complaints in Amsterdam in the past year. In addition, immigration, immigration issues continue to be present. Minister of Immigration, Integration and Asylum Gerd Leers has spoken publically of the problems presented when people who are rounded up in the clearing of squats refuse to provide identification, often because they are in the Netherlands illegally.[70]

Finally, at least some percentage of Dutch squatters has been incorporated into the legal system of the Netherlands, often by hiring themselves out as "property guardians." Landlords may hire "legal squatters" to legally occupy their properties so that they are not subject to either the threat of squatters or the fines they might incur for having their property stand empty. The idea has been around since the early 1990s, and was also practiced in East Germany. A number of businesses currently exist to "place" squatters as guardians in buildings—in both the Netherlands and the UK.[71]

6 Conclusion
Is Desecuritization of Housing Policy Possible or Desirable?

Throughout this manuscript, I have demonstrated the ways in which housing policy in general and policy towards property squatting in particular has become securitized. At the same time, I have shown that there is not unanimous support either by the political establishment or by the general public for the securitizing moves undertaken by politicians in the Netherlands, Great Britain, France and Denmark. Rather, in each nation the process of securitization has been contested, and a counternarrative has emerged that still attempts to place property squatting not in the context of security but rather in the context of an ethic of care for society's most vulnerable members, as well as a more general context of human rights for both citizens and migrants in each nation. In an essay published in 2008, Iver Neumann, a Norwegian analyst, argues that discourses are frequently contested and always dynamic. He notes that "if there is only one representation, the discourse is closed," while at the same time reminding us that "Not all representations are equally lasting. They differ in historical depth, in variation and in degree of dominance/marginalization in the discourse."[1]

However, at the same time, Roe warns that language and discourse has a tendency to become institutionalized over time, so that people may automatically attribute a certain context to certain language—for example, automatically hearing echoes of security language when encountering a term like terrorism. At that point, securitization becomes something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is no longer necessary for those in authority to provide the securitizing context, since there may either be no alternative discourse, or the hearers may be unable to conceptualize an alternative discourse at all.[2]

Thus, the task for the analyst is to determine what the life cycle of a particular discourse is and to predict the conditions under which a discourse might change—if, indeed, one believes that it can change at all. For this reason, in recent years, a number of analysts concerned with securitization have evinced an equal and compelling interest in the process of so-called desecuritization, asking whether and under what conditions an issue might move from the arena of a security—in which the issue is described as an existential threat requiring the commitment of major resources—back to the arena of politics as usual. Thus, desecuritization may involve a dialing

back of the rhetoric of security, danger and crisis and the reframing of an issue from the politics of security, to politics of crisis to politics as usual. In this way, an issue can be said to have been normalized, rather than securitized.[3]

CAN DESECURITIZATION HAPPEN?

But what are the implications of an issue being normalized rather than securitized? Giorgio Agamben, the Italian philosopher, describes the politics of security as characterized by a politics of exception. (Here he notes the idea of a state of exception comes from Schmitt's book *Dictatorship*, which draws upon the lessons of Weimar Germany.) According to Agamben, the most important characteristic of the state of exception is the absence of rule of law—and the conflation of all of government's powers (executive, legislative, judicial) together. In his work, Agamben talks about Guantanamo and the ways in which the individuals there were invisible and had no rights. They were not subject to rule of law because officially they did not exist—as they were neither citizens nor prisoners of war. Agamben suggests that the state of exception has a tendency over time to become permanent—with more and more issues being subject to the state of exception until finally the state of exception becomes the rule.[4]

However, other analysts disagree—noting that it is indeed possible to draw back the state of exception—to desecuritize or normalize an issue— and they suggest means by which this has happened in other sectors.[5] From a critical theory perspective, then, desecuritization can be seen as a type of emancipating process, by which a social problem can be reinterpreted and reconceptualized, so that new policy solutions to an old problem might emerge. By developing a new optic or a new lens for viewing a problem, it is entirely possible that the problem itself can now be shaped in a new way. Indeed Didier Bigo asked as early as 2002 why it was that migration issues were increasingly being understood within the context of "terrorism, crime, unemployment and religious zealotry," rather than in the context of "new opportunities for European societies, freedom of travel over the world, cosmopolitanism or a new understanding of citizenship."[6] In asking this question, he was implicitly acknowledging both that desecuritization of migration policies was possible, and that it was desirable.

