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FOLLOWING PAPER:**

**On the Milieu of Security: situating the emergence of new spaces of
public action**

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The securitization of everything

As issues of risk and vulnerability have become staple concerns across various fields of policy intervention, then so too has the critical evaluation of security expanded to encompass a whole range of empirical objects, including terrorism, migration, food systems, logistics and supply chains, financial networks, environmental issues, and precarity in labour markets. Whole fields of policy practice have been identified as having undergone ‘securitization’, and in turn, opened up to a particular style of critical analysis. ‘Securitization’ is a concept formalized by the so-called Copenhagen School of International Relations (see Buzan et al, 1997). In this tradition, it refers to the process whereby issues are made into matters of security, and thereby opened up to certain sorts of state-led regulation and management as threats, risks, or emergencies. As a frame of critical analysis, however, a focus on upon processes of securitization is a much more broadly shared theme across disciplines. It has been given further impetus by Ulrich Beck’s (2008) work on ‘risk society’, and above all perhaps by successive waves of ideas derived from Michel Foucault, from discourse and power through to governmentality and biopolitics. Security has been identified as the exemplary object for biopolitical analysis (Dillon 2010). The focus on themes of security has been stimulated further both both by events such as 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis, as well as by the rolling translation of Foucault’s own lectures on issues of war, territory and security through the 2000s (Dillon and Neal 2011). And in turn this analytical frame has been supplemented by powerful theoretical inflections of Foucault’s ideas provided by Giorgio Agamben’s account of bare life, sovereign decision, and the state of exception; and by a more general Deleuzian drift towards conceptualising the analytics of power in post-humanist terms of affect and assemblage.

A recurring motif across fields of research on security is the claim that we are living through an epoch-defining moment in which the shape of the future itself is being transformed. Critical analysis of security and securitization turns on claims about contemporary shifts from precaution to preparedness, from risk to resilience, from risk to uncertainty, from providential state forms to catastrophic state forms. We are, apparently, living through a transition in which logics of state action are shifting from programmes of avoidance and insurance to programmes of mitigation, preparedness, and recovery. The idea that security is at the centre of fundamental historical shifts in modes of governing, and perhaps of everyday life and experience, has been clearly articulated by Ash Amin (2012). Amin identifies a fundamental shift in state practices across a whole set of fields, including urban governance, economic policy, environmental management, social policy. The shift involves the displacement of an approach that sought to avoid or insure against future hazard and risk, by a regime of catastrophe management that judges the perils to be both potentially devastating and unavoidable (Amin, 2012, 101). Amin's argument draws on Adi Ophir's (2007) account of two ideal-typical formations of modern state power: a providential state, and catastrophic state. Amin translates this distinction into a historical narrative of a move from programmes of avoidance and insurance to programmes of mitigation, preparedness, and recovery. This is meant to be a shift not just in state forms, but a shift too in the way in which time itself is apprehended as a cause and object of governmental intervention:

The focus now is on addressing the unknown in a warlike fashion, through detailed monitoring and intervention, aided by elaborate technologies of surveillance and control, clear cartographies of the inside and outside, active

engineering of public moods and sentiments, a public culture of emergency, and easy suspension of the rules and standards of democracy in the name of securing communal well-being (Amin 2012: 123-4).

On this interpretation, a catastrophic model in which principles of preparedness and resilience predominate is replacing a providential model of public life in which principles of avoidance and insurance once predominated. It is open to question whether a rhetoric of epochal shifts is really the most appropriate way to proceed with the analysis of contemporary biopolitics (see Lentzos and Rose 2009). But what is of interest to me here is that Amin's account of the emergent rationalities of apocalyptic governance is framed by the familiar rhetoric of the attenuation of public life and the diminution of democracy. His summary of the new order of security, quoted above, invokes ideas of publicness in two related ways. First, public moods and public culture are presented as potential surfaces of manipulation for this new mode of governing. Second, normative values of publicness appear in the above presentation only in the moment of their suspension. In both of these respects, Amin's invocation of publicness is typical of a broader field of analysis. It stands within a standard paradigm for the critique of security that finds it difficult to recognise public action as anything other than an ideal that is either always already suspended or in imminent danger of being eclipsed.

Amin's analysis is valuable precisely because of the emphasis it places on the indeterminate politics of this emergent field of security. On the one hand, he warns that the catastrophic mode can be used to justify draconian actions and infringements of democracy and liberty. On this dark interpretation, the rise of apocalyptic scenario planning and a public culture of emergency are seen as a process of 'ontological war',

in which 'Power' is always effectively enacted to subject people to its own will. On the other hand, Amin suggests that this same modality of power is spreading responsibility for action (anticipatory or reconstructive) to citizens and civic agencies. And in this respect, it has a democratizing potential, in so far as it implies a redistribution of political responsibility amongst an engaged, virtuous citizenry.

