and vice versa), and the role that knowledge gathering practices play within this materialization. In other words, this chapter will expand on the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a French philosopher and “historian of ideas” who developed a theoretical framework to understand the power politics and knowledge structures that govern our lives. For Foucault, the relation between security, materiality and knowledge needs to be seen in its close connection to power. He draws attention to the power/knowledge nexus that enables discourse to materialize and security to act as a governance technique to make this happen. With the help of Foucault’s understanding of governmentality, it becomes possible to analyze the role of security by studying the techniques and social structures (the mentalities and rationalities) that are used to exercise power over a population within a political-economic knowledge base to organize, regulate and order human reality.

Through a discussion of the work of Foucault, this chapter makes four arguments. First, it explicitly understands security as a productive form of power. Productive security implies a performative understanding of security, meaning that ideas about energy security help govern and produce a specific way of life (e.g. high-energy consumption) through the creation of subjects, markets, and the materialization of its concerns. Second, it is not possible to secure something, through risk or other security practices, when people do not know what it is that needs securing. Security, here interpreted broadly as undesired futures, hence is a prime example of ontological

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1 Braun and Whatmore 2010b, x.
2 Foucault 2003; Foucault 2007; Foucault 2008.
3 See for example Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008; Dillon 2008.
politics: the identification of that what needs to be secured and the politics of knowledge and observation that guide it. Third, the way security works, is by governing bodies, minds, objects and the material world around us. More specific, security works increasingly in one of two ways. Either by governing the milieu of the humans or objects that need governing or else by letting the people involved govern themselves based on shared understandings of normal and acceptable behavior. The example of smart grids in chapter 10 details how people and their electricity consumption are formed and governed through the construction of a particular electricity grid. Fourth, based on Foucault’s theory, this chapter examines how security functions in relation to society, governments, the economy and nature, and how the boundaries between these fields are constantly performed and redefined through the rearticulation of these concepts, logics and modes of reasoning.

This chapter proceeds by first introducing the concept of governmentality in chapter 8.2 as part of the theoretical framework behind Foucault’s notion of security and risk. To introduce governmentality, this chapter delves deeply into Foucault’s understanding of the conduct of conduct, his understanding of power and his concept of biopolitics. Following his identification of biopower as a new form of power in the early 18th century, and the active use of this form of power under the header of biopolitics, chapter 8.3 will continue the discussion of governmentality by studying the relation between government, markets and society. A particular form of governmentality that is discussed here is neoliberalism: how freedom is organized through security and how neoliberalism actively works to separate economics from politics and society. Chapter 8.4 will bring the different notions together, by focusing respectively on the relation between materiality and governmentality, between knowledge and materiality, and between security and materiality. This chapter ends with a brief summary and reflection.

8.2 Productive Power

8.2.1 Conduct of Conduct

To guide the reader through the rest of this chapter, five initial remarks can be made on Foucault’s overarching concept of governmentality. First, governmentality is said to link the French words gouverner and mentalité.4 By including the French term for governing, the concept of governmentality seems to refer to a modern definition of governing, as in the ‘management by the state or the administration’.5 Foucault,

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4 Lemke 2002, 50. However, see Michel Senellart’s Course Context discussion in Foucault 2007, 339, footnote 126 where Snellart argues that this contraction is a translation error and governmentality instead is the noun of governmental just as musicality derives from musical.

5 Lemke 2002, 50.
however, uses governing more broadly by referring to its classical Greek use where it meant both the management of the household (oeconomia), one’s soul and oneself. As will become clear below, for Foucault, governmentality or

[...] is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy – that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth [...] and of making the family fortunes prosper – how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the state.

Second, Foucault captures this triple understanding of government with his ‘conduct of conduct’, a concept that he explains as the ‘activity of conducting’ and by which he refers to both the directing of someone and the ‘way in which one conducts oneself [and] lets oneself be conducted’. In his reflection on governmentality, Dean actually presents three forms of conduct that are captured with this concept. Dean separates the verb ‘to conduct,’ which describes the act of conducting, from the noun ‘conduct’ describing bad and proper behavior, and a third form of conduct that describes the ethical self-reflection of how one conducts oneself. In other words, governmentality is not just about a form of governing from above, by the state or someone in authority, but it is as much a form of governing by people themselves through a reflection on what they think is ‘appropriate’. Good examples of governing oneself are dieting or working out: whether for health or aesthetic reasons, people practice them because they are constantly confronted by pictures of beautiful models and warnings about unhealthy lifestyles: messages that structure how people think about themselves and thus how they behave in relation to their body, to the food they buy, and to others.

Third, directing this reflexive behavior, this bombarding or nudging of people in a certain direction, is where the latter half of the term governmentality, namely mentalité, comes in. Better translated in its plural as rationalities of government, a mentalité is described by Gordon as a ‘system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed), capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it was practised.’ It is only by questioning and becoming aware of these invisible and hidden forms of power that one can study

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6 Ibid.
7 Foucault 1991a, 91.
8 Foucault 2007, 193.
9 Dean 2010, 17.
10 Gordon 1991, 3. This thesis follows Dean 2010, 24 who defines rationality as: ‘[…] any way of reasoning, or way of thinking about, calculating and responding to a problem, which is more or less systematic, and which might draw upon formal bodies of knowledge or expertise.’
them.\textsuperscript{11} Fourth, for Foucault the connection between these two forms of governing, from above and from the self, is his main object of study. It is at this intersection where one can see resistance brewing, questions are asked and uncertainty is made certain again. Not as something tangible, because there is no physical place where these forms of power meet, but as a balance of forces that no person or organization can escape.\textsuperscript{12}

Fifth, Foucault shunned polemics and deliberately focused on how questions.\textsuperscript{13} His thinking on governmentality, therefore, does not provide guidance for future decisions nor does it provide a map to follow for those with a desire for “power”. His main argument for this position is that reasons are always provided ex post facto, after the event, and thus originate from within a system of thought and consequentially are always already polemic. Arguing that something is “good” means that one already has drawn a boundary that excludes the “bad”. Defining what the good and bad are thus depends on the rationality to which one adheres. For an economist, a core priority is often the organization of free markets to reduce overall transaction costs and improve efficiency and profits, but that is clearly not the priority or “good” for somebody who identifies primarily as a climate activist. These five points will be explained more extensively in the rest of chapter, but already it is possible to see how Foucault focusses on techniques of power and modes of thought to govern people, how the relationship between economics and politics is enacted, and, as we will see, what role security and risk play within this notion of governmentality.

\section*{8.2.2 Power}

It is not just the concept of governing that Foucault sees differently. Another, closely related, concept is power.

Foucault teaches that power is less a commodity that can be held than a force which comes into circulation when human beings - who he considers to be free beings - come into relation with one another. To be crude, power as a force that circulates is more like electricity than it is like a lever or a sword.\textsuperscript{14}

Power, for Foucault, is thus not something tangible nor is it intentional. It is not the light switch, but everything that lies behind one’s ability and desire to pull the switch. It has no source and no end, but it shifts and transforms. It is ‘located and exercised at the level of life’ and as such seems to resemble life.\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, because

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11} Lobo-Guerrero 2012, xvi–xvii.
\bibitem{12} Dean 2010, 19.
\bibitem{13} Gordon 1991, 7.
\bibitem{14} Dillon 2010, 63.
\bibitem{15} Lobo-Guerrero 2007, 330.
\end{thebibliography}
it resembles life, Foucault argues that power is not only restrictive but productive as well. It produces subjects: individuals behaving within and conform a particular system of thought (a rationality of government). That said, while it is impossible to touch power, it is still possible to analyze it. Something that Foucault manages by differentiating between multiple forms of power, namely sovereignty, discipline and biopower.

The first form of power is sovereign power or the power of the prince. An often-quoted description that captures Foucault's understanding of sovereign power is 'the right to take life or let live'. In the endorsed ability to order a death, the sovereign is able to govern life. As a form of power, sovereign power is aimed at the good of the prince against both internal and external opposition (other princes). The survival or "good" of the sovereign was seen in terms of strength of arms, which consequently was translated in the number and wellbeing of the population within his territory. In other words, on the number and wealth of his subjects. Sovereign power works through both judicial instruments (laws, degrees) and instruments of control (punishment). Such a feudal form of sovereign power is no longer applicable and Foucault noticed how, within a modern state, power is actually dispersed over state officials, mothers, teachers, bosses, generals, etc. In other words, lots of individuals and institutes have some form of sovereign power. This 'plurality of forms of government' or 'the multiplicity and immanence of these activities distinguishes them radically from the transcendent singularity of Machiavelli’s prince.'

