The notion of governing society has for a long time seemed self-evident. Society was conceived as a totality coincident with a certain space, a territory, and occupied by a population. Governing was undertaken by a unified agency that acted upon the society of which it was also a specialized part—the government, or, more broadly, "the state." The notion of "governing society" thus referred unproblematically to the binary of state and society. The articles in this special issue of Alternatives, however, each in its own and different way, address the question of "governing society today."

The 1990s, by contrast with earlier times, witnessed a widespread calling into question of both sides of the above-mentioned binary. On the one hand, the idea of a self-contained unity was undermined by the perception of "globalization." The "second age of modernity," as Ulrich Beck called it, was to be one in which the unit of analysis must shift to the features of global change and their local impacts, rather than focusing on the endogenous processes occurring within particular societies. In fact, the processes of globalization were held to have shown that the notion of society depended upon the identification of society with the nation. Society, it seemed, was an artifact of political modernity.

On the other hand, "governance" tended to displace the notion of the state. Against the image of a unitary locus of power and government in the state, focus was shifted onto the diverse and heterogeneous agencies through which governance and ordering was achieved. Governance was something undertaken by corporations, public and private institutions, and nongovernment agencies working above and below the nation-state. Indeed, in its most radical and perhaps consistent formulation, inspired by Michel Foucault's lectures on "governmentality," governing was undertaken by any

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kind of social, political, or economic actor, ranging from international organizations to corporations to the actions of the conscious self over its desires, aspirations, and conduct.  

In the world sketched by the twin themes of governance and globalization, the role of states was sidelined, and the related themes of their claims to sovereignty and violence at the very least was attenuated. The world of the second age of modernity might appear to be a risky one with new inequalities, but from most accounts it presaged greater possibilities of individual self-fulfillment and collective self-determination. Compared with the old world of state and domination, the new world of globalization and governance would appear to be relatively benign.

Suddenly, this felicitous scenario looks suspiciously naive. This is due not simply to the events of September 11, 2001, and their apparent ramifications, but a confluence of happenings that reaches back rather further. The public consciousness of antiglobalization protests since the 1999 protests in Seattle came to highlight the lack of necessity of many of the policies conducted in the name of globalization. Similarly, the phenomenon of mass refugee movements showed both the limits to the globalization thesis and the effects of not belonging to a viable nation-state or society. The use of detention and sometimes military and police force to deter “asylum seekers” also suggested that sovereignty and its powers were far from peripheral to the operation of contemporary governance. Further, war remains a fairly basic feature of our contemporaneity, whatever set of purposes are pursued by it and whatever agencies authorize it. The 1990s saw United Nations-sanctioned, multilateral limited military operations in the defense of human rights—with the United States operating according to Clintonian doctrine. The present decade, by contrast, has witnessed the United States and its closest allies employing a doctrine of preemptive strike to conduct a war on terrorism.

The widespread deployment of the language of security to rethink all kinds of issues from food to the internet to the environment—and to bring about the most extensive post–World War II reform of U.S. federal government—suggests that the language of governance is at best partial. All these events and processes in sum indicate that the pacific model of a deliberative liberal democracy governing in the name of freedom and open to the civilizing flows of global commerce is also at best partial and at worst a foolish chimera.

The articles in this issue are all written within this context and remain skeptical of much of the literature on governance and on globalization. They share a common set of references to and some
degree of struggle with the work of Foucault on different forms of power, particularly his work on governmentality. While they share these references to Foucault, they do so not out of a slavish devotion to his texts but because they partake of his ethos of intellectual experiment and political innovation. In doing so, they chart new analyses, produce new concepts, and offer new forms of intelligibility of key problems of social and political thought and practice today.

It is something of an understatement to say that the formations of power analyzed by Foucault form the lexicon of critical political and social analysis today. They have provided a key set of resources for the analysis of how we govern and are governed in all kind of institutional and noninstitutional practices. However, as Foucault’s concepts have been used more extensively in empirical research and the contours of forms of power and governing are charted, several questions arise prompting new directions for research.