Amin does not develop fully just what is at stake, conceptually and politically, in the difference between these two interpretations. In order to fully acknowledge the democratizing potentials that Amin identifies, one would need to suspend the systematically cynical view of securitization that underwrites the first, dark interpretation. From this perspective, any democratizing potential is likely to be interpreted as a ruse of power, appropriately understood to act 'positively' to construct willing subjects of rule rather than only 'negatively' to constrain them. To suspend this style of interpretation requires further consideration of the ways in which figures of publicness operate across this field of critical analysis. Accordingly, the discussion in the next section, **Public Spaces of Securitization**, focuses on two closely related ways of representing publicness in the critique of security. In the first, publicness is gestured at by reference to under-theorised ideals of transparency, visibility, openness, inclusion and participation; in the second, public spaces of communication and interaction are presented as mediums for controlling, disciplining, and subjecting populations. These two figures of public space, when combined in critical analysis, present the spatiality of security as a surface in which powerful actors effectively manipulate the dispositions and feelings of whole populations. Such an understanding follows the conventions of a paradigm of critical analysis that is neither adequate to fully account for the public values animating practices of security,

nor able to acknowledge the degree to which resources for engaging creatively with the government of risk and vulnerability lay in existing patterns of social relationships.

I make use of the notion of ‘milieu’ to elaborate on the limits of the existing critical paradigm, and outline the lineaments of an alternative perspective on the politics of security. It is a notion invoked by Foucault in his discussion of the distinctive spatial of practices of security as compared to those of sovereign forms of power (see O’Grady 2013). Foucault defines ‘milieu’ as the name of a problem, that of how to understand the relationships between circulation and causality under regimes of security:

The specific space of security refers then to a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted within a given space. The space in which a series of uncertain elements unfold is, I think, roughly what one can call the milieu. [...] What is the milieu? It is what is needed to account for action at a distance of one body on another. It is therefore the medium of an action and the element in which it circulates. It is therefore the problem of circulation and causality that is at stake in this notion of milieu. (Foucault 2007: 20-21).

Thinking of the ‘milieu’ of security as a problem requiring further specification allows us to open to scrutiny a tension across what might at first appear to be a singular paradigm of critical analysis. On the one hand, in so far as security is understood as a modality of power that circulates across an open and extended milieu, as Foucault suggests, then its operation is not best modelled on the closed, contained spaces of disciplinary power. On the other hand, the tendency to provide critical

accounts of the enveloping, subject-forming effects of security easily reduces action in and across any such milieu to the contagious communication of the instrumental will-to-form-compliant-subjects. This tension is elaborated further in the section **Acting in Catastrophic Times**. In collapsing the first emphasis into second, the political imperative to identify deleterious subject-effects proves unable to grasp the constitutive role of public action in security practices. This

In order to move beyond this impasse, the section **Problematizing Security** draws into focus the contrasts between two styles of analysis of security practices. In the first, securitization is viewed with deep suspicion as an extension of domination that impinges on the freedom of those subjected to its orderings. Here, security is subjected to a form of critique that privileges the tasks of exposure and revelation. There is a second strand of work on processes of security that accords more weight to the contingent modes of power it finds to be characteristic of security. The difference between these two styles lies in different social theoretical premises about action. In particular, I want to tease out a division over how best to understand the practice of acting in relation to norms. This is a conceptual issue that cuts to heart of what value is ascribed to ‘publicness’ not just as a normative category of evaluation, but also as a focus of diagnostic accounts of how practices and processes unfold. The final section, **Emergent Publics of Security and Insecurity**, elaborates on the idea that far from standing in contradiction to democratic values of publicity, security might be analysed as a privileged field for the generation of new modes of public value.

