District Space: A Nineteenth-Century Technique of Rule

by

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Abstract:

This dissertation traces the rise of the district as a system of administration across two historical periods: the deployment of districts by the Hudson's Bay Company (1815-1840), and the spread of districts throughout England following the implementation of the New Poor Laws (1790-1860). By studying these episodes the project interrogates how what was initially a technique to rationalize the costs of administration became a system of documentation that supported the centralization of knowledge and the rule of population. I develop three theses on the effects of ruling through districts. First, I argue that administering through districts reworked 18th-century practices of Linnaean observation into 19th-century practices of inspection. Second, I argue that districts were used in both the HBC and in England to police the mobility of undesirable populations. Districts were used to document and control the mobility of unproductive labour and, thereby, solidified capitalist social relations. Last, I argue that as a system of spatial partition and documentation, the district formed the connective tissue that joined bureaucratic rule, the census of population, and biopower. I argue that ruling through districts supported the census of population through the creation of an administrative order where the surveillance of human beings was imagined to be continuous and equalized across time and space. The documentation of people, land, and things at the scale of the district made population visible as an object conditioned by the climate, means of subsistence, and topography of each district. As such, ruling through districts stabilized population as a biopolitical object of rule.

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Table of Contents

	Pages
<i>Introduction: Ruling Through Districts</i>	v-xvii
 <i>Part I: The Register of Observation</i>	
<i>1. Spatial Order Beyond Governmentality</i>	1-25
<i>2. Observational Practices in Natural History: Conducts and Technical Registers (1700-1798)</i>	26-64
 <i>Part II: The Colonial District: Birth of a Register</i>	
<i>3. The Right of Seizure, the Fort, and the Preconditions of District Inspection</i>	65-94
<i>4. The Codification of Natural History: Observation to Inspection</i>	95-128
<i>5. District Space and Productive Labour</i>	129-146
<i>6. District Space, Population, and the Growth of a Variable Milieu</i>	147-171
 <i>Part III: Consolidation: The District in Service of the State</i>	
<i>7. Theorizing the District in Service of State</i>	172-185
<i>8. The Rise of the District in Bentham's Inspection-House Principle</i>	186-212
<i>9. Registration Districts and the Further Codification of a Milieu</i>	213-235
<i>10. Constabulary Districts and Making Labour Productive</i>	236-255
<i>11. The District: A Template For the Modern State Form</i>	256-271
<i>12. Conclusion</i>	272-288

Introduction: Ruling Through Districts

Nation states constitute and regulate a field of social vision, which is both unitary (minimizing differences within the nation) and Manichean... This is the field within which official politics proceeds, both grounding and bounding it... its symbols and rituals come to stand for, represent, that which demarcates us, sets us apart and makes us what we are...¹

In this project I trace the practices and forms of knowledge that structured the emergence of a “regulated field of social vision” in the 19th-century British North America and England. My focus is on “the district” as a form of measure and control that was integral to colonial and, later, state projects of rule. Situating the historical place of the district and its relation to bourgeois civilization and the modern state form presents a unique challenge. The district has a polyvalent social character. The district was described in the late 17th century as “territory under the jurisdiction of a lord or officer.”² The division between lord and officer suggests the beginning of a contested, or at least unclear, division between feudal authority and authority vested by office. In the 18th century, “district” was used to denote any vague or unmeasured “tract of land,” and in the 19th century, it became a form of action. To district “is a technique of dividing places for administrative purposes.”³ Thus, “the district” was pulled apart by a range of social forces. On one level, its meaning points to a conditioning relation between bureaucracy and spatial order as well as to a

¹ Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: The Bath Press, 1991), 196.

² District (n), District (v), Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2015, Oxford University Press.

³ District (n), District (v), Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2015, Oxford University Press.

process of documenting and registering people, land, and things within jurisdictions of territory. Consequently, the district provides insight into the processes of making discrete, bounded spaces, which are assigned to administrative functions. At the same time these neat, ordered units of jurisdiction are dialectically related to the other meaning of the district as an indistinct and unknown region that appears on the periphery of rule. The etymology of the word is indicative of a whole field of problems expressed between jurisdictions, bounded spaces, and the making of territory through administrative areas. The task of this dissertation is not to pinpoint the moments when the district took on these meanings or the causes that mobilized each successive transformation, but to focus on the historical formation of the district as a technique of spatial measure and control. I am concerned particularly with how the district came to be aligned with inspection, the effects this alignment had on relations of rule, and the district's possible relationship to discontinuities in the knowledge and representation of human life between the 18th and mid-19th centuries.⁴

I read the district through particular sites, institutions, and objects of rule around which it circulated and which, in some instances, it brought into existence. As an off-hand unit of spatial designation the district is ubiquitous. Today there are commercial districts, shopping districts, traffic districts, school districts, and electoral districts. As a stand-in for speaking about things as specific to a space, the district has taken on a banality that makes it hard to conceive its place in broader

⁴ There are various instances of districting that fall outside my field of study. The examples of districting I have focused on are unified in that they are both paired to practices of documentation.

processes such as state formation, colonial rule, and the consolidation of population in mid-19th-century industrial capitalist society. To periodize the concept, I focus on two episodes of “districting” that occurred over the course of the 19th century. The first episode was the formation of trading districts in the Hudson’s Bay Company (1815-1840), and the second was the emergence of the registration district in England in 1838. These episodes were not the first time districts were thought of and mobilized. For instance, the district was utilized in Alexander von Humboldt’s studies of New Spain (1801), both as a technique to isolate and examine variations within vegetation and also as a technique to enumerate and document the mortality of Spain’s colonial subjects in various mining districts.⁵

However, three characteristics differentiate the districts used by the HBC and the General Registrars Office in England from the earlier practices of “districting.” First, these districts were not organized principally with the intent to stabilize authority or title over land. Rather, these districts were deployed as a means to populate artificial spaces and to gather “statistics” (such as those of mortality, criminality, and economy). To this end, these districts were deployed to produce administrative spaces that were contiguous to a number of other relations of rule. Second, whereas there were cases of one-time applications of districts, the districts in this study were mobilized to consolidate people, land, and things as a stable social field with some degree of administrative permanence. Third, these districts were designed to document people and place, subject them to continuous inspection, and

⁵ Alexander Humboldt, *Climate, Inhabitants, Productions and Mines of Mexico* (London: Paternoster-Row, 1824 [1821]).

to use the knowledge collected through these inspections for the mobilization of bureaucratic systems of administration. These episodes reveal a dual-deployment of the district as a technique of spatial measure and as a technique to enforce the consistent inspection of people, land, and things.

Suggesting that a unit of measure had to be made presents its own problems of study. How does one *make* something abstract like a unit of measure or a mode of gathering and administrating people, land, and things within a circumscribed area? The district is analytically slippery as a form of social practice. It appears far more consistent as a mode of thinking than as a definite material “object.” Nonetheless, districts are material things as they pertain to definite locations, administrative points of delimitation, and specific assemblages of people, land, and things. At the same time, the district is also a method of social geometry that can be applied to a given area to bring into view certain objects, which can then be reconfigured once the necessary details are ascertained. As a technique, the district appears far more tactile in mind than in hand. For instance, Charles Darwin used districts as impromptu designations to organize his findings and to spatialize the variations between his specimens;⁶ yet none of these districts had permanence or any material existence outside the text. Thus the district’s elision as a mode of thought and as a

⁶ Darwin used the district as a technique to conceptualize variation amongst his specimens. For instance, “to test the anticipation of this truth I have arranged the plants of twelve countries and the coleopterous sects into two districts” see Charles Darwin, *On the Origins of the Species* (New York: Atheneum, 1964 [1870]), 56. *The Descent of Man* also relies heavily on the district as a technique to demarcate and compare populations; see Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man in Relation to Sex* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1871), 290–291.

spatial field that can be assigned a materiality makes it difficult to trace its lines of descent.

Consequently, to understand the district and the processes that constituted it requires that we study the effects of the district within a broader ecology of relations. I focus on the forms of knowledge that were stabilized and modified by ruling through districts, the objects of rule districts circulated, and the sites through which the district was imagined and deployed. I approach the district from the perspective of historical epistemology. For example, I consider what forms of knowledge became possible with districts, and how did administrating through districts create discontinuities in the way(s) subjects were envisioned and ruled?⁷ Although districts were deployed to rationalize the costs of administration, seeing and acting through districts modified social practices of inspection, stabilized the census of population, and centralized political rule. Pairing the district's material effects to modifications in social vision and acts of documentation allows this project to historicize how dividing, measuring, and standardizing space was productive of new representations of human beings and new conceptualizations of rule, both of which became linked to 19th-century capitalist social relations.

Although the focus on inspection, population, and state administration does not play out evenly in both episodes, taken together they can be read as the social

⁷ This dissertation's interest in how practices of documentation and new forms of social vision condition the production of knowledge overlaps with Michel Foucault's work in *Birth of the Clinic*. See Michel Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic: an archeology of medical perception* (New York: Pantheon Books); see also Michel Foucault, "Introduction" in Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 21.

relations that make up the “genetics” of the district during the mid-19th century. I propose three theses:

First, the district was integral to the formation of inspection as a practice of rule; it forms the link in a shift from 18th-century practices of observation to the processes of institutionalizing inspection in the 19th century. I trace practices of using districts to codify inspection in both the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and in state projects linked to the New Poor Law in England. In the latter case, I focus on how Jeremy Bentham imagined the district as part of the extended diagram of the principle of inspection. It was through the codification of districts that inspection was economized and rationalized as a practice of rule.

Second, the district emerged both in the HBC and in England in relation to projects that sought to stabilize relations of production. In the case of the HBC, the district formed a colonial strategy of making labour productive by policing mobility and debt. In England the district was tied to capitalist relations as well. As a technique of economic control, the district was meant to make the expenses for the Poor Law system reliable, consistent, and, above all, comparable. While the use of districts to coordinate Poor Law administration was only partially successful, it was taken up again to regulate the movement and productivity of the poor in a system of constabulary districts. In particular, it was deployed to regulate the mobility of idle labour, which was thought to be disruptive to capitalist production. As such, the district provided a framework of political rule integral to both colonial processes of accumulation and it later worked to attenuate or make manageable the internal contradictions of industrial capitalist society.

Last, districts formed the connective tissue that joined bureaucracy, the census of population, and biopower. Using districts to divide space for the purposes of administration not only served to economize inspection and documentation, it also grounded the census in a comparative spatial order. These data were then utilized to distill from census returns the laws, tendencies, and internal statistical rates of population. Thus the district was not only an administrative division capable of imposing stable bureaucratic jurisdictions, but it was also the 19th-century reservoir for the “laws of large numbers.” The district reveals how the census shifted from enumeration to the formation of internal laws and patterns of life that allowed people and things to be ruled at the level of biological contingencies.⁸ As such, the district illuminates the connective tissue between the census of population in the 19th century and the codification of spatial order.

Method

The method employed for this study is a combination of archival study and a close reading of primary documents. There are, of course, many ways to read these kinds of texts. I am using these documents to reconstruct certain relations of rule, namely the formation inspection, documentation of people, and census and the points of contact these practices share with the development of the district as a form of spatial order. I hope to avoid a purely discursive analysis through my commitment to a historical materialist ontology. This approach structures my method and my treatment of the archival documents in three ways. First, my focus

⁸ See Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality vol. 1* (London: Penguin Press, 1997 [1976]), 142; see also Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

on the district as both a social practice and a form of documentation requires reading each document twice. As these practices of documentation are material—they involved individuals, modes of documentation, relations of rule between those who recorded, those who were recorded, and bureaus or administrative points to which these forms of registration were directed—they are embodiments of a specific configuration of practices of commanding space and documentation. Fort Journals, post-logs, District Reports, the Minutes of the Northern Council reveal the social relations that structured the codification of observation into district inspection. The document is the remnant of the practice and so insight can be gained, not only into how officials desired these practices to operate, but also how they faced both structural and idiosyncratic limits.

There are, of course, pitfalls in this approach. Reading the document as a form of practice privileges the effects of the practice over the actual struggle and conflict that the practice of rule was deployed to attenuate or destroy. This is clearest in the study of the HBC: the people who were most subject to the company's attempts to rule through a system of district reports were indigenous people who came to "belong" to HBC districts. Consequently, indigenous people were not given much voice or an identity outside the one the company sought to impose upon them. This was not for lack of interest, but because their existence, identity, and voices were recorded in documents that were intended to rule and marginalize them. Given this bias, while the categories of HBC district reports provide insight into the prejudices and concerns of HBC officials, they tell us little about who these indigenous people were outside the modes of registration to which they were subject.

The second way to read these documents is to view them as offering insight into a specific set of relations—the ideas, associations, beliefs, and, possibly habits—of their authors. Approaching the material in this manner provides a means to discuss these practices at a point when they existed unattached to the state-idea or state institutions. It is important, however, to be mindful of the social position, ideas and habits, and political offices of the authors of these texts. Although I have not been able to include the biographical details of every individual who enters the study, those figures whose lives are the most legible are given as much attention as possible.

I have relied on primary documents from three sites: the Manitoba Keystone archives of the Hudson's Bay Company, Library and Archives Canada, and files from the archives of the General Registrar in England. While other primary texts have been consulted, these three document sources comprise the bulk of the primary research material. I focused on documents from the period 1815–1875 (although some lines of research fall outside this stated period). My sketches of the sovereign right of seizure and practices of observation in the 18th century are important to provide an idea of the lines of descent behind inspectoral practices used by HBC officials. Moreover, in studying the role of the district in English state formation, I focus on the period of 1834–1863. In places, the project extends on either side of this period: I analyze Bentham's writings from the 1790s, as these are essential to understand spatial codification of the Poor Laws of 1834, and I move outside 1863 to trace the district in William Farr's understanding of population as an object conditioned by the milieu of the district. The temporal period under investigation is

quite large, but my intention is neither to provide the reader with a unified or complete narrative of the period nor with all the trajectories that come out of the district. Instead, I allowed the social forms and relations that appear as the effects of “district space” determine the scope of these episodes.

For the first episode of the district, my study used the following research materials: District reports, annual reports to the London Council, private journals, the minutes of the Northern Department meetings, architectural drawings, cartographic surveys, and secondary sources. These documents were used to develop a social analysis of the HBC practices of districting that weaves together institutional directives, biographical detail, administration practices, and material determinations such as reporting styles, fort designs, district reports, and earlier journal narratives. These research materials link together practices of observation and inspection, and the effects of districting land, people, and things as objects of administration.

The second episode involves a more eclectic document base and, as it orbits already developed sites of analysis, I have made more use of secondary accounts. In this section, the study focuses less on excavating the technique of how districts were made and more on how different systems of districts became embedded in projects of state. I draw on the Poor Laws, registration districts, Farr’s work at the General Registrars Office (GRO), the commission on establishing constabulary districts (1839), journals, and texts produced by district inspectors. Focusing on these sites, I examine the logic of the registration district and its connection to the census and inspectorial practices and how the district helped anchor knowledge of vital

statistics, crime, and economy. In traversing these sites, I illustrate how the district became a technique of state that was used to govern population, control mobility of undesirable subjects, and rationalize state administration.

Project Layout

This project is divided into three parts. *Part I: The Register of Observation* consists of the chapter “The Eighteenth-Century Observational Register and its Limits.” In this chapter I examine how physico-theology (a belief that the divine laws of God could be discerned from studies of nature) mobilized a form of observation in the 18th century that was concerned with producing detailed knowledge of nature. Being cognizant of nature, recording details about land, vegetation, animals and even “orders of men,” was linked to the individual’s own virtue and piousness. I sketch how this incitement to observe became bound up with Linnaean categories and how these categories produced a specific representation of people, land, and things. I develop this case by reviewing the observations made by naturalists, three of whom were employed by the HBC from the mid- to late-18th century. The chapter concludes with a theorization of how this mode of seeing, recording, and documenting nature produced knowledge of human beings in static typologies. Here I analyze Malthus’s *Essay on the Principle of Population* as an outgrowth of the form of knowledge produced by physico-theology and natural history. I conclude by theorizing how the formation of population as a biopolitical object was contingent upon the emergence of the district as a new form of spatial order.

Part II: The Colonial District: Birth of a Register is divided into four chapters. Chapter 3, “The Right of Seizure, the Fort, and the Preconditions of District

Inspection,” interrogates how the HBC shifted from ruling through a sovereign right of seizure to ruling through districts. The chapter focuses on how the command of space was exercised by the fort from the 18th to the 19th centuries. Chapter 4, “The Codification of Natural History: Observation to Inspection,” examines how the social vision of the naturalist was codified into an inspectoral practice. I develop this argument by tracing how the categories of the naturalist’s observation were used to structure the inspection of HBC trade districts. Chapter 5, “District Space and Productive Labour,” and Chapter 6, “District Space, Population, and the Growth of a Variable Milieu,” respectively examine how districts were integral to HBC strategies to make indigenous hunters into productive economic subjects, and the role districts played in constructing indigenous people as population.

Part III: The District in Service of the State examines the processes through which districts became tied to state practices of rule. Chapter 7, “Theorizing the District in Service of State,” opens with a theorization of how the district can help us understand processes of mid-19th century state formation. I draw on the work of Max Weber and scholars of historical sociology to develop an account of the role spatial measure played in the creation of bureaucratic agencies in service of the state. That discussion provides the context for Chapter 8, “The Rise of the District in Bentham’s Inspection-House Principle,” which outlines Jeremy Bentham’s initial plan to use districts to administrate the new Poor Law system consistently throughout space and time. The chapter stresses the comparative nature of the district in Bentham’s thought and points to how the spatial order of the Poor Law was used to setup the registration district. Chapter 9, “Registration Districts and the

Further Codification of the Milieu,” sketches how registration districts in England served to further consolidate people as populations as determined by the milieu of the districts to which they “belonged.” In Chapter 10, “Constabulary Districts and Making Labour Productive,” I develop the argument that, in ways analogous to the HBC district, the district was introduced in England to calibrate a spatial order that would effectively police the mobility of idle labour. Finally, Chapter 11, “The District: A Template For the Modern State Form,” addresses the generalization of the district as a technique of state administration by interrogating how districts were used to rationalize people, land, and things as the interior of the state, economized inspection, and were used to cultivate “objective” political relations of rule.

Part I

Chapter 1: Spatial Order Beyond Governmentality

In this chapter I have two objectives that, when taken together, inform this dissertation's theorization of how population and place were combined in the early 19th century. First, I argue that by focusing on the prosaic practices of dividing space for the purposes of documentation, it is possible to uncover relations and practices of ruling populations that are otherwise underdeveloped in theorizations of territory and population inspired by Foucault's concept of governmentality. In particular, I outline three conceptual lacunae that abstract territory and population when read solely through the framework of governmentality. I map these lacunae in relation to Foucault's initial analysis of the relations of territory, security and population. Second, this chapter develops the theoretical concepts of "observation and inspectoral practices of documentation," "spatial codification," and "internal conditions" in order to rethink district-inspection and the formation of population as a category of rule.

Governmentality, Territory and Population

A number of scholars use Foucault's writings on governmentality, especially *Security, Territory, Population*, to study the history of territory and population as objects linked together by the strategies of rule deployed by governmental states.¹ This body of work has drawn attention to the calculative nature of territory and

¹ Matthew Hannah, "Calculable Territory and the West German census boycott movement of the 1980s," in *Political Geography*, vol. 28 issue 1 (2009): 66.

population through such case studies as the mapping of congestion in colonial Delhi, the formation of territory in 19th-century America, the fixing of race to borders, and the mapping of mineral systems.² This analytical approach to “doing a history of territory” has been most elegantly articulated by Stuart Elden. Starting from the premise that Foucault makes an error by assigning territory to historical periods in which it did not exist, Elden draws on governmentality to historicize territory as technique of calculative governmental rule unique to the 19th century.³

In *The Birth of Territory* (2013), Elden proposes that the historical appearance of territory in earlier epochs is largely the product of palimpsest (i.e., writing new text over the concepts and meanings of older documents). Theorists and writers have, argues Elden, returned to historical texts and accounts of power and place and, in maintaining the original forms of ruling land in these texts (such as dominion, majesty and empire), they have rewritten these configurations as “territory.”

Elden argues that by extending the history of territory into earlier periods, Foucault overlooks its contingency to 19th-century governmental rule. It follows that in order to unpack the rise of territory as a category of rule, it is necessary to

² Stephen Legg, “Governmentality, Congestion and Calculation in Colonial Delhi,” in *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 7 issue 5(2006): 709–729; Matthew Hannah, *Governmentality and the Mastery of Territory in Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jeremy Crampton, “Cartographic calculations of territory,” in *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 35 no. 1 (2011): 92–103; Jeremy Crampton, “The cartographic calculation of space: race mapping and the Balkans at the Paris Peace Conference 1919,” in *Social and Cultural Geography* vol. 7 issue 5 (2006): 731–752; Bruce Braun, “Producing Vertical territory: geology and governmentality in late Victorian Canada,” in *Ecumene* vol. 7, no. 1(2000): 7–46.