The articles in this issue have been selected both to illustrate and to contribute to these emerging research agendas. We use the articles to illustrate what we think are some key questions. Given the postulate of the heterogeneity and complexity of power relations, the first question concerns how we might think about the relationship between different kinds of power. Further questions address the relationship of governmentality analyses to cultures and populations outside the “West” (however construed) and the problem of the spatiality of power and government.

What Is the Relation of Different Formations of Power to One Another?

Foucault provided immensely inventive ways of thinking about power and government. In doing so, his work critically engages with long-standing concepts of sovereignty and state and with the frameworks and categories of liberal and Marxist political thought and practice. He famously articulated his relational (sometimes called poststructuralist) conception of power in contrast to those problematics that identified power purely with domination. He viewed power operating at the capillary level, rather than emanating from rigid structures. From here, it could be seen as dispersed, omnipresent, and facilitative, rather than centralized, occasional, and repressive.

Foucault enjoined his readers to analyze power in a bottom-up, rather than top-down, fashion. He contrasts this notion with what he calls the juridico-discursive theory of power, which places the
law and state at the center of analysis and as the origin of the commands and interdictions that constitute power.

Foucault's approach to power does not, however, preclude the identification of different kinds or, better, strategies and programs of power. Thus disciplinary power, biopower, pastoral power, and governmentality marked out different but overlapping, complementary, and often rivalrous strategies. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault was led to investigate "disciplinary power." Operating through the regulation and normalization of minds and bodies, this form of power is evident in such techniques as military drill, timetables, time and motion studies, and categorization and ranking. In the first volume of *History of Sexuality*, Foucault developed the concept of "bio-power," which refers to the management and government of the life of populations through such technologies of public health, disease control, eugenics, and the welfare state. If disciplinary power focused on the individual body and its capacities, biopower involves the control and management of the social—or even species—body of the population.

Foucault elsewhere articulates the idea of "pastoral power" to argue that the development of the modern welfare states must be understood as the interplay of two strategies of power encapsulated in a "city-citizen game" that involves the self-governing capacities of free persons in a political community and a "shepherd-flock game" concerning the needy, obedient individual. Disciplinary and biopowers could be viewed here as modern techniques of pastoral power that operate in concert with and extend the traditional powers of sovereignty. It is through pastoral power that the sovereign no longer would be purely concerned to appropriate land, goods, and labor, to bark orders, and mete out spectacular punishments, but would take for its object the care of each and all through a detailed knowledge of the individual and the collective—through, in its modern version, the various forms of expertise of the human sciences.

To these various conceptions of power, Foucault adds "governmentality." Governmentality or "rationality of government" emerges from early-modern reflection on the arts of government, first in cameralism and mercantilism and later in early liberalism. Gordon defines it as "a way or 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 is practised." Foucault's discussions of governmentality often seem to subsume his earlier focus on disciplinary and biopolitical techniques and offer a more concentrated reflection
on how one might engage in an analytics of certain kinds of power found in liberal constitutional states.

This conceptual repertoire that Foucault invented has greatly enhanced our critical analytical capacities with respect to the intelligibility of forms and transformations in power and rule. However, it is not immediately clear how the different forms of power he identifies relate to each other, both historically and conceptually. While somewhat tempting to do so, it would be precipitous to say that disciplinary power precedes biopower or that sovereign forms of power are increasingly displaced by the art of government in the modern liberal period. Foucault himself spoke suggestively of a triangle of government-sovereignty-discipline.10

Given the centrality—and one might add, obscurity—of the notion of sovereignty in conventional political theory, teasing out the relationship between it and Foucault’s notions of bio-, disciplinary, and pastoral power might suggest some productive research directions. Indeed, this task has become increasingly important in the last few years, given developments in biotechnologies, the spectacular display of counterviolence of September 11, 2001, and the “war on terror” conducted since the events of that date, and the more mundane if equally devastating consequences of statelessness and its aftereffects.