Public spaces of securitization

The critical analysis of security makes spatiality central to how the exercise of power is theorised (see Dodds and Ingram 2009). Space is thought of in two related senses in the critique of security. First, there is a concern with how the management of risk devolves down to the attempt to manage *zones* of conduct, localised either in place (e.g. high streets, shopping malls, schools, the home) or bodies (e.g. the pregnant body, the obese body). Second, risk is understood as problems generated by the *mobility* and *circulation* of people, animals, objects and germs. These two ways of representing the spatiality of security practices are connected in turn to two ways in which critical analysis of securitization represent the value of publicness. First, there is a cryptonormative invocation of public values, which appear through reference to the suspension of ideals of inclusion or transparency or openness in the process of cataloguing practices of containment, exclusion, or secrecy. Critical accounts present securitization as a grave threat to democratic values of openness, equality, inclusion, accountability and participation. In so doing, they merely gesture at a notion of publicness that is never fully articulated. The analysis of security practices is meant to be critical precisely in so far as it reveals how processes and practices that are supposedly considered to be natural and self-evident are, on closer inspection, motivated constructs. It is assumed that securitization processes are, by their very nature and intent, resistant to critical reflection. Hence, the task of criticism is to *expose* such practices to wider scrutiny (e.g. Graham 2010, Neocleous 2008). Likewise, in work informed by concepts of affect, the argument is that securitization involves the inculcation of anxious states of mind and fearful habits of mind that effectively circumvent the rhythms and speeds of public *deliberation* (e.g. Anderson 2012).

Notions of publicness as an open field of scrutiny, deliberation and inclusion are, then, implicit if under theorised elements in the critical analysis of contemporary practices of securitization. In its darkest form, this is a style of critique that sees the logics of security as foreclosing space of ‘the political’. Securitization is supposed to squeeze out any scope for contestation in the face of overwhelming consensus about the good of securing citizens from potential dangers and harms. It is a process that is understood to function according to the logic of the exception, of emergency powers, and the suspension of law.

Alongside this first, implicit appeal to publicness as a democratic medium, there is a second notion of publicness at work in the critique of security. This notion is at work in accounts that present spaces of cities, built environments, media, and material infrastructures as effective surfaces for manipulating the subjective dispositions of whole populations. There is a widespread presumption that securitization works through the generation and circulation of states of anxiety, apprehension, alertness, suspicion. It is through the generation of states of mind and habits that security is meant to get into everyday life (e.g. Huysmans 2006). Across the sweep of theoretical innovation from discourse-based accounts of the social construction of security threats, to speech-act models of securitization effects, through to non-representational accounts of affect as the medium of securitization, it is routinely assumed that securitization works by spreading fear and circulating anxieties amongst whole populations through public means. And space is understood as the vector for such contagious communication. In important respects, the turn to affect in cultural and political theory provides a much better route to securing the assumed link between logics of governing and effects on everyday dispositions of whole populations.

Discourse-based models of subjectification or speech-acts keep open, in principle at least, a space of address and reception within which intended effects can always go awry. Theories of affect effectively dissolve the problematic qualities of subjectivity entirely, in so far as the milieu of security is rendered as a public space of communicability and contagion (e.g. Massumi 2009).

In presenting space as a vector in which life itself is made into an object and medium of biopolitical strategies, critical analysis security presents the milieu of security as simultaneously a field of emergent, non-linear effects and yet also as a highly determinate medium, open to instrumental manipulation. There are, in short, two related figures of the public realm at work in the critique of security, a field that oscillates between idealism and cynicism. In one, a weak, residual principle of publicity is appealed to as an implicit normative benchmark of criticism and evaluation. In the other, public space is understood to be an effective surface for the manipulation of minds and bodies. Overt attempts to shape conduct or to secure the conditions of life or happiness or liberty are presumed to stand in a paradoxical to public ideals of self-legislating individuals or self-governing communities. Recourse to an analysis that exposes constitutive paradoxes, contradictions or aporias, is, I will suggest below, an index of a continued, although often unacknowledged, attachment to a constricted view of the sources of legitimacy of concerted public action. In order to further develop this argument, the next section elaborates on the temporal framings in which the public mediums of security are presented in critical styles of analysis.

Acting in catastrophic times

The political inflection of the milieu of security as a space of control and manipulation is dependent on splicing the dual understanding of the spatiality of security identified above together with a particular account of the temporalities of security. The critical analysis of security focuses on the articulation of two distinctive temporal modalities of action: anticipating the *future*, which now appears in a distinctively new form as that which cannot be wholly predicted or calculated; and *urgency*, specifically the model of immediate action required when responding to ‘the event’ when it unexpectedly arrives.