A second form of power identified by Foucault is discipline. Foucault’s insight regarding discipline is that the training and conditioning of individuals in schools or armies, while being applied on the individual is in reality concentrated on the group as a whole. People are disciplined towards what is considered to be useful knowledge or correct behavior. ‘Discipline, of course, analyzes and breaks down; it breaks down individuals, places, time, movements, actions, and operations. It breaks them down into components such that they can be seen, on the one hand, and modified on the other.' In other words, discipline separates those that “behave” from those that do not and exercises itself on the latter. It does so by exercising its power on a micro-level, meaning the individual body, by correcting towards a norm that applies to the whole group. Foucault for that reason argued in a later work that discipline is not

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16 Foucault 1982.
17 Foucault 2003, 241.
18 Foucault 1991a, 90.
19 Foucault 2003, 35.
20 Foucault 1991a, 91.
21 Foucault 2007, 12.
22 Ibid., 56.
23 Foucault 2003, 38.
just about ‘normalization’ or the correction of the bad, but about ‘normation’ or the diffusion of the norm itself.\textsuperscript{24} As a form of power, discipline is of interest for Foucault because its shifts the focus from the prince and his subject to an individual body as part of a particular population.\textsuperscript{25}

Foucault’s third form of power is what he sometimes discusses as security but initially identified as biopower. Biopower, according to Foucault, is a form of power that combines aspects of both disciplinary and sovereign power, but is more than just a combination of the two. From discipline, it takes the focus on populations and the role of individuals. From sovereign power, it takes the focus on life and wellbeing. Importantly, however, is that in relation to life and wellbeing the focus of biopower shifts from ‘taking lives’ to ‘making live and letting die.’\textsuperscript{26} In other words, it differs from both in that biopower is mostly a productive form of power. Literally productive, as it deals with biological ‘matters of life and death’ and thus ‘with birth and propagation, with health and illness, […] and with the processes that sustain or retard the optimization of the life of a population’.\textsuperscript{27} Biopower is the power to increase life and decrease death through policies that are based on birth and mortality rates and explicitly aimed at influencing those rates. This is what Dean calls ‘the administration of life,’ or what Foucault in his earlier work described as ‘regulation’ and later called ‘biopolitics’ (a concept that is taken up below).\textsuperscript{28}

These three forms of power differ. Discipline and biopower differ on the level at which their power is effected, with discipline focusing on the individual body while biopower concentrates on the level of populations.\textsuperscript{29} They differ as well in that biopower, by focusing on biological life, works on ‘a number of material givens’, while discipline instead first ‘determines a segment’ of the overall population by ‘isolat[ing] a space’ for itself to work on – those that are in need of disciplining.\textsuperscript{30} As a form of power, discipline only works within this site, but once set ‘allows nothing to escape.’\textsuperscript{31} In contrast, biopower has no boundaries and constantly expands to new areas and spaces, depending on what is known about life and deemed necessary to enhance that life. Most of all, the forms of power differ on the level of the individual. Whereas discipline makes a normative judgement on the behavior of the individual and sovereignty subjugates the individual to the will of the sovereign, biopower instead takes the behavior of individuals for granted and acts only on those effects that are

\textsuperscript{24} Foucault 2007, 57.
\textsuperscript{25} Foucault 1991a, 102.
\textsuperscript{26} Foucault 2003, 247.
\textsuperscript{27} Dean 2010, 119.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.; Foucault 2003; Foucault 2008.
\textsuperscript{29} Foucault 2003, 250.
\textsuperscript{30} Foucault 2007, 19, 44.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 45.
considered consequential for the population as a whole.\textsuperscript{32} While they differ, Foucault is explicit in arguing that they do not exclude one another and always return in on combination or another.\textsuperscript{33} In different combinations, these three forms of power make up particular forms of governmentality.

\textbf{8.2.3 Biopolitics}

As a form of power, biopower quickly conflates with biopolitics: the actual administration of life, or, as the concept implies, the \textit{politics} or strategies of biopower. While biopolitics is about the politics of life, it is neither a form of power nor a mode of governmentality. Instead Foucault sees it as a technology of power, Collier describes it as a ‘problem space to be analyzed’ (as does Foucault), while Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero argue that ‘there is no biopolitics which is not simultaneously also a security apparatus. There is no biopolitics of this, or a biopolitics of that. When one says biopolitics one says security, albeit in a certain way.’\textsuperscript{34} Biopolitics is all that because it administers biological life, not through the individual as with discipline, but by influencing the conditions or the milieu of individuals based on the knowledge it has gathered over the population that needs to be secured. Instead of feeding the hungry, biopolitics is about setting up the conditions for people to feed themselves by enabling and supporting a circulation of food. Ultimately, biopolitics tries to bring out the full potential of individuals, a ‘potential [which] is sought to be promoted, enhanced and, in the process, protected.’\textsuperscript{35} ‘This full potential needs to be \textit{protected} against the ‘random element inherent in a population of living beings.’\textsuperscript{36} Accidents happen and they are highly uncertain for individuals. Yet, accidents happen all the time, so statistically on the level of the population they are far from uncertain. In other words, to administer life and protect the wellbeing of a population what is needed are security apparatuses or techniques and mechanisms aimed at the ‘objects’ of ‘species life’ by gathering and acting upon the assessed numbers available on a population.\textsuperscript{37}

Even in this brief description of biopolitics, a number of terms stand out and call for further inquiry: population and statistics, prosperity and potentia, things and the milieu, and security. First, biopolitics is geared towards populations. Foucault identifies the advent of biopolitics in the shift when wars were no longer fought in ‘the defense

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 8. What Foucault 1991a, 102 has called the ‘sovereignty-discipline-government’ triangle.
\textsuperscript{34} Collier 2009, 94; Foucault 2007, 11–12; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 266; Watts 2004b. For a problem to be governable, it needs a problem space. Methmann describes how the earth’s carbon cycle has become such a problem space based on the technological ability to monitor carbon emissions and their effects. Within this problem space, the population is defined as those people and institutions that are related to the emission of carbon. See Methmann 2013, 78.
\textsuperscript{35} Lobo-Guerrero 2007, 331.
\textsuperscript{36} Foucault 2003, 246.
\textsuperscript{37} Collier 2009, 83; Foucault 2003; Foucault 2007; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008.
of the sovereign’ but instead were aimed ‘to secure the existence of a population’. Before the idea and ability to think in terms of populations, government was aimed either at the level of the sovereign, as the head of the state, or at the level of the family, as the Greek did when describing the oeconomia as the management of the family. Combining both levels only became possible with the invention of statistics, through which it became possible to gain knowledge at the level of the population. When Malthus advanced his dilemma, it was based on his insight about the ‘bio-economic problem’ of a limited area for food production and a faster growing population.

Statistics, in Foucault’s argument, developed along two tracks. On the one hand, with the organization of the police and, on the other, with the evolution of mercantilism. Police, as a form of government that is internal to the state, is said by Foucault to be aimed at securing and increasing the domestic output of the state. It is concerned with the protection of active life, especially those activities that relate to the state. This implies that the number and safety of the population, their basic needs, their health and their productivity are all subject to this form of government. Importantly, before the police can secure all of this, it needs to know what to secure. In other words, to protect life it is necessary to know life. Foucault argues in this respect that ‘[p]olice makes statistics necessary, but police also makes statistics possible.’

Biopolitics, second, is thus aimed at the wellbeing of the state. In this modern form of power the focus shifted from the wellbeing of the prince and his tax revenue to the conditions for the wellbeing and potentia of the population. This wellbeing and ‘making life proliferate’ has been interpreted, from the Greek household oeconomia onwards and especially since the 16th century physiocrats, as being first and foremost about ‘good economic government.’ In chapter 6.5, Foucault was used to describe how the main idea behind the government of scarce food supplies shifted from one based on Mercantilism towards one based on Liberalism. Mercantilism tried to govern scarce food supplies by introducing ‘laws, decrees, regulations: that is to say, the traditional weapons of sovereignty.’ It fixated prices and organized distribution, consequently stifling incentives to increase food production during periods of scarcity and thereby prolonging periods of shortages. Foucault noted how the

38 Campbell 2005, 950.
40 Foucault 2007, 77.
42 Foucault 2007, 323–326.
43 Ibid., 315.
45 Foucault 2003, 253. See also Massumi 2009, 157; Foucault 1991a, 92.
46 Foucault 1991a, 98.
47 Foucault sees Mercantilism as the first serious attempt to gather knowledge/data on an issue to help govern the problem of food shortages and economic growth in general. See Foucault 2007, 102.
physiocrats instead argued for what now would be seen as a more liberal program: one that trusts markets to do their work, to follow the laws of the market, to let prices fluctuate and goods circulate so as to provide incentives to counter any shortages. Dean remarks that ‘[t]he discovery of the ontological reality of scarcity […] mean[t] that the administration of life must take into account the means of production for the subsistence of that life.’\textsuperscript{48} As these means cannot be controlled by the state directly, the government has to let go of its control for the well-being of the state.

Third, discovering the ‘reality of scarcity’ and the ‘means of production’ implies that what is governed through biopolitics are things, not men alone. Whereas sovereignty exercises its power on a particular territory, biopolitics exercises its power on the conditions that enable man to live freely; in other words on the things s/he relates to. Foucault takes a broad perspective on these “things”. He sees them as “material” things, e.g., things like resources or the weather. He also sees them as ‘men in their relationships with things’, by which he focusses on the ‘customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking’ through which men and things relate.\textsuperscript{49} Finally, Foucault describes these “things” as uncertain events, events like ‘accidents, misfortunes, famine, epidemics and death’ that effect from ‘men in their relationship with things.’\textsuperscript{50} In other words, the uncertainty inherent in life, which is discussed as undesired futures in chapter 5 and as surprising events in chapter 7. Biopolitics works on these things, it ‘disposes’ of them using different forms of power, to achieve the desired goal of an affluent population.\textsuperscript{51}

Fourth, not only is biopolitics a governing of individuals through the things s/he relates to, it is also a form of governing based on a certain ‘naturalness’.\textsuperscript{52} This disposing of things to increase the economic wellbeing of a population is based, since the physiocrats, on the laws of the market. While these laws are not part of nature as such – they stem from the interaction between people – they are seen as natural, as given (see chapter 6 on the naturalization of scarcity). This naturalness results, according to Foucault, in a separation of the state and the economy.\textsuperscript{53} Gordon in fact describes this ‘naturalized’ way of thinking in terms of a ‘transformation in the relationship between knowledge and government.’\textsuperscript{54} He sees it as an internalization at the side of the government, in particular the sovereign, of the liberal argument that it can never know “the” economy and therefore can never govern it.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{48} Dean 2010, 137.
\textsuperscript{49} Foucault 2007, 96.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Foucault 1991a, 95.
\textsuperscript{52} Foucault 2007, 354.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 349, 354.
\textsuperscript{54} Gordon 1991, 14.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 16.
Fifth, just as the category *population* combines the state with the household, it also bridges the individual and his environment, a point Foucault takes from Darwin and his focus on the survival and evolution of the species within a particular *milieu*.