Rather than viewing sovereignty as a power of the past replaced by a rationalized, calculating, biopolitics or governmentality, these events have returned analysts to the question of the nature of sovereign power in our present. Rereading Carl Schmitt, the controversial twentieth-century international jurist and theorist of sovereignty, and Foucault together, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s Empire11 and Giorgio Agamben’s Homo Sacer12 have made the best-known recent analyses of the relationship between sovereignty and biopower. In the first case, the mutations of imperial sovereignty are driven by struggles over biopolitical production; in the latter, sovereignty and biopower, linked since antiquity, enter into “zones of indistinction” as the detention camp becomes the new biopolitical nomos of modernity. At a minimum, one could say that an analysis of the productive powers over life and freedom (of biopower and liberal government) cannot be divorced from a consideration of issues of subordination, obligation, coercion, and violence—particularly when we consider those excluded from nominal and actual citizenship of states (refugees, indigenes, the long-term unemployed, those with disabilities, the frail, and the monstrous).

In this collection of articles, Melinda Cooper reads Foucault and Schmitt off each other to examine the interrelationship of security and sovereignty in an increasingly global order. She argues
that while capitalism requires a level of risk and insecurity in order to make money, the global financial market generates a need for systemic insecurity that flows beyond the nation-state. This insecurity produces economic and social disasters, which in turn enroll the state in coercive means by which economic insecurity can be maintained.

In an analysis of sanctuary practices in Canada, Randy Lippert’s article provides a much needed examination of the largely overlooked concept of pastoral power. Lippert charts the relationship between pastoral and sovereign forms of power. In a careful reading of Foucault’s views on pastoral power, he demonstrates that pastoral power is evident in contemporary secular activities that protect failed asylum seekers from deportation by the state and advocate the state’s acceptance of their claim for asylum. Lippert’s analysis highlights how sanctuary providers also define a small sovereign space—such as a church or community building—that challenges and contests the power of the state to enter that space in order to apprehend the asylum seeker. Far from being opposed to sovereign forms and territories of power, pastoral power produces new kinds of sovereignty and new demarcations of political space (on which, see below).

A different body of work has provided conceptual clarity to the notion of liberal, neoliberal, and authoritarian forms of power. Several authors have separately reminded us that liberalism is not simply about the pursuit of freedom through state nonintervention but is intrinsically joined to authoritarian forms of power through the training, confinement, or even elimination of those populations who cannot or will not be self-governing, however the latter is defined. In her article, Virginia Watson draws upon these works to analyze shifting rationalities for governing Australia’s indigenous populations. She notes that while policy transformations from paternalism to assimilation and then to self-determinism involve a shift from liberalism to neoliberalism, there is also an undercurrent of authoritarianism, evident in recent times through the increasingly onerous auditing responsibilities faced by indigenous corporations.

Gary Sigley’s article also draws upon the idea of the duality of liberalism. He coins the idea of “liberal despotism” in his study of Chinese population policies. Most significantly, he discerns within liberal as well as nonliberal governmental reasoning a distinction between “bad” and “good” authoritarianism, the latter defined by the employment of coercive measures in the name of improving the subject and rendering it capable of self-conscious conduct. An analytics of government has always claimed to bracket off the normative
claims of liberal rule. Articles such as Sigley's and Watson's demonstrate the complex relations between liberal and illiberal social and political practices both within and outside contemporary liberal democracies.

How Well Do Foucault's Conceptions of Power Relate to Non-Western Cultures and Peoples?