A defining feature of modernity, Ian Hacking (1990) once argued, is the development of calculative practices that enabled the future to be made a manageable object of action in the present. According to the critique of security, it seems we have now entered into a new relationship with the future. The idea of the future as something that can be predicted on the basis of probability, and the idea of action as a projection of intentional will into a foreseeable future, has been superseded by a formation in which the future has been rendered more radically uncertain than ever before. On this understanding, ‘the politics of catastrophe’ is shaped by an orientation towards the unknown and the unanticipated (Aradau and Van Munster 2011). The future is now something that we have to be secured against, rather than something that can be planned for in a more or less probable fashion. Contemporary practices of security and risk are associated with the idea that catastrophic events cannot be predicted in the same way as they once were, and that they resist total reduction to statistical regulation (see Amore 2013). We know catastrophic events will happen, but not when or where. The shape of the future has apparently become both *more certain* (i.e. lots of bad things will be happening) and *more uncertain* at the same time (i.e. not only is

it going to be risky and dangerous, but you can't quite know what sorts of risks and dangers will be involved) (e.g. Anderson 2010, Tellman 2015). It is this understanding of a new temporal register for managing the future that underwrites the narrative of a broad shift in modes of governing from protection and prediction to preparedness, anticipation and pre-emption (e.g. Adey and Anderson 2012, Amin 2013, Aradau 2010b).

The first temporal dimension of the critique of security, the emphasis on the instantiation of a distinctive sense of the future, is related to a second temporal frame. This is the emphasis on the urgency of action in situations of emergency. The concept of enactment provides the link between uncertain futures and the urgency of action in the emergency situations. Enactment is understood as a distinctive mode of knowing-and-doing, the means of developing competencies in the present by practicing scenarios or by preparing for emergencies. These might include a range of events, including nuclear attacks, disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks (e.g. Collier 2008, Lakoff 2007). The enactment of anticipated scenarios is the means of inculcating the habits required to act decisively in the event of catastrophe. They are the means by which people are trained up to be able to respond, almost without thinking, to events as and when they arrive. The empirical analysis of security focuses on the ways in which practices of preparedness are developed and institutionalised. In particular, attention has been paid to how uncertain and unknowable events in the future are governed by being imagined in the present (e.g. Aradau 2010a, Anderson and Adey 2011).

The critical analysis of security therefore rests on two images of the temporality of action: the un-anticipated future, plus the urgency of enactment. It splices these together with a view of the milieu of security in which public space is a communicative vector for the propagation of affective dispositions. Articulating together the anticipatory enactment of unforeseeable futures with the acquired skills of acting in the pure punctuality of the moment confirms the idea that programmes of rule largely succeed in generating their desired effects by working through registers that resist explicit recognition or reflection by subject populations.

The normative frisson of the critical analysis of security revolves around more or less implicit claims about what programmes of preparedness and anticipation do to people. Although the theoretical frontier may have shifted from discourse to affect, the critique of security retains an investment in a well-established model of cultural politics, in which the critique of power is focussed at the level of revealing the subject-effects sought and achieved by top-down programmes of rule. The continued valence of this style of critique is well illustrated by recent critiques of the rise of resilience thinking (see Evans and Reid 2014).

The concept of resilience has become increasingly important to a range of policy fields, taking in objects as diverse as terrorism, infrastructure, flooding, cyber networks, climate change, war and conflict, food supply, urban planning (see Rodin 2014). Resilience, like security and risk, is itself a trans-disciplinary topic of critical attention. The proliferation of resilience thinking is indicative of a shift in modes of governing that focus on the capacity of actors, institutions and whole systems to adapt to change, in a self-correcting and self-protecting way. It is consistent with the wider

transformation of the temporalities of risk already noted: resilience thinking implies a modest orientation to future events that cannot be predicted or prevented, but only prepared for.

There are different routes through which resilience practices have been sourced, from systems thinking and ecology (Walker and Cooper 2011), to military and business complexes (O'Malley 2011). Resilience as a model of risk management is characterised by both the recognition of the inherent tendency of systems to experience crisis, but also the recognition of the creative dimensions of such crisis (see Chandler 2012). In short, it is a mode of governing that presumes the capacity of subjects who are creative, engaged, and responsive to new situations. As resilience thinking has spread to financial sectors, social policy, environmental management or urban planning, the lineaments of the 'biopolitics of resilience' have been identified. From the paradigmatic perspective of critical security studies, the rise of resilience thinking is just one part of a generalised 'neoliberal' retreat from modernist biopolitics, a motivated process of 'becoming unprepared', and an example of the exposure to risk of subjects once thought worthy of protection (Duffield 2010). While precaution, preparedness, and pre-emption are modes of governing which are negative in their relation to 'events', resilience is a more positive mode. The assumption of the critique of resilience is that this mode of governing is a means of inculcating neoliberal dispositions towards the creative potentials of risk.