The milieu for Foucault is both a medium and an element. The milieu is a medium as it ‘is needed to account for action at a distance of one body on another’, while it is simultaneously the ‘element in which it circulates’. As both medium and element, the milieu offers a circular reasoning of cause and effect between those parts of the milieu that affect and those that are affected. In more general terms, the milieu, for Foucault is ‘a certain number of combined, overall effects’ of the above mentioned men in their relationship with things and each other. In recent commentaries, the milieu is often translated in terms of a horizontally organized network analogy, where everything is connected in constant circulation across time and space. Through such a relational analogy, discussed in chapter 7, the milieu becomes something that bridges the social environment of people with their material environment. It is something that is analyzed and acted upon, and something that is both knowledge and matter.

To govern such a milieu, filled with men, things, mentalities and uncertainties, biopolitics aims to administer the conditions of life while remaining open to life itself. In other words, to deal with the complexity and uncertainty inherent in the relations that make up life itself. Foucault describes biopolitics consequentially as a *security dispositif* (also security apparatus or mechanism). Such a security apparatus tries to manage the constant uncertainty of life by ‘plan[ning] a milieu in terms of events or series of events or [its] possible elements’. Biopolitics does not govern humans directly but focusses on their conduct by:

- Structuring the desires, proprieties and possibilities that shape the operation of life working on and through subjective freedoms, governmental rationalities typically develop around specific problematics, such as those of health, wealth, security, poverty, esteem, culture, sexuality or migration.

Alternatively, as Renzi & Elmer state it:

At the same time, government is no longer exercised directly on the subjects but through interventions that both safeguard and actively produce the

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56 Foucault 2007, 78; Foucault 2003, 245.
57 Foucault 2007, 20–21.
58 Compare to the discussion of Bryant in chapter 7.4.
59 Dillon and Reid 2001, 47; Campbell 2005, 951.
60 Foucault 2007, 296.
61 Ibid., 20.
62 Dillon and Reid 2001, 48. See also the quote by Mitchell Dean in Watts 2004a, 55.
conditions for free exchange, circulation and competition, while expanding and intensifying mechanisms of social control and surveillance.  

While firmly driven by security considerations, biopolitics thus has a clear economic focus. A focus, which does not influence people by confining their (economic) freedom through laws, but by nudging what they desire and by what is seen as possible; in other words by administering the freedom that an individual experiences. Freedom in this perspective is something that is constantly constructed based on particular ways of how we understand a problem and what is deemed appropriate behavior. As Amoore concludes, connecting the two statements above: ‘[i]n contrast to a world in which biopolitics eclipses sovereign and disciplinary power, we see a security apparatus that mobilizes specific techniques for deploying the norm to govern uncertain and unfolding populations.’

8.3 Governing Society and Markets with Security

8.3.1 Governmentality

Whereas biopolitics (security), sovereign power and discipline are techniques of power, Foucault sees governmentality as both a technique and more than a technique. Foucault writes that he sees governmentality in three ways: as an ensemble, as a mode of power (equating it with biopower), and as a process. Governmentality refers to the ensemble of ‘institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics’ that exercises itself as a form of power. In turn, as a form of power governmentality has overshadowed other types of power (sovereignty, discipline), which are now only active under governmentality. This follows the creation of the modern state based on the development of an evolving administrative process from the Middle Ages onward, which is the third meaning of governmentality. To be clear, the state itself is not driving this process. On the contrary, the state is an outcome, a tactic according to Lemke, of governmentality. Governmentality is ‘the tactics of government that allow the continual definition of what should or should not fall within the state’s domain, what is public and what private, what is and is not within the state’s competence, and so on.’ Within this constant judging of its domain, Dean remarks how a failure to govern has the peculiar effect of reinforcing the actual

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63 Renzi and Elmer 2013, 48.
64 Dillon 1996, 34.
65 Amoore 2013, 65.
66 Foucault 2007, 108.
67 Foucault 1991a, 103; Lemke 2002, 58.
governmentality process. In line with the discussion on security in chapter 5, governmentality as a mode of power continues even when its programs have failed.

Governmentality stems from what Foucault has identified as the pastoral mentalité and the mentalité of raison d’état. The pastoral mentalité, the Christian understanding of a shepherd herding a flock, is explained by Foucault as ‘a subtle economy of merit and fault’ where power is not applied on individuals, but through them. It is a subtle economy that creates obedient subjects or people who see themselves as sheep needing to be saved and are situated within a certain system of knowledge based on a particular truth, in this case the word of God that can be found in scripture. Within this rationality, the merits and faults of the individual are analyzed by the pastor, atonements are transferred and penance is offered for the individual to reach salvation. A pastoral mentalité is thus guiding, instead of forcing, individuals as part of the population for the good of the individual, instead of the state or the sovereign.

A more modern form of pastoral power can be found, according to Foucault, in the above discussed ‘police government’ as this has a similar economy of merit and faults. Of course, the economy of a police government is not driven by salvation and obedience to God, but by raison d’état or the survival of the state itself. Based on statistics and calculation, the state, by way of its authoritative subjects (police officers and other representatives of the state), learns of itself and acts on itself through its population. Ultimately, it tries to produce happy individuals by protecting processes of circulation (of people, goods, ideas) and by separating good from bad circulation. For the simple reason that happy citizens are also economic active and useful citizens who strengthen the state, especially in comparison to other states and their populations.

In building on both the pastoral economy of merits and faults and the calculation and statistics of raison d’état, governmentality introduces an even larger focus on economic reasoning and the enacted separation of economics and society. In each of the mentalités discussed so far, individuals are subjectivized as part of a population within a particular system of knowledge containing a particular truth. Foucault even argues that ‘[t]o become individual one must become subject’. In other words, while Western citizens consider themselves free individuals, they are only free because they have become subjects. Whether that is to a technology of the self (self-reflection), a

69 Dean 2010, 220.
70 Foucault 2007, 173, 184–185.
71 Ibid., 129.
73 Dean 2010, 224.
74 Foucault 2007, 348.
75 Ibid., 231, footnote †.
form of discipline, or a technology of the market (promoted circulation) is irrelevant. People are free because they are made to think and act as if they were free. They are only free, as Hayek’s argues, due ‘to restraints of freedom.’ In other words, the only freedom people have is the freedom that is provided, organized and secured.

This hints at the wider relations between the state, economy and society. Governmentality builds on a Marxist inspired separation of political and non-political spheres, with society and the economy as clear examples. The early physiocrats have worked hard to make the economy into a non-political sphere by separating it from the sovereign, based on, firstly, the unknowability of the total economic process (ungovernable) and, secondly, the ‘naturalness’ of the economic relations between men (e.g. Smith’s invisible hand). Because the sovereign or government cannot know all the processes related to the economic circulation of men and things, it cannot act upon them. A liberal organized economy, according to Foucault, therefore always assumes that ‘one always governs too much’ and in reaction tries to organize government as cost-effective as possible. In more Foucauldian terms, the market, meaning the naturalness of economic processes that cumulate in and are visualized by prices, becomes ‘a standard of truth’ that is used to judge ‘governmental practices’. Still, while government can only act indirectly (as described above), this does not mean that economics is the ‘science of government’ nor that it is the ‘governmental rationality itself’.

For one, because society plays a role as well. What nowadays is known as society is explained by Foucault as ‘the juridical structure (économie juridique) of a governmentality pegged to the economic structure (économie économique).’ He sees (civil) society as a wider and mainly judicial, sphere of government, which, on the one hand, offers the economic relations a space to be played out and, on the other hand, limits the government by offering another moment of self-reflection by asking the fundamental question ‘why must one govern’ in the first place? Besides limiting the government, society also interacts with the economy. This too is a double-edged

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76 Hayek 1979, 163. As quoted by Dean 2010, 182–183. See also Dillon 1996, 10.
77 And nature, see Mitchell 2013 on the manner in which economics creates nature as something outside of politics.
79 Ibid., 319. As Best 2007, 90 argues: ‘Paradoxically, while the economy is often the exception to politics as usual, it is an exception that simultaneously enables and constrains the possibility of exercising sovereignty itself’.
80 Foucault 2008, 32. Dean 2010, 184 reflects on Hayek and notes that Hayek, contra Foucault’s naturalness, translates his non-natural state of freedom to the market, which he sees as neither ‘natural’ nor as an ‘organized system’. Instead, Hayek sees markets as ‘spontaneous social order[s]’.
81 Foucault 2008, 286.
82 Ibid., 296.
83 Ibid., 296, 319. Aradau and van Munster 2008, 34 argue that ‘Rather than a formal guideline, law is part of the material reality of society’.
relationship as markets are part of society and thus reinforce it, but at the same time also undermine the communitarian relations of society with their focus on self-interest. Foucault describes this interaction by referring to his earlier food scarcity example:

When the economic subject sees that he can make a profit by buying wheat in Canada, for example, and selling it in England, he will do so. He does it because it is to his advantage, and furthermore it will benefit everyone. However, the bonds of civil society mean that one prefers to stay in one’s community, even if one finds abundance and security elsewhere.