Sigley's article in this special issue is also significant in addressing a major criticism of governmentality studies: that it principally refers to the historical and contemporary experience of "Western" countries; that is, the countries of Western Europe and North America and perhaps other antipodean outposts such as Australia and New Zealand. It is the case that Foucault concentrated his analysis on historical transformations in classical Greece and Rome and in "early modern" Western Europe. However, it seems to us that Foucault's focus on governmental rationalities and technologies and his formulation of governing as the "conduct of conduct"—be it by the monarch, the capitalist, patriarch, teacher, or expert—has provided an analytical approach that is readily suited to examining peoples beyond the imagined limits of these geographic and cultural spheres.

The authors cited above have been important in recalling that the development of liberal approaches to government coincided with the colonization of the Americas and Central Asia. As they note, classical liberalism, as articulated by Locke and Mill, recognized the need for authoritarian forms of power to deal with the ungovernable or as yet ungovernable. The subjects of such coercive powers were, of course, often peoples in colonized places. This conceptualization of the "two faces of liberalism" has enabled more contemporary practices of "authoritarian liberalism" to be critically examined—such as aspects of contemporary workfare practices. Virginia Watson's contribution to this issue of Alternatives, an analysis of the government of Aboriginal peoples of Australia—a highly marginalized people often having "Third World" health and living conditions—also demonstrates how authoritarian practices can readily be aligned and enmeshed with liberal and neoliberal forms of governing.

Meanwhile, in response to the observation by O'Malley, Weir, and Shearing of a "virtual silence within governmentality work on postcolonial perspectives," it should be pointed out that there are now quite a few analyses that have used governmentality to study colonial and postcolonial societies. Sigley's article in this special
issue is particularly significant in that he examines governmental practices in a non-Western country not subject to colonization—namely, China. With a long and independent history of political thought and practice, the application of governmentality to Chinese population planning demonstrates the wider applicability of this approach, while at the same time providing new insights about the way government might be conceptualized and practiced. Sigley's article is also important in charting the way Chinese arts of government have been reconfigured and redefined as a result of engagements with contemporary Western governmentalities.

Sigley's analysis also highlights the way in which the concepts of “markets” are entering contemporary Chinese policy and political thought as part of a wider discourse about globalization and international competitiveness. This observation points to a third area in which this special issue seeks to extend governmentality studies: the question of the spatial aspects of governmental power.

How Do Governmental Relations Relate to Spatial Formations?

Foucault's perspectives on power and government clearly incorporate various sites and spaces of government. For example, in his "Governmentality" lecture, Foucault asks, and answers, "What it means to govern a ship?" In many places, Foucault also examines the government of the self. For the purposes of its government, the self today is construed as a space of interiority, inhabited by a personality, driven by a will, and subject to cultural determinations and inscriptions, occupying particular social and political spaces from the school to the home, the job center, the workplace, the shopping mall, and the sporting field. Different types of active, enterprising, innovating selves are conceived in terms of social and geographic mobility and flows, of identifications and networks across global and virtual space.

Along a similar view, Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller draw on Foucault to direct attention to government "beyond the state" and in capitalist enterprises. Governing is fundamentally spatial because it is about "acting at a distance," creating particular sites as "containers" of power and authority, coordinating diverse locale, linking center with periphery, metropole with colony. Despite these analyses of the differential sites of power, much governmentality work has examined the (direct or indirect) exercise of power by the national state policy. Even if this work has called into question the model of power centralized upon the state, it has largely
assumed that multiform powers occupied a space defined by the horizon of the nation-state.