However, analysts differ as to whether desecuritization can occur in all areas—with Roe in particular arguing that issues involving identity and ethnicity are particularly bad targets of desecuritization since ethnic identity is so often construed in zero-sum terms, where one side's gain is the other side's loss.[7] Aradau builds on this notion, suggesting that security frames create social formations. As she states the problem:

Since security utterances are constitutive of who belongs to the (political) community and who does not—when you speak of societal security—

you have necessarily created a zero-sum game, where helping one group means taking from another. There are no non-divisible goods, nor any way of distributing them between the opposing camps.[8]

This dynamic is very much in evidence as we think about antisquatting legislation. The implication of the securitizing frame is that the best—and perhaps the only—way to assure the safety of neighbors and those in the neighborhood and urban community is through outlawing and cracking down on squatting. There is no middle-range solution.

HOW DOES DESECURITIZATION HAPPEN?

Among those who agree that desecuritization is possible, however, there are still points of contention. Analysts differ about the conditions that make desecuritization most likely and whether desecuritization is a strategy that may be actively pursued by actors employing agency, or whether it is merely part of a gradual evolution in which over time the importance of an issue in society can change. That is, some analysts argue that desecuritization is a top-down process that can be pursued and managed (i.e., desecuritization is a normative goal rather than an observable process), while others argue that it merely happens as a result of environmental factors or some other impetus, and that it can thus occur in a bottom-up fashion as well.

Huysmans, for example, suggests that desecuritization can be pursued and managed through a process of political socialization in which a government might consciously seek to shape citizen attitudes towards their neighbors.[9] Tjalve argues that the task of international relations theories should be explicitly normative in spelling out and encouraging the development of strategies that would allow policymakers and the public to move away from the state of exception and towards the creation of "normal politics." Here, normal politics are characterized by open dialogue and a climate that allows for the articulation of diverse viewpoints, in which citizens do not have to worry about seen as "unpatriotic" if they disagree with government policies or the majority view.[10]

Salter, on the other hand, suggests that the moral and social authority of an actor involved in securitizing an issue may decay or fail over time, if, for example, that actor is found to be incompetent. In that way, he implicitly references Carl Schmitt's famous saying that "sovereign is he who decides on the exception,"[11] noting that the who no longer decides or describes the exception is one who is powerless.[12] Here, desecuritization is not seen as managed or pursued, but rather as a set of affairs that may occur over time. For example, when a war ends, some players and issues may be removed from the realm of security.

If one buys the assumption that desecuritization is possible and desirable, then one needs to ask finally, how does desecuritization happen?

Table 6.1   Paths to Desecuritization

	Managed desecuritization	Evolutionary desecuritization
Top down	Change in language of security; change in security procedures	Change in international system
Bottom up	Empowerment of objects of securitization: visibility; articulation	Changed views of object of securitization

As Table 6.1 indicates, desecuritization may occur in four different ways. The matrix indicates that there are two possible paths towards managed desecuritization—top-down and bottom-up—as well as two paths to evolutionary desecuritization—top-down and bottom-up. We shall consider each of these in turn.

"TALKING OURSELVES DOWN" OR MOVING AWAY FROM SECURITIZATION

A top-down, managed strategy for desecuritizing an issue has been articulated by Aradau. She argues that it is possible for those in power to frame new rules for how citizens and policymakers should behave in discussing and describing an issue—such that issues either do not become securitized or may be desecuritized. In her work, she blames the notion of risk, suggesting that "risk policies" often affect the democratic process. She notes that "Risk policies are often speechless policies, communicated through the symbolic, the visual, the insinuated and the vague."[13] That is, as long as actors persist in describing other groups as presenting a risk without deploying evidence and spelling out their accusations in full, it is impossible for a rational conversation to occur in society. Instead, it is likely that the conversations engaged in by policymakers will include elements of secrecy and quick decision making with an absence of public debate.