³ For a discussion of territory and political rationalities see Stuart Elden, “How Should we Do a History of Territory,” in *Territory, Politics, Governance*, vol. 1 issue 1(2013): 1–20; Hannah, “Calculable Territory” (2009).

examine the parallel formation between the government of population and the rise of calculable territory. Elden suggests,

Territory is a political technology: it comprises techniques for measuring land and techniques for controlling terrain. Foucault's analysis of the politics of calculation is, therefore, crucial, but not as something which only manifests itself in population, but, rather, in territory too. *The same kinds of mechanisms that Foucault looks at in relation to population are used to understand and control territory.*⁴

Jeremy Crampton echoes Elden's concern that scholars have used Foucault's writings on governmentality, population and security to gain insight into "what calculation is, and the insights it provides into strategies of territory, [the] appropriations of space and the role of mapping."⁵ Scholarship, therefore, has focused on "genealogies of territory and calculation" and appears to start from the premise that, at least in the 19th century, "space and governmentality [are] the species of population."⁶ The emergence of population as the target and end of government does not mark a moment when population displaced territory but, on the contrary, when the emergence of a whole ensemble of techniques and forms of political knowledge rendered territory manageable in relation to population.⁷

As such, scholars that have approached territory through governmentality– calculation argue that the 19th century was a period during which population

⁴ Elden, "How Should We Do a History of Territory?," 10 [my italics]; see also Elden, "Governmentality, Calculation, Territory," in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* vol. 25(2007a): 562–80; Elden, "Rethinking Governmentality," in *Political Geography* vol. 26(2007b): 29–33.

⁵ Crampton, "Cartography: Cartographic Calculations of Territory," 93.

⁶ Crampton, "Cartography: Cartographic Calculations of Territory," 93.

⁷ See R.S. Rose-Redwood, "Governmentality, geography and the geocoded world," in *Progress in Human Geography* vol. 30 (2006): 469–486; G. O'Tauthail, *Critical Geopolitics: the politics of writing global space* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996); Braun, "Producing Vertical territory: geology and governmentality in late Victorian Canada"; John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Mapping, Cartographic Reason and the Geocoded World* (London: Routledge, 2004).

emerged alongside the deployment of geo-power. As a mode of encoding space, geo-power “linked governmental knowledges (both statistical and cartographic) with the governed population by constructing a ‘geo-coded landscape’.”⁸ John Pickles approaches territory as part of a formation of a “cartographic gaze” in which “temperature, biota, populations, regions, spaces and objects attain the reality that is particular to them through the combined and multiplied acts of mapping, delimiting bounding, categorizing.”⁹ Geo-power, or the coding of people and space as gridded knowable objects, is a process that needs to be conceptualized as an ensemble of practices that actually precede the government of population. In many ways, this notion of geo-power has been refined by the territory-calculation literature as the use of calculable orders to produce “geometrical order and spatial clarity”¹⁰ and also to “know, control and govern territory by number.”¹¹

I agree that territory is tied up with the knowledge, social relations and practices of 19th-century social formations.¹² However, I argue that the following three issues arise from governmentality-centric analyses of territory and population. First, reading territory through governmentality overlooks the historical

⁸ For this point see Stuart Elden, “How should we do a history of Territory”; Elden, “Land, Terrain, Territory,” in *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 34, issue 6 (2010): 799–817; and Elden, “Thinking Territory Historically”. Cf. Hannah, “Calculable Territory”; Crampton, “Cartographic Calculations of Territory”; Rose-Redwood, “Governmentality, geography and geocoded world,” 470.

⁸ Pickles, *A History of Spaces*, 94.

⁹ Pickles, *A History of Spaces*, 94.

¹⁰ Margo Huxley, “Geographies of Governmentality,” in *Space, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (Great Britain: Ashgate publishing, 2007), 196.

¹¹ Crampton, “Cartography: Cartographic Calculations of Territory,” 94.

¹² Elsewhere I have argued that the Down Survey of Ireland forms an episode where a territorial imagination emerged. See Aaron Henry, “William Petty, the Down Survey, Territory and Population in the Seventeenth Century” in *Territory, Politics, Governance*, vol. 2 issue 2 (2014): 218–237.

limitations of conceptualizing territory through the same mechanisms of government used to “discover” population. Second, such studies tend to historicize territory in a way that posits an uneven relationship between sovereign power and governmentality, which leaves projects of state formation on the margins. Third, there is an inclination to displace real social, cultural, and material relations with abstract and socially decontextualized forces (such as political knowledge and governmental rationalities). In developing these critiques I argue that the district provides a concrete empirical link between the formation of population and the rule of place in the 19th century.

Critique of Governmentality and Territory-Population

Although governmentality was one of Foucault’s least developed ideas, in the last two decades it has become a predominant concept in critical social science. As Curtis notes, with this ascendance there has been a tendency for scholars to ascribe the concept a theoretical unity that was absent in Foucault’s development of it.¹³ Foucault’s insights into how governmentality homogenized the conduct of rule from state, city, household, and individuals, or that an aim of government was to cultivate self-rule have not caught the attention of contemporary scholars; they are more interested in the argument that governmentality is characterized by a calculative and biopolitical representation of population.¹⁴

¹³ Bruce Curtis, “Taking the state back out: Rose and Miller on political power” in *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 46 no. 4 (1995): 575–588.

¹⁴ See Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Essential Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (London, New York: The New Press, 1978), 241; Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.

In the *History of Sexuality* vol. 1, Foucault suggests that modern society is characterized by a reworking of the sovereign right to kill and let live, which was replaced with a new form of power typified by “administrating life.”¹⁵ This form of power, Foucault explains, works at the scale of population and of “man as a living species.”¹⁶ Sexuality is one site where this form of power—biopower—is deployed. However, the formation of biopower is said to be the product of two earlier forms of power: anatomo-power, which is a form of power concerned with regulation, productivity, and optimization of the movements, as well as the docility and attentiveness of the body; and biopolitics, which is a form of power concerned with controls over demography, birth rates, and mortality, as well as the relations of population to resources.¹⁷ While Foucault provides a compelling study of anatomo-politics in his work on discipline, biopolitics is not sketched with the same rigor. Biopolitics is, for Foucault, an 18th-century formation of power even though its characteristics, such as the census, tables of national resources, and mortality, for the most part only became dominant social practices in the 19th century. Instances of recording and enumerating people do occur in the 18th century and earlier, but, as Curtis notes, Foucault fails to demonstrate that these enumerations are part of population and not other forms of aggregation (such as populousness and the social body).¹⁸ Consequently, his theorization of biopower as the coalescence of anatomo-politics and biopolitics has no historical basis.

¹⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol. 1, 139.

¹⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol. 1, 142.

¹⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol. 1, 139.

¹⁸ Bruce Curtis, “Foucault on Governmentality and Population: the impossible discovery,” in the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, vol. 27, no. 4 (2002): 505–533.

Foucault followed up this theorization a year later in his work *Security, Territory, Population* (1978). Here Foucault explicitly brings up the concept of governmentality and pays less attention to the concept of biopower.¹⁹ Far from providing a more rigorous historical analysis of biopower, the lecture focuses on the emergence of population and its relation to state formation. Population, then, takes the foreground in a lengthy but, at times, cursory historical analysis. Analyzing Machiavelli, Foucault argues that the conditions of possibility for population to emerge lay in the modification of sovereignty from a direct relation of the prince to his “principality” to a relation to an internal set of relations that must be managed. The relation to territory, therefore, ceases to be grounded in sovereign rule and instead becomes grounded in the rule of the internal reality of things. For Foucault, this shift in sovereignty heralded the mercantile administrative-state form premised on maintaining the “right disposition of things.”²⁰ Ruling “things,” for Foucault, shifted power away from land and territory and instead concentrated rule on the internal management of the state. This development marked the rise of the “art of government” as a technology of rule. Foucault views the art of government as being blocked by the mercantilist state form, however, which seems to imply the art of government had its own agency that was expressed through seemingly autonomous rationalities of political rule.²¹ Thus, it was only once the mercantile state developed

¹⁹ Although the lectures were intended as a study of biopower, Foucault dropped the concept almost as soon as it was introduced. Biopower became a ‘vague concept’ to denote the “mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy...from the eighteenth century onward.” See Foucault, *Security Territory, Population*, 1.

²⁰ Foucault, *Security, Territory Population*, 96.

²¹ Curtis, “Foucault on Governmentality and Population.”

the science of police and the capability of generating documentation and nascent forms of statistical records that human beings became imagined as governable biopolitical phenomena.

Although Foucault does not make much use of biopower in his lectures on governmentality, this theorization still rests heavily on the scaffolding of biopolitics. In particular, while he provides a more specific discussion of police and the rise of biopolitical conceptions of population, he does not, as Curtis notes, confront the historical problem that population as a concept lacks a history in the 18th century. While police sciences are implicitly credited with transforming earlier practices of enumeration into population, there is no discussion of how this took place.²² Herein lies one of the lacunae of reading territory as constituted by the same governmental strategies of ruling population. That is, the placement of population in the 18th century is ahistorical. If it is the case that population and territory are informed by the same calculative mechanisms, then taking Foucault seriously would mean examining the science of police as the first calculative mechanism. Yet, this would tie territory to historical periods during which, as Elden persuasively argues, the category of calculative territory did not exist!²³ Consequently, population has a history that extends outside Foucault's account of biopolitics, which troubles the idea that territory was simply the product of calculative strategies to rule population. The connection of population to the constitution of territory is far from evident and the literature on calculative territory has yet explicitly to develop the

²² Curtis, "Foucault on Governmentality and Population", 524.

²³ See Elden, "How Should we Do a History of Territory", 1–16; Jeremy Black, "Government, state, and cartography: mapping, power, and politics in Europe, 1650–1800". *Cartographica* vol. 43(2008): 95–105; Hannah, "Calculable Territory."

relation between them.²⁴ The focus, then, is on the calculation of land, cartographic mapping, rationalization of people and place, all of which is interesting, but which assumes these techniques belong to the same mechanisms of population.

Moreover, focusing on population-calculation and governmentality as a means to discuss territory leads to an over-determination of government as the form of rule that characterizes modern society. In particular, Foucault's earlier work, such as *Discipline and Punish* and the *History of Sexuality*, uses analyses of specific locations and institutional sites to show that top-down apparatuses of power did not characterize rule, but that rule was diffuse, contingent, and site specific.

Governmentality, however, is interpreted as a totalizing form of rule. For my purposes, the problem that arises is that older and different social forms may in fact determine calculative practices that appear to be part of governmentality. Working from the premise that territory is linked to population through governmentality makes it difficult to discuss the historical formation of the rule of land and population outside the concepts and empirical sites that have come to constitute studies in governmentality. This leads to the problematic role ascribed to sovereign power in the calculative territory literature.

Sovereign Power

Sovereign power remains undeveloped in Foucault's work and has not been pushed much farther by his interlocutors.²⁵ The analytical problem this lack poses is

²⁴ Matthew Hannah takes up the themes of census, geography and social control but treats census as a disciplinary relation of panoptic administration. See Matthew Hannah, "Space and Social Control in the Administration of the Oglala Lakota" in *Historical Geography* vol. 19, issue 4(1993): 412–432.

that a focus on territory as a 19th-century category of rule conditioned by governmentality leaves out the role sovereign power may have played in constituting the conditions of possibility for territory. Without developing an analysis of sovereign power, it is difficult to understand the relation of 19th-century territory to state practices developed by earlier formations of power and place (e.g., Westphalia). This problem is further compounded by the fact that the literature has largely adopted Foucault's anemic reading of sovereign power. Sovereign power, for Foucault, operated on space "by establishing limits and frontier or fixing locations" and, as such, it imagined its field of view to be fundamentally unpopulated.²⁶ In relying on Foucault's reading of sovereign power, scholars working on territory and population have understood sovereign power as a static field of relations subsumed or surpassed by the biopolitical strategies of governmentality.

Moreover, sovereign power is still taken to be an older modality of rule based loosely on a right of seizure. As a form of power, sovereign power is analyzed through a tripartite formation of royal decree, ritual-spectacle-symbol, and the coercive power of the sword.²⁷ As such, sovereign power features only as an analytical foil for more complex forms of power that, in some instances, either surpassed or formed outside the framework of sovereign rule. Consequently, sovereign power is not given any vitality in animating new forms of rule. The spatial

²⁵ Brian Singer and Lorna Weir, "Sovereignty, Governance and the Political: The Problematic of Foucault" in *Thesis Eleven* vol. 94, no. 1 (2008): 49–71.

²⁶ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 11.

²⁷ Mitchell Dean, "Demonic Societies" Liberalism, Biopolitics and Sovereignty in *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State* ed. Thomas Blom Hansen, Finn Stepputat (2001): 49; Hannah, "Calculable Territory"; Black, "Government, state, and cartography."

order of sovereign power has been largely bracketed from the putatively calculative, measured spatial order of territory by treating the former as a static and, therefore, ahistorical form of rule. Discounting sovereign power as a historical force ultimately generates a reading of modern territory that works within the thematic of historic rupture. Territory emerges with the rise of population and, as such, the historical forces and social forms that pre-existed the rise of governmental reason appear to have no influence on the form of spatial order that emerged with 19th-century territory.

Throughout the project I focus on the district as a practice of classification and designation that becomes a technique of state allied with other formations of power. My discussion of the rise of the district in the Hudson's Bay Company examines the district as an alignment of power and place that relied on social practices that initially developed out of the company's sovereign right of seizure. By developing this theorization, I make clearer the relation of sovereign practices of rule to territory than it is in those approaches that treat territory as solely a unified form of governmental power.

Build With Actual Blocks

Hannah argues that scholars who use the territory-calculation theorization are working towards building the categories of territory, sovereignty, and state from the bottom up.²⁸ Nevertheless, the literature reproduces the pitfalls that exist in other governmentality-inspired approaches where the focus of studying projects and

²⁸ Hannah, "Calculable Territory," 66.

rationalities remains aloof to concerns over agency and causality.²⁹ The problem arises when identified rationalities and projects of rule are taken to emerge from governmental reason or mentalities of rule through their own momentum. Thus, in his work on the mastery of territory in 19th-century America, Hannah proposes to study one notable government official as “the comprehensive subject of governmental strategies during this period.”³⁰ Building up territory or sovereignty through the sole address of rationalities and projects is not without analytical consequences.

In particular, the employment of a governmentality-inspired approach to territory often deploys rationalities twice, once as the historical genealogical building blocks of the category and then as the mentalities (or knowledge) produced by a society characterized by governmental rule. Neither the category, which ought to be empirical and real, nor the analytical mode of power the category it is said to characterize is in need of historical validation. Moreover, historical circumstances and material determinations often feature as the backdrop to these rationalities. There is no issue with suggesting that rationalities have agency insofar as rationalities of rule have effects once they are deployed. The problem stems from a failure to acknowledge that said rationalities are the products of agency: they are thought of and produced by real individuals, and they are deployed in real material circumstances that shape the conditions of their formation. Often in the territory-calculation literature, social forms of determination—such as capitalist production

²⁹ Curtis, “Taking the State Back Out”, 582.

³⁰ Hannah, *The Mastery of Territory*, 61.

and sites of particular domination as the state—are either missing or remain subservient to seemingly self-mobilizing political rationalities.

Inspection in Service of the State

By examining how land and people were classified and documented throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, I move beyond the abstraction of territory and population that appears prevalent in governmentality-inspired processes. I focus specifically on how the observation of the naturalist was reworked into an inspectoral conduct. The rise of inspectoral practices has been studied by a number of scholars, particularly in relation to the formation of the modern state form. There are important insights gleaned from this scholarship. Inspection is predominantly a 19th-century practice that emerged both in the English state and in the colonial theatre. As a practice it was deployed across a number of domains: liquor inspectors, road and railway inspectors, workhouse inspectors, factory inspectors, and education inspectors.

The effects of inspection are not uniform. For instance, Curtis demonstrates that education inspectors were put in service of an educational idea, namely that the use of education enabled the public to vote responsibly and, in this way, govern itself. In short, inspection was a practice tied up with the accumulation of administration knowledge about educational facilities—the location of schools houses, the state of schools, and the moral character and quality of the schoolmaster—as well as moral regulation.³¹ Hacking points to the relation between

³¹Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?: Inspection, Education and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Bruce Curtis, “Jacob Keefer’s Educational Tour 1845” in *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 28 no. 2 (1993); see also Philip

inspection and the English Blue Books as a project of biopolitics,³² while Corrigan and Sayer gesture to the rise of inspection as one means used to challenge Old Corruption in 1830s England.³³

These studies of inspection yield two key points. The first is that the centralization of the state and the development of administrative knowledge are intimately tied up with knowledge of local conditions. Colonial governors' and government officials' inability to know local conditions formed a recurrent and fundamental problem in the 19th century, and, in this sense, inspection played a crucial role in building local conditions that could be later connected to centralized authority. Second, inspection is a practice distinct and historically prior to official bureaucratic expertise. Inspectors by and large were "choice men" or "enlightened men" selected by local government bodies to carry out the practice. As such, government offices and projects did not create inspection. These sites refined inspection and modified it by standardizing how things were recorded, documented, and the frequency at which these inspections occurred. Nonetheless, inspection was put in service of the state. Consequently, the question remains of how this private practice emerged. What milieus, forms of conduct, ideas and practices came together to give inspection a distinct historical form in the 19th century?

Corrigan and Bruce Curtis, "Education, Inspection and State Formation: A Preliminary Statement" in *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* vol. 20 issue 1(1985): 156–171.

³² Ian Hacking, "Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers" in *Humanities and Society*, vol. 5(1982): 279–295.

³³ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Bath Press, 1985).

The district can be studied to engage with these two aspects of inspection: its historical formation, and its relation to the registration of “local conditions.” The two episodes of the district examined in this dissertation do not attend to these two aspects of inspection equally. While the analysis of the HBC focuses on the emergence of inspection, the discussion of the district in England is far more attentive to how putting the district in service of the state was productive of a range of local conditions of rule. My key argument is that while a number of modifications had to take place in restructuring observation into inchoate practices of inspection, most of these changes were connected to the HBC’s deployment of the district as an administrative field of management. By tracing how district-inspection emerged as a practice, I am able to show how the observational narrative of the naturalist informed some of the historical conditions for inspection. In contrast, the discussion of the district in England examines how districts and inspection emerged as related techniques of state rule.³⁴

While Scott makes a similar investigation into the techniques of cultivating social vision as a relation of rule, I take up his work only in passing. This is due in part because Scott’s focus on late 19th- and 20th-century projects of high modernism falls outside my scope. Additionally, whereas Scott privileges “the state” as the site of construction for this form of social vision, I want to show how the social vision executed through the district was produced through a range of social practices that later became of the state. Nonetheless, a reader familiar with Scott’s discussion of

³⁴ See Corrigan and Curtis, “Education, Inspection and State Formation”; Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*; Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men*.

legibility and simplification will see a parallel history of the narrowing and standardizing of social vision.³⁵

I will now trace how districts were used to narrow inspection and give it a distinct spatial codification that drew people and place together as the local conditions of rule. I will also explore how, once put in service of the state, the district economized inspection and allowed it to be formally examined and reviewed by government agencies. The primary focus of this second episode is on the Registration District of the General Registrar's Office, Constabulary Districts, and then the spread of districts as the organizing conditions for other fields of state agencies.

Theory of District-inspection

As the 1670 HBC charter shows, territory was positioned as part of a general litany of terms to describe parcels of land. The charter granted

and confirme[d] unto the said Governor and Company and their successors the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas Streights Bayes Rivers Lakes Creekes and Soundes in whatsoever Latitude they shall bee that lie within the entrance of the Streights commonly called Hudson's Streights together with all the Landes and Territoryes upon the Countreyes Coastes and confynes of the Seas Bayes Lakes Rivers Creekes and Soundes.³⁶

No doubt, territory has boundaries but it appears as one of many designations, indistinct to land. Moreover, in this description, territory is deprived of any interior space. It reveals a form of power that is positioned on the surface of objects, and that is measured and expressed between coasts and shorelines. In this sense, subjects,

³⁵ See James C. Scott, "Part 1: State Projects of Legibility and Simplification" in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁶ *The Royal Charter for Incorporating the Hudson's Bay Company*, 1670, 5.

forts, fish, minerals, and so forth were not considered to form the internal features of conditions of territory. They fell under the dominion of the company insofar as they were present in the territory and land granted to the HBC. During the 17th century there were similar usages of the term outside the HBC Charter. In his work, *The Down Survey of Ireland*, Petty gives us a similar reading of territory as one of many units of measure: “town and country, half barony, *territory*, franchise, liberty, parish.”³⁷ Territory, then, formed one of many spatial units of designation.