Critiques of resilience presume that governmental programmes seek to achieve their intended objectives by securing various dispositional or attitudinal effects at the level of individual subjects. In short, the apparatus of resilience is a means of producing

resilient subjects able to be innovative, enterprising, flexible, robust and responsible, and able to thrive in conditions of uncertainty (O'Malley 2010). From this perspective, resilience thinking is seen to be explicitly de-politicizing in both its intentions and effects (Reid 2012). It is conceptualised as the exemplary mode of neoliberal biopolitics, a means of shifting the burdens and responsibility for security from states and public agencies to non-state actors, and ultimately to individuals. There is little acknowledgment in this line of critical thinking of the degree to which theories of resilience might well provide for much thicker accounts of social relations, power relations, and institutional capacity than is found in standard conceptualizations of governmentality, neoliberalization and biopolitics (see Brown 2013, Pelling 2011).

The critique of resilience exemplifies the basic assumptions of the critique of security more generally. It presumes that the task of critique is to elaborate and expose the putative subject effects of programmes of rule. We have already seen that in work on the enactment of emergency, the milieu of securitization is presented as public space in which temporal imperatives of anticipation and urgency circulate to effectively modulate so many fearful but prepared subjects. In the critique of resilience, it is argued that that newly constituted resilient subjects are no longer even able to imagine that the world can be changed.

In its oscillation between cynicism and idealism, the critique of security does a poor job of acknowledging how practices of security work through mediums of public action rather than through their suspension (see also Barnett 2009). There are certainly resources within this field for resisting the foreclosure of critical analysis around a re-vamped yet persistent culturalist focus on subjectivity-as-subjectification.

For example, securitization has been conceptualized in terms drawn from theories of speech acts (e.g. Huysmans 2011). In principle, this approach should keep open the possibility of elaborating the precise type of ‘force’ through which intended effects do, or do not, come off. However, it should also be said that in standard accounts of the performative qualities of both speech acts and enactment, there is tendency to collapse the ‘illocutionary’ force of security practices into their presumed ‘perlocutionary’ effects; that is, to presume that threats really do scare people, and that warnings really do put people on their guard. It has become routine to conceptualise security discourses as circulating in an imperative register, as if the social field is structured through a series of commands. If one thinks of the performative ‘force’ of actions not as a self-realizing effect, but as the name of a problem requiring further elaboration, then one would be led to think of the effectiveness of securitization practices as dependent on the interpretative capacities of social actors. In short, one might be led back to thinking of the social more ‘semiotically’, that is, as structured through a series of circulating signs which require and presume some competency for receptivity and response (see Honig 2009).

There are various fields of inquiry in which capacities of response and repair in times of crisis are theorised as an ordinary, habitual quality of social worlds, a quality that might be the very locus of the possibility of public action (e.g. Honig 2014, Scarry 2011, Simone 2013, Solnit 2009, Spelman 2002). In order to fully realize the potential of this type of work, however, requires a shift away from the idea that security is a strongly constitutive mode of governing, towards thinking of securitization practices as responses to situational problematizations of risks and uncertainties of various sorts.

Problematizing security

The predominant paradigm for the critique of security is quite good at identifying the reconfiguration of the rationalities of public agencies responsible for sustaining public values such as welfare, security and order. But there is a persistent tendency to overstretch, to make claims about the effectiveness of governing strategies, primarily through deductions about subject-formation. This leads to a view of governing rationalities and programmes of rule as strongly constitutive of the entire social field. The critical analysis of security tends to be relentlessly top-down in its perspective. Its methodological entry point is the investigation of logics of governing revealed by the purposive actions of institutions and organisations concerned with governing risk, uncertainty and, vulnerability. The division I want to elaborate on in this section revolves around the question of what sorts of deductions about general social dynamics can and should be made on the basis of a more or less narrow examination of institutional logics of governing, intervening, and managing.

The strand of work on ordinary capacities for response and repair in situations of crisis and emergency noted at the end of the previous section overlaps with social science research on practices of biosecurity and public health. Together, they make up a distinct, more modest style of analysis of contemporary practices of risk and resilience, security and vulnerability. Such work is attentive to the emergent possibilities inscribed within new biopolitical regimes of governmentality (e.g. Diprose 2008, Rose 2010). This work is often informed by a more ethnographic sensibility than work in international relations and critical legal studies (e.g. Collier *et al* 2004). So, for example, both Lakoff (2008) and Collier (2011) provide detailed