Drawing upon her insights, the question then becomes: Is it possible to have a civil, nonhysterical, calm, rational dialogue about squatting in society? In pursuing this strategy we would wish to ask how the media and politicians might behave responsibly and rationally in discussing this issue. Is it possible for all sides to agree upon some ground rules that might keep this issue (or indeed any issue) from becoming merely a war of words or a war of images?

It is my contention that the establishment of such a space for rationally discussing the issue of property squatting is possible. However, doing so would require establishing norms regarding the content of debates that take place both in Parliament and in the media. (For example, all parties might be required to furnish empirical data, to back it up and as much as possible to refrain from sensationalizing the issue.) Legislators would be required to

carry out deliberations without such haste that those citizens and the objects of securitization themselves feel that they are being "railroaded" into finding a solution to the problem. And finally, the media should be encouraged to pursue ethical coverage of the squatting issue.

Politicians might agree to check their facts more carefully in speaking about issues, not to cite statistics that have not been verified and not to draw upon examples and stereotypes presented in the mass media. Fines might be imposed upon media outlets that act irresponsibly—in stirring up dissent regarding the rape of a journalism student at Calais or against transnational property squatters. Governments might also agree to fund more research for problems for which there is little hard data and little agreement about that data. (For example, we still do not have any definitive statistics regarding the number and types of squatters in Britain, nor a complete picture of the numbers of individuals in the camp in Calais, France.)

THE OBJECTS OF SECURITIZATION SPEAK OUT

Next we can consider the possibility that the objects of securitization themselves may experience empowerment and agency, taking on the job of "talking back to securitization" themselves. As chapter 1 of this volume has attempted to show, squatters—as objects of securitization—are both ultravisible and "in your face" and simultaneously invisible in that their stories are seldom told. Instead, they are othered, presented as a monolith and described in ways that tend to ignore their essential humanity. Instead, they are regarded as termites, as parasites and as invaders.

Thus, desecuritization may come about once those who have been othered and marginalized organize so that they might be seen and heard by those who seek to define them largely as a security problem to be solved. The objects of securitization speak back to securitization by disputing generalizations made about them, as well as by presenting additional evidence that might call into question the facts of a particular case. In the case of squatters, a number of the case studies presented here do show that squatters themselves have engaged in the process of talking back to securitization—particularly in Great Britain. In the UK in particular, individual squatters as well as members of groups like Shelter have publicly disputed the facts being put forth by those in authority in order to construct squatting as a security issue. They have disputed such pieces of "common wisdom" as the official number of squatters, the monetary damage alleged to have been caused by squatting and the motives of squatters. In addition, they have actively sought to reframe squatting as a housing issue rather than a security issue through calling the attention of legislators and citizens to the underlying issues that led to the problem. Thus we can point to the actions of "Nick," a London squatter, as an example of talking back to securitization. On the blog "Diddly Squat London," we can see a transcript of an interview conducted by Nick with a member of the UK's Ministry of

Justice, in which he disputes the numbers of squatters put forth by UK representatives in their official publications, as well as the fact that they themselves don't seem to know where the numbers are coming from.[14]

Even the tendency of squatters in Holland to dress up like clowns and mimes while demonstrating can be seen as a way of talking back to the prevailing rhetoric, which seeks to portray squatters as arsonists, drug dealers and dangerous anarchists—rather than harmless students who enjoy wearing costumes.