Less than two hundred years later, during the Oregon dispute, the HBC described to the Colonial Office “the character of the British territory on the mainland” in a markedly different way. The writer commented on the topography, the resources, the flora and fauna, the climate, the number of forts and outposts south of the 49th parallel (and the total population at each), and the total exports of the territory.³⁸ In contrast to the earlier formulation, the correspondence of the Colonial Office presented territory as a distinct thing. People, infrastructures, economic activity, soil and climate formed the registers of knowledge that constituted territory as a category.

What draws the district and inspection into this theorization of these two different social forms of territory? The internal categories expressed in the above report on territory were the same categories used to populate the HBC district in the 19th century: climate, soil, animals, vegetation, population, economic activity, and infrastructures. If territory shifted from a set of boundaries to a form of rule over an

³⁷ William Petty, *The History of the Survey of Ireland, Commonly Called, The Down Survey: 1667* [my italics], 326.

³⁸ National Archives of Canada 51, A.8/6, Letter from James Douglas to Captain Sheppard, May 28th, 1849.

interior arrangement of things, this shift was historically contingent on building knowledge of people, land, and things that were grouped together and arranged as delimited unit of administration. This formation was the product of drawing together the administrative field of the district and the practice of inspection. As such, this dissertation traces both the historical formation of the classification and documentation of land, people, and things, and also the processes whereby these classifications came to be attached to a distinct field of rule.

Soil, climate, people, flora and fauna are in fact forms of classification that developed from the Linnaean categories of natural history. These fields of classification, in the case of the HBC, formed the historical lines of social vision, language, and knowledge that constituted the technical details for HBC practices of district-inspection. It was through the district that a series of things (people, land, and resources) were made manageable, and it was also possible to draw lines of mutual constitution and conditioning relations between them. People, land, and things became comparable objects, indexed with one another. It was by combining longstanding registers with the administrative grid-work of the district that population came to be understood as an object conditioned by nature, subsistence, and economy. This regionalized relationship both modified the possibilities of political rule and formed the spatial order through which a conception of population, economy, soil, climate, land, and infrastructures could be envisioned as the material expression of territory.

Foucault makes passing reference to the district in the earlier parts of *Security, Territory, Population*. Instead of focusing on the uniformity the district—and its

relation to the production of local sites of intervention and new imaginations of people, land, and things as the conditions of territory—Foucault substitutes the milieu for the empirical object of the district.³⁹ In contrast, by pairing district-inspection as a practice, I am able to trace the historical formation through which a population was assembled and given a regionalized relationship to a set of conditions thought to be internal to “place” as territory. In so doing, I move beyond the abstract reading of territory and population by interrogating how districts were used to combine knowledge of population, land, and things. These social practices were structured by a particular spatial distribution that allowed for things to be separated and held in place as distinct targets of knowledge and administration. In other words, district inspection provides a concrete example of how territory took shape as a form of rule.

Observation and Inspectoral Systems of Documentation

The observational register refers to the practices, conducts, and intellectual conditions that shaped the social vision of people, land, and things in the 18th century. I focus on the role of natural history in creating the categories that were used to classify people and place. The mode of subjecting people, flora, fauna, and geography to the Linnaean system of registration generated typologies of life that were expressions of the various orders of nature. This historical form of vision produced an account of nature that was total in its scope. As a system of documentation, observation lacked permanent and definite spatial temporal coordinates. The overproduction of detail produced a reading of people and place

³⁹ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 21-22.

that did not effectively individualize or aggregate them in a way that allowed population to emerge as a living biopolitical object.

The inspectorial system of documentation changed how people, land, and place were seen. It refers to a form of social vision concerned with “real conditions,” which attempted to document people, land, and things as they were in real time. This inspectorial mode of documentation involved both the reworking of categories and the use of these categories to populate a pre-determined social field. Inspectorial practices worked within the district’s finite administrative field, and thus what was included in the district as objects of inspection and classification could be classified and documented according to the different objectives of those who ruled. I make use of inspectorial practices not only to refer to a shift that took place in how to see and in who records what and when, but also to denote a change in the spatial temporal coordinates in which people, land, and things were imagined.

These terms are not to be considered historically evident. In chapters 3 and 4 I demonstrate how practices of observation created the conditions of possibility for the formation of 19th-century inspectorial conducts. In the case of the HBC, observation was built into inspection by applying the categories first developed in the Linnaean system to districted spaces. In short, the collection of detail, or the totalized scan of the naturalist’s vision, was tamed and refined by placing it in a delimited administrative field that was then used to rationalize people, land, and things as discrete sites of inspection. I ground this formation in the specific milieus and circumstances that emerged in the HBC at the end of the 18th century. The second episode focuses more on Bentham’s writings on the importance of districts

to his principle of inspection. Bentham proposed the “district” as a means to transform how knowledge is built of people, land, and things. It is important to note that these terms do not refer to an extended social field or typify an entire historical period. Rather, they are assumed to be specific to the field of study of this dissertation. It is for this reason that I opt for observational and inspectoral systems of documentation over, for instance, Scott’s more broadly defined and generalized state practice of “legibility.”⁴⁰

Spatial Codification

I develop the concept of spatial codification to deal with the problem of causality that appears between the district and inspection. The district appears to provide the means to routinize inspection, assign jurisdictional limits, and subject people, land, and things to uniform consistent field of documentation. At the same time, the historical formation of district-space is contingent to the deployment of inspectorial practices. If the district is a spatial field, it is dependent on an array of practices of documentation used to populate it. Spatial codification, therefore, refers to the processes through which techniques of documentation and record making were extended and stabilized by planned geographies and architectural configurations. This concept avoids reading “space” as a category of rule onto itself. Space is not a field of rule that is awaiting the proper instruments of constitution to be discovered; rather, space becomes visible in the relations that configure how people, land, and things are related to one another and in the fields of intervention that are presupposed by their constitution as objects of rule. Documentation is

⁴⁰ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

bounded by an imagination of space and time, and such imaginations of space-time cannot be envisioned as tangible, knowable coordinates without objects that are subject to the conditioning effects of their parameters.

The documentation of these things, whether they are made contiguous to one another or separated by various attempts of measurement and classification, allows space to enter history as a field that can be planned and commanded. Understanding how people, land, and things were measured, controlled, and imagined in different historical periods adds to the dimensions of state formation, capital accumulation, population, and bureaucratization. In short, it contributes to well-established and researched sociological objects and processes.

Lefebvre argues that the spatial mode of production must be understood as an assemblage “produced by the forces and relations of production and property” and as “a product of relations of domination and strategies decided at the summit of the state.”⁴¹ Recognizing spatial order as something “decided” by the summit of the state, however, treats the state as a unified agent with a clear agenda in the making of rule. The summit of the state implies a particular hierarchical location where spatial order is seemingly planned and executed by state officials. The architecture of towns, buildings constructions, planning district boundaries, property formations, developing modes of measure, and the borders of nation-states are all arrangements developed with particular ideas, projects, and imaginations. As processes of political rule they are worked on and negotiated against real material conditions. This nuance is in danger of being lost when trying to understand them

⁴¹ Henri Lefebvre, “Space and the Mode of Production” in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 214.

through abstractions like “the summit” of the state and not as historical products of many concrete material relations.⁴²

To start from the premise of a spatial mode of production used by the state to attenuate the contradictory logics of capitalist production is to abstract the real processes from the analysis. Moreover, the directionality of the relations suggested by Lefebvre (the relation of state to space), does not mesh with the empirical findings of this study. Contrary to Lefebvre’s position, districting was not made by the state apparatus but was put in service of projects of state rule. This theoretical schematization, therefore, does not fit the historical processes through which the district as technique of measure and control emerged. Initially, the district was a technique of managing the costs of administration. Its formation as a technique of rule was contingent and episodic, and it was shaped by real direct concerns of individuals operating both within and outside state agencies. The history of the district, while no doubt conditioned by productive relations, does not validate the spatial mode of production Lefebvre offers.

Internal Conditions

I use the phrase “internal conditions” to contextualize the shift from 18th-century practices of observation as a static reading of people, land, and things to the rise of district-inspection and the making of people, land, and things as forces in motion. In Part I, I suggest the interior relations between people and place could not be discovered as a field of administration without tactics of partition. This concept is

⁴² Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 101.

inspired by Netz's work *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity* and Foucault's *The Order of Things*.

First, in *Barbed Wire*, Netz argues that the history of modernity is grounded in the prevention of movement.⁴³ He goes on to say, "property, prisons, borders: it is through the prevention of motion that space enters history."⁴⁴ The idea that barbed wire's prevention of the movement of human beings made motion visible and knowable as a dimension of rule is compelling. It is possible to think then that the prevention of motion presupposes an imaginary of life in motion as a dynamic force. As the static nature of 18th-century observational registers suggest, imagining life in motion is historically contingent. In this sense, the realization of economic forces, internal dynamics of population, and even nature as a conditioning environment are conditioned by measurement, namely a technique of partition. Thus, "internal conditions" refers to the idea that life in motion also had to be developed and was developed through material practices. The district is a material artifice that linked administrative journals, reports, and censuses to strict institutional lines of demarcation. If barbed wire brought space into history, the district was one technique through which life was made into a mobile object that could be compared across time and space. The spatial partition of people, land, and things precedes the development of internal motion, where prevention, Netz suggests, constituted "modernity."

⁴³ Reviell Netz, *Barbed-Wire: An Ecology of Modernity* (Middle Town CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Netz, *Barbed Wire*, xi.

Netz's insight can be used to re-examine the shift that Foucault argues took place towards the end of the 16th century when an episteme of representation grounded in natural history, wealth, and grammar was displaced by a new knowledge of biology, economy, and language centered on "internal conditions."⁴⁵ Foucault claims that with this shift "man" ceased to be an immobile object intelligible through species or genus as a closed analytical space. Instead, "man" became a natural finite being, conditioned and conditioning of environment or place.⁴⁶ However, these fields of knowledge, instead of being representative of changes in social relations practices and material determinations, rest on the episteme as a self-constituting mechanism transformation. My study of the district reveals one form of material practice that shaped the representation of human beings as dynamic living organisms conditioned and conditioning of their environment. I use Netz's insight into the role material objects and practices have in shaping the imagination and perception of space to give contingency and materiality to Foucault's account of the historical formation of "man" as a living being (which is addressed more extensively in chapter ten).

⁴⁵ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 336-376.

⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 336-376.

Chapter 2

Observational Practices in Natural History: Conducts and Technical Registers (1700–1798)

In this chapter I interrogate the historical formation of the naturalist's observation as a mode of social vision. Late 17th- and early 18th-century currents of physico-theology constructed the naturalist as a subject that scrutinized nature as the evidence of divine law. Theorizing the formation of the naturalist as a subject provides some insight into how the social practices of observing—especially the attentiveness to detail and collection of information—structured the conditions of possibility for the emergence of district-inspection as a practice used by the HBC. The practice of observation became linked to the Linnaean system of classification and, in turn, naturalists documented human life in relation to various “orders of nature.” These observational practices formed the limits of Thomas Malthus' conceptualization of population at the close of the 18th century.

There are three main sections in this chapter. First, I review Foucault's analysis of the 18th century as a period characterized by the emergence of a political anatomy of detail as a form of knowledge. I engage with Foucault to recover the place of the naturalist as a subject that played a role in the development of political knowledge about human beings (a role that Foucault maligns). Second, I examine the observations of several 18th-century HBC employees in order to trace how the Linnaean system of classification produced a distinct representation of human life. The final section demonstrates that this system of observation formed the epistemological limits of Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population*.

Foucault's History of Detail

Foucault is one of the few scholars to focus on a history of detail over the 18th century and chart its movement towards the formation of panoptic-inspection. Yet his theorization largely forecloses on “the naturalist” and natural history as sites in which details were put in service of relations of rule. Countering this point is therefore important for understanding the history of inspection as it developed within the HBC. To begin, Foucault understands the relation of the naturalist’s observation to panoptic power as such:

One finds in the programme of the panopticon a similar concern with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space. The panopticon is a royal menagerie; the animal is replaced by man, individual distribution by specific grouping, and the king by the machinery of furtive power. With this exception, the panopticon also does the work of the naturalist.¹

In the conclusion of his chapter on “Panopticism,” Foucault dismisses the possibility of contact points between panoptic-inspection and the observation of the naturalist by suggesting that, despite the similarity of their programmes, each was the product of a different rationality—one was “the science of man” and the other was the “science of nature.”² The science of nature was an outgrowth of practices of investigation: “the great empirical knowledge that covered the things of the world and transcribed them into the ordering of an indefinite discourse that observes, describes and establishes the facts.”³ The naturalist’s observation belongs, in contrast, to “the science of man” and the disciplines, or as Foucault’s writes, to the “calm knowledge of the animals, the plants or the earth.”⁴ Despite being productive

¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books (1995 [1975]), 203.

² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 226.

³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 226.

⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 226.

of similar ways of knowing objects as inspection (i.e., individualization, classification, and the making of details), the science of nature was thus separated from projects of political rule.

Foucault argues that the 18th century saw the formation of a “political anatomy of detail” as a form of knowledge of political rule.⁵ This knowledge was produced by joining the “meticulous observation of detail” with an appreciation that knowledge of details could be harnessed for the control and use of men.⁶ Within particular institutional contexts (the school, the barracks, the hospital, or the workshop) this general interest in “little things” was hardened into a set of material practices that ensured “the meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body.”⁷ An attention to detail formed the basis for a political knowledge that achieved both a refinement and generalization through the disciplinary-mechanism of panoptic-inspection.

In contrast, for Foucault, the naturalist’s observation appears as a formation conditioned by the classical age’s episteme of “the table.” The practices of observation were the outgrowth of a general set of concerns over:

how one was to arrange botanical and zoological gardens and construct at the same time rational classifications of living beings...how one was to inspect men, observe their presence and absence and constitute a general and permanent register of the armed forces; how one was to distribute patients, separate them from one another, divide up the hospital space and make a systematic classification of diseases.⁸

The “table” as a procedure of knowing draws heavily on Foucault’s earlier work, *The Order of Things* (1966), in which the “table” is a key element in constituting the

⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 139.

⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.

⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 140.

⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 148.

“episteme” of representation. By drawing heavily on this earlier work, Foucault abstracts “observation” from any distinct social context. The episteme mobilizes and conditions observation across the entire social field (whether in zoology, military discipline, schools, medicine, etc.). Consequently, observation appeared as part of a modality of knowing that was over and above real, definite individuals and the specific historical relations they both confronted and produced.

For the purposes of analyzing the formation of observation as a social practice, two questions emerge from Foucault’s historical sketch of parallel development of panoptic-inspection and the naturalist’s observation. First, what is the history of detail? Do observational techniques accumulate political details outside the enclosed sites that Foucault privileges? Indeed, are there some contact points between observation and questions of political rule that existed outside the so-called enclosed sites of the school, barracks, and workshop? Foucault’s analysis suggests that the 18th-century naturalist’s observation was grounded exclusively in nature, unable to capture human life in a way that made it into an object of political knowledge. In contrast to the close relation other scholars have established between naturalists and colonial ventures, Foucault views the registers of natural history as having played no part in the consolidation of knowledge over the human beings encountered in the so-called New World by European explorers.⁹ In Foucault’s telling, it seems that naturalists merely brought back flora and fauna.

⁹ See also Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation* (New York: Routledge Press, 1992); Richard Drayton, *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the Improvement of the world* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Fa-Ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: science, empire and cultural encounters* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Second, in trying to account for the historical formation of inspection, classification, and permanent observation, Foucault burdens the panopticon with too heavy a task. Foucault's discussion of the panopticon as a technique that allowed "inspection" to travel across the social body, though useful, has overshadowed some of the other conducts and social relations that generated inspection as a social practice. I propose that it may not be the case that the panopticon merely began to do the work of the naturalist. What social forms and attitudes emerged from the naturalist's practical activity of observing nature? To what extent did the observation of nature become productive of knowledge over human life as an object of rule? I argue that the relations constituting 19th-century practices of inspection can be located in the registers of observation that developed in the domains of natural history over the 18th century. To trace the conduct of the naturalist, in England at least, I must first make a foray into the domains of physico-theology.

Physico-theology and the Birth of a Moral Practice

There have been a number of studies of Natural Theology as an outgrowth of Protestantism and of the connections between Natural Theology and the formation of scientific practices.¹⁰ In the interest of brevity, I focus on the practices and conducts that developed out of physico-theology during the 18th century through two very specific lines of inquiry: first, in broad terms, what was the social, political, and economic context in which natural religion was mobilized at the close of the

¹⁰ For instance, see Robert Merton's thesis in *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*, that Protestantism, and by association natural theology, played a role in propagating scientific-practices. See Robert Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Howard Fertig, inc. 1970).

seventeenth century? Second, how did physico-theology condition practices of observing nature?

From Elizabethan England to the close of the 17th century, physico-theology was drawn on to support theological debates.¹¹ The removal of King Charles I, however, created uncertainty within English society over the stability of the government and the established order. According to Mary Poovey, the subsequent disillusionment in the power of an absolute ruler to guarantee order forced the ruling class in England to rethink the mechanisms through which the order of English Society was governable.¹² The proposals for government advanced by members of the Royal Society in the 17th century, such as Sir William Petty's political arithmetic, relied on a form of sovereign power that was co-extensive with the social field—the power to know everything and rule all accordingly.¹³ The absence of an absolute sovereign generated an interest in how to cultivate subjects capable of self-rule. The 18th century, then, can be characterized as a period traversed by projects to establish relations of rule structured by liberal governmentality.¹⁴ The removal of a king who embodied infallible divine power on earth, presented a formidable challenge to sovereign rule. Physico-theology was meant to resolve this challenge.

Recent studies have focused on the fraught relationship between Robert Boyle and Thomas Hobbes as a conflict of the different epistemological claims made by the

¹¹ See John Brooke, *Science and religion: some historical perspectives* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution: 1689–1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976); Neal Gillespie, "Natural history, natural theology, and social order: John Ray and Newtonian Ideology" in the *Journal of the History of Biology* vol. 20 issue 1 (1987): 1–49.

¹² Mary Poovey, *The History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: Chicago University press, 1998): 145.

¹³ Poovey, *The History of the Modern Fact*, 146.

¹⁴ Poovey, *The History of the Modern Fact*, 147.

two thinkers.¹⁵ Less noted these days is that Boyle considered physico-theology as a means “to shew that in physics themselves [Hobbes’] opinions and even his ratiocinations [had] no advantages over those of some orthodox Christian Naturalists.”¹⁶ Boyle’s “A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature” (1686) is illustrative of this engagement. Boyle attempted to provide a clear definition of the word nature, as it is “so frequently and yet so skillfully employed, both in books and discourses by all sorts of men both learned and illiterate.”¹⁷ Boyle argued “nature” was ultimately used to describe eight different orders of phenomena, from denoting that “men exist partly corporeal and partly immaterial” to “the use of nature as forces and phenomena.”¹⁸

Boyle constructed his argument by insisting that when describing the existence of corporeal and ethereal forms of life, often referred to as “*naturae naturans*,” the term God was the most suitable word to express “the profound reverence we owe the divine majesty.”¹⁹ To describe the existence of human life as nature than as God, “[made] the Creator differ too little by far from the created.”²⁰ Boyle suggested it was an error “to have the nature of everything to be the only law that was received from the Creator, and accordingly to which it acts on all

¹⁵ Bruno Latour, “Part 2: Constitution” in *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991); Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the experimental life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press, 1985).

¹⁶ Robert Boyle, “MS Notes on a Good and an Excellent Hypothesis” in *Selected Philosophical Papers of Robert Boyle* (New York: Manchester press, 1992), 191.

¹⁷ Robert Boyle, *A free enquiry into the vulgarly received notion of nature: made in an essay addressed to a friend* (London: H. Clark for John Taylor printer, 1698), 177.

¹⁸ Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*, 178.

¹⁹ Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*, 179.

²⁰ Boyle, *A free Enquiry*, 179.

occasions.”²¹ Law existed only as a “notional rule of acting according to the declared will of a superior.”²² As such, the patterns in nature could only become laws if beings were able to “either conform or deviate from [them].”²³ Boyle concluded, “God [impressed] determinate motions upon the parts of matter, and [guided] them as he [thought] requisite for the primordial constitution of things,” and only humans were capable of either conforming with or deviating from these motions as they alone could realize “determinate motions” as “laws.”²⁴

Boyle perceived his redefinition of nature as a means to confront Hobbesian atheism, which he and other members of the Royal Society and the Church of England believed had intensified following the Glorious Revolution.²⁵ After all, Hobbes argued in *Leviathan*, the mortal sovereign was the outcome of the equal powers of each individual to deprive the other of life and property. For Hobbes, this “equality of powers” was the consequence of the mechanical motions attributed to each individual by the laws of nature.²⁶ By redefining nature as God, Boyle could reassert the essential difference between created and creator, which Hobbes, in the course of rendering human political society the creation of man’s own naturally given motions, had effaced. By conceiving “nature” as the substance of God, Boyle advanced the idea that human society ought to be reinstated as the product of divine providence and design, not as worldly human artifice.

²¹ Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*, 181.

²² Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*, 181.