empirical accounts of how the enactment of security threats in the USA since the 1950s has been extended from national security contexts to public health, and other fields (see also Collier and Lakoff 2008). These genealogies are characterised by a distinctive theoretical inflection that sets them off from the more totalising accounts of resilience discussed above. They take their distance from standard views of ‘neoliberalism’ as an overarching, hegemonic Leviathan shaping all social fields (see Collier 2012). More precisely, these ethnographies focus attention on how preparedness becomes established as a *norm*, without presuming that norms are automatically *normalizing*. By focussing on practices of scenario planning, for example, they help us see the extent to which contemporary biopolitics does not simply bring off interpellative subject effects, nor should it be understood to automatically ‘enact’ its intended effects, and nor should it be assumed to embed dispositions beneath the level of conscious thought. Rather, the emphasis is placed on security understood as a ‘practice’, and by extension, on the capacity of people to *learn* through repeated performances and adjustments (e.g. Bingham and Lavau 2012). The distinction lies in the emphasis that the idea of learning places on the capacity for actors to exercise discretion, interpretation, and judgement. If we are to think critically about the proliferation of norms of security across contemporary fields of governance, then it is worthwhile thinking of norms not on a model of conformity but rather on the assumption that norms only function through their application, that is, because of the capacities of people to reflect on strategies and define objectives, a self-reflexive capacity that is interpretative and interactive. Norms of security are *normative*, one might say, rather than *normalizing* – they shape fields of action, rather than operating through the production of subjects.

The reason to draw the distinction between normative and normalizing concepts of action is precisely to help specify just who the subjects of security might be. First, it is notable that much of the research work on the enactment of emergency scenarios focuses on programmes for configuring specific fields of professional practice (e.g. Collier and Lakoff 2014). Rather than presuming that security is a modality of power that shapes the subjective dispositions of entire populations, this work reminds us that discourses of catastrophe and emergency most often address circumscribed fields of institutionalised expertise. Second, there is certainly also an empirical focus on how practices of emergency preparedness shape programmes of engagement with dispersed publics. In so far as such programmes are one means by which ‘security’ is inscribed into patterns of everyday life, they might easily be interpreted as effective means of subject-formation. However, they also appear to demonstrate that securitization depends upon the ‘empowerment’ of ordinary citizens as well as professionals, not simply their effective subjectification. In seeking to inculcate certain dispositions of good judgement, these programmes might well require us to question the appropriateness of inherited theories of subject-formation which struggle to acknowledge ordinary capacities for learning and discretionary action.

There is, then, a significant difference between accounts of security that focus on the subject-forming effects of programmes of rule (exemplified by critical analysis of resilience thinking); and genealogies of security practices that attend to the development of fields of action coordinated by particular norms. The difference is between, on the one hand, dark interpretations in which the political implications of governmentality and of biopolitical interventions is always already known in advance

(they will always involve efforts to contain and subject people, and they will infringe on their freedom; they demand the exposure of naturalised processes or secret actions; they will in the final analysis be reducible to violence); and on the other hand, ethnographically inflected analyses of biosecurity which interpret dynamics of risk and security as indicative of the inherent indeterminacy of governing conduct (and which attend more closely to the distributions of power that different practices enable). The latter type of approach is, I would suggest, typical of what Orford (2012) has characterised as a style of descriptive analysis. It seeks to describe ‘what is to be seen’ in fields where issues of risk, insecurity, susceptibility and uncertainty are organising principles. And what emerges from such descriptions is a sense that programmes of rule are much less effective than seamless stories about subjectification-as-interpellation would seem to suggest. By extension, this implies that programmes of rule are much less constitutive of the social field than is routinely supposed in the critical paradigm; they are better interpreted as responsive adjustments to forces beyond the complete control of governing agencies.

The idea that securitization practices are a response to problems can be gleaned from some of the recent literature on the ‘matter’ of security, which appeals to vitalist materialisms to draw into view the degree to which objects of securitization are not mere passive constructs (e.g. Aradau 2010a, Adey and Anderson 2012). The focus on the materiality of objects of security in this work should, in principle at least, lead to a much more modest view of the power of governing regimes, or of the constitutive powers of apparatuses and assemblages of biopolitics. It suggests that to an important degree, securitization is a situational engagement with risks and threats and dangers that demand some type of response (Clark 2011). Approaching security practices as

responses to problems in this way also suggests that the task of critical analysis might be better focussed on diagnosing what Foucault referred to as the ‘problematizations’ through which such issues become objects of focussed reflection (Foucault 1984). This would include attending to the variety of values through which support for concerted action is sought and secured. Rather than granting strategies of governing considerable constitutive force, contemporary practices of security might then be more fruitfully approached as responsive problematizations of emergent situations of uncertainty (see Barnett 2015). If we follow Dewey (1986), alongside Foucault, in thinking of ‘problematic situations’ as disruptions or perturbations which provoke concerted action (Rabinow 2012), then we might indeed be led to recognise practices of security as pre-eminent formations in and through which public issues emerge. Looking at modes of problematization suggests a more modest understanding of what state and non-state actors are capable of doing, for good or ill. It directs our attention to identifying the causal rationalities that different agents follow by examining the reflexive prisms through which fields of intervention are made visible (Foucault 2007, 276-7). But it does not require us to suppose that these interventions are wholly determinate of fields of action.