What this quote highlights is the fact that neither the economic nor the security rationalities are total. In other words, that there are options that “free” individuals are able to take which do not follow the forceful logics of either the market or security. In a sense, this is what Dean means when he argues that ‘while government gives shape to freedom, it is not constitutive of freedom.’ Instead, Dean sees freedom as originating in the acting and thinking of both those who are being governed and those who are governing. Freedom is thus enacted or performed by all those involved, and as such, is open to change.

Nevertheless, the resulting uncertainty inherent to life that follows this openness is a form of freedom that is constantly secured. This desire to secure against the unexpected is something that Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero have identified as the ‘fundamental paradox [behind] biopolitics’. To secure the living, life needs to be fixed. However, once secured it is no longer true life, as true life thrives on transformation and unfulfilled potential. ‘In order for a living thing […] to be secured it has to be allowed – indeed encouraged – to pass out of phase with itself and become something other than what it was in order to continue to live.’ Foucault’s freedom, therefore, is not a freedom in terms of ‘exemptions and privileges’, but it is a particular ‘freedom of circulation’ of goods, people and ideas, and it is this freedom of circulation that he sees secured in everyday practices. The consequence of such a practice is that it is not an actual threat that needs to be contained, but that the attention shifts to those parts of life that might become dangerous. The virtual. By shifting to the virtual, every fear and imagination can become a source for action. Everything can

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84 Foucault 2008, 301, 302.
85 Ibid., 303.
86 Dean 2010, 21.
87 Ibid., 24.
89 Ibid.
become dangerous and undesired, but Foucault argues that this all-embracing stance is limited by the ‘liberal’ cost-benefit analyses to which security is subject as well. Instead of prohibiting all soft-drugs, there is an increasing number of countries where it is regulated or tolerated, only to be acted upon when thresholds are crossed and the costs incurred by its usage warrant governmental intervention.92

To be clear, the goal of governmentality or biopolitics is not security nor is it freedom, especially not liberal (democratic) freedom. In fact, Foucault argues that a liberal governmentality, as it builds on biopower, is and needs to be inherently racist in the sense that it constantly creates distinctions.93 It needs to be, because how else to identify and act on those parts of the population that weaken it? How else to decide ‘between what must live and what must die.’94 Moving this argument to its extreme Dean argues that this is another aspect where sovereign power and biopower differ: contrary to sovereign power, biopolitics does not have a constraint on ‘the right to kill.’95 For the sovereign prince the ultimate exercise of power was to kill, but this would have left him one less person to govern. Biopolitics, however, seems to be driven by a Darwinian need to weed out the weak in order to strengthen the population as a whole. An additional non-democratic “violation” identified by Dean is found within the subjects themselves who, in the constant biopolitical struggle to behave ‘mature and responsible’ in effect repress any alternative desires to behave otherwise.96 If there is one conclusion to be drawn, than it is that security draws a boundary between forms of life that are valued and forms of life that are not.

These boundaries are akin to power, which in line with Foucault is a good thing. The reason being that a person can resist, however little, a form of power that is exercised over him or her. If a person cannot resist, if s/he cannot even think or whisper, then what is exercised according to Foucault is not power but brute force.97 Whereas brute force is applied on objects, power is meant to ‘guide’ individuals as subjects and can therefore be resisted. This resistance against the current ‘conduct’, whether by thinking, acting or speaking, is something Foucault has named ‘counter-conduct’.98 With this term, Foucault refers not to opposition, dissidence or revolt. Each of these terms originate from within a system of biopolitics and are used to exclude those involved, to differentiate us from them. Indeed, active opposition to a particular system of thought and practices often reinforces that system, as direct opposition is an indirect form of acknowledgement. A system can reject and ridicule such opposition,

92 Foucault 2007, 5–6.
93 Foucault 2003, 254–255. Compare with Luhmann in chapter 7.2 and Bryant in chapter 7.4.
94 Ibid., 254, 258.
95 Dean 2010, 164.
96 Ibid., 156.
97 Foucault 1988, 83–84; Selby 2007, 332.
for example in the case of Occupy Wall Street, but it can also incorporate the concerns. Liberalism is so prevalent because it incorporates socio-cultural concerns on natural resource use, climate change or privacy concerns within its own system of thought by translating them as “externalities” and attaching a price to them.\textsuperscript{99} In short, counter-conduct is not an act directly against a particular mentalité, but is to behave “well” from within another system of thought, one that counters some of the core assumptions of the former. In this sense, Evans & Reid as well as Lundborg & Vaughan-Williams question the resent interest in the concept of resilience (see chapters 5 and 10). They see resilience as a concept that, instead of offering a way out, is a solution that constantly reinforces the virtual uncertainty and vulnerability that is inherent in liberal systems.\textsuperscript{100} For Evans & Reid such resilient subjects are passive subjects: they no longer actively secure or change the world around them, they only adapt to ‘a series of dangerous events.’\textsuperscript{101} This in turn, as Foucault teaches, reinforces the initial assumption behind society, namely that individuals and their freedom are vulnerable and need to be governed.

\textbf{8.3.2 (Neo) liberalism}

A last aspect to mention in respect to the broader line of Foucault’s work is the clear and inseparable link between governmentality, biopolitics and (neo) liberalism.\textsuperscript{102} The organization and role of markets and economic relations is of principal importance in Foucault’s understanding of forms of governance. Burchell explains how, for Foucault, liberalism is not a ‘theoretical doctrine’, but a ‘rationalizing governmental practice.’\textsuperscript{103} It is a rationalizing governmental practice because it is ‘a political project that endeavors to create a social reality that it suggests already exists.’\textsuperscript{104} In turn, while it is a political project, it is not only a political project. Collier rightly remarks that it is first and foremost a system of thought that promotes its own mentalité and practices while it criticizes other modes of thinking. It is something that is pushed by certain thinkers in a certain time.\textsuperscript{105} In other words, ‘liberalism is a version of biopolitics,’

\textsuperscript{99} Dean 2010, 182.
\textsuperscript{100} Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2011, 375. Evans and Reid 2013, 84 actually argue that ‘[t]he underlying ontology of resilience, therefore, is actually vulnerability. To be able to become resilient, one must first accept that one is fundamentally vulnerable.’
\textsuperscript{101} Evans and Reid 2013, 87.
\textsuperscript{102} See also Collier 2009, 100 who argues that the overwhelming focus on the concept of Governmentality overshadows any critical readings of (neo)liberalism.
\textsuperscript{103} Burchell 1991, 143. See also Best 2007, 91.
\textsuperscript{104} Lemke 2002, 60.
\textsuperscript{105} Collier 2009, 100. Collier comments on the limited number of thinkers introduced and analysed by Foucault to make this point, and the lack of attention of current scholars towards the fact that this is actually a process (supported by Foucault).
as well as a limit on the biopolitics of governmentality due to its dominance and principles.\textsuperscript{106}

That liberalism limits sovereign power based on both the unknowability of the total system and the naturalness of the economic relations has already been discussed. However, liberalism also limits governmentality by building ‘on the rational behaviour of those who are governed’, which it does by presupposing free and rational individuals who uphold a liberal calculative rationality instead of envisioning individuals with juridical rights and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{107} In shaping these rational individuals and the responding rational theories, a liberal governmentality is thus reliant on free individuals who also have the ability to resist that same liberal governmentality.\textsuperscript{108} There is, consequently, a certain restraint on liberal governmentality and the state. Yet, at the same time, the restraint supports the view of rational individuals and thereby upholds the liberal governmentality. In this respect, Lemke sees the shifting boundaries between state, society and markets ‘as element and effect’ of a neoliberal inspired governmentality.\textsuperscript{109} As he argues, ‘the so-called retreat of the state is in fact a prolongation of government: neoliberalism is not the end but a transformation […].’\textsuperscript{110}

This free individual is not only considered free and rational, s/he is also considered to be driven by desire. By translating desire into personal interests and by assuming that these personal interests, when given ‘free play’ on the market, become the collective interest, it is desire that links the individual to the population in liberal economic thought. Foucault argues that in this transformation to collective interests one can witness ‘both the naturalness of population and the possible artificiality of the means one adopts to manage it.’\textsuperscript{111} This implies that desire is something that is and can be managed, which makes it a technology of power.\textsuperscript{112} In other words, liberalism governs through the calculation of the collective interests of the population, which it secures by identifying conflicting desires or personal interests that endanger the population.\textsuperscript{113} It then works on these individual desires by manipulating the \textit{milieu}, for which it needs to assume that these individual desires are “rational” (cost-effective) and thus governable based on the conduct of conduct. (If these personal interests are deemed irrational, it is hard to act upon them through the market itself and liberalism needs to fall back on the state and more traditional forms of power by

\textsuperscript{106} Dean 2010, 132.
\textsuperscript{107} Foucault 2008, 312; Dean 2010, 63.
\textsuperscript{108} Best 2007, 92.
\textsuperscript{109} Lemke 2002, 59.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 58; Foucault 2008, 112.
\textsuperscript{111} Foucault 2007, 72–73, 73.
\textsuperscript{112} Rose 1999, 85–89.
\textsuperscript{113} Foucault 2008, 65.
actively intervening in the freedom of the individuals.) As Foucault summarizes this liberal line of thought from the perspective of security and governmentality:

The problem of security is the protection of the collective interest against individual interests. Conversely, individual interests have to be protected against everything that could be seen as an encroachment of the collective interest. [...] The game of freedom and security is at the very heart of this new governmental reason [...] 114

The market and all of society are built around this game between freedom and security: between the protection from dangers to the game and the protection against dangers that stem from within the game itself.