²³ Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*, 181.

²⁴ Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*, 181.

²⁵ See Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689–1720* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), 96; Gillespie, “Natural History, Natural Theology, and Social Order”, 19.

²⁶ C.B Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon University Press, 1973), 226.

It followed, then, that by knowing these divine laws it was possible to differentiate societies into two distinct orders: societies that were in accordance with the laws of God, and those societies organized by human will, which deviated from divine law (like the model of society suggested in *Leviathan*). Because divine laws organized nature, studying nature revealed both God and the established order willed by God. In his last will and testament, Boyle left a legacy to establish public lectures intended to “prove the Christian religion” and ensure that political power remained out of the hands of “the crafty and ill-principled.”²⁷ These lectures emphasized that the laws of the divine were embedded in natural things, and that the study and observation of natural objects was morally virtuous. Together, these two beliefs—the moral virtue of observing natural things and the presence of divine laws in natural objects—structured observation in England throughout the 18th century.

The Moral Virtues of Observation

Samuel Clarke’s 1705 Boyle lecture, “The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,” preached,

There is no such thing as what men commonly call the course of nature, or the power of nature. The course of nature, truly and properly speaking, is nothing else but the will of God producing certain effects in a continued, regular, constant and uniform manner, which course or manner of acting being in every moment perfectly arbitrary is as easy to be altered at any time as to be preserved.²⁸

²⁷ Boyle, 1744 [1690], 105; John Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 157. To organize and carry out this final request Boyle selected the following four trustees: John Evelyn, Thomas Tenison, Sir Henry Ashurst and Sir John Rotherha. All the trustees were socially positioned to popularize and support the development of the Boyle lectures. (See Jacob, *The Newtonians*, 125,147.)

²⁸ Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of Christian Revelation* (London: W. Botham St. Paul’s Church Yard, 1705), 86–87.

As Margaret Jacob notes, Clarke's insistence on the existence of a constant, uniform manner of "effects" drew heavily from a lecture delivered by Richard Bentley, in which he suggested that "all the powers of mechanism are entirely dependent on the deity" and are "a solid argument for the reality of his nature."²⁹ Both Clarke and Bentley were heavily influenced by Newton's *Principia*,³⁰ which is not surprising. Newton's belief in the existence of a "most subtle spirit, which pervades and lies hid in all bodies" was perhaps the surest way to combat Hobbes' "mechanical godless materialism."³¹ The adoption of a Newtonian view allowed advocates of physico-theology to import an active God into their teachings, and to suggest that the natural order, as well as the political order, was the product of laws and patterns, which the pious could observe.

As Clarke noted in his lectures, however, it was only in nature that these laws were distinct and identifiable.³² He stated,

[it] seems to be a very strange thing that through the system of nature in the material in the inanimate, in the irrational part of the creation, every single thing should have in itself so many and so obvious, so evident and undeniable marks of the infinitely accurate skill and wisdom of their almighty creator...which does not afford such instances of admirable artifice and exact proportion and contrivance as exceeds all the wit of man...to search out and comprehend; and yet, that in the management of the rational and moral world...there should not in many ages be plain evidences...of God or of so much as the interposition of his divine providence at all, to convince mankind clearly and generally of the world's being under his immediate care, inspection and government³³

It was only within nature that the pious observer could locate the laws, patterns, and uniform effects that revealed the evidence of God. That the "world politick" was

²⁹Richard Bentley, *The Folly of atheism and (what is now called) deism, even with respect to the present life: a sermon preached at Saint Martin's* (London: J.H Mortlock, 1692), 8.

³⁰ See Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, 156.

³¹ The connection is noted by Martin Tamny in "Newton, Creation, Perception" *ISIS* vol. 70 issue no. 1 (1979): 54. Cf. Isaac Newton, *Principia* (Glasgow: MacLehose press, 1871), 142.

³² Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural Religion*, 176.

³³ Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural Religion*, 177-178.

also governed by these laws had to be taken as an article of faith. Consequently, the world of mortal affairs, to which all of nature appeared subservient, could not be known as a field of inquiry. The “world politick” was too messy for divine laws to be successfully deciphered as the conditioning force of social life. Nature was the only site where the order of the divine could be successfully observed. The workings of society were to be decreed first by the order present in nature. This unevenness between the intelligibility of divine laws manifested in “nature” and the opaque nature of “God’s inspection, care and government in the moral order of society,” was not resolved within the Boyle Lectures.³⁴

George Turnbull (1698–1747), a philosopher, theologian, and lecturer in Natural History, drew on Bentley and Clarke’s lectures to develop his *Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*. In this work, Turnbull introduced a subtle modification to the intellectual framework of physico-theology. In developing “a study of ‘morals’ as formed through divine providence and design,” Turnbull relied upon the “Vegetable and Animal fabrick” as proof that divine providence and design may be studied to discover the “powers and laws of powers” that generate human beings as “a very noble species of being...rising in scale of life and perfection.”³⁵ This shift is important. While Clarke and Bentley had introduced a Newtonian model of nature with laws put in motion by divine power, they had stumbled in positing the visibility of these laws in “world politick.” Turnbull overcame this blockage by declaring that the laws and designs that govern the moral order of society were not

³⁴ For an expanded argument about the Newtonian principles and the dissemination of physico-theology see Gillespie, “Natural History, Natural Theology and Social Order.”

³⁵ George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy: The Principles of Moral Philosophy volume 1* ed. Knud Haakonssen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005 [1740]), 7–9.

a separate sphere of inquiry but were, in fact, elements of nature. He wrote: “the order kept in man, as well as in the other parts of nature within our observation, [constitute] the same system.”³⁶ Through the “accurate inspection of this whole, and its constituent parts,” the moral order and individual inward constitutions could “be rendered or preserved or contrariwise, distorted and impaired.”³⁷ Thus Turnbull managed to make the knowledge of vegetable and “animal fabricks” double as the knowledge of the laws of the moral order of society. Given this, the study of nature was also the study of the “good order” of “man” insofar as a good moral order obeyed the laws present in nature.

By positing the presence of laws and patterns in nature that were put in motion by divine power, physico-theology provided an elegant proof of the existence of God as well as combated Hobbesian materialism. However, the proponents of physico-theology saw that proof of the existence of God was nothing if it did not inculcate “dutiful” worship in the population. It is from this point that observation became an internal form of moral conduct.

Ye study of Nature affords infinite pleasure to them ye minde it; that it satisfied men’s reason and curiositie above all others: that it heals all disturbances of ye minde and renders men thinking and active; that it furnishes such as are well seen in it with a treasure of real knowledge; that it takes away many vices men might be guilty of, in thought or action if not diverted by this or some such innocent employment; and that it dayly manifests ye incomprehensible power of our Creator.³⁸

Edward Lhwyd wrote this passage to the naturalist, and former priest, John Ray before the inauguration of the Boyle Lectures. The passage is significant insofar as Ray returned to this theme of the moral effects of the observation of nature into two

³⁶ George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy* vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005 [1740]), 469.

³⁷ Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy* vol. 1, 7.

³⁸ *Life and Letters of Edward Lhwyd* ed. R.W.T. Gunther (London: Dawsons press, 1945), 78–79.

texts, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (1691) and *Persuasion to a Holy Life* (1700). The texts treated astronomy, botany, and zoology as evidence of perfect design. Ray used these examples to connect the practice of making observations of the natural world to a moral imperative of piousness and good virtue.

I know that a new study at first seems very vast, intricate and difficult: but after a little resolution and progress, after a man becomes a little acquainted, as I may so say, with it, his understanding is wonderfully cleared up and enlarged, the difficulties vanish and the thing grows easy and familiar. Some reproach me thinks it is to learned men that there should be so many animals still in the world whose outward shape is not yet taken notice of or described, much less their way of generation, food, manners, uses, observed. If man ought to reflect upon his creator the glory of all his works, then ought he to take notice of them all and not to think anything unworthy of his cognizance.³⁹

Mere knowledge of the bible alone would not suffice. In fact, given that individuals “may discern and admire the footsteps of the Divine Wisdom...in the formation and designation of [natural objects]... it is reproachable not to reflect upon them.”⁴⁰ It was necessary that all external forms be examined. Ray contemplated this moral linkage between observation of natural objects and the divine in *A Persuasion of the Holy Life* by asking, “how shall we manifest our care of our souls? What shall we do for them? Our souls are to be fed: the food of the soul is knowledge, especially knowledge of the Things of God.”⁴¹ The observation of nature feeds the soul and “[therein serves] to stir up and increase... Affections and Habits of Admiration, Humility and Gratitude.” Although Ray was never a Boyle Lecturer, his formulation of an imperative to observe natural objects and the “things” of God was popularized. *The Wisdom of God in the Vegetable Creation* achieved an impressive

³⁹ Jon Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (London: printed for Samuel Smith, 1691), 124.

⁴⁰ Ray, *The Wisdom*, 124.

⁴¹ Jon Ray, *Persuasion to a Holy Life* (London: Samuel Smith, 1700), 242.

circulation, reaching its twelfth edition in 1759 and remaining in print until 1846.⁴² It was frequently imitated with the most notable impression by Henry de Salis, *The Wisdom of God in the Vegetable Creation*, which was written towards the end of the 18th century. Salis' work was edited by Joseph Banks, the curator of Kew Royal Gardens and President of the Royal Society from 1770-1820, who also invited Salis to deliver a lecture to the Royal Society on its chief principles.⁴³

Moreover, William Derham, a student of Ray, became a commonly cited Boyle lecturer. Echoing Ray, Derham remarked, "my text commends God's works not only for being great but also approves those curious and ingenious inquirers that seek them out or pry into them."⁴⁴ One must, he went on, "observe with attention, some particular instances of the divine skill wherein it is conspicuously displayed."⁴⁵ This mode of contemplation created "a due subjection [of] all our appetites and passions to the government of sober modes of reason."⁴⁶ One was to be attentive, after all the "the eye of the virtuous was curious" and "the eye of the atheist was incurious."⁴⁷ The moral virtue ascribed to observation spread from a religious concern to the assumed disposition of the naturalist.

⁴² C.E Raven, *John Ray: Naturalist* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 472.

⁴³ MacKay, "Agents of Empire: the Banksian collectors and evaluation of new lands" in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany and Representations of Nature* ed. David Philip Miller, Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1998), 53.

⁴⁴ William Derham, 1715 [1713], *Astro-theology: or a demonstration of the being and attributes of God, from a survey of the heavens* (London, W. Innys at the Prince's Arms in St. Paul's Church-yard, MDCCXV, 1715): 345.

⁴⁵ Derham, *Astro-Theology*, 345.

⁴⁶ Derham, *Astro-Theology*, 346.

⁴⁷ Derham, *Astro-Theology*, 346-348.

As Linnaeus wrote in his *Systema Naturae*, “the accurate scrutiny of nature is a matter of...curiosity worthy of man.”⁴⁸ To observe nature was “the first and most sacred [duty]” of man. The further one pried into nature, “into [its] most consecrated recesses” and attempted to uncover its points of animation, the laws and patterns that govern its “oeconomy,” the more “penetrated one is by the wisdom and goodness of god.”⁴⁹ Goldsmith’s *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (1774) reiterated these sentiments. “A description of the earth, its animals, vegetables and minerals, [was] the most delightful entertainment” of the mind, it was also “the most interesting and useful.”⁵⁰ It was argued that the “proper business of the natural historian” was to trace the “greatness and wisdom of the deity” “in all the worlds that surround[ed] [him].”⁵¹ The greater “the exertion [of ones] faculties” in the study of nature, the more one [assimilated himself] to his creator.”⁵² As Gilbert White mused in *Natural History of Selbourne*, “these nature’s works, the curious mind employ, inspire a soothing melancholy joy.”⁵³

By the 19th century this relationship between moral refinement and the observation of nature achieved a more lucid and direct articulation. In particular, in his 1813 *Essay on the Philosophy, Study and Use of Natural History*, Charles Fothergill argued that by tracing the “footsteps of God” the naturalist developed knowledge necessary to the welfare of humanity and, in turn, turn regulated his own duties and

⁴⁸ Carl Linnaeus, 1964, *Systema Naturae*, trans. B de Graaf [1735 edition], 14.

⁴⁹ Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae*, 14.

⁵⁰ Oliver Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (London: J Nourse, 1774), 11.

⁵¹ Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth*, 11.

⁵² Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth*, 160.

⁵³ Gilbert White, *The natural history of Selborne* vol. 1 (London: J and A. Arch Press, 1822), 119.

pleasures through the knowledge of nature.⁵⁴ He proposed that: “The mind of those who [were] employed in the cultivation of Natural History [was] expanded, made cheerful and refined...in degrees proportioned to the extent and application of their researches.”⁵⁵ Observation in nature became explicitly joined to the formation of the naturalist as a subject.

This analysis of physico-theology as an inculcation of a conduct to observe allows us to reconsider Foucault’s theorization of how detail became a feature of 18th-century political rule. Foucault claims that observation and detail became possible through the establishment of “negative conditions.”⁵⁶ What remains visible in the 18th century “are the lines, surfaces, forms and relief” left behind after from a long process of exclusion.⁵⁷ In some ways the naturalist’s tools of description collaborate Foucault’s claim. “The journal, the table, detailed precise illustrations” all served to hold the specimen in the narrow space of individualized analytical examination.⁵⁸ Yet these negative conditions that Foucault highlights did not solely structure observation in natural history.⁵⁹ The close relation between moral virtue and observation inherited by natural history from physico-theology was also productive of the naturalist’s subjectivity. This subjectivity was grounded in both a compulsion to observe nature and as relation of self-inspection and cultivation. Thus, observation in the 18th century was grounded in an ethos of self-formation.

⁵⁴ Charles Fothergill, *Essay on the Philosophy, Study and Use of Natural History* (London: White Cochrane and Co. Fleet Street, 1813), 5–6.

⁵⁵ Fothergill, *An Essay on the Philosophy*, 14–15.

⁵⁶ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 22.

⁵⁷ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 145.

⁵⁸ David Allen, *The Field Naturalist in Britain: a social history* (London: A Lane, 1976), 22.

⁵⁹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 145; Lorraine Daston, “Attention and the Values of Nature in the Enlightenment” in *Visual Sense: A Cultural Reader*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Kaushik Bhaumik (New York: Berg Press, 2008), 108.

Almost as if a form of compulsion, the dutiful naturalist was to “seek out,” “pry into,” and survey nature with great attention. The “eye of the virtuous [was] curious” and the eye of the atheist was incurious insofar as the treatment of nature as anything other than God was an implicit condemnation of God’s work. After all, only “the virtuous will find fresh springs of instructions and new fountains of delight” in observing nature, to all others nature will be nothing more than “a treasure that is hermetically sealed.”⁶⁰ To be virtuous led one closer to having cognizance over all little things.

In the mid-18th century, this compulsion to observe nature made its appearance as a form of conduct. John Bartram, for instance, entitled his journal of his trip to North America, “Observation on the inhabitants, climate, soils, rivers, vegetable productions, animals and *other matters worthy of notice*.”⁶¹ By the mid-19th century, however, this pairing of virtue and observation had overstepped “nature” and had become a requisite condition for social observation, as evidenced by Harriet Martineau’s text, “How to Observe Morals and Manners.”⁶² It is, then, hardly surprising that in 18th-century English society the naturalist was known as a “curious gentleman” and a “man of god.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Fothergill, *An Essay on the Philosophy*, 13.

⁶¹ John Bartram, *Observations on the inhabitant, climate, soils, rivers, vegetable productions, animals and other matters worthy of notice made by Mr. John Bartram, in his travels from Pensilvania to Onondago, Oswego and the Lake Ontario, in Canada* (London, reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2014 [1751]) see preface [my italics].

⁶² According to Martineau, for the observer to make accurate observations “[he] himself must be perfect as every prejudice, every moral perversion, dims or distorts whatever the eye looks upon.” Harriet Martineau *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (London: Samuel Bentley, 1838), 28.

⁶³ This corresponds with Steven Shapin’s findings that in the 18th century, the practitioner of science, in particular natural history, was perceived as both ‘a scholar and a gentlemen’. It can be argued that this shift, in part, has to do with relation of self-cultivation that had developed towards observation of nature. See Steven Shapin “A Scholar and a Gentleman” in

As a relation of self-inspection, it was assumed that the contemplation of nature, of God's works, rendered the human mind active and attentive. To study nature was to satisfy the individual's appetites and passions in degrees that were proportional to the extent and application of their studies. Shells, fossils, plants, and the anatomy of bees, all held the substance of the divine. The more intensive the interrogation and the more precise and microscopic the detail, the further the naturalists had ventured into God's eternal design and thereby assimilated themselves to God's likeness. Curiosity, attentiveness, careful description, and patient recording were a means used to refine and cultivate one's mind and attention. "Good sense, penetration and sincerity joined to a commendable curiosity" were the traits one gained through sustained observation of nature.⁶⁴

If in the 18th century there was the development of a "meticulous examination of [natural] things" (the attentiveness to detail), these practices were, in part at least, rooted in a subjectivity formed through the observation of nature. The history of detail unfolded in the 18th century as a project of self-formation. While I will outline the limits that grew up with this formation of observation, I first want to examine the external conditions that gave this internal mode of conduct its expression. The first nine editions of the *Systema of Naturae* (1735), for example, included a "methodus" on how to make "accurate observations of nature." The "methodus" was divided into seven sections and included 38 steps for properly classifying flora and fauna. The section entitled "Attributes" is of particular

History of Science vol. 29 (1991), 162; see also Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*.

⁶⁴Bartram, *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals and Other Matters Worthy of Notice*, i.

relevance to the formation of the naturalist's observation. During the documentation and classification of a specimen the naturalist was instructed to include the following: the season of birth, growth, and maturity, old age and death; the geographic region where the specimen lives; the climate and soil, the diet, habits and temperament, and the anatomy of the body.⁶⁵ The "methodus," therefore, was a procedure of registration that placed any the specimen in a general order of nature with accuracy.

Of course systems of classification seldom retain their initial form when they are put into practice. Did the Linnaean system provide an outline through which the ethos of observation could be shaped and deployed? What forms of registration did it engender? How did this means of observing flora and fauna translate into the observation of human life? An examination of four 18th-century texts offers some insight into these questions. Three come from HBC officials, John Isham's *Observations on the Hudson's Bay Company* (1749), Andrew Graham's *Observations on Hudson's Bay* (1767–1791), and Edward Umfreville's *The Present State of the Hudson Bay* (1790), and the other is Joseph Banks' *Endeavour Journal* (1762?). Taken together, these journals suggest that at the end of the 18th century categories from the Linnaean system were used to create a system of representation for human life. I argue this mode of registration placed definite limits on how human life was represented and thus contoured a very specific set of relations of rule.

⁶⁵ Reproduced in Karl Schmidt, "The Methodus of Linnaeus" *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History*, vol. 2 (1954), 370–374.

Linnaean Classification and the Documentation of Human Life

John Isham was originally employed as a clerk for the HBC. Whether he was formally trained in the Linnaean method is unknown. HBC officials were educated within the company and so it is possible that he received some cursory instruction. *Observational Notes* (1743–1749) was written with the intention of producing a document for the HBC London Council.⁶⁶ The text is traversed by the structure and categories of the Linnaean system of classification. Isham structured his account with the Linnaean categories of constitution, physical anatomy, longevity and diet. In discussing the inhabitants he described their anatomy:

The men are for the most part tall and thin straight and clean limbd larged boned and full breasted, there is very few crooked or deformed persons amongst them but well shap'd neither are they of any large bulk or corporation. The women are for the most part short and thick...both men and women are for the most part round faced with their noses flat between the eyes not unlike a negro but tolerable in other ways, small feet and very small hands and fingers, their eyes large and grey.⁶⁷

Following this racial comparison, the discussion progressed to a reflection on the constitution of the sexes: “The natives...are of incredible strong constitution both men and women.” He also remarked on their longevity, “they live to a very great age”, and, then, a cursory account of diet and child rearing.⁶⁸ These categories of observation also structured the journals produced by Edward Umfreville.

Umfreville, who worked for both the HBC and North-West Company, produced his own journal of observations on North America. Umfreville opened with “a brief account of the climate and soil of the country” and then remarked on “the people

⁶⁶ The document was never made public and kept in the company’s private library. Whether any members of the London Council read it remains unknown.

⁶⁷ James Isham, *Observations on Hudson’s Bay* (London: Hudson’s bay Record Society, 1949 [1743]), 68.