We are perhaps seeing an empowerment of Roma people in the same way—with the formation of such Roma organizations as the European Roma Rights Centre and the beginning of Roma representation as stateless peoples within the European Parliament. Certainly in the United States we have seen the Arab American community as well as gay activists disputing stereotypes put forth about them and about the danger that they are described as posing to a community. For example, activists have spoken out against media articles that suggest that gays should not work with children because they are thought to "pose a risk as sexual predators. Citizen activism and study have led to this "common wisdom" being widely discredited. In this way, the objects of securitization have sought a space at the table and membership in the epistemic community that has made knowledge about a particular social problem.

Speaking back to securitization may also involve acts by the objects of securitization, as well as their supporters, in which they deploy language in such a way as to construct the situation differently. Thus, squatting activists have frequently noted that "For us, this is not a matter of danger, but rather a matter of justice and human rights." In addition, activists have criticized the media for engaging in generalizations that seek to portray squatters merely as dangerous foreigners without noting that they might improve a neighborhood or contribute to a community. Thus, speaking back to securitization might also involve efforts to call the media to account, through asking them to provide balanced coverage and adhere to a code of journalistic ethics.

However, while certainly the group that is being securitized might be said to have sufficient, even superior, knowledge of the condition being studied, it may not have the necessary resources to disseminate and compile this knowledge enough to change the tenor of societal debate. Instead, activism by the objects of securitization might be constrained by the structural factors such as the finances of the nongovernmental organizations in comparison to government agencies. In addition, in the case of squatters, it is important to recognize the fact that anarchist groups in particular may be reluctant to form the formal structures necessary to fundraise and otherwise advocate for their cause. Furthermore, even in situations where the objects of securitization have attempted to speak out and sway the terms of the debate, the media may still prefer the established side and may not be diligent in providing both sides with equal time. Here we can consider the many British squatters who did devote time and effort to responding to the British government consultation paper. However, their input was downplayed in the final document that was released, as well as in the media.

The final two possibilities for achieving desecuritization of the squatting issue rest not on actions taken by any players but rather on events that may or may not occur domestically or internationally. The first possibility here is that over time changes in the domestic politics of each nation may lead to the evolution of a consensus whereby the average citizen no longer fears his neighbors or buys into a worldview that would depict the squatter or rootless individual as an existential threat to an individual or collective way of life. In this way, a group that had enjoyed liminal status might move towards the mainstream and as a result be viewed as less threatening.

THE EVOLUTION OF TOLERANCE

In this scenario, desecuritization could occur due to broad-ranging changes in society that lead to the development of a different majority view of the object of securitization. That is, collectively, our society's vision of the object of security changes and an actor or set of actors that were previously regarded as suspect, deviant and dangerous are no longer so. For that reason, attempts to mobilize majority opinion about the need for securitization against this particular object of securitization no longer resonate within society. Over time, it appears, we may begin to think about our neighbors differently and no longer regard them as enemies. (For example, increased rates of racial intermarriage in the United States have changed the way that Americans think about race relations, and attempts to securitize racial issues are now much more prone to failure due to changes in social views and norms.)

Examples of desecuritization that occurs due to a change in the majority's view of the object of securitization include the ways in which Americans have changed their views regarding traditional "threats" such as homosexuals or people of minority races. We might also point to the ways in which German society no longer believed or acted as though Jews were a threat to the state after the defeat of Hitler. In recent years, we have seen how homosexuality has become more accepted in the American mainstream due to legislative initiatives in the areas of gay marriage, homosexual adoption and gays serving in the military. Gradually, in the United States, views have changed, so that homosexuals are no longer regarded by a majority of citizens as mentally ill deviants, or as people who are too compromised and untrustworthy to serve in the military or as bad neighbors to be avoided. Because views towards the securitizing rhetoric of the late 1980s that shut down gay establishments due to fears of the spread of AIDS would be as effective or as accepted today. Similarly, it is possible that efforts to include Roma children in schools and Roma families in societies may have contributed to the failure of securitizing acts in France aimed at shutting down Roma squats.