In this context, it is well to dwell on what it means to govern a ship for a moment. This reveals several of the limitations of Foucault’s understanding of governmentality. Foucault answers: “It means clearly to take charge of the sailors, but also of the boat and its cargo; to take care of the ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks and storms; and it consists in that activity of establishing a relation between the sailors who are to be taken care of and the ship which is also taken care of, and the cargo which is to be brought safely to port, and all those eventualities.” Foucault thus emphasizes that government involves guiding human beings and things and their relationships. The key word here is “care,” which invokes a pastoral relationship over humans, mentioned above. This is all well and good. But what this example misses is how the government of the ship is tied to the government of the seas and oceans through international law and custom, agreements, and so on, and the relationship between one’s own ship and other vessels. It means not only recognizing reefs and storms but territorial waters, security, and fishing and immigration zones. This kind of limitation of the governmentality framework perhaps accounts for its relative lack of recognition of the international conditions of national government. To make an obvious extrapolation, the “ship of state” appears to be a lonely vessel on the open seas for Foucault. In reality, it meets and passes or engages in commercial, diplomatic, and military relationships with other such ships, which are regulated by an international order that divides spaces and places, including terra firma and mare liberum, firm land and open sea. This is an order that speaks in terms of economic flows and globalization as it draws new lines, territories, boundaries, and borders.

Since the early 1990s, the rethinking of the space of power has received considerable attention, particularly as a result of the spectacular rise of globalization discourses. Most of the popular accounts and many of the academic ones regard globalization as a real and unstoppable reality, although some academics and activists question both its necessity and its uniqueness. Within this context, the governmentality analytic has lent itself to providing insightful analyses of global or transnational power. They have helped to unearth and make visible the micropowers, strategies, rationalities, and technologies through which power moves across nation-state borders.

Two of the articles in this collection significantly add to this growing work. Melinda Cooper draws on Foucault and Schmitt to argue that neoliberalism is necessarily combined with problematics
of security and risk resulting from the globalization of speculative financial markets. The argument extends the classical liberal view that uncertainty is the means by which capitalism progresses and national wealth is created. According to Cooper, neoliberalism is defined by the way economic uncertainty breaks out of national boundaries to become global in nature.

While Cooper takes globalization processes as a given, Wendy Larner and William Walters suspend their judgment and turn their attention to globalization discourses in order to understand the way such discourses constitute certain political agendas and rationalities. In short, they analyze globalization as a governmental rationality and, in doing so, point to the range of meanings, political agendas, and transformations associated with the term *globalization*.

While these articles address themselves to questions of the space of global powers, recently there have been governmentality analyses of other spaces of government, such as the development of the European governmental space through the European Union and its recent common currency, and of regionalism through wide trading blocks. Smaller governmental spaces are also proliferating. For example, Rose has analyzed governing through communities, and Lippert, in this issue, refers to the creation of spaces of sanctuary in church halls and the like. Elsewhere in this issue, Sven Bislev turns attention to another means of governing space—the growing phenomenon of gated communities in the United States. Bislev argues that although gated communities often create the pretense of security from crime, their purpose is to create a highly controlled and homogenous environment to enable affluent people to segregate themselves from cultural diversity and poverty within their locality.

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Above we have explored but a sample of some of the questions that arise from the articles collected here and from the Foucauldian frameworks with which they engage. They display the continuing usefulness of the governmentality research program, but they also begin to reveal its limits and some lines of criticism. The utility of the framework was linked to a focus on the "how of power" and the bracketing of the themes of conventional political analysis centered upon state, law, and sovereignty. Perhaps these articles begin to reveal a new route to understanding contemporary issues of governing society that can be expressed in the form of the following hypothesis: If we move our attention now to the question of the "where of power" we can begin to respond to the problem of the
relationship between the diverse kinds of power and, above all, to reimagine the operation of sovereignty, the role of law, and the institutions of the national state within the zones, spaces, and locale through which diverse forms of power cross, demarcate, and appropriate planet Earth and its inhabitants and products.

Notes


7. See esp. Foucault, note 5, part 5.


10. Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in Burchell, Gordon, and Miller, note 9, pp. 87–104; quote from p. 102.


18. Foucault, note 10, p. 93.


22. Foucault, note 10, pp. 93–94.

23. At a minimum, then, Foucault's narrative on the liberal arts of government needs to be situated with a genealogy of international law and government such as that provided by Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003).