⁶⁸ Isham, *Observations*, 104.

who inhabit it.”⁶⁹ He described the physical features of “the natives of the Hudson Bay” as of “middle size, of a copper complexion, their features regular and agreeable.” Umfreville then discussed their diet, constitution, and their temperament.⁷⁰

Andrew Graham’s observations run over more than two thousand pages of notes collected over twenty-five years.⁷¹ Graham recorded his observations in nine sections: the description of Hudson’s Bay, mammals, birds, reptiles, flora, minerals, Indians, Eskimos, and life and trade in the bay. Each section was carefully guided by the Linnaean system. In his observations on birds, Graham opened his “observations” by dividing the species of birds into those that were migratory and those that were not. From there he painstakingly listed each species. For instance, the Ethinesu Mickesew, a species of eagle, was described according to its physical features, “the bill and talons are dusky, strong, large and much curved. The cere, irides, legs and toes are yellow; the latter naked and scaled.”⁷² He detailed the eagles’ diet, “they feed on young hares, or fowl of any kind,”⁷³ and their mode of breeding, they “lay one egg and the male assists to rear the young one.”⁷⁴ Graham even provided an account on the time of year they appeared and what type of

⁶⁹, Edward Umfreville, 1954 [1790] *Present State of Hudson’s Bay* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954 [1790]), 29.

⁷⁰ For instance, “they are great walkers, able to “patiently endure cold, hunger and fatigue. Of temperament “their dispositions are mild, affable and good-natured, when sober” Umfreville, *Present State of Hudson’s Bay*, 36.

⁷¹ Two of his papers, “Account of Some Quadrupeds From Hudson’s Bay” and “An Account of the Birds Sent From Hudson’s Bay” reached Joseph Banks through a mutual friend, John Reinhold Forster, and were published by the Royal Society.

⁷² Andrew Graham, *Andrew Graham’s observations on Hudson’s Bay, 1767–1791* ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson’s Bay Company Record Society, 1969 [1791]), 39.

⁷³ Graham, *Andrew Graham’s Observations*, 39.

⁷⁴ Graham, *Andrew Graham’s Observations*, 39.

terrain they inhabited. Every chapter proceeded with this same structure of meticulous examination.

While he divided “Indians” and “Eskimos” into two races, he used the same system of classification to describe them. Graham provided a general description of the physical stature of the people he encountered: “Indians in general exceed the middling stature of Europeans; [were] straight well made people, large boned but not corpulent, their features regular and agreeable.”⁷⁵ In general, “their constitution is strong and healthy, their disorders few, the chief of which are the flux, consumption and pain in the breast.”⁷⁶ Of their age he noted, “they seldom live to a great age but are of good mental faculties to the last.”⁷⁷ Graham went on to document their habits and temperaments. “They are not very lively, much less jovial and extravagant.”⁷⁸ According to Graham they also were “accustomed to the indulgence of every inclination” and lacked frugality and prudence. However, with an education, he proposed, they could perhaps “appear in their morals equal to the most accomplished Europeans.”⁷⁹ Graham, like Isham and Umfreville, then went on to discuss the mode of breeding and reproduction.⁸⁰

On diet, “their food consists of the flesh of buffalo, deer, or any other animal they can procure, together with seals, whales and other inhabitants of the sea and

⁷⁵ Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations*, 143.

⁷⁶ Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations*, 143.

⁷⁷ Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations*, 143.

⁷⁸ Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations*, 154.

⁷⁹ Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations*, 152.

⁸⁰ Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations*, 177.

ivers.”⁸¹ The entry system for Graham’s section on the “Esquimaux” similarly drew on Linnaean categories.

The men are short in stature, few exceeding five feet five inches, but exceedingly well proportioned; their faces broad and flat, occasioned by the prominency of the cheek bones and the rotundity and largeness of their cheeks; the eyes black and diminutive; the mouth small; teeth white; and the lips black; countenance brown; the beard eradicated.⁸²

As the acting naturalist aboard the Endeavour, Joseph Banks also utilised Linnaean categories.⁸³ Each collection of entries was gathered to create “Accounts” of various locations, ranging from New Holland, the Islands of Savu and Island near Savu, Batavia, Princes Island, and St. Helena. Each of these entries reviewed the coastline, its natural harbours, the quality of the soil, the flora and fauna, the chief products, whether the region was populated or unpopulated, and, if populated, which areas were inhabited. Following this, the bodies of the inhabitants were described with detailed accounts of their physical features, strength, life span, diet, dress, housing, religious beliefs, and language.

For instance, of the inhabitants of New Holland Banks wrote, “the men are of the size of larger Europeans, Stout, Clean Limned and active, not as fat and lazy as the inhabitants of the South Sea Isles, and far more vigorous, nimble and clever in their exercises.”⁸⁴ In remarking on their diet, Banks observed that the inhabitants ate “fish and birds, [broiled or toasted] and a glutinous pulp mixt with many fibres, which they generally spit out after having sucked each mouthful a long time,”

⁸¹ Graham, *Andrew Graham’s Observations*, 183.

⁸² Graham, *Andrew Graham’s Observations*, 215.

⁸³ The intention was to forward the document to the British Admiralty and the Royal Society, see Mackay, “Agents of Empire: the Banksian collectors and evaluation of new lands”, 49.

⁸⁴ *The Endeavor Journal of Sir Joseph Banks*, Journal from 25th of August 1768- July 12 1771(published online by Project Gutenberg, Issued November 2005), paragraph 9.

concluding that, “so simple a diet accompanied with moderation must be productive of sound health.”⁸⁵ Having “observed several towns where young and old crowded to see us... there was not a single instance of a person distemperd in any degree that came under my inspection.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, “among the numbers of them that I have seen naked I have never seen an eruption on the skin or any signs of one by scars or otherwise...but there are many with gray hairs and worn out teeth” (a sure sign of longevity).⁸⁷ Banks concluded that, on the whole, the inhabitants were “a race infinitely below us in the order of Nature.”⁸⁸

There are several points we can draw from these four journals. These observational accounts reveal how Linnaean categories gave rise to a particular way of representing human life. In the course of developing knowledge of constitution, longevity, diet, reproduction and temperament, the entry system lent itself neither to individualization nor to the specification of geographical locations. The Linnaean categories marked a departure from earlier texts of natural history where the body is represented as a series of component parts and discussed in terms of their functions and operations. The Linnaean system was, in part, a practice of comparative indexing. Orders of “men” were crafted, and European life was contoured in comparison to the physical structure of the body, diet, temperament and longevity of “others.” In this sense, the body of each inhabitant was linked to a number of external processes to produce an abstract “body” compared across regions. The physical strength, body shape, and temperaments of groups of

⁸⁵Banks, *The Endeavor Journal*, paragraph 12.

⁸⁶Banks, *The Endeavor Journal*, paragraph 23.

⁸⁷Banks, *The Endeavor Journal*, paragraph 24.

⁸⁸Banks, *The Endeavor Journal*, paragraph 26.

inhabitants was abstracted into generalized comparable features. It was, according to this organization, possible to “know” that Inuit are smaller and less jovial than First Nations people, and that Southsea Islanders are “fat and lazy” compared to the inhabitants of New Zealand.⁸⁹ The comments on the ability of inhabitants to carry out “clever exercises” or walk great distances, along with details about the physical strength and bodies of various peoples, are linked to the construction of the body as an object to be appropriated possibly for the purposes of slavery.

Notably, these accounts lacked the capacity to record individuals or places in a way that would allow them to be revisited in an efficient manner. As a system of classification, Linnaean observation produced only a general picture of people, place, and things. Such a field of view was clear and consistent enough to be compared against people, places, and things situated elsewhere. The 18th-century observational register produced the details that allowed for disparate things to be ordered into a singular field of examination, yet it was a one-time glance. The registers lacked a system to allow the current state of these objects to be compared against previous records.

These journals employed categories that did not allow for the registration of human life as “population” either as a biopolitical object or as a numerical figure. None of these accounts provided a quantitative record of the inhabitants encountered. Banks simply noted whether a region was populous or not, and, similarly, Isham was happy to state that the “natives [were] not numerous.” Population, therefore, did not emerge within registers of observation and there was little consideration of the internal laws or lifecycles that may condition life in these

⁸⁹ Banks, *The Endeavor Journal*, paragraph 12.

different locales. Despite the concern over the external forces that were seen to condition the body, determining its strength and temperament, these forces did not become linked to some notion of species life. Yet, this form of power was not fully on the other side of the pole of relations Foucault describes in his account of anatomo-politics. The scale of the body was developed, and its physical strength, its clever exercises, and temperament were listed as objects to be observed and recorded—but the body belonged to no individual. Rather, the body was an aggregate object, abstracted and suspended from immediate projects designed to “[optimize] [its] capabilities... [or] extort its forces or increase its usefulness or docility.”⁹⁰

It is possible that this system reflected a form of power over life that was a composite of these two poles. Linnaean categories classified and recorded human beings in such a way that “life” was given a specific form representation. Diet, temperament, life span, anatomy, climate, and soil place human life within an order of nature. Observation produced a representation of life that existed somewhere between concerns with the physical features and motions of the body and the consideration of the body in reference to a series of biopolitical forces, such as diet, longevity, habitat and customs. Instead of developing this notion of the body in relation to population or species life, however, the body itself was made into an aggregate abstraction, a means to compare the physical features between “men of different orders of nature.” It appears that observation had its anchorage points in an understanding that the laws of nature held life and, given this, the task of the observer was to reveal the order and plan of nature as it was manifest in the attributes of human beings.

⁹⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol. 1, 139.

Life was not the product of a regionalized relation, of a mutual impact of conditions, as Foucault suggests, mid-19th-century biology would later mobilize.⁹¹ Regionalized orders of nature held life in place and so nature and life emerged in the observational register as static forces. Life in the 18th century was fixed in a comparative scheme of nature and contributed to a form of power somewhere between the two-poles of relations Foucault describes as anatomo- and biopolitics.⁹² This leaves one last question for this chapter to address: What were the outgrowths of this form of power, and in effect, the limits of observation-registers in the 18th century?

Malthus and the Limits of 18th-Century Representation

The compulsion to observe and the Linnaean classificatory system produced knowledge of human beings. This knowledge remained grounded in typologies that were read through different orders of nature. The naturalist's gaze produced a functional connection of life to nature, as exemplified in Linnaeus or Goldsmith's "orders of man," where species, genus or typologies were rendered intelligible by being indexed to a specific "state of nature."⁹³ Therefore 18th-century practices of observation captured life, not as a vital force conditioned and conditioning of nature, but as an object that was intelligible and stabilized by the laws of nature. Nowhere are the limits of this representation more apparent than in Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principles of Population* (1798). By reflecting on the manner in which the naturalists' observation informed Malthus' argument, it is possible to

⁹¹ For a discussion on biology and the modern humanist subject see Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 287-304.

⁹² Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol. 1, 139.

⁹³ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 336.

see how the formation of district-inspection marked a new configuration of documentation and space that formed the conditions of possibility for new representations of human life.

Thomas Malthus' place in the history of liberalism has posed a problem for readers of Foucault. Straddling the end of the 18th century and the middle of the 19th century, Malthus occupies the historical period where, for Foucault, the human sciences achieved a marked degree of sophistication. If the "human sciences" characterized a period in "which life was becoming a fundamental force," an object now firmly tied to subsistence, scarcity and the threat of death, it seems odd, as other scholars note, that Malthus does not feature in this transformation.⁹⁴ Using Foucault's analytical concepts, scholars have tried to situate Malthus within the historical formation of population and liberal governance. Ute Tellmann argues that Thomas Malthus' *Essay* reveals the relation of biopolitics to a colonial hierarchy of "savage life."⁹⁵ Mitchell Dean suggests that Malthus lacks a biopolitics of population. Instead of giving us a means to rule through "propagations, birth, mortality, and the level of health, life expectancy and longevity,"⁹⁶ all elements of biopolitics, Malthus' *Essay* ends up advocating a form of conduct for men alone.⁹⁷

In contrast to these interpretations, I argue that Malthus' notion of population rests in the confluence of colonial registers of "orders of men" and the hold of divine law over nature and humanity as posited by physico-theology. Malthus does not

⁹⁴ Ute Tellmann, "Catastrophic Populations and the Fear of the Future: Malthus and the Genealogy of Liberal Economy" in *Theory, Culture and Society* vol. 30 issue 2(2013): 135–155; Dean, Mitchell, "Chapter 4: Population, Subsistence, Poverty" in *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 68–86.

⁹⁵ Tellmann, "Catastrophic Populations", 135.

⁹⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol 1, 139.

⁹⁷ Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty*, 68–86.

deploy population as a living object but as inert object animated by nature. This form of knowledge reveals the limits of the 18th-century observational register and it is from these limits that I can begin to theorize the rise of inspectorial practices. I have divided these two elements of Malthus' epistemology into two-sections: The Proof of the Laws, and Life in Malthus' Essay.

Proof of the Laws

The beginning of *Essay on the Principle of Population* varied with each edition, but both the 1798 and 1824 versions follow a similar logic. The essay opened by establishing two premises, "food is necessary to the existence of man" and the passion of the sexes is necessary and constant in form.⁹⁸ Malthus argued that these are "fixed laws of our nature" and so they can only be thrown asunder by the "Being whom first arranged the system of the universe," which is apparently to "the advantage of his creatures."⁹⁹ Based on this premise, Malthus argued that population was forever checked by the "difficulty of subsistence."¹⁰⁰ What is important is how Malthus sought to demonstrate these natural laws and the proof of their operation. As Malthus stated,

through the animal and vegetable kingdoms nature has scattered the seeds of life abroad with the most profuse and liberal hand. She has been comparatively sparing in the room and nourishment necessary to rear them...nevertheless that imperious all-pervading law of nature, restrains them within the prescribed bounds. The race of plants and the race of animals shrink under this great restrictive law.¹⁰¹

In the 1825 edition of the essay, Malthus opened with a similar but somewhat more concrete line of reasoning: "In taking a view of animated nature, we cannot fail to be

⁹⁸ Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1798), 4.

⁹⁹ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 53.

¹⁰⁰ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5.

struck with a prodigious power of increase in plants and animals.”¹⁰² Yet “whether [plants or animals] increase slowly or rapidly...their natural tendency must be to increase in a geometrical ratio.”¹⁰³ Malthus concluded that if the natural progression of geometric increase operated over the populations found in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, “the race of man cannot by any efforts of reason escape from it.”¹⁰⁴

Two questions emerge from Malthus’ analysis: from where does Malthus’ law originate, and why is he certain we cannot escape it? The answers to these questions reveal the epistemology that underpins Malthus’ thought. Dean proposes that there is a rupture in Malthus’ discourses on population and subsistence.¹⁰⁵ Dean arrives at this conclusion by reading Malthus in relation to his contemporary, Joseph Townsend. As Dean argues, “where Townsend, for example, had located tendencies to overpopulation in the forced and unnatural disturbance of the fragile relation between population and subsistence brought about by the Poor Laws, Malthus was to find such tendencies in nature itself.”¹⁰⁶ Dean’s interpretation, however, is limited in two important respects. First, in situating Malthus’ thinking in relation to 18th-century economic thought, Dean fails to see that much of what Malthus has to say on the relation between subsistence and population was outlined in earlier discourses of natural history. Second, Malthus’ point was not that population presented a potential imbalance in nature. In fact, Malthus’ formal training as an Anglican

¹⁰² Thomas Malthus, *Principle of Population*, in *Encyclopedia of Britannica in Three Essays on Population* (Indianapolis: New American Library, 1960 [1824]), 13B.

¹⁰³ Malthus, *Principle of Population* pp. 13B.

¹⁰⁴ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty*, 76.

clergyman and his reliance on physico-theology for the intellectual underpinnings of his essay foreclosed this possibility. To introduce disorder into nature would be to introduce disorder into the laws and patterns of the divine.

In Linnaeus' *Amoenitates Academica*, the chapter entitled "Police of Nature" outlined the laws that linked population and subsistence. The police of nature was ultimately the study of "the Oeconomy of nature," of the "certain moderators" which ensured that a species "may increase but not indefinitely."¹⁰⁷ In other words, the police of nature was formed through the "hundreds and thousands of separate commissions given to different animals" all of which ensured "that the *general proportion of things should be kept up; and nothing multiplied beyond it.*"¹⁰⁸ In a discussion of the growth of grass, then, the naturalist was to examine the checks and balances that ensured grass grew in proportion to the needs of other species and did not overwhelm or strangle other types of vegetables. In looking at the effect of grass production on cattle,

the quantity of grass being greatly diminished, the other plants which were being choked by it spring up and the ground becomes variegated with a multitude of different species of flowers: had not nature given commission to this minister [cattle] for that purpose, the grass would destroy a great number of species of vegetable of which the equilibrium is now kept up.¹⁰⁹

From this example the author concluded that "nature resemble[s] a well regulated state in which every individual has his proper employment and subsistence," a system replete with "offices and officers appointed to correct and restrain every detrimental excess."¹¹⁰ These internal correctives were assumed to extend past the

¹⁰⁷ Carl Linnaeus, *Select Dissertations from the Amoenitates Academic* (London: Robinson Bookseller, 1781 [1750?]), 146.

¹⁰⁸ Linnaeus, *Select Dissertations*, 146 [my italics].

¹⁰⁹ Linnaeus, *Select Dissertations*, 141.

¹¹⁰ Linnaeus, *Select Dissertations*, 164.

animal and vegetable kingdoms. For “in places abounding with inhabitants, contagious disorders prevail with more frequency and force,” and “whether it be not a *positive constitution of nature*,” wars appear “most common where men are found most numerous.”¹¹¹ In this sense, the text articulated the laws of vegetable and animal productions, as well as outlined the so-called positive checks of nature that Malthus later identified: war, famine, and disease. A similar discourse ran through Townsend, Malthus, and Smith’s general understanding that subsistence and population could be brought to bear on one another. How did Malthus draw the truth of these laws?

In the early editions of this essay, Malthus offered little empirical data to support his claims. The first edition relied on a few scattered registrations of births and deaths from localities in the Kingdom of Prussia, several Dukedoms, and the Duchy of Pomerania.¹¹² Subsequent editions of the essay contained numbers of births and deaths, but Malthus never felt compelled to draw these numbers together to support his proposition that passions and subsistence were linked and formed a natural immutable law over all forms of human civilization. Had he endeavoured to do so, he would have had to admit that cycles of birth and death and increases in food production do not necessarily belong to the same time series. Yet, the “truth” of the essay was never in jeopardy. The “geometric” law of population existed in animal and plant populations and, therefore, it held for society as well. The restrictive law of subsistence was found in the operations of nature and nature

¹¹¹ Linnaeus, *Selection Dissertations*, 159 [my italics].

¹¹² Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 36-38.

authored by “mighty God” was constant in its effects over human life.¹¹³ Malthus concluded that these laws were so constant and inexorable that to try to overcome them was nothing more than an “extravagant dream of fancy” which was extinguished as soon as “we turn our eyes to the book of nature, where alone we read God as he is.”¹¹⁴ Malthus insisted that in thinking through the laws that govern human life “it seems absolutely necessary that we should reason from nature up to nature’s God.”¹¹⁵

From Newton to Bentley to Clarke to Turnbull and onward, the premise was advanced that the laws of God governed both the fabric of the vegetable and animal kingdoms and political society. Malthus transformed this philosophical premise into the anchor for the governance of human life by natural immutable laws. That this great restrictive law was present in the animal and vegetable kingdom was enough to establish its existence in the orders of human life as well. Indeed, if Turnbull claimed “the order kept in man, as well as in the other parts of nature within our observation [were] of the same system,” Malthus reiterated this principle.

The constancy of the laws of nature, is the foundation of the industry and foresight of the husbandman; the indefatigable ingenuity of the artificer; the skilful researches of the physician, and anatomist; and the watchful observation, and patient investigation, of the natural philosopher. To this constancy we owe all the greatest, and noblest efforts of intellect.¹¹⁶

Not only did “the constancy of the laws of nature and of the effects and causes, [form] the foundation of all human knowledge” but human life could only be

¹¹³ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 77.

¹¹⁴ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 94.

¹¹⁵ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 94.

¹¹⁶ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 97.

contemplated in relation to the laws as they appeared in nature; any other mode of reasoning “[was] in the highest degree unphilosophical and totally unwarranted.”¹¹⁷

In such a way, the truth of the laws advanced by Malthus was vested in the constancy of the divine as evidenced in nature. The intellectual anchorage points of his essay can be found in the slow-burning historical formation of physico-theology. The positive checks on life were, according to Malthus, inviolable and operated over human life across the globe in accordance with the development of civilization. The preventive checks, however, had nothing to do with altering these positive laws. The laws themselves could not be altered and, thus did not—contrary to Dean—betray the possibility of disorder within nature.

The preventive checks were voluntary means human beings could use to mitigate the misery and suffering that would be inevitable when these positive checks brought subsistence and population into balance. Thus, the scale of intervention was the level of economic conduct, not the aggregate phenomena or internal patterns that make up population.¹¹⁸ Despite being the object of the essay, population was knowable through laws of nature that were universal, constant, and ultimately external to population as an object of regulation. Malthus’ intellectual grounding in physico-theology *cum* natural history foreclosed the possibility of a biopolitics of population. Population was an object regulated by the laws of nature and had no interiority, no patterns, and no dynamics innate to itself. Rather, the laws of nature determined population. Its coherence and regularity as an object

¹¹⁷ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 49–50.