Emergent publics of security and insecurity

By suggesting that the analysis of security should be approached from the angle of the problematic, uncertain situations that provoke certain sorts of concerted responses, I am suggesting that far from thinking that securitization is an occasion for the suspension of democracy or the abrogation of public values, it might be better thought of as the exemplary modes for the reconfiguration of the temporalities of concerted public action. Security sits alongside and overlaps with practices of adaptation,

anticipation, resilience, sustainability, and transition, as a conceptual figure helping to reorient various fields of practice around the more-or-less permanent potential for crisis, the constant possibility of catastrophe, and the general condition vulnerability. Despite the unremittingly negative connotations that securitization has taken on (see Roe 2012, Nunes 2012), it is good to remember that security is, also, a public value, one quite central to democratic politics understood as a non-violent art of government (see Yeatman and Zolkos 2010). Security is, after all, a constitutive dimension of modern liberalism since Hobbes. It is noteworthy, in this respect, how far the critique of security continues to rely for its normative force on a distinctly liberal conception of freedom, understood by reference to unacknowledged ethics of non-interference. The presence of this liberal notion of freedom is indicated by the recurring tropes of paradox or aporia in the critical analysis of modern governmentality and biopolitics. The critical analysis of security joins broader styles of critique in which the primary task is always reduced to the identification of a contradiction of some sort: affect theory resonates politically in a space between the possibility of pure creativity and the dread of being manipulated without knowing it; discussions of the role of neuroscience or psychological knowledge in policy come to rest at uncovering a disabbling paradox between ideals of the self-governing citizen and the social facts of institutionalised interventions to ‘make up’ such citizens; the analysis of security finds people’s rights and liberties being diminished by the paternalist measures taken to protect them and enhance their safety. Across these fields of analysis, there is a shared sense of sinister power being exercised behind people’s backs. We are left with a choice between a liberal commitment to an ideal of freedom everywhere exposed as a ruse, or the promise of wholly new forms of becoming political that have no knowable form.

The forms of critical analysis I have outlined here have succeeded in backing themselves into a corner, unable to acknowledge the ordinary reasoning capacities of citizens for fear of being caught in some sort of conceptual naivety about intentionality, rationality, representation, or meaning. In contrast to this style of critique, the proliferation of security as a contemporary political rationality might be better approached as an opportunity to reconsider the range of justifications of concerted action that extend beyond constricted models of popular sovereignty (see Meredyth and Minson 2000). Or, to put it another way, it invites us to take more seriously the degree to which experiences of vulnerability and intimations of potential harm might well be the animating dynamic of democratic politics, not necessarily its negation. The genealogies of contemporary biopolitics that I differentiated from the paradigmatic critique of security in the previous section help us to see practices of governing as forms of public reason. That is, they are best approached as describing the modes of thinking-and-acting of various actors charged with maintaining order, or health, or security, including the forms of justification and legitimation these fields operate with and through. We might consider these forms of justification and legitimacy as both constitutive of fields of action (see Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), and as historically variable and capable of new mutations (see Rosanvallon 2011). Neither of these features necessarily negates the democratic qualities of security practices: democracy is, after all, nothing if not a system of rule, and also nothing if not contextually sensitive (see Barnett 2008). Acknowledging the causal significance of public values in shaping programmes of rule is a crucial step in diagnosing what is really at stake in the proliferation of security. It is a recognition lacking in a great deal of critical work, which remains wedded to the idealist-cynical dualism identified

earlier. The critique of security shares with other styles of radical analysis a tendency to reduce the normative dimensions of social life to the function of merely *legitimizing* more fundamental relations of domination. Rather than persisting with an interpretation of contemporary practices of securitization as simply extending sinister modes of power that erode public values and virtues, what is required is deeper consideration of the implications of the degree to which the specific public value of security has indeed become the primary figure through which legitimate political support is sought, won, withheld or withdrawn (see Freedon 2009).

Pursuing further this line of analysis of security would no doubt require an adjustment in methodological and critical conventions. It would, for example, require what Robbins (2009, 43) calls a more neutral view of governmentality, and by extension of concepts of biopolitics and biopower too. It would require extending some scepticism to those accounts of biopower in which right from the beginning and in the last instance biopower is fundamentally always also sovereign power, a nightmarish imposition of command and control (Hinchliffe and Bingham 2008: 1539). It would require developing more multi-faceted accounts of the politics of biopower (see Rabinow and Rose 2006), ones that even countenance the possibility of thinking of what Hannah (2011) has called ‘progressive’ biopolitics’ (Hannah 2011) and what Ferguson (2011) refers to as the challenge of developing forms of ‘left governmentality’. Instead of thinking of conceptual terms such as governmentality, or biopolitics, or security, as names for varieties of power-relations the normative substance of which is already known in advance, it would require thinking of them as analytical heuristics (see Koopman and Matza 2013), ones that open up certain

questions about the objects, objectives, and mediums of programmes of rule and management (e.g. Death 2013).