Today, in the United States we may also point to a failure of securitization when citizens raised objections to the profiling of Arab Americans at

security checkpoints in the United States.[15] We can also point to the public information campaign and statements by prominent individuals who spoke out against the 2012 Arizona "show me your papers provision" to the immigration law that allows police to stop people whom they suspect of being illegal aliens. In this case, prominent American citizens posed for pictures, noting that "I look like an illegal alien," thus indicating that they did not accept the government's attempt to "other" illegal residents through constructing a huge gulf between them and their neighbors.[16] Instead, legal citizens showed solidarity with the objects of securitization, noting that they all had much in common, such as Hispanic surnames or immigrant ancestors.

In the language of the physical sciences, liminality can be seen as being in motion, as an individual, a place or a group exists in a transitory state before becoming something permanent. Thus, in asking about squatting we can ask how the liminal status of the squatter might be altered. Earlier in this work, I suggested that there are two types of strategies that might be used towards squatters and those in transitional housing. Inclusionist strategies describe how the squatter might either demand or be granted rights to more satisfactory housing, and with it could accrue a place within mainstream society.[17] In this way, his liminal status would be resolved as he became a member of the mainstream. On the other hand, an exclusionist strategy would draw a starker line between the squatter and others in his neighborhood, noting that he was wholly unlike them and perhaps not entirely human. In this way, his liminal status would be resolved by banishing him from regular society either through deporting him (if he is foreign) or by criminalizing him.

Clearly, only the first possibility—that squatters and those who squat might somehow be incorporated into wider society—would lead to a desecuritization of the squatting problem. In his work, Aguilera has suggested that squatters often squat in an attempt to "hack" legal housing policy. That is, their overall aim is to acquire access to legitimate public housing in a timely fashion.[18] In this case, once squatters succeed in reaching this goal the issue may be seen as resolved and removed from the legislative agenda. The squatters have become nascent citizens and legitimate participants in the polity.

However, the European situation at present is different because of the ways in which those who are squatters are often left out of legitimate means for achieving legitimate housing. For groups such as foreigners in France or students in England, where there is no legitimate housing available, it is difficult to think about how they might be reconceptualized as citizens within the polity.

However, the Dutch case offers a possible solution—those who have become "house sitters" are no longer regarded as the problem, but rather as part of the solution, working with government to pressure and force homeowners to keep housing in circulation, and providing protection from vandalism. And discussions in England about the "big society," implemented by Prime Minister David Cameron in the summer of 2011, describe the ways

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in which citizens might be induced to cooperate on a local level to solve problems rather than merely relying on the government. These discussions have been of interest to squatters. In a recent op-ed, the analyst Matthew Bell quotes a young British squatter who notes the following:

Squatting is the perfect example of the Big Society. It's about people taking matters into their own hands, looking after their own, and getting together in groups and putting on events that are of benefit to the whole community. They're not relying on the state to survive. In fact they're saving the Government money by not signing on and claiming housing benefit.[19]

However, this possibility that squatters might be redefined as part of the solution rather than the problem and thus lose their liminal status encounters two obstacles in reality. First, as Blitz argues, Britain's squatters may not have as much common ground with the government as they are claiming since anarchist squatters, for example, do not recognize the right to private property. She suggests that this difference in thinking is simply too great an ideological gulf to ever be traversed, and, for that reason, squatters will always be marginal, liminal and outside society.[20]

In addition, the proposed desecuritization of squatting broached here rests on the assumption that what has been and is being securitized is actually property squatting and not "being poor" or "being a foreigner." Just as some suggest that the war on terror was actually a war on Islam and Islamic people,[21] one might argue that squatting was never really the problem in the first place. That is, one might argue that France's war on squatting was in actuality not a war on a particular lifestyle or set of housing practices but rather a war against the fact of being a Roma minority illegally in France. In this case, regardless of strides made in housing policies or steps towards the incorporation of squatters into more regular housing, the securitization rhetoric is likely to persist as it is merely one way (among many) of securitizing the situation of minorities in France and elsewhere.