The description of liberalism so far should not be interpreted as if there is a liberalism, as if it is a closed totalized system. It is not. Foucault’s main approach was to open up the naturalness of such central characteristics by showing how certain ideas have developed over time. In the case of liberal thought, Foucault differentiates for instance between classic liberals and two types of neo-liberals, including German ordoliberalists and American liberals. Disregarding all his nuances, early liberals can be said to have introduced the ‘naturalness’ of the market through the principle of exchange and introduced the separation of market and state. Ordoliberalists shifted the focus to the principle of competition and consequently looked at the twin organization of the state and the market, while striving for the optimum conditions for individuals to be able to live up to their potential. American liberals, in turn, exported the economic perspective of rational individuals to other social areas, introducing a broader economized society as a check on government action.115 Again, and following Dean, these forms of liberalism support the initial position of Foucault that one should not judge these different liberal rationalities, but instead be mindful of their different effects and implications.116 Dean, however, contradicts his own statement by concluding that both classic and neoliberalism are ‘naïve’, as they reduce the role of the state and thereby open the door to a return of sovereign power, but this time applied by the markets themselves: he gives the example of forced work projects for the unemployed.117

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114 Ibid. Of interest here is Dean 2010, 184 who puts Foucault’s perspective in place: ‘For Hayek, by contrast, the market is neither a natural sphere of the relations between exchanging individuals [neoliberal] nor an artificial contrivance of appropriate policies [e.g. Foucault] but a spontaneous social order governed by customary rules selected by a complex cultural learning process.’

115 Foucault 2008; Dean 2010, chaps 2 & 8.

116 Dean 2010, 73.

117 Ibid., 259.
Of course, this does not mean that scholars using Foucault’s ideas cannot be critical. Nally, for example, is highly critical when he discusses the influence of a liberal rationality on hunger from a systems perspective.118 His main conclusion is that the continuous struggle against hunger is not a ‘failure of the modern food regime’ as such, but instead a ‘logical expression of [the food system’s] central paradoxes, particularly its reliance on over-production in some places and under-production in others.’119 These paradoxes, Nally concludes, are a result of ‘[t]he neoliberal truth regime [which] presents global markets, agrarian biotechnologies and multinational corporate initiatives as the structural preconditions for alleviating world hunger.’120 Nally shows how hunger in Europe steadily decreased with an increase in colonization. Not because the problem of hunger was solved, but because the problem was displaced from the poor in Europe to the people in the colonies where ‘the destruction of pre-existing anti-scarcity programmes was rapid and severe as market mechanisms were frequently permitted to operate unchecked and with devastating consequences.’121 Produced food was shipped to those who could afford it: creating abundance where there was scarcity and scarcity where there was abundance. By using a Foucauldian inspired critical approach to disclose these paradoxes, it becomes possible to argue that current solutions (often technical fixes or claims for more free markets) are ‘empirically shaky and ideologically driven’ as they inherently disregard other alternative explanations, like Sen’s argument that the entitlements to food are more important than the actual amount of food.122

8.3.3 Neoliberalism, Milieu and Risk

Nally’s example also highlights that (neo)liberalism not only has an effect on humans and how humans are governed. As a biopolitical rationality geared towards ‘man in their relation with things’ it governs through the milieu, implying that it also effects the milieu. For this reason, Massumi interprets governmentality as an ‘ecological theory of power’, which transforms nature, real physical nature, increasingly into a cultured nature.123 Nature becomes the

“environment” of the capitalist system. [Wherein] previously untapped areas are being opened in the interest of capitalization and chances for commercial

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118 Nally 2011.
119 Ibid., 49.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Massumi 2009, 177.
exploitation. Nature and life itself are being drawn into the economic [and technocratic] discourse of efficient resource management.124

Nature thus becomes part of a capitalist system, which, like liberalism, is also not a “fixed” or “completed” way of doing things.125 Instead, Nitzan & Bichler describe it as a ‘forward-looking’ and ‘commodified’ mode of power.126 The financialization of nature, of the milieu itself, offers a search for and commodification of knowledge about the future. In other words, in the commodification of the milieu, ‘enterprising’ capitalist liberalism turns towards the practices of risk calculation to make sense of a ‘permanently uncertain environment, not to fight it, but, as Massumi claims, to ‘ride’ it.127

Risk calculation is discussed extensively in chapter 5.5, but in terms of neoliberalism and governmentality, there are some additional remarks to be made. First, in terms of its historic development, it is possible to say that modern risk has its origins in the collective insurance schemes installed with the organization of the early shipping expeditions to the Eastern and Western hemispheres. These schemes transformed individual risks into collective risk and ultimately evolved with and into the West-European welfare states, which took responsibility for social risks such as health and unemployment on a national level. More recently, with the ‘withdrawal of the state’, risk is once more turning into an individual responsibility; something the individual is expected to buy into (or not) depending on the individual’s personal risk analysis.128 Expected, firstly, because it is deemed cost-ineffective for governments to organize totalizing social insurance programs. And secondly, because, as Lemke argues, a neoliberal rationality ‘aspires to construct responsible subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts.’129 Making a risk analysis, making the right risk analysis, and behaving accordingly to minimize risks, becomes a moral quality for people to uphold and on which they are judged and judge themselves.130 Risk thus works through the technologies of the market towards the state (and governmentality) and as a moral quality on the level of the self.

Not only is the meaning of risk changing over time, its contents are shifting as well. From the possibility of insuring oneself against well-known but uncertain events

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124 Lemke 2002, 56. Lemke remarks: ‘In view of today’s “global” perils, the main issue now is less the restrictive notion of the “limits of growth” than it is a dynamic growth of limits.’
127 Massumi 2009, 177.
129 Ibid.
130 Lupton 2006, 14; Amoore and de Goede 2008a, 12.
neoliberal risk is increasingly focusing on the virtual. It is no longer enough to deal with events that most likely will happen, but these days everything needs to be analyzed and secured, from the infinitely small impact and high likelihood events to the infinitely large impact but low chance calamities. A neoliberal future is therefore described as ‘radically uncertain’ and it is in this uncertainty that security and economy meet. In this respect, Dillon concludes that “the aleatory”, arises for Foucault as one of those tactical elements or ‘natural’ processes to which liberal governmentality must attend, with which it must deal and in relation to which it has to regulate and evaluate its own performance and effectiveness in its ambition to exercise power over life.

He continues by concluding that this contingency, which a (neo)liberal governmentality takes as given, is actually a double contingency. It is the contingency of emergent life itself, as described above, but also the contingency of decision-making, on what is appropriate and/or the right course of action in relation to future developments.

Whatever the form of uncertainty, in dealing with the unknown, security and economics meet through risk and are played out in the milieu to govern the conduct of conduct. It is in the constant rearticulating of this balance, for example by the liberal argument of unknowability and hence uncontrollability of the economy, that economy and security meet. In the search for profit and the need for security, both seek to know the radical uncertain future the best they can. The practice of risk is what binds them and makes it possible that ‘[a]t the level of ontology, forms of economy offer forms of sovereignty a means to harness the productivity of possible futures and the capacity to reconcile openness, freedom, and mobility with the pursuit of security.’

8.4 Governing through the Materialization of Power/Knowledge

8.4.1 Governing through a Milieu

The insights from Foucault clearly resonate in the other theoretical chapters of this thesis. Although the brief discussion above does not do justice to his nuanced and extensive work, three aspects in particular deserve closer attention. These include the

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131 Ewald 1993, 222.
133 Dillon 2007b, 45.
134 Dillon 2007a, 22. See also Luhmann 1993.
135 Amoore 2013, 5.
governing of things through the milieu, the power/knowledge nexus and it relation to the materialization of calculation, and lastly the material security of circulation.

Before moving on to discuss the governing of things through the milieu, it is interesting to note that all three of these aspects involve the relation between discourse and the material. Foucault himself, purposely, has never been clear in distinguishing these two, just as he never clearly defined what he meant by discourse and the non-discursive. On the one hand, Foucault describes discourse as based on statements and the ‘rule of repeatable materiality that characterizes these statements’ and simultaneously ‘as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. On the other hand, he offers the concept of the non-discursive as a ‘field of practices, appropriation, interests, and desires’ covering domains that include ‘institutions, political events, economic practices and processes.’ Clearly, he sees them as different yet both focused on acts and practices, as well as on the materialization of thought through language. Switching from discourse to materiality itself, Foucault argues that materiality acts ‘as an instrument and vector of power’, in fact, he argues that ‘nothing is more material, physical, corporeal than the exercise of power’. It is this definition of the material (together with the reiterative nature of statements) and the realization that all matter that people see is always in some way materialized and subject to forms of power, which Butler uses to build her case for a performative approach. It closely connects with the argument in the chapter on scarcity that all resources must first be seen as commodities before they can be seen as resources. Together, these “definitions” from Foucault lead Hardy & Thomas to conclude that Foucault might differentiate epistemologically between the material, discourse and the non-discursive, but ontologically he ‘collapses the Cartesian dualism of mind/body’ and sees them as highly interconnected and made different per context.