¹¹⁸ Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty*; David Collings, “Discipline of Death: Knowledge and Power in An Essay on the Principle of Population” *European Romantic Review* vol. 18 issue 2 (2007): 223–230.

were assured not by its own ontology but by nature itself. I can outline the limits of 18th-century observational registers in this essay further by examining how Linnaean categories structure Malthus' claims.

Life in Malthus' Essay

The confluence of the natural laws of physico-theology and the study of natural history reveals one of the ways observational techniques inform Malthus' essay. In particular, the observational register appears to have provided the details that supported Malthus' construction of a savage state of life. As Tellmann notes, nearly a hundred pages of Malthus' text were devoted to the construction of a "quasi-state of nature" that is intended to be comparative in scope.¹¹⁹ Malthus provided a discussion of the orders of nature and their corresponding forms of life ranging from Tierra del Fuego, American Indians, South Sea Islands, Africa, Persia and Tibet. This comparison, which has the colonial body as its focal point, reveals the elision between early discourses on political economy and anxieties over colonial hierarchies.¹²⁰ What Tellmann overlooks, however, is that the sources of Malthus' descriptions come from the observational registers of natural history.

For instance, in a discussion of the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Island as among "the lowest scale of human beings," Malthus opened with a remark on the diet of the people. With "few or no supplies of animals and but little vegetable diet" the inhabitants subsist mainly on fish.¹²¹ This remark was followed by a discussion of the physical characteristics of the individuals: "Their stature seldom exceeds five feet; their bellies are protuberant, with high shoulders, large heads and limbs

¹¹⁹ Tellmann, *Catastrophic Populations*, 141.

¹²⁰ Tellmann, *Catastrophic Populations*, 142.

¹²¹ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 25.

disproportionately slender.”¹²² Of their temperament, they exhibit “the extreme of wretchedness, a horrid mixture of famine and ferocity.”¹²³

He then moved to “the next scale of human beings,” “the inhabitants of New Holland,” and, once more, he discussed the physical characteristics of the inhabitants. He wrote: “They are described as in general neither tall nor well made: their arms, legs and thighs are thin.”¹²⁴ In terms of subsistence, “they depend almost entirely on fish for their sustenance.”¹²⁵ The soil and climate were discussed and animal and vegetable productions were reviewed: “A few berries, the yam, the fern root and the flowers of the different banks make up the whole vegetable catalogue.”¹²⁶ In terms of reproduction, “the union of the sexes takes place at an early age” and women appear “incapable of bringing up two or three children nearly of the same age.”¹²⁷

Turning to the American continent, Malthus suggested that the “savages [subsist] nearly in a similar manner to the natives of New Holland.”¹²⁸ The conditions of the soil were reviewed, as is the climate.¹²⁹ Stature, diet and child rearing were also noted as part of the register. Each entry built up an account of human life in the various orders or scales of nature through details mobilized around the categories of the Linnaean system. Tellingly, Malthus’ sources came from the journals of Cook and Vancouver’s voyages as well as from David Collins, the

¹²² Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 25.

¹²³ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 25.

¹²⁴ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 26.

¹²⁵ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 26.

¹²⁶ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 26.

¹²⁷ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

¹²⁸ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

¹²⁹ Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

lieutenant governor of New South Wales who was a correspondent of the naturalist Joseph Banks.

Malthus' *Essay* therefore demonstrates that the ontology of "population" was, initially at least, provided by 18th-century epistemologies. Physico-theology provided the stability of Malthus' laws while the registers furnished by Linnaean categories filled in the details to construct a general typology of "savage life." As a consequence, there was nothing close to a biopolitics of population in this essay. Life was rendered intelligible by being "placed" into orders of men or scales of human life. This representation of human beings has clear limits. As a tool of demarcation, the state of nature offers no grid-work in which the individuals can be recorded and accounted. Moreover, defined through diet, stature and some vague notion of longevity, there is no way to bring a temporal reading over a form of population anchored in the state of nature. In short, the 18th-century register had yet to subject human beings to a fixed administrative grid.

Life was represented within these categories not as an object with its own internal forces and conditioning relations, but as an object distributed across a series of gradations by divine natural forces. As Foucault argues, during the classical age, nature itself underwent a modification. For 17th- and 18th-century natural philosophers, nature did not exist as a source of knowledge through which humans' conditions of scarcity could be realized and uncovered. Rather, in the classical age, nature was "a homogeneous space of orderable identities and difference."¹³⁰ To this end "nature" was burdened with two functions: that of an abstract space into which typologies of life were slotted, and that of the "source" of natural law. It was

¹³⁰ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 292.

therefore read as both “place” and “action.” As I demonstrate in Parts II and III, one effect of district space was to deprive nature of this dual function. The district would become the milieu in which the laws of nature were sublimated as conditioning effects over population.

Moreover, in the 18th-century observational register, life remained a static object caged by a taxonomic account. Foucault suggests this static representation of life was the product of the episteme of the Classical Age.¹³¹ The argument in this chapter has exposed the material conditions behind this static representation. If the observational register seemed to freeze humans in fixed typologies, it was because of the way in which naturalists recorded their objects. Space and objects were not integrated within the naturalist’s view but were sutured through the respective orders of nature to which they belonged. Tierra del Fuego is remarked upon, a dossier of observations build up its existence, but people, land, and things were not specified or attached to place. The naturalists’ observation lacked a grid in which to ground human beings for documentation and inspection and, thus, observational registers were without clear spatial-temporal coordinates.

Human life was interrogated only insofar as it could be arranged into distinct orders and gradations. The order of nature, although comparative in relation to orders of life, was internally homogeneous and without records of time and without demarcations of its inhabitants, flora, fauna and features. This homogeneity ensured that objects could not be internally differentiated: the typology of the inhabitants of Tierra Del Fuego was meaningful and coherent only in comparison to the North American “native.” It was therefore not possible to have internal comparative rates

¹³¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 300–305.

or regionalized forms of life. Consequently, in the 18th-century observational register there was neither a place for a registration of population as an object with its own rates of death, birth, criminality, and disease, nor was there the capacity for individualization. As such, the temporal-spatial conditions of observation foreclosed both a conception of life as a dying, consuming labouring entity and limited the possibility for a biopolitical representation of population.

Part II: The Colonial District: Birth of a Register

Chapter 3

Hudson's Bay Company's The Right of Seizure, the Fort, and the Preconditions Of District-Inspection

To shift from 18th-century practices of observation and the limits of Malthus' conception of population to a study of the HBC may appear to be abrupt. My study of the HBC, however, reveals how observational practices (as exemplified in the journals of Isham, Graham, and Umfreville) were reworked into practices of district inspection, and, in turn, how the representation of human beings shifted from Linnaean typologies to the documentation of population. By interrogating the form of social vision exercised by HBC naturalists from the mid-18th century to the start of the 19th century, I trace how district-inspection emerged from 18th-century practices of observation.

Part of the process that codified the naturalist's "conduct to observe" as allied with district inspection was tied to a change in how the HBC fort commanded a field of social vision. Between the 18th and 19th centuries, the HBC fort was imagined as a technology that formed part of the sovereign's right of seizure. HBC forts were used to control trade routes, rivers, and lines of contact. As Netz notes, the 18th-century fort was part of a system of rule premised on governing trade routes and supply lines than an extended grid-work of land, people, and things.¹ Consequently, the administrative documents from this period were focused on what entered and exited the fort via these supply lines and trade routes. At the start of the 19th century, the fort changed from being an enclosed headquarters of power and even

¹ Netz, *Barbed-Wire*, 63.

became architecturally more open. This shift created the conditions for the fort to emerge as one of many points of registration in an extended social field that structured the district as the new scale of administration and documentation.

This chapter proceeds in two parts. First, I analyze how the HBC ruled land, people, and things through the right of seizure during the 17th and 18th centuries. The right of seizure is important not only as a contrast to the spatial-temporal imaginary of district inspection but also in conceptualizing the HBC's relation to earlier formations of sovereign rule. Second, I develop the 18th-century HBC fort as a representation of the right of seizure and then trace how, in the 19th century, the fort gradually took on a more open and inspectorial form.

Theories of the HBC's Form of Rule

In 1670 King Charles II incorporated the HBC in London by royal charter, and gave his "dear and beloved cousin Prince Rupert" and several dukes and knights the "sole trade and commerce" in the waterways and "sea straights" that made up the Hudson's Bay Company basin.² This first draft of the charter granted the sole right to trade in what today are Ontario and Quebec north of the of Laurentian hills and west of the Labrador boundary, all of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, southern Alberta and the south eastern section of the North West Territories. In 1821, following the merger with the North West Company, the HBC's lease was further extended into the so-called "Indian Lands" of what are now the states of Oregon, Washington and the province of British Columbia. Prince Rupert and his associates were made by Charles into the "absolute lords and proprietors" of lands that, at the height of the

² HBC Charter, retrieved September 7th, 2013 from caid.ca/HubBatCha1670.pdf pp. 1.

company's operations, were 31 times the size of the United Kingdom.³ The right to grant Prince Rupert dominion to these lands was established through a series of acts of possession by expedition, which started with the Voyage of Cabot in 1497 and ended with several royal expeditions in the 1660s, as well as founded Port Nelson and erected a few crosses within the Hudson's Bay basin. The right of *terra nullius* (empty land) was used to turn these expeditions into a right of ownership.⁴ This transfer is an important place to start in this analysis as the HBC charter offers some insight into how people, land, and things were initially measured, enumerated and administrated in "Rupert's land." How was rule facilitated and how did district-inspection emerge and modify these initial practices?

Scholars question whether the HBC charter made the company "a mode of state onto itself."⁵ As Cavanagh claims, "beyond granting and extending the charter's company at home" the English crown's role in the company's day-to-day operations was minimal.⁶ This reading is supported by the "company's relative freedom to make war, abstain from the conflicts of the crown, its power to set up courts and its

³ This transfer was made before the size of this land and its resources were known. More importantly, the civilizations and peoples that had long since thrived on this land were but ghosts in the charter. The only mention of the civilizations already in the Northern part of the Americas was that if they were not already subjects of another Christian prince, they were to be ruled as subjects of the company.

⁴ Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 163–165; see also James Simsarian, "The Acquisition of Legal Title to Terra Nullius" in *Political Science Quarterly* March(1938): 111–128.

⁵ Edward Cavanagh, "A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of its Own? The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1763" in *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* vol. 26 no. 1 (2011): 25–50; and for a discussion of mercantile company power more generally, Philip Stern, "A Politie of Civill and Military Power: Political Thought and the Late Seventeenth Century Foundations of the East India Company-State" *Journal of British Studies* vol. 45(2008): 253–283.

⁶ Cavanagh, "A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of its Own", 28.

attempts to discipline its servants and control their sexual relations.”⁷ In contrast, drawing on Foucault, Smandych and Linden suggest that the HBC represented a form of rule without a state and, as such, most closely resembled Foucault’s account of governmentality.⁸ They come to this conclusion by examining the different tactics of “government” used by HBC throughout the 18th century such as paternalism, corporal punishment, and other forms of discipline.⁹ I argue that both interpretations are inadequate, and propose that the HBC is better understood as a company that inherited a relation of rule that was sovereign in origin (i.e., the sovereign right of seizure).

Treating the HBC as a company state effectively treats the state as a mere set of functions. Courts, declarations of war, and the use of discipline over its employees are all modes of rule and power that are part of modern state rule. However, the historical specificity of state relations includes more than these functions or apparatuses. As Corrigan and Sayer note, the modern centralized state form is a formation particular to the 19th century. In earlier periods, the commonwealth, government and the Royal Court typified the apparatuses through which political society and political rule were constituted.¹⁰

As Abrams notes, a dimension of the modern project of state rule is the use of the “state-idea” to confer legitimacy on relations of rule that otherwise appear

⁷ Cavanagh, “A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of its Own”, 28.

⁸ Russell Smandych and Rick Linden, “Administering Justice without the State: A Study of the Private Justice System of the Hudson’s Bay Company to 1800” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* vol. 11 (1996): 5.

⁹ Smandych, and Linden, “Administering Justice without the State”, 21–62.

¹⁰ Corrigan, and Sayer, *The Great Arch*; Philip Abrams, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State” *Journal of Historical Sociology* vol. 11 no. 1 (1977), 72.

illegitimate.¹¹ In particular, central to the state-idea is to re-present relations of direct domination as disinterested relations of rule sanctioned collectively or, at least, initiated in service of the common interests of society. A distinct form of sovereign representation historically conditions the modern state form. If the state is invoked to make relations of domination palatable by ensuring these relations of rule appear objective, disinterested and exercised by no particular social class, the state takes on this form because of new representations of people as political subjects.¹² It is only when people appear *de jure* as democratic subjects with the inalienable right to determine how they are governed that the legitimacy of political rule becomes tied to its appearance as state rule.

The degree to which the HBC encapsulated this historical dimension of state rule is questionable as neither its employees nor indigenous “subjects” were invested as political subjects. Reading the HBC as a form of state overlooks the social character of the relations of political rule it deployed and denies the historical specificity of the state formation. While it is true that the HBC was granted autonomy in how it structured its political rule, there are sections of its charter that suggest the administration of Rupert’s land was imagined along semi-feudal lines. In particular, the charter was considered only to be valid so long as the company maintained “its faith [and] allegiance” to the sovereign dominion held by the King and his heirs and successors.”¹³ To this end, it was understood that the sovereign would exercise absolute authority when he or his heirs entered Rupert’s land and that the company would make an annual royal tribute of two elks and two black

¹¹ Abrams, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State,” 76.

¹² Singer and Weir, “Sovereignty, Governance and the Political,” 61.

¹³ Hudson’s Bay Company Charter, 1670, 6.

beavers to the king.¹⁴ These relations were upheld and complicate the degree to which the HBC can be seen as a sovereign state form. Accordingly, using the company's institutional functions to classify it as state reveals little about the political and social forms that underpin these institutional practices.

Smandych and Linden's reading of the HBC as a form of non-state power is not without its own analytical and historical problems. Their study runs from the company's incorporation in 1670 to 1800. They provide a fascinating case study of the tactics fort governors used during the 18th century to maintain control over company servants, and demonstrate that the fort was a space of rule typified by the absence of standardized conduct. Each governor was given leave to rule his fort as he saw fit, with occasional guidance from the London Council.¹⁵ Smandych and Linden's choice to analyze the HBC through a governmentality framework was prompted by their discovery of these "non-state forms of governance" and the "diversity" of tactics utilized by individual governors.¹⁶

There are three problems with Smandych and Linden's interpretation. First, they impose the concept of governmentality on late 17th- and 18th-century Canada. As Foucault's history of governmentality suggests, however, the "art of government" was a slow formation that occurred via processes of making the economy governable through population and making population governable via the economy. However, the art of government was distinctly grounded in processes specific to Europe and did not become a coherent rationality until the late 18th and early 19th century. In particular, it was partially freed by the treaty of Westphalia and concerns

¹⁴ Hudson's Bay Company Charter, 1670, 6.

¹⁵ Smandych, and Linden "Administering Justice Without the State", 39.

¹⁶ Smandych, and Linden, "Administering Justice Without the State", 1, 3, 58.

that directed rule way from governing the surface of territory to focusing on governing through the proper disposition of things.¹⁷

Governmentality was a form of rule that was codified through the opening up of the Prince's office to new forms of advice on how to govern.¹⁸ Accordingly, the history of governmentality is unique to Europe. By neglecting to develop an alternative history of governmentality, Smandych and Linden implicitly make Canada's process of state formation identical to the historical processes that characterized state formation in Western Europe. Moreover, given the close relationship between population and the formation of governmentality, the absence of population in the HBC during the period claimed by the authors poses problems for their interpretation. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, a form of population did emerge in the HBC, but it emerged in the 19th century as conditioned by the administrative power of the district. Without population readable as an object, it is difficult to conceptualize the factors of 18th-century HBC practices that make them reflective of governmental rule.

Third, while Smandych and Linden are correct to point out that HBC rule was not premised on relations of state, their conclusion suggests an analytical slippage. For instance, the corporal punishment, surveillance by sentries, infra rules surrounding the working day, and control over movement used by the HBC fort governors' are all forms of power that Foucault characterized as disciplinary (and not as governmentality). More saliently, the contrast the authors seem to rely on to

¹⁷ See Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*; Thomas Lemke, "New Materialisms: Foucault and the Government of Things" in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 32, issue 4 (2015): 3-25.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality" in *The Essential Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York, London: The New Press, 2003 [1978]), 229.

demarcate non-state forms of power from sovereign rule reinforces a number of problematic ambiguities in Foucault's work.¹⁹ The employment of sovereign power to discuss state rule arguably reverses subject and predicate. When following a historical sociological perspective, however, it is forms of state that develop certain relations of sovereign rule. As projects of state are mobilized to codify historically specific relations of domination, the historian should try to locate different forms of sovereign power in the relations of domination and their transformations. Reading sovereign power as a form of state rule that runs parallel to different formations of power, therefore, makes it difficult to historicize sovereign power or locate the sites and social relations that may push sovereign rule into new forms. To draw a stark contrast between state and non-state forms of rule obfuscates the processes whereby relations of domination come to be connected to sovereign rule and, in turn, are modified as they become techniques of state rule.

The HBC charter is better understood as a semi-feudal form of ownership. Charles granted Rupert a dominion of land to rule as a lord and proprietor. The sovereign remained the absolute lord of the region and was even entitled to a token tribute to his authority. To call the HBC a company state overlooks that its dominion was granted by the sovereign and, that on its incorporation, it was not imagined as a company but as a right of extraction (a sole right to the commerce of a given area). Its corporate structure developed as a "vehicle for the conveyance of an opportunity of limitless value."²⁰ The incorporation of the HBC and the making of Rupert's land

¹⁹ For a discussion of the anemic theorization of sovereign power by Foucault and his interlocutors see Singer, and Weir, "Sovereignty, Governance and the Political," 49–71.

²⁰ *Hudson's Bay Company: a brief history* (Winnipeg: Hudson Bay Company Press, 1934), 7–9.

as a form of dominion served to transfer to the HBC a right of rule derived from sovereign power. It is by theorizing the right of seizure and its means of constitution that I can examine the social forms through which inspection worked and modified HBC rule.

Theorizing the Sovereign Right of Seizure

Foucault introduces the right of seizure as a means of contrasting modern political rule premised on biopolitics to earlier sovereign forms of rule. For Foucault, the right of seizure was “essentially...seizure: of things, time, bodies and ultimately life itself.”²¹ Yet the theorization of the right of seizure, along with the relations of rule and legal codifications that crystallized in it, remain underdeveloped in Foucaultian scholarship.²² Foucault predominately introduces the right of seizure as a foil for establishing when biopower came to exist.²³ Even in Mitchell Dean’s attempt to provide a more rigorous account of how sovereign power connects to biopolitical rule, he stays close to Foucault’s schematics of sovereign power: “Laws, decrees and regulations backed up by coercive sanctions ultimately grounded in the right of death” are the instruments of sovereign power, which operate “through

²¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 136.

²² This shortcoming is developed in Singer and Lorna, “Sovereignty, Governance and the Political” and illustrated in Dean, “Demonic Societies” and Hannah, “Calculable Territory”, 68; Matthew Hannah, “Spaces of exception and unexceptionability” in D. Cowen, M. Gilbert (eds.), *War, citizenship, territory* (London, Routledge, 2008), 57–54; Stuart Elden, “Governmentality, calculation, territory,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* vol. 25 (2007): 565.

²³ To see how Foucault contrasts sovereign power and biopower see *Society Must be Defended*, 254; For a reintroduction of this historically anemic construction of sovereign power see Peter Gratton, “A Retro-version’ of Power: Agamben via Foucault on Sovereignty,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* vol. 9, issue 3(2006): 448–449.

spectacle and ritual” and prohibit forms of action.²⁴ The concept of a right of seizure therefore needs further unpacking.

What is the right to seize? The term “seize” spans the power to claim, to annex, to take people, things, bodies, and life through warrant, declaration, or title. Taken in this way, it can then include the power of Royal charter as one form through which a sovereign right to seize was exercised. The right to seize departs from Foucault’s other typologies of power in several notable ways. One aspect involves a contrast between the way seizure interacts with human life and biopolitics and biopower. Instead of operating on the scale of species life and governing life, seizure establishes relations of rule at the level of a claim. Dominions, lands, and kingdoms form the grid-work of seizure. Those things that fall into this grid—be it fish, timber, native subjects, rivers, or the soil—are subsumed within this right and rule is enacted on them accordingly. Seizure is a form of power that totalizes at the expense of individualization. Seizure, in short, does not populate its dominion through measure, surveillance, or enumeration; it presumes its space and knows whatever is encountered is by right “its to claim, destroy or let live.”

There is a less obvious effect that is linked to the rule through the right of seizure. As Lemke observes, Foucault points to biopolitics and the rise of governmental reason not only as form of power typified by the rule of population but as a form of power premised on the “intrication of men and things.”²⁵ Rather than ruling by “imposing a law on men,” biopolitics tries to achieve rule through the disposition of things in an arrangement that a “particular end of government may be

²⁴ Dean, “Demonic Societies”, 49.