The final possible way in which desecuritization might occur rests on the assumption that changes might occur in the international system so that the threat is no longer seen as quite so dangerous. In this way, again, securitization strategies and securitization rhetoric are likely to fail and to thus no longer present such an effective weapon in the arsenal of strategies available to a political leader.

THE WORLD BECOMES LESS DANGEROUS

In this scenario, the context changes, and with it so does the way in which everyone 'thinks about risk, including the risk presented by the object of securitization. That is, policymakers and the audience no longer think of the

situation as so risky, and therefore they are more willing to accept some risk generated within their societies by not mobilizing on a large scale against the risk. For this reason, policymakers and the population may agree that a crisis stance towards the situation—including the allocation of massive resources—is no longer necessary. Therefore, the state of exception ends and the society goes back to "normal politics" in all arenas, including towards the object of securitization.

An example of desecuritization taking place due to changes in the global arena might thus be the end of the Cold War, and with it a dialing down of rhetoric about the Soviet threat in the United States, and eventually a full-scale US military demobilization in many parts of Germany. Credible empirical evidence suggested that the threat simply was no longer a threat. In this situation desecuritization was not pursued but was rather a result of changes in the international system.

However, it is difficult to see how changes in the international system might occur such that squatting (including international property squatting) is no longer seen as threatening. It is doubtful that the nations of Europe will ever return to a world of tightly controlled borders, nor is it likely that globalization will end. It is also doubtful that the terrorist threat will recede to the point that citizens stop worrying about who resides within their borders. Thus, the threat of unauthorized, unregistered and unsurveilled citizens within one's borders will continue to persist and with it the securitization of property squatting.

ARE THERE REAL POSSIBILITIES FOR DESECURITIZATION?

Although the aim of this chapter was merely to articulate some possible ways in which squatting might become desecuritized in Western Europe, it is also necessary to ask whether such possibilities are actually feasible rather than simply possible. In several cases, I have raised objections to the feasibility of specific strategies—noting that some groups do not have the power or organizational capacity to speak back to securitization, noting the limits to tolerance and suggesting the unlikelihood of sweeping changes in the international system.

However, one might raise a final objection to all of the strategies for desecuritization discussed here, and this is that they are largely domestic strategies designed to be practiced within a specific state. However, the problem of property squatting has thus far been conceptualized largely as a regional problem affecting all of Europe. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether any of the desecuritization strategies examined and proposed here could ever really be effective on a Europe-wide scale. Instead, it is possible that as European culture becomes more homogenized, individual nations may have less leeway in deciding individually what does and does not threaten their societies. (That is, societal security may come to be conceptualized as occurring, on

a Europe-wide scale, with all of the nations of Europe eventually coming together to protect the societal security of Europe. Thus, for example, we saw both Holland and Denmark abandoning their social commitments to tolerance and alternative lifestyles in order to bring their own squatting policies more in line with those of other European nations, including those of their bordering neighbors.

For this reason, over time we may see not just the moving of more issues into the realm of securitization (as Agamben suggests) but also the increasing development of similar worldviews and similar norms regarding what does and does not threaten domestic security in Europe. In this way, nations can be said to be exercising "peer pressure" on their neighbors in influencing them to tighten their security policies and to implement harsher policies towards those who are seen to threaten societal security not just in one nation but in all the nations of Europe. Here one can see the utility of Axelrod's work on the evolution of cooperation, in which he suggests that in situations of group cohesion, actors can band together to punish those players who do not enforce penalties against norm violators.[22] That is, group cohesion is predicated upon common defense, and one's loyalty to the group is demonstrated in part through one's willingness to participate in collective sanctioning of norm violators.[23] In this case we can point to the evolution of a norm against property squatting throughout Europe, which all nations have been pressured to participate in enforcing. Thus, it appears that as states begin to frame security threats in similar terms, national characteristics (including tolerance of alternate lifestyles and dissent) may begin to recede—as states adopt a universal definition of what threatens the state.