Foucault later describes his position on materiality with the help of La Perriere’s 1567 definition of government as ‘the right disposition of things arranged so as to lead to a suitable end’. From the same text by La Perriere, Foucault takes his broad definition of “things” as described earlier in this chapter (material things, men in their relationship with discursive things, and man in their relationship with uncertain

136 Lemke argues that Foucault also never ‘chose’ to discuss the connections between humans and non-humans, see Lemke 2015, 5.
137 Foucault 2002, 114, 120–121, 54.
138 Ibid., 77, 179–180.
139 Foucault 1977, 30; Foucault 1980, 57–58.
141 See Hekman 2010, 120; De Gregori 1987b.
142 Hardy and Thomas 2015, 681, 682; Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2014, 19.
143 Foucault 2007, 96.
event like things). Lemke argues that the main lesson Foucault takes from this text, is the intricate relationship between humans and things, and how this relationship is made to be political:

the art of government determines what is defined as subject and object, as human and non-human. It establishes and enacts the boundaries between socially relevant and politically recognized existence and ‘pure matter’, something that does not possess legal-moral protection and is ‘reduced’ to ‘things’.\footnote{Lemke 2015, 9.}

Human-like things and thing-like humans (e.g. ANT’s hybrid human/things) are made to be subjects with discursive and non-discursive practices that are enacted through their milieus. Above it was already discussed that the “milieu” offers both the instrument to act on a distance and the element within which it is possible to do so. With this term, Foucault once more collapses any distinction between the material and the social as the concept itself already covers both social milieus and environmental milieus. In his original manuscript, Foucault actually describes the milieu as the relations between multiple humans and things ‘that act on them and on which they act in turn’.\footnote{Foucault 2007, 22.} From this quote, Lemke rightly remarks that this implies that what today is described as agency, is not something that thing’s \textit{also} have (contra Bennett), but something that follows from the actual relations and boundaries between humans and things (in line with ANT and Barad).\footnote{Lemke 2015, 10; Latour 2005b; Preda 1999, 358; Bennett 2010a.}

Together with Foucault’s insight that materiality acts as a vector of power, this latter insight of agency as an outcome of the relationality of humans and things enables the conduct of conduct or the government of humans and things through the governing of their actions, desires, and possibilities. A good example of this complexity between humans and things, and how they interrelate and shape each other, can again be found in the politics of food. Shannon, for instance, discusses the conduct of conduct over food on a local level of cities and municipalities where ‘the choice between a fried chicken and fruit salad is never simply a matter of nutrition.’\footnote{Shannon 2014, 257.} In describing how local governments are influencing the milieu of people for them to behave healthier, Shannon shows how the fight against obesity starts by defining obesity as something abnormal in respect to a ‘normal’ healthy way of life.\footnote{Ibid., 255.} This norm, broadly shared as it is and reiterated with each action that local municipalities take, triggers a governing of the self. Unfortunately, Shannon does not continue on
this self-governance but focusses on the knowledge and risk practices of the state/government alone. He highlights how the municipality programs often approach obesity by dividing their populations in clusters of high/low obesity and then map those clusters geographically. In this process, these programs identify geographic regions at risk, but also, simultaneously, transform particular geographic factors, like the number of fast-food restaurants and supermarkets, into the core problem. In so doing, these policymakers define obesity as a supply problem and focus on markets and consumers as they try to provide a broader range of healthier foodstuffs for lower prices. Consequently, they disregard the citizens behind the consumer and ‘close off a more systemic interrogation of both food production systems and processes of urban economic and racial segregation.’ In other words, the wider questions that discuss why the obese live in the poorer down-town regions with lots of fast-food restaurants and the healthy non-obese people mainly live in the suburbs with plenty of supermarkets and very little fast-food restaurants.

Shannon’s article beautifully shows three important points discussed so far. First, that governing takes place through a physical milieu. The construction of healthier restaurants and shops, the promotion of healthier food, and the organization of healthier and cheaper food for those particular neighborhoods, indicate that it is not the obese people who are dealt with, but that their environment is re-organized in such a way that their possibilities in- and decrease. Second, Shannon’s article shows how the problem definition itself is not neutral. Initially, the problem is shifted from the behavior of the obese to the food itself. Later, food is approached in terms of availability, ease of access, and cost: all related to the organization of supply in concrete buildings (shops, restaurants). At every step, other potential issues are excluded, ranging from a lack of cooking courses to the supermarkets themselves, not as saviors and suppliers of healthy food, but as monopolists within the global food production system pressuring production prices and thereby decreasing actual production. Third, it shows that when things can act human-like then humans can be approached thing-like. Initially, biopolitics implied just that: to study (human)populations with statistics, define the normal and abnormal and then govern the conduct of those behaving abnormally. The obese persons in Shannon’s article are aggregated as part of the overall city population and within that population are grouped together in degrees of obesity. During this process, ‘men … became calculable and measurable and could be conceived of as physical phenomena themselves’. Obese people in this

149 Ibid., 250.
150 Ibid., 261, 258.
151 Ibid., 250, 259.
152 See also: Lemke 2015.
153 Ibid., 10.
example are transformed into physical thing-like phenomena that are made visible as a governable problem as they are categorized and mapped.

### 8.4.2 Materialization through Calculation

The core problem shared by new materialists and those working on scarcity and energy security is that it is only possible to govern that which is known. The power/knowledge nexus is Foucault’s way of describing the close linkages between these two. It describes how knowledge, its systematic gathering, categorization and analysis, always already contains ways to structure and dominate. As Rouse argues ‘[a] more extensive and finer-grained knowledge enables a more continuous and pervasive control of what people do, which in turn offers further possibilities for more intrusive inquiry and disclosure.’ The power/knowledge nexus describes the practice of governing a group of people (a population) by gaining knowledge over that group and by defining, during the gathering of knowledge, what is normal and abnormal. This subjectification of people, witnessed in the obesity example, is a necessity for people and things to have an ontological existence at all in public life. Nothing material and no body or thing exists in public life that is not somehow structured by knowledge gathering practices. Two observations follow from this argument. First, while matter and reality are real, the ontology that people use to describe our reality is historically constructed and thus comes in multiple versions (multiplicity) and is open to change. Second, earlier in this chapter power was defined in terms of materialization, as the conflation of discourse, non-discursive practices and matter. This implies that all matter and bodies are imbued with power when they act relationally to other things and bodies.

Energy and food in this reading are powerful things that enable us to live a particular lifestyle that would not have been possible without them. Simultaneously, they are part of “power struggles” as they are part of the milieu through which other humans and things are governed. Power is thus based on knowledge and knowledge is based on power; the two are not identical but relational, yet so intricately related that ‘there is no point of dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power.’

The power/knowledge nexus was already briefly discussed in the example from Shannon above. An even better example of how calculative principles help identify and subjectify humans and things – and consequentially make something initially ungovernable and unproblematic into a problem that can be governed – can be found in Amoore’s book *The Politics of Possibility*. Amoore provides an interesting

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154 Foucault 1980.
156 Hekman 2010, 57.
157 Ibid., 58; Mol 2002.
158 Preda 1999, 358.
159 Foucault 1980, 52.
Chapter 8

Foucauldian inspired reflection on the role of accountants and their methods towards food scarcity in Great Britain during the Second World War. She starts by noting that the British government did not act on its domestic food supplies and commodities pricing during the first 18 months of the war. The reason, according to Amoore, was an ‘absence of a defined problem of scarcity.’ It was not that the problem of food shortages and price increases were unknown, but that the controls to counter them were unavailable. Hence, the problem was not seen as a governable problem that could be acted on. Amoore then describes how the British Board of Trade during this period started to identify the problem not in terms of scarcity, but in terms of a lack of statistical knowledge and data about normal consumption patterns of its population. Without such data, it was deemed impossible to anticipate future consumption, let alone decide upon exceptional measures (like rationing).

In the absence of accurate census data, the board authorized accountants from the firm Price Waterhouse to devise techniques for accounting for the population and to administer new restrictions on supply: “The need to control and monitor the workings of an economy at war necessitated the recruitment of accountants as administrators and advisers, many being granted considerable executive authority.”

Amoore returns to Foucault to analyze this moment. A moment when accountants helped open up the unknown world of food distribution through their methods of accounting and statistics. Thereby enabling the government to act upon it by steering the flows of commodities and acting upon ‘systems of exchange,’ as if they were known in full. In the process, Amoore argues that the accountants gained ‘executive authority’ as they decided on what trade and consumption practices were allowed, meaning that they had ‘[t]he capacity to decide upon the norm’. Amoore concludes that this had two consequences: it helped “organize” a wartime economy centered on the army, and it reified the techniques and methods used for future government practices. The latter is the main result for Amoore, as “[a] changed system of accounting does not simply change the measure but also the world and how we see it, how we apportion it, how we differentiate and divide it.” In other words, it changes our ontology, helps identify new problems (by subjectification) and enables

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161 Ibid., 34.
162 Ibid., 35.
164 Ibid., 38.
165 Ibid., 47.
166 Ibid., 39.
new ways of governing. With knowledge comes the ability to act, thereby making knowledge a goal in itself. To reach this goal a method is developed, statistical risk calculation, which promises to make the future known. This is such a strong promise in fact, that the absence of knowledge and the subsequent inability to act becomes a risk itself.167

These calculative practices develop constantly. Foucault and Amoore highlight the use of statistics, while Shannon discusses geographical and visual mapping (GIS).168 Elsewhere, Barry discusses the governing of geography and territory through common measurement systems, infrastructure standards and qualification standards (skills).169 All three of these practices are shared ways of gaining knowledge and not one of them is “fixed” as they are continuously adjusted and improved. Callon and MacKenzie discuss another calculative technique when they independently analyze the performativity of economic formulas.170 For these authors, economic formulas and models do not describe or represent the economic reality “out there”, but they see these formulas constituting that reality (in line with Searle’s social fact of money itself).