²⁵ Lemke, “New Materialisms”, 3; Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 97.

achieved.”²⁶ Lemke’s point is that biopolitics requires a certain materiality that entails calibrating political rule by “intricating” human beings with things, a development that complicates the binary of human and non-human actors through a new imagination of nature.²⁷

For my purposes, however, another point can be drawn from intrication and the making of spatial order: the right of seizure is not a technique of intrication. In particular, for a process of intrication to occur—for people, land, and things to be viewed as processes that can modify one another through their points of interaction—people, land, and things must first be developed as individual objects of rule. For instance, for population and environment to emerge as points of mutual constitution, knowledge of people must first be developed and nature also needs to be viewed as a set of internal forces, patterns, and laws that can be linked to social life. The right of seizure, however, can arguably contain everything in its scope. In a field of rule where everyone and everything are captured by the same right, the product is amorphous: land, people, and resources all collapse into one another as one singular continuum of order. Under such conditions, the relations of rule that are representative of intrication cannot develop. The right of seizure can be understood as being productive of a spatial order expressed in one framework of rule, as a total claim where people, land, and things become expressed in one right. It does not serve to intricate them, therefore, to produce knowledge that separates them and then later finds their shared axes and mutual sites of constitution. Such an approach does not sustain a documentation of life as a regionalized relation.

²⁶ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 99.

²⁷ Lemke, “New Materialisms,” 9.

Accordingly, the HBC charter can be read as a right of seizure. In particular, the charter granted the HBC:

the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas Streights Bayes Rivers Lakes Creekes and Soundes in whatsoever Latitude they shall bee that lie within the entrance of the Streights commonly called Hudson's Streights together with all the Landes and Terriroryes upon the Countryes Coastes and confynes of the Seas Bayes Lakes Rivers Creekes and Soundes.²⁸

Vested as "as absolute lords and proprietors of Rupert's Land, Prince Rupert, his associates, and their heirs received an extensive field of rule. Under the title of proprietorship, the charter united the right to construct "castles, fortifications, fortes, garrisons, colonies, plantations and towns and villages;"²⁹ the right to control all traffic and commerce; the right to all soil, fisheries, forests, rivers, and game; and the dominion of both English subjects and natives not under the authority of some other Christian king or prince. As such, the charter conferred a totalized command of land, people, and things as one continuum of rule.

This understanding of the HBC as founded on a right of seizure introduces several lines of theorization. The right of seizure was productive of a distinct spatial order. Furs, game, fish, soil, and land were the spoils of Rupert's land. Yet Rupert's land remained internally undifferentiated. Certainly, it was given limits and boundaries by the tributaries of the Hudson Bay basin, but beyond these surfaces, the land, people, and resources were not directly or consistently documented. In other words, everything was owned but little was specified or demarcated. Consequently, the colonial spatial order of the 18th century appears inverted in comparison to the 19th-century projects of colonial rule. It was a spatial order defined by forts and the narrow arteries of trade, rivers, navigations, and the trade

²⁸ Hudson's Bay Company Charter, 5.

²⁹ Hudson's Bay Company Charter, 7.

routes used by indigenous people running between these headquarters.³⁰ Thus, people, land, and things were not ruled through a totalized grid work. What existed beyond the fort and its trade routes was represented on the 18th-century map as little more than blank parchment. In other words, the seizure of everything established a form of rule without verifiable, measurable, and consistent objects of administration. This form of spatial order created an extensive field of management ruled at the scale of the fort, the site through which company practices of documentation were aligned throughout the 18th century. The post-log and the account book served to produce the HBC's administrative field. People, land, and things were neither administered nor were they contemplated outside of these registers. This limited field of view produced by the right of seizure was interlocked with the economic relations of the HBC.

The right of seizure conditioned a form of rule that was pre-capitalist in its scope. The charter granted the company the right to the sole "trade and traffic" of the area within their territorial limits. The movement of goods remained the company's sole right and, in this sense, formed the basis of accumulation. While they formed the substance of the HBC's dominion, vegetation, furs, animals, and soil were not included as objects the company could enclose and effectively own (and so shape the direct material relations of production). Initially, at least, the sovereign right of seizure was subject to a dual deployment as the basis of political rule and economic extraction.

³⁰ This relationship between power and spatial order is expressed in the survey maps and navigation charts of 18th century. See Richard Ruggles, *A Country so Interesting: the Hudson's Bay Company and two centuries of mapping, 1670–1870* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

As such, the right of seizure gave the HBC a right to property that Locke tried to confront and dissolve in his *Second Treatise of Government*.³¹ Rule and ownership were exercised at the level of trade and traffic, not by the company's efforts of added labour to land and things. Effectively, the HBC's right to land, people and things replicated semi-feudal productive relations where accumulation occurred through extraction at the level of exchange than within a delimited sphere of productive relations. Wealth was accumulated not by direct relations of extraction or by the control of subsistence, but by the control of circulation, the collection, and command over flows of goods. This was a relation legitimized by the personal political relationship of a lord and proprietor.

Part of the formation of district-inspection occurred through the codification of observational practices as administrative categories. The Linnaean system's classification of flora, fauna, topography, climate, and indigenous people formed the documentary system of district-inspection. The codification of natural history categories into an administrative document served to shift the production of knowledge from accounting practices to registers of life, subsistence, and nature in an extended field of view. District-inspection, therefore, was formed from a process of modifying the categories of natural history. Yet the use of these categories to define a pre-determined field of view to administer introduced new objects of rule into HBC administrative practices.

³¹ Locke opened his treatise on property with the argument "that God gave the world to Adam and his posterity in common" and, as such, it was impossible for anyone but a "universal monarch" to be granted a dominion. See John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government: An Essay Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government* (London: Watchmaker Publishing, 2011[1689]), 17.

District-inspection emerged as a technique through which the spatial order produced by the right of seizure was “populated.” The districted space of the early 19th century imposed a gridded imagination that segmented nature, separated people into populations, and rationalized the activity of the trade on a scale greater than the fort. Consequently, the introduction of districts reworked the singular framework guaranteed by the right of seizure into distinct fields of management, which, in turn, extended rule from the fort to cover land, people, and things.

I will outline the effects of this new spatial field of rule in chapters 4 and 5, but first I need to review the fort as part of the material conditions that structured the 18th-century spatial order as grounded in the right of seizure. Throughout the 18th century, the spatial imaginary of the HBC was fort centric, premised on a command of space that envisioned rule as the control of contact lines, trade routes, and lines of traffic, which left everything that fell beyond these points as outside rule. Thus the forms of documentation that occurred before the emergence of practices of district-inspection, conditioned an 18th-century spatial imaginary that left population notably absent in the HBC practices of documentation from this period.

Command of Space: Notes on Hudson Bay Company Fort (1740–1840)

For the purposes of this discussion, John Muller’s (1756) “A Treatise on Fortification” constitutes an important piece of work.³² Muller opens this treatise

³² John Muller was a professor of artillery and fortification at Woolwich University from 1736–1766. I open here with Muller because, as Kenneth Perry notes, many of the HBC forts were smaller models of European fortifications. See Kenneth Perry, *Frontier Forts and Posts of the Hudson’s Bay Company: During the Fur Trade and Gold Rush Period* (Surrey, Hancock House Publishers, 2007), 7. HBC architects replicated Muller’s work both in terms of the fort models they designed but also in the advice they provided on making forts fire proof and geometric patterns used to design the fort’s defensive structure. It may not be the case that these designers were in contact with Muller, although this is a possibility as he was England’s authority on fort design during this period, but they were certainly connected to

with the declaration that “the fort” is an “art of enclosing towns” and “commanding space.” Forts may be used “to guard some passes, in a mountainous country or near causeways, rivers and other such places.”³³ The text is divided into different types of fortification: the construction of citadels in existing towns and the construction of “irregular forts” in newly conquered places. It was a matter of correct enclosure to have control over the “entrance into a country” and thereby to control the country itself, and to hold a monopoly over the land, resources, and subjects. In other words, it was necessary to have the right size of fort, the right walls, in the right location.

Alongside the fort’s rationalization of space was a discussion of the fort as a site of commerce. “The greatest strength of [England],” wrote Muller, “and all maritime nations consists in traffic” as “fortified places which lie near rivers, lakes, creeks, or the sea chiefly serve to protect and promote trade.”³⁴ The construction of such types of forts must be explained “in a particular manner [so that] nothing [will be] omitted.”³⁵ If one built a fort on the river large enough to house a market, for example, “the streets [were] to be perpendicular to the river, and to cross each other at right angles” so as to facilitate the “transporting goods from the ships to the market.”³⁶ Moreover, “it should be considered whether the country round it produces such commodities as are fit for trade how [they] can be improved and

these debates on fortification. There is, for instance, a remarkable similarity in the geometric design of the fort, and also the discussions on using dung to fireproof earthworks. The design of Churchill fort adheres particularly close to Muller’s principles. See John Muller, *A Treatise containing the elementary part of fortification regular and irregular* (Ottawa: Museum Restoration Service, 1968 [1756]), 197, 207.

³³ Muller, *A Treatise*, 196.

³⁴ Muller, *A Treatise*, x.

³⁵ Muller, *A Treatise*, x.

³⁶ Muller, *A Treatise*, 132.

where [they] may be transported to, either for sale or exchange.”³⁷ As the “great wealth of a country depends on traffic by sea,” one was to build forts that had “proper landing places” and the capability to “defend against the force or stratagem of any enemy.”³⁸ The fort also required good storehouses to lodge all the goods “as the greatest wealth of a country depends on these sites.”³⁹

Muller’s text reveals that the 18th-century fort was designed to extract wealth from the countryside. Given this purpose, the fort was a technique that extended dominion over trade routes, rivers, and other lines of traffic. To this end, the construction of the fort was a process of commanding space. It is noteworthy that the type of spatial command Muller advocated was not encompassing but rather limited to the immediate surroundings of the fort itself. The fort operated as a headquarters of sovereign power and, in this sense, can be viewed as representative of the right of seizure. The HBC forts constructed during the 18th century reflected some of Muller’s principles of fort design.

From 1670-1763, the HBC consolidated its hold over the Hudson’s Bay area through the construction of five forts: York Factory, Fort Albany, Fort Charles, Fort Rupert, and Fort Prince of Wales. Placed no more than ten kilometers from the sea or a river, their geographical location reflected their purpose: food and building supplies were exchanged for furs shipped back to London. The placement of these forts left them subject to year round permafrost, which left few prospects for the company to cultivate its own food-supply. The survival of the HBC staff (somewhere between 30-50 individuals at any time) was largely dependent upon supply-lines

³⁷ Muller, *A Treatise*, 184–185.

³⁸ Muller, *A Treatise*, x.

³⁹ Muller, *A Treatise*, 187.

from ships from the Atlantic. The role of the fort in safeguarding and maintaining relations of exchange appears to have been a central concern. Each HBC fort was designed to have a minimum of 8000 square feet of storeroom space.⁴⁰ Built at the mouths of the rivers that fed the HBC basin, each fort was positioned to receive Indigenous traders after the spring thaw. The fort was situated with the sole purpose of “accumulating wealth.”

The following three images are from HBC fort plans from the 18th century. The second image is a specific plan for Churchill, and the other two are unnamed fort plans. The highlighted section of the third image reads, “place for Indian trade.” These three images appear to be representative of the architectural structure of the usual HBC fort constructed during this period.

Sketch of the outer walls: defense begin with stakes, an open plain easily scoured by musket fire, a moat, an embankment with wooden stakes, an external wall, and finally the stone perimeter of the keep).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, "An Essay on the Timber Buildings in Hudson's Bay", date circa 1740, Author unknown, 11M1 G1/41/74.

⁴¹HBCA, AM, Plan 4 of Six Plans for Churchill, Circa 1740, designer unknown, 11M1/G1/74.

All designs call for a singular entrance point. Any subsequent sites of entrance within the interiors of the fort's space were kept perpendicular to one another. The limitation of entry points established who had access in and out. HBC employees required permission from the governor of the fort (precursor of the position of chief factor) to leave.⁴² A sentry was employed to maintain watch over the walls and to make sure no one entered or exited without permission (a sentry who failed to maintain control over the movement across gates and walls was subject to corporal punishment).

The placement of the fort and its walls was also subjected to a rigorous geometry. A geometry sheet with the calculation of the angles generated by the

⁴² Deidre Simmons, *Keepers of the Record: The History of the Hudson Bay Company Archives* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); Douglas Mackay, *The Honorable Company* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Press, 1936).

walls often accompanied the blueprint for the fort's architecture.⁴³ The outside space of the fort was divided into quadrants of angles and all areas had to be visible and open to canon fire.⁴⁴ The fort needed "inclose a space of ground that... can be viewed by every side so there [was] no shelter were any enemy [could] lodge themselves."⁴⁵ In most designs, the interior was left blank. The governor's room was mentioned but the actual placement of rooms and their social functions received no explicit discussion, as the size, length, and angles of the walls were the sole concern.

The 18th-century fort fabricated a spatial order focused on the pairing of canons to walls. The walls functioned to enclose dwellings, staff, and, most importantly, the spoils of the fur trade packed away in HBC storerooms. To be effective, the wall not only had to be designed according to certain geometric maxims, but the immediate area surrounding the fort had to be cleared and brought into view to provide the fort's canons with a clear line of sight. Canons, musket-fire, and moats formed a command of space premised solely on the capacity for destruction. As the fort could not be the seat of any form of power that required extensive, permanent, and continuous regulation over an extended field of relations, its gates formed the limits of its regulative power, restriction, and containment.

Nevertheless, the fort still needed to function as an instrument of extraction. The relations of exchange between HBC staff and indigenous people were built into the fort's enclosed architecture. Thus, despite the large storerooms that housed the accumulation of trade goods at each fort, practices of exchange were not allowed to

⁴³ HBCA, AM, "Plan 5 one of six plans of Churchill", circa 1740, author unknown, 11M/G1/80.

⁴⁴ HBCA, AM, "Churchill Plans [not executed], author unknown, circa, 1740, 11M1/G1/78.

⁴⁵ HBCA, AM, "A Draught Plan of the Old Fort at Albany Together with a Draught Plan of the Same with Alterations" date 1700s (circa) author unknown, 11M1 G1/75.

disrupt the fort's enclosure. Throughout the 18th century, trade was conducted along the exterior wall in the designated "Indian Trading Places," which were positioned near the fort's bastions for a clear line of fire. In some instances, the location was simply designated on fort designs as ABV, an area of angles composed by the exterior wall and two lines of fire. Some designs included "trading wickets" or small portholes in the exterior palisade for goods to be exchanged.⁴⁶ With these considerations in place, the fort's architecture ensured that the wall was only porous to goods (and not people).

In line with Muller's instructions on using the fort to control traffic and trade, the HBC fort was explicitly designed as a site of extraction. Its structure presupposed that furs and goods would be deposited by indigenous hunters, packed into storerooms, and then shipped back to London. York Factory, Fort Albany, Fort Charles, Fort Rupert, and Fort Prince of Wales formed the nexus for one of the primary relations of extraction in British North America. Thus, mercantile relations of production shaped the 18th-century fort. The fort was built in range of commodities that were fit for improvement and "sale and exchange."⁴⁷ The HBC forts reflected this logic, as each was placed along rivers and tributaries within reach of the sea, and, thus, conferred power over the traffic in goods. Accumulation was premised on holding trade routes and traffic rather than on directly increasing the productivity of labour. The palisades and the walls of the 18th-century fort

⁴⁶ Mackay, *The Honorable Company*, 220.

⁴⁷ As such, the fort had to be designed to support the circulation of commodities and their 'improvement' before export. This economic reasoning resembles the economic doctrines of the 18th-century police science. See Johann von Justi, "Selections From on Staatwirthschaft" in *A General Police System: Political Economy and Security in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. George Rigakos, John L. McMullan, Joshua, Johnson, Gulden Ozcan (Ottawa: Red Quill Books, 2009).

supported the circulation of goods but also kept “the natives” firmly outside its gates.

By virtue of the social relations of production it codified, the 18th-century fort belonged to a limited social field. As a consequence, however, what existed outside the fort was not subject to regular superintendence because the “art of enclosure” precluded this possibility. While the 18th-century fort was deployed to ensure that a limited number of men could control an entire country through the application of force over trade routes and lines of traffic, the fort did not presuppose command over an extensive social field of people, land, and things. As Netz argues, until the mid-19th century, rule over land and people “strikes the modern eye as strangely inverted.”⁴⁸ Trade routes and contact points were commanded from specific headquarters of power, leaving the rest of the social field unknown and outside of control.

The architectural structure of the 18th-century fort therefore limited the kind of registrations the company produced. In particular, two forms of record were produced over the 18th century: fort logs and account books.⁴⁹ An example of a day-to-day account registered the weather and the activity of company servants, and contained brief notes of exchange with indigenous people:

Wednesday. Wind SW a gentle breeze with clear hot weather. One man mending a net, one man lame and the rest collecting firewood. Trade 200lbs of meat and 60lbs of very poor dried meat but not an ounce of fat. At noon the Indian went away.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Netz, *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity*, 63.

⁴⁹ Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman, *“Give us good measure”: an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson’s Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, E.E Rich, *The Hudson’s Bay Company 1670-1870* (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1958).

⁵⁰ Tominson, “Edmonton House Journal” in *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1800; Chesterfield House 1800-1802* ed. Alice M Johnson (London: Hudson’s Bay Company Record Society, 1967 [1795]), 67.

HBC council required that each governor of the fort produced a similar form of log. The account books meticulously listed trade goods, furs, and foodstuffs, and records were kept of the purchases made by the HBC employees. However, during this period, there was no record of who brought the furs to the fort. Indigenous people, the principal suppliers of wealth, are not featured in these records. Throughout the 18th century, then, the company had little knowledge of indigenous people as a population or of the topographical conditions in which they existed.

The company's lack of documentation of indigenous people was not due to disinterest. For instance, in 1749 a parliamentary select committee was commissioned to inquire into the state of the HBC's affairs. Company employees were asked to attest to whether the company had faithfully undertaken its civilizing duty towards its "native subjects." The company's response was that "civilizing" the indigenous people required the company "to bring them up to labour from their youth," and that this was impossible as the company knew little about the locations of most of its indigenous trading partners.⁵¹ Within this same period, when asked to write on the "native" population, Chief Factor John Isham was only able to state that they "are not numerous relative to the proportion of land they occupy."⁵²

In the same year as the select committee, HBC surveyor William Coates was charged with the development of a map for a new Fort in the Gulf of Richmond. In his survey, Coates described the immediate features in the vicinity of the new fort: the trees, the animals, and the plains. As to the existence indigenous peoples, he remarked "of men that we expected to see the footsteps of many numerous tribes of

⁵¹ Cavanagh, "A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of its own?" 37.

⁵² Isham, *Observations on Hudson's Bay*, 74.

Indians which we did everywhere in our progress.”⁵³ This lack of detailed knowledge of indigenous people appears to have persisted within the HBC until 1815. For example, when the company asked a clerk at Whale’s Lake Outpost to enumerate the surrounding indigenous population, his report noted that he had “endeavored to collect a list of those who traded at the post... but their are some who at times are not seen here for several successive years and whose names are mostly unknown to me.”⁵⁴ Much of the company’s inability to develop knowledge of indigenous people as colonial populations can be linked to the HBC fort’s form of registration. The physical structure of the fort, the prohibition against indigenous hunters entering the fort, and the prohibition against Hudson’s Bay Company employees conversing with “the natives” circumscribed the production of records.

The Nineteenth-Century Open Fort

The register of the 18th-century fort was too narrow and the accounts of HBC gentlemen outside the fort too encompassing for indigenous people to be documented as population. Over the course of the 19th century, the fort’s register and the accounts of HBC agents were refined and connected through the jurisdictional-administrative unit of the district. I begin here with the transformation of the fort. As mentioned, the 18th-century fort was bound up with a practice of record keeping that was “blind” to its surroundings. Part of the formation of ruling through districts was conditioned by the opening of the fort in the 19th century.

⁵³ HBCA, AM, “A Map of Artuimipeg or the Gulf of Richmond” William Coates, 1749, 11M1/G1/17.

⁵⁴ HBCA, AM, “Report to Thomas Vincent Governor of the State of the Honorable Hudson’s Bay Company, Settlement at Whale River”, Thomas Adler, 1815, 1M778/B372/2/e/1.

The 1786 design plans for fort York Factory included an innovation that at a glance may appear minor. The new design converted two rooms with a shared wall into a counting room and a trade room. The trade room had a single door and was lined by windows—three outside, and one inside that linked it with the counting room. In the bottom corner of the map the architect left the following note: “it might be deemed unsafe to admit too many of the natives at one time into the fort.”⁵⁵ As already discussed, earlier designs had placed indigenous people outside the exterior wall and directed towards designated trading places (often in a configuration of firing lines). The design for York Factory, however, admitted indigenous people to the fort. Their number was to be carefully controlled and monitored, however, as the trade room was to be close to the main gate and separated from the inner dwellings and administrative site by another set of gates. Nonetheless, the wall of this fort was made more porous. The trade room also shared a wall with the new counting house. Clerks and hunters were face-to-face as furs, rifles, ammunition, blankets, foodstuffs, tobacco, and liquor passed between them.