In this spirit, I want to close by outlining two aspects of the problematization of security in which new modalities of public life are generated by the re-temporalization of governing around notions of emergency, catastrophe, and uncertainty. The first of these aspects concerns the emergence of new mediums of public action. By this, I mean the institutional and social practices that are drawn upon in making problems of uncertainty coalesce into matters of sustained of public attention. In on-going debates about how the management of risks is being re-distributed across classical boundaries separating states, private corporate actors, NGOs, and citizens (see Lakoff 2010), it is possible to identify not the diminution of public life but its reconfiguration. For example, public life might be increasingly reconfigured around ideas of ‘systemic risk’ (Collier and Lakoff 2011). It is notable that these new modalities of risk and uncertainty are consistently presented not simply as problems and challenges, but also as opportunities for rethinking concerted public action. In work as different as Sunstein’s (2005) argument in favour of re-configuring policy interventions away from the precautionary principle towards what he calls the anti-catastrophe principle, and the account of ‘technical democracy’ developed by Callon *et al* (2009), one finds a view in which the democratic response to pervasive uncertainty is to develop more dialogic, co-operative modes of shared expertise. These accounts might certainly invest a little too heavily in an image of benevolent expertise, underplaying the creativity of ‘civic epistemologies’ in responding to risk and insecurity (see Jasanoff 2012a). But they do at least open out to a sense that the resources for responding to risk and insecurity lay in existing patterns of social

relationships, an idea developed in strands of work on topics as diverse as everyday urbanism, urban food security, and post-conflict reconciliation (e.g. Molotch 2012, Jasanoff 2012b, Koopman 2011, Lemanski 2012, Simone and Fauzan 2012). This is a presumption that cannot be easily fitted into a style of social theory that only ever sees ‘the subject’ as either as an effect of programmes of rule or as dissolved into flows of affect.

The second aspect of the contemporary problematization of security concerns the emergence of new registers of public feeling around which such action is mobilised. By public feeling, I am referring to the forms of attachment that are mobilised to enjoin people to attend to particular matters of public concern. The emergence of new registers of public feeling is perhaps most evident in the rise of humanitarian reason (see Barnett 2011, Moyn 2012), and its close articulation with security. The proliferation of humanitarian forms of mobilisation is indicative of a mode of public action that draws on compassion, pity, care, solidarity and other modes of other-regarding virtue to generate concern around objects and issues. These registers are no less important or less prevalent than anxiety, fear, or insecurity in contemporary public life. Indeed, they might well be closely related, in so far as both sets turn around intuitions of unequal life chances and shared vulnerability. The rise of humanitarian reason in international politics, or the re-gearing of areas such as food security around the paradigm of human security (e.g. Shepherd 2012), should be seen as occasions when the content and form of public action is being reconfigured, rather than eroded away. In each of these areas and many others, it seems that ‘securing’ the conditions of life is a public value capable to mobilising considerable popular support.

Neither of these two cases – the emergence of new mediums of public action and the emergence of new registers of public feeling – is unambiguously positive or progressive. My point is simply that it might be useful to suspend the conventions of the critique of security to enable an adequate clarification of such emergent phenomena. My interest here has been in opening up space for the consideration of the possibility of a democratic style of critique, one that is respectful of the ordinary concerns and capacities of citizens rather than one that supposes them to be affectively attuned automatons or always covered by fear. The standard paradigm for the critique of security has difficulty in acknowledging public action as anything other than an ideal always already under erasure. The milieu of security, on this view, is presented as a circulatory space for the inculcation of functional subject-effects amongst whole populations. Styles of social theory that only ever view uncertainty, danger, risk or insecurity as ruses for the more effective subjectification of populations are poorly configured to develop an account of action adequate to understand a world increasingly shaped by felt experiences of indeterminacy and vulnerability. The conventions of radical critique misconstrue the public spaces through which practices of security proliferate. Processes of securitization depend upon ordinary capacities for rational action that are not well theorised in terms of the interpellation of subjects or the modulation of affective moods. I have argued that analytical attention might be best directed towards asking what sort of public concerns are at stake within securitization practices, rather than assume in advance that they are necessarily at odds with public values.

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