Someone who pushes the argument that economic calculative practices shape reality even more is Mitchell. More so than Foucault, who sees neoliberal economics and its calculative practices as separating politics from economics, Mitchell argues that the main function of neoliberal economics lies in the artificial boundary that it creates to separate the political from the natural. According to Mitchell, in the shift towards governmentality and its focus on political economies, nature became something ‘excluded from politics by practices of calculation’.171 While the sciences define what nature is, economics defines how it is approached in socio-political life by creating ‘the large no-man’s land between the two’.172 Mitchell refers to the politics surrounding oil and gas reserves (also in chapter 4.2). In particular, to the distinction between above ground politicized relations and the belowground geological factual reserves. Mitchell argues that any discussion of oil and gas reserves needs to incorporate the ‘space of uncertainty, of economic possibility’ that economics (e.g. the oil industry) carves out in calculating the distinction between proven, probable and possible reserves.173 In short, for Mitchell ‘[t]he appeal to nature shortcuts political

168 Related, Elden introduces the concept of geometrics and geopower as an alternative to biometrics and biopower, believing that biopower focuses too much on humans and not enough on territory and geography. My reading of Foucault’s biopolitics above is more material than Elden’s, so I do not follow along in his argument. Elden 2007; Elden 2013; Bridge 2014.
169 Barry 2006.
171 Mitchell 2013, 251.
172 Ibid., 241.
173 Ibid., 247.
debate and contestation.\textsuperscript{174} Then again, with a broader reading of Foucault and ANT in mind, so does any desire for factual knowledge and clear definitions on humans in their relationship with things.

\subsection*{8.4.3 Securing Circulation}

The combination of power/knowledge, the governing through the milieu and the desire to organize freedom of circulation for the benefit of the population, results in practices of security to identify and counter undesired futures. Foucault’s example of scarce food supplies in chapter 6 highlights this combination quite clearly. In the neoliberal acceptance of the ‘reality of grain’, Foucault argues, what is accepted is ‘the reality of fluctuations between abundance / scarcity, dearness / cheapness’, this is a reality that is governed ‘not by trying to prevent it in advance’, but by installing ‘an apparatus […]’, which is, I think, precisely an apparatus of security […]\textsuperscript{175}

Such a security apparatus or \textit{security dispositif}, is, like his concepts of discourse or non-discursive, never explicitly defined by Foucault. In one of the few broad descriptions of a security dispositive, Foucault discusses them as consisting of ‘discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions.’\textsuperscript{176} Elsewhere, Foucault summarizes his study of security dispositifs as studying (1) ‘spaces of security’, (2) ‘the treatment of the uncertain’ (what Nally describes in terms of ‘management of the uncertain or “aleatory”’), (3) ‘the form of normalization’, and (4) the ‘emergence’ and ‘reality’ of the population as ‘both the object and subject of these mechanisms of security.’\textsuperscript{177} Dillon describes these security dispositifs as a combination of different security technologies that assemble under a singular logic.\textsuperscript{178} Schouten takes a similar approach, but combines insights from Foucault with ANT to define a security dispositif or assemblage as ‘the totality of relations structured by security apparatus, or the shifting – discursive, material, institutional, practical – “milieu” upon which a security apparatus acts in order to render it secure.’\textsuperscript{179} In turn, he defines a security apparatus as ‘a set of “socio-technical” arrangements that mediate relations and interactions within a specific sphere of activities, black-boxing some concerns and threats while foregrounding others.’\textsuperscript{180} Returning to Foucault, perhaps this concept is another one of his that should not be defined too narrowly and instead just be described by what it does. What a security dispositif does, according to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 246.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Foucault 2007, 37.
\item \textsuperscript{176} Foucault 1980, 194; Aradau and van Munster 2007, 97.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Foucault 2007, 11; Nally 2011, 38.
\item \textsuperscript{178} Dillon 2008, 311; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 266.
\item \textsuperscript{179} Schouten 2014, 30.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
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Foucault, is that it indicates the set of relations of a multiplicity of humans and things; it highlights the nature of these relations and its effects; and it highlights the strategic function of such a set of relations.\textsuperscript{181} In this sense, it is the identification of a specific network of relations based on its goal or strategy. It is within these networks that one can analyze the performativity of such a network (or the agentic distribution of the nodes in the network of relations).\textsuperscript{182}

The chapter on scarcity briefly discussed two such strategies or security dispositifs by examining the shift from mercantilism to liberalism and the subsequent shift in security apparatus from a direct management of things towards an indirect management via the observation and protection of circulation. It is from the latter that Foucault identifies the security apparatuses that work in-between abundance / scarcity and which govern the mobility of individual things within these flows of circulation.

As briefly discussed in chapter 3.2.5, circulation is secured from at least five directions. First, the critical security literature takes Foucault primarily as discussing the security of circulation in terms of directly separating good and bad products within the circulatory flow at specific points or gateways where a decision is made on the thing’s further mobility, as in the literature on airport security and migration policies (direct governing of circulation). Second, Foucault himself provides the scarcity example and describes how the supply and consumption within the circulation of food should not be governed directly, but indirectly through the neoliberal markets and the milieu (indirect securing of circulation). However, third, this example excludes the protection of the circulation itself and its potential total absence. Within energy security debates, the fear is not whether the oil is good or bad, but whether the supplies themselves are secure (the protection of circulation itself against outside influences). Instead, with the example of scarce food, Foucault himself reinforces the neoliberal separation of politics, economics and nature, while neglecting that scarce food could also have been organized differently, through diversification or other political alternative ways of organizing the circulation of food. While these options most likely cost more and therefore will never result from the markets, they do not fall back into a direct mercantilist governing of supply and demand. This enables a fourth form of protecting circulation, namely that the security of circulation also entails the protection of the idea of free circulation itself against alternative modes of organizing circulation (like La Via Campesina, Occupy Wall Street and communes). Lastly, the security chapter also briefly discussed how security and risk processes themselves are circular, with failure as an incentive to do better and move on.

\textsuperscript{181} Foucault 1980.

\textsuperscript{182} Aradau, Coward, et al. 2015.
Securing circulation thus entails more than separating good from bad or leaving the markets to its bidding. Energy security itself highlights how it is not just the product itself that is secured, or the nodes that enable the circulation of these products, but also the idea of free markets, the consequences of the form of circulation, the lifestyles that it enables, and so on. In other words, security needs to be problematized on multiple dimensions. This includes refraining from making a priori assumptions about the ontology of (in)security, instead considering it as itself at stake in – and hence the outcome of – security governance efforts. In short, after accepting and observing 'the reality of the grain', a set of relations of discursive and non-discursive humans and things is enacted that empowers or materializes a form of governance that is called security. Security in this sense is something that (1) accepts the in-between of scarcity/abundance, (2) is part of the in-between of scarcity/abundance and (3) acts on the in-between of scarcity/abundance.

8.5 Reflection

The work of Foucault returned in all theoretical chapters, whether in relation to security, scarcity or materiality. This chapter focused solely on his later work in order to combine and deepen many of the insights in those previous chapters as a final theoretical unpacking of a critical performative approach with significance for the study of energy security. Chapter 8.2 showed that governmentality builds on techniques like the power/knowledge regimes as well as notions like biopolitics and security apparatuses to analyze a modern form of power that is aimed at the bio and everything behind that what 'makes life live', vis-à-vis the historic sovereign power 'to kill or let live' or the disciplinary power exercised over individuals. Power is key for Foucault, but he sees it as intangible, relational and affective (as electricity) instead of a property that can be owned (the light switch). Once administered this form of biopower becomes biopolitics. Biopolitics governs life as it regulates the circulations of people and things. It does so by influencing the desires of individuals through the milieu, which is only possible after knowledge has been gathered over populations. Without knowledge, there is no problematization and hence no ability to act. This turns biopolitics into a security apparatus that organizes and defends freedom. The freedom that allows circulation to take place, and which allows life and the relationships that constitute life to gather and splinter.

The particular manner in which biopolitics is applied, through technologies of the self and the market (conduct of conduct), together with the gathering of knowledge about populations, is part of what Foucault describes as governmentality. Chapter 8.3 describes another part by approaching governmentality as a practice that is

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183 Schouten 2014, 24. See also the discussion on observation in chapter 7.5.
constantly balancing government regulatory practices with society and economy. An economy, in turn, which includes its own (neo) liberal biopolitics based on the freedom of consumers and producers to act within markets. It is in the constant rearticulating of this balance, for example by the liberal argument of unknowability and hence uncontrollability of the economy, that economy and security meet. In the search for profit and the need for security, both seek to know the radical uncertain future as best as they can. This turns risk into a core technique to rule the lives of identified populations by distributing “security” and the accompanying material benefits.184

Chapter 8.4 discussed in more detail how Foucault approaches the material world in relation to the milieu, power/knowledge and security. The goal of this chapter was not to differentiate Foucault from new materialist and modern security studies or alternative understandings of performativity. On the contrary, by reading Foucault through a material lens that focusses on materialization (of power), which looks at the close connection between calculation, politics of ontology, the governing of circulation and security dispositifs, what becomes obvious is how closely related all these different theoretical fields are. Foucault’s idea of productive security is strongly performative in nature. However, above all, his notion of the power/knowledge nexus bring out both the political role of calculations and knowledge gathering practices as simultaneously measuring, defining and differentiating, as well as the materialization of these discourses through non-discursive acts and their enactment in the milieu of the humans and things that are recognized and subjected to these knowledge practices.

In terms of energy security, this chapter offers an alternative to the way in which energy security is studied in regular policy debates and academia. Simultaneously, it offers the theoretical grounding behind many of the conclusions and insights from the earlier theoretical chapters. Moreover, it adds to those theoretical chapters by seeing (energy) security as a security apparatus that is (1) productive, (2) based on knowledge gathering practices with their inherent differentiation, (3) a form of governing and materialization, and (4) facilitating in drawing boundaries on a social level between nature, economics, the political, and society. With these four, it is no longer possible to define energy security except as a set of relations with strategic intent that is constantly performed and disrupted. A set that is enacted by other sets of relations in and through a milieu. But also a set that acts on the milieu of other sets of relations. In short, each call for energy security is a performative act for a particular understanding of energy security and the work of Foucault helps to understand what happens with these calls in a broader context of governing.

184 Dillon and Reid 2001; Dillon 2008; Amoore 2013.
Where Part I of this thesis discussed current understandings of energy security and Part II problematized these understandings by unpacking some of the core theoretical concepts that are used in energy security analysis, this part will introduce two illustrations that highlight how such a performative understanding of energy security can be used. Before introducing the two illustrations below, a brief recap of Part II is useful to bring its many insights together. In short, Part II moved away from the topic of energy security towards a theoretical discussion of the practices behind it. In order to come to an understanding of the constant proliferation of energy and food security concepts and to rephrase energy security performatively it introduced four chapters dealing with respectively security, scarcity, materialization and biopower.

Chapter 5 on security argued that security is not one thing or one logic, but that there are multiple ways in which security is approached, defined and practiced. Following its empty nature, security is a man-made process of boundary drawings based on a call for urgency by people who try to govern the present based on an imagined future. Security hence was regarded as the process of identifying and acting upon undesired futures. One such an undesired future, when it comes to energy security, is scarcity: the doing without, disruption or structural lack of energy. Chapter 6 on scarcity, too, found not one but four definitions. These include shortages, scarification, absolute scarcity and relative scarcity. All of them describe different aspects of scarcity, both temporal and in abstraction levels. Besides separating these four types of scarcity this chapter identified a further three core modes of reasoning on natural resources in general: including neo-Malthusians, Ricardians and Distributionists. Through these four types of scarcity and these three modes of reasoning, this chapter further problematized energy security, and, especially, the current geopolitical realist and neoliberal free market ideas on how best to prevent a potential “scarcity” of energy.

Chapter 7 discussed the relationship between materiality and knowledge with a focus on processes of becoming. It contains two parts. The first part studied the epistemological argument of linguistic oriented critical scholars, who argue that it is impossible to know whether anything exists outside of our knowledge, because everything is always already mediated by our previously socially shared knowledge. It then moved on to discuss the artificially created distinction between mind-body as a necessary distinction for humans to make sense of the relationality of the material-social world of which people are part. Following the new materialist literature, the second part of this chapter shifted the focus to the role and importance of matter, only to conclude that matter and language can be both durable and eventful. To unpack the relationality of these events, they need to be known first, which returned the chapter to knowledge practices, including the ethics of observation and the politics of ontology. Chapter 8 introduced the later work of Foucault and his concepts of power/knowledge, biopolitics, the milieu, and governmentality, to highlight the productive
nature of security in governing humans and things in a social-material milieu. How security (e.g., biopower) and security apparatuses combine discourse, nondiscursive practices and materiality in a specific strategically channeled set of relations of humans, things, knowledge, morality, practices, etc.

On their own, each of these chapters further problematized current understandings of the assemblage of energy and security that makes up energy security, and each of these chapters offers alternative insights and mechanisms to study energy security differently. At the same time, all of these chapters are connected through several core critical insights. All chapters deal with being (what is) and becoming (how something is enacted or performed) and highlight a strong ethical dimension of this becoming. They focus on the creation of boundaries and distinctions. Different ways of seeing the world and different logics through which to analyze and define issues. They all deal with the relation between knowledge and the material, and the ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’ sets of relations that make up the durability and vibrancy of life.\(^1\)

All chapters deal with the relation between matter, economics, politics and ethics or morality by analyzing the political economies of (energy) security.

Part III builds on these insights and illustrates their value through a performative analysis of two illustrations. From the start, a performative reading of energy security has two benefits. First, it allows scholars to focus on other aspects of the debates as it is able to escape the real-life ‘energy’ language of these debates by building on its own concepts. This implies, for example, a move away from state centrism and an escape from the security concerns themselves towards a reflection on how they evolve and what their impacts are. Second, it enables scholars to reflect on, for example, the energy security theories and core assumptions of policy makers, not to improve them, but to show the consequences of their assumptions. For many, the questions and deeper understandings on how humans act socially are enough to justify a critical performative approach. For others, the lack of modelling and theorization means that these understandings might be interesting but less than useful in real life. Clearly, this thesis argues for the first, if only for the awareness to exclusions that these performative studies offer citizens, consumers, policy-makers, economists, scientists and so forth.

The two illustrations that follow are an attempt to offer such an awareness, in addition to the example of Securitization Theory in chapter 5.4. In fact, the two illustrations build on this latter example, not by applying Securitization theory, but by analyzing the politics of conflicting calls for energy security and how energy security evolves with each iterative use of the term. The first illustration in chapter 9 discusses the Dutch debate on natural gas extraction, which over the last couple

\(^1\) Barad 2007.
of years has heated up with concerns about extraction induced earthquakes. While these earthquakes are not nearly as strong as the recent shale gas earthquakes in the US, they originate at a shallow depth and in populated areas. Subsequently, they have spurred a debate about the causality between the extracted volumes of natural gas and the earthquakes. By making use of some of the insights from Critical Security Studies under the header of ‘everyday insecurities’ (a focus on routine and local insecurities), this chapter discusses how the debate is structured by local citizens who try to securitize their safety concerns and national policy makers who use risk analysis to weigh these concerns with national energy security concerns. In this process, the realist and liberal understanding of a state centric energy security is reified and strengthened, even in its opposition.

The second illustration in chapter 10 moves away from a state centric understanding of energy security and the dominance of fossil fuels altogether to electricity grids and their evolution into smart grids. Climate change, a potential peaking of fossil fuels and the desire to incorporate renewable electricity sources all require a new modern grid that utilizes ICT infrastructure to optimize the transportation of intermittent electricity production and consumption. With the help of Foucault and his power/knowledge nexus, this chapter studies how energy security concerns for a stable and reliable grid push the development of these new smart grids, but simultaneously change the idea of energy security in that process. From a totalizing idea of energy security, the construction of smart grids is shifting energy security towards a resilience logic where the general idea of access and delivery for all is sacrificed in favor of the stability of the overall electricity grid.

The two illustrations discuss two different aspects of the energy sector, with one discussing a traditional fossil fuel and the other dealing with renewable electricity production, transmission and consumption. They differ also in that one discusses a settled infrastructure of gas extraction while the other discusses the controversies around the construction of a new type of infrastructure. Simultaneously, they share a focus on knowledge politics and the relation with materiality. Where the Groningen gas example touches upon the risk versus security debate of locals and national officials, the smart grids example touches upon the governing of future smart grids. In both cases, the eventfulness of matter is problematized, interpreted and defined through a politics of ontology. In both cases, the issues are addressed by governing “man in its relationship with things” through the milieu. In the gas example, this shows in the reduction of gas extraction (in the hope of reducing the earthquakes) and the reinforcement of buildings. In the smart grid example, this is highlighted in the organized freedom of consumers who are actively directed through their economic and social milieu to behave in the best interest of the grid.
What the illustrations share most, however, is the underlying dominant discourse of energy security. Both examples offer a performative understanding of energy security, but it is an understanding that builds on the striking absence of energy security within these debates. The phenomenon of energy security is so dominant, and yet so openly defined, that it hardly leaves traces and acts as a black box that drives people to act on others in their relationship with things in order to fulfil their desire for energy. Only in the gas example is energy security, in its narrow security of supply definition, mentioned as an argument. It is also here that energy security is reified through its opposition, as the opposition focused on the costs/safety decision of a secure energy supply and not the supply of energy itself. In contrast, within the smart grid example energy security is the assumed naturalized driving force in the background. Hardly ever mentioned in texts and generally accepted, it drives the development of new technologies and security apparatuses that govern life. However, in this example it is possible to observe a shift from a traditional security logic towards a resilience logic and its alternative ethical consequences and changing understanding of energy security. This in turn hints at an understanding of energy security for which proliferation and change is not a problem but an actual strength as its shows adaptive capabilities.

To repeat, the following part of this thesis does not offer the approach to energy security. Instead, it makes use of the full range of insights that the four previous chapters offer – from securitization to performativity, from risk to disclosure, from ANT to power/knowledge – to analyze two brief illustrations of modern energy security that break with state centric understandings of geopolitical realists and neoliberal free markets, and instead make these understandings part of the reasoning that helps perform energy security as it is understood today.