This pairing of the counting room and the trade room was not merely an isolated architectural episode. The 1815 floor plans for York Factory Fort reveal that the configuration was still in use at that time.⁵⁶ More importantly perhaps, over the 19th century, this more porous architectural configuration became a standard arrangement of most HBC forts. From 1815 onward, the exterior wall was

⁵⁵ HBCA, AM, “A Design For Building a Commodious Fort in Room of the Present Warehouses in York Factory, 1786–1787”, author Joseph Colen, submitted to the Governor, 11M1, G1/112.

⁵⁶ HBCA, AM, “Ground Plan of York Factory, 1815” [author unknown], 1M11/G1/113.

increasingly removed from design plans.⁵⁷ The careful coordination of walls and canons that had dominated the design plans of the 18th century receded from the structural layout, and left only one heavily fortified building, a keep, which was guarded by “high wooden stakes.”

As well, HBC forts were increasingly designed with a set of internal arrangements in mind, which constructed new relations among the inhabitants into its architecture. The dwellings of company servants were carefully laid out, and munitions were stored a mandatory distance from kitchens. Subsistence was built into the model as areas of space were dedicated to acres of gardens. With the change in design, there was a push for a lighter economy of power that would displace the fort’s previous restrictive functions, to focus instead on the management of internal circulations.

Sir George Simpson’s criticisms of Fort George during his 1824 Inspectorial Tour reflect this shift. The HBC established control over Fort George—formerly a North West Company (NWC) fort—after the amalgamation of the two companies in 1821. Built in 1811, the fort’s inhabitants were attacked and killed within months of its completion. In response, the NWC erected more palisades and strengthened the bastions.⁵⁸ Simpson described the fort as follows:

The establishment of Fort George is a large pile of buildings covering about an acre of ground well stockaded and protected by Bastions or Blockhouses, having two eighteen Pounders mounted in front and altogether an air of appearance of Grandeur

⁵⁷ This modification was represented in a number of diagrams, such as HBCA, AM, “Sketch of Edmonton House (1815) by J. Bird 11M1/G1/99; HBCA, AM, “Plan for Fort Simpson 1853 by James Anderson” 3M102/D.5/36/462; HBCA, AM, “Ground Plan of Carleton House (1815) 11M1/G1/76; Hudson’s Bay Company Collection, Library and Archives Canada, “Rough Sketch plan of Fort Wedderburn” 1814–1815, 1M153/B235/a/3.

⁵⁸ Perry, 2007, *Frontier Forts and Posts of the Hudson’s Bay Company*, 10.

and consequence which does not become and is not at all suitable to the Indian Fur Trade post [my italics].⁵⁹

The stockades, bastions, and weaponry that had constituted the core features of HBC fort design plans only some thirty years earlier became ill suited to conduct “the Indian fur trade.” Insight into why this structure was unsuitable can be gained by examining Simpson’s comments on the design features of Fort Vancouver, which was commissioned that same year:

The fort is well picketed covering a space of about 3/4ths of an acre and the buildings already completed are a dwelling house, two good stores, an Indian Hall, and temporary quarters for the people. It will in two years hence be the finest place in North American, indeed I have rarely seen a Gentlemen's seat in England possessing so many natural advantages and where ornament and use are so agreeably combined.⁶⁰

The newly designed fort had a lighter structure. It still was walled but the need for multiple barriers was, in the case of Fort Vancouver at least, reduced by its strategic placement on a hillside. The elevation of the hill gave the fort a natural defense and a better firing position. While the earlier fort designs tended to predate the location, Fort Vancouver used the “natural advantages” to produce a less imposing but no less defensible model. The updated model was not only less costly but its lighter fortifications did not act as a deterrent to trade. Simpson also noted that the new fort would have an “Indian Hall,” which would become a regular architectural feature of HBC forts in the 19th century. For example, an HBC Official recalled the place of the Indian Hall in Mountain House outpost in 1850:

Mountain house was surrounded by the usual 28-foot pickets, with a block bastion at each corner and a gallery running all round inside about four and a half feet from the top, each bastion containing a supply of flintlocks and ammunition... There were two gates, the main gate on the north and a smaller one on the south side leading to a

⁵⁹ Sir George Simpson’s remarks on his 1824 Inspectorial tour, cited in Mackay, *The Honorable Company*, 192.

⁶⁰ Mackay, *The Honorable Company*, 193.

narrow passage the height of the stockade into a long hall. In this hall the Indians were received... They were then turned out and the gates closed against them, the only means of communication being through two portholes some 20 inches square opening through the stockade into small blockhouses through which the trade was conducted.⁶¹

The 'hall' featured in the architectural plans of HBC forts up until the mid-nineteenth century. Writing in 1853, Chief Factor Anderson described to George Simpson a new design plan for Fort Simpson. It was to be made of wood, situated 180 feet from the river, and all buildings would be spaced from one another by 50 feet. The Indian Hall was included in the diagram, and, similar to the earlier 19th-century design at York Factory, it was placed next to the exterior wall and given a separate entrance out of the fort.⁶²

The "hall" codified a new arrangement of rule. In many respects, it marked a movement away from the restrictive space of the external wall. While it presupposed a circulation of men, women, and children through the fort, such circulation would be rigorously circumscribed. The hall functioned as a site of containment as indigenous people were admitted but confined to a site that posed little risk to the rest of the fort and its inhabitants. Moreover, in some diagrams the hall was always close to the guardroom and far from the company's storerooms and warehouses (an arrangement that reflected the Company's belief that indigenous people were prone to "thievery"). Despite the careful restrictions on its space, the hall formed the possibility for new practices for registering and documenting

⁶¹ Mackay, *The Honorable Company*, 229–230.

⁶² HBCC, LAC, "Plan of Fort Simpson Letter From James Anderson to George Simpson [1853]" 3M102/D5/36. The 'hall' was also included as a feature in the 1815 design plans for the Fort Wedderburn- HBCC, LAC, "Rough Sketch plan of Fort Wedderburn 1814–1815," 1M153/B235/a/3.

indigenous labour. In part, these new practices of documentation were achieved by replacing fort sentries with clerks.

Throughout the 18th century, sentries were responsible for policing the movement of HBC officials. In the 19th century, however, there was no further mention of sentries in HBC documents and the new fort design largely foreclosed the material possibility of an effective sentry system. While the old model placed the keep in the center of the fort to provide the sentry with a potential vantage point, in the new architecture, pickets without ramparts replaced walls and, if retained, the keep no longer occupied the same central vantage point. In short, there was no location that provided the sentry the same capacity to observe the perimeters of the fort. Instead, its management was increasingly left to clerks and accountants.⁶³ The “hall” therefore combined the registers of the counting house and the trade room into a singular point of registration and so provided the material possibility of bringing bodies together in one site where they could be effectively recorded. This opening of the fort prefigured later practices of keeping records on indigenous people who traded with the fort or post, which gave the company the ability to document names, hunts, and locations.

⁶³ HBCC, LAC, “Albany Report on District(1826), Thomas Vincent”, 1M776, B/3/E/12.

Chapter 4

The Codification of Natural History: Observation to Inspection

This chapter focuses on how the social vision of the HBC naturalist formed some of the preconditions of district-inspection. In particular, I argue that the categories that had made up the Linnaean system of classification became the categories through which the district was inspected. I develop the argument first by examining the journals of Peter Fidler and David Thompson to show how the 18th-century observational registers provided the categories and modes of conduct that informed the HBC practices of administration in the 19th century. Second, I trace the district-report as a form of documentation deployed by the HBC to rationalize its rule over the newly leased 'Indian Lands' in 1821. By tracing the history of the district-report as a mode of documentation I draw attention to how what was initially an attempt to rationalize the company's costs of administration became a more encompassing social practice of inspecting and documenting people, land, and things.

The chapter proceeds in two parts. The first section analyzes the journals of Peter Fidler and David Thompson to show their mode of social vision was connected to 18th century practices of observation. The second part traces the practices that stabilized the district-report as a technique of documentation by examining the district reports produced from 1821–1830. The conclusion outlines how seeing and acting on the scale of the district gave the company new knowledge of the indigenous populations that fell within this newly created system of districts.

The HBC and the Conduct to Observe

As suggested in chapter 3 as the architecture of the fort was opened it became possible for the company to engage in the surveillance and documentation of indigenous people. If this was one shift that made district inspection possible, the other was the integration of the fort into the practices of documentation that came to define the district as a scale of rule. These documentary practices can be traced to the practices of observation that developed within natural history. I am not the first to consider the relation of the HBC to the emergence of natural history. Huston et al. (2003) provide an extended study of the relationship of HBC servants and officials to English naturalists. The authors posit a European connection between HBC staff and the accumulation of the collections of specimens and accounts that were added to organizations like the Royal Society.⁶⁴ Similarly Binnema has studied how the HBC patronized a number of scientific endeavors and, in turn, helped shape science as disinterested object advanced for public knowledge.⁶⁵

Although insightful, both studies tend to treat scientific practices as extraneous to the administrative practices of the company and overlook the presence of many amateur naturalists in its service. Consequently, they fail to reflect on the way the practices of observation and natural history may have shaped the

⁶⁴ Stuart Houston et. al. *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson's Bay* (Montreal and Kingston: McQuill-Queen's University press, 2003), 15–97.

⁶⁵ Ted Binnema notes that when English naturalists visited British North America they were often invited by Simpson to examine the collection of specimens gathered at the different forts and posts. Quite rightly, Binnema uses this to advance the role the company played in shaping public knowledge. What remains less developed though is what these private collections disclose about the role the company played in connecting natural history to administration. See Ted Binnema, "Chapter Five Benevolent Intentions: The Hudson's Bay Company, the Royal Navy, and the Search for the Northwest Passage, 1818–1855" in *Enlightened Zeal: The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

formation of the company's records and forms of knowledge production. Yet, as we have seen, natural history was not merely just a domain of knowledge but was also rooted in a personal set of conducts. The devoted naturalist was curious and diligent. Hence the observation of nature was both a technical practice and an act of self-formation. In what follows, I use the private journals of Peter Fidler and David Thompson to outline the persistence of this disposition within the habits of company officials. These journals reveal that the act of recording geographic knowledge and the registration of people was embedded in practices of observation. I go on to argue that the district report reveals the codification of this form of knowledge.

Fidler and Thompson were selected for several reasons. First, both came of age within the same circle of 18th-century naturalists. Philip Turnor and Samuel Hearne trained Fidler and Thompson and in their turn were mentored by Andrew Graham. Thus there are lines of contact linking Fidler and Thompson to the observational registers discussed above. Their lives and careers represent one site from which to analyze how the conduct of observation, especially the categories used to describe people, land, and things, formed the conditions of possibility for inspectorial practices. In addition, the company trained Fidler and Thompson as surveyors. Both played an integral role in the Company's westward expansion, although Fidler served the company for a longer period, Thompson having left to join the NWC at the start of the 19th century. Fidler and Thompson thus appear as exemplary individuals to trace how the practice of observation shaped the formation of district-inspection.

Peter Fidler (1769–1822)

Fidler was employed by the HBC in 1788 and in 1790 he was put under the charge of Philip Turnor, who was also instructing David Thompson in surveying.⁶⁶ Subsequently appointed ‘assistant surveyor,’ in 1790 he accompanied Turnor to the Athabasca Region, wintered at Great Slave Lake in 1792, and in 1793 travelled to the predominantly uncharted Rocky Mountain region. In the late 1790s he built and planned several new posts, including Carlton House in what became the Assiniboine district, a short-lived establishment at the junction of the South Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers. Towards the end of his career, he was in charge of the Red River Colony, when it was lost to a Metis uprising.

The details of his career are more accessible than his private life.⁶⁷ Yet some insight into his engagement with physico-theology and observational practices can be gleaned from his personal library. The library included an underlined and book-

⁶⁶ There is no clear account of Fidler’s early life. However, that he was employed as a clerk suggests that he may have been recruited from one of the two preferred institutions of the company: Christ’s Hospital and the Grey Coat school. Both these institutions were preferred by the HBC as orphans and the poor were prime candidates for employment. In addition, the company deemed the curriculum offered by these schools useful to the trade.

Navigation, cartography, astronomy and instruction in natural history as well as writing and arithmetic formed the foundation of the education offered by these institutions. Whether Fidler came from these particular institutions cannot be said with certainty, but his activities and interests suggest he received the type of education that the company prized.

⁶⁷ Fidler married a ‘Swampy Cree’ woman named Mary. It has been that suggested Fidler’s marriage and his frequent use of “Indian words for geographic sites, common objects and important places” indicate that Fidler had a firm belief in the “equality between men, white and native” see Judith Beattie, “Indian Maps in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: A Comparison of Five Area Maps Recorded by Peter Fidler 1801–1802, in *Archivia Winter, 1985–1986: 165–175*. Yet, his private journal reveals a far colder attitude towards indigenous people. In an entry from 1796, Fidler witnessed a summary execution of two native men suspected of murder the previous winter. Fidler noted, “there was only one Indian man present for the execution and a boy, and they appeared very much terrified and shocked, never seeing or hearing of the like before...the [execution] will be a means of deterring the Indians in the future” Fidler, Peter, “Private Journal 1796” in *Peter Fidler, Trader and Surveyor 1769–1822* ed. J.B Tyrrell (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 1913, [1796]), 121.

marked *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the creation: or a compendium of natural philosophy in three volumes* (1770); *The Nautical Almanac*, *The Diary Companion* (1803); *The Mathematical Repository*; *Biblical chronology*; and several years' worth of subscriptions to the *Monthly Magazine* (1790-1800), a British 'register' journal of natural history.⁶⁸

Fidler's activities reflect both a desire to observe and an effort to produce uniform and regular observations of astronomy, ornithology, geography and fauna. During his 34 years of service to the company he made astronomical observations at the same spot, twice a day at seven in the morning and two in the afternoon. The results filled 41 notebooks, which Fidler evidently made an effort to preserve. He also appears to have been attuned to the idea that these standardized records could be used to reveal the laws and patterns governing nature.⁶⁹

For instance, he wrote in his 1820 journal

There are in some seasons plenty of rabbits, this year in particular—some years very few—and what is rather remarkable the rabbits are the most numerous when the cats appear. This winter the cats have come in considerable numbers, whereas these several years past there were scarce one to be had—its flesh is good eating, sweet and tender and they live principally on rabbits. The cats are only plentiful at certain periods of about every 8 to 10 years and seldom remain in these southern parts in any number of more than two or three years.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ HBCA, AM, Fur Trade Library, Fidler's Private Library, P4642/1. Fidler's notebooks of astronomical observations make up much of the library's content. That Fidler possessed *A New method of stating and explaining the scripture chronological upon mosaic astronomical principles, madiums and data as laid down in the Pentateuch* [1751] [sic], suggests his attentiveness to his regimen of observation may have been motivated by a similar drive to observe as the naturalists of the mid-18th century. One of Fidler's issues of the *Monthly Magazine*, stresses the importance of being cognizant of nature. One essay in his possession stressed that "the enlarged views of science lay open to the mind a state of existence, the result of such a curious and profound contrivance that we cannot but feel anxious to study...nature, our incomprehensible lawgiver." See Daniel Mackinnen, "An Account of the Country South of Lake Ontario" in *Monthly Magazine, A British Register*, vol. VIII (1800): 613

⁶⁹ For an example of Fidler's diligence and attentiveness to nature, see his astronomical observations and daily entries in his post journals such as, HBCC, LAC, "Peter Fidler's Winnipeg Post Journal 1815" 1M153, B.235/a/3.

⁷⁰ HBCC, LAC, "Peter Fidler's Fort Dauphin District Report 1820-1821," 1M41/ B.51/A/3.

As others have noted, this 'observation' would later become the basis for a study of the population cycles of the lynx and arctic hare populations.⁷¹ The company received both snowy rabbit and Lynx as furs and so the number and weight of each during any year could be found by consulting company records housed at York Factory. Fidler's observation suggests a willingness to search for laws and tendencies within nature.

This 'will to observe' appears to have led Fidler to engage in a number of practices of creating lists of various populations.

	Stone Ind. in Red River	Southern Ind or Crees	Sauteurs or Bungees	Grand Total
Number of Tents	300	70	110	480
Warriors	800	200	300	1300
Married Women	700	250	350	1300
Old Men	100	10	30	140
Women	200	50	70	320
Boys	600	120	200	920
Girls	900	130	300	1330
Horses	500	200	100	800
Dogs	1500	400	500	2400
Guns	100	180	300	580

NB There are 80 Tents of Stone Indians, exclusive of the above who Trade at Carlton House in this River far above.

If one examines Fidler's Winnipeg Post Journal of 1814 it becomes clear that at this juncture, the guidelines for district reports did not include a consideration of

⁷¹ Houston et. al. *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson's Bay*, 96.

population. That year Fidler had been asked to inform the company of the number of 'Free Canadians' and 'Half Breeds' in the Red River settlement as the company feared (rightly) an uprising. However, the decision to group the people around Brandon House into tribes and to provide an estimate of their warriors, women, boys, girls, horses, dogs, and guns, appears to have been made on his own initiative. The company would have found knowledge of the number of guns held by indigenous people in the area useful in assessing how well equipped these populations were to hunt furs. It could also indicate which tribes could overthrow the company if not properly 'handled'.

David Thompson (1770–1857)

Like Fidler, Thompson kept a journal of his observations and scarcely missed a daily entry.⁷² His journals straddle personal narrative and observation and include entries such as "A Trip to Lake Athabasca" "Winter at Rein Deer Lake" "Life At a Trading Post on Hudson's Bay" as well as sketches of the Rocky Mountains carried out in service of the company. Although Thompson made these records at his own discretion while he was employed first with HBC (from 1784-1797) and then with the North West Company, his accounts anticipate the reporting style that structured HBC district reports. I focus on three series of entries, "Muskrat Country" "Nahathaway Indians" and "Great Western Forest Lands." These entries have been

⁷² In keeping with the company's recruitment strategies Thompson was educated at the Grey Coat Hospital. At fourteen he was apprenticed for seven years to the company to keep accounts. Upon joining the company he was assigned to Samuel Hearne and spent most of his first year copying Hearne's natural history manuscript, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*. At twenty, he joined Fidler at Cumberland House to study mathematics, surveying, and astronomy with Philip Turnor. While Thompson spent most of his career in the employment of the NWC, his training and mentorship tie him to 18th-century practice of observation. See David Thompson, *David Thompson's narrative, 1784–1812*, ed. Richard Glover (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), 55-56.

utilized as they not only fall within the period that Thompson was employed by the HBC and had been mentored by the company's amateur naturalists (1786-1812) but also occurred before the codification of district-inspection.

The following headings structured his entry on Muskrat Country - *Boundaries, Frozen Soil, Forest, Berries, Fish, Swan, Marten, Nature of Marten, Wolverine*. Here is a sample drawn from this entry:

I now turn to the interior country and include a space of about 300 miles in width, know to fur traders by the name of the Musk Rat Country." "The geology of this country is quite distinct from the countries westward, it is composed of granitic and other silicious rocks...everywhere it's character is much the same." "Tolerable soil are neither large nor frequent, containing very many lakes, the streams from which find their way to the large rivers. "This region is bounded on the west by the great chain of lakes, the principal of which are Lake Superior, the Rainy Lake, the Lake of the Woods, Winnipeg, the Cedar, and the chain of lakes northward to the Athabasca and great slave lakes.⁷³

Thompson remarked on the pines, and listed the most useful trees, provided an account of the flora and reviewed the animals found in the region. Following the Linnaean method, the animals and birds were given their Latin names, and their means of subsistence, system of reproduction and habits were also noted.⁷⁴ The description concluded with the note,

The animals described in this stony region are few in proportion to the extent of country, the Natives with all their address can only collect furs sufficient to purchase the necessaries of life...and the natives acknowledge that with all their endeavors they can barely subsist by the chase, even when making use of all the animals they can catch.⁷⁵

His account of the indigenous people of the Great Forest Lands utilized a classification of human life furnished by the Linnaean orders of men. Upon remarking on the different tribes of natives he concluded, "all these people are superior in stature and

⁷³ Thompson, *David Thompson's narrative*, 55–56.

⁷⁴ Thompson, *David Thompson's narrative*, 58–76.

⁷⁵ Thompson, *David Thompson's narrative*, 77.

good looks, to the generality of those of the Stoney Region from a better country and greater supply of food.”

Thompson repeated this system of observation in his account of the “Nahathaway Indians” written over the period 1794–1806. Here Thompson remarked on language, appearance, dress, manners, tradition, marriage, children, sleds, dogs, moving of Indians, and even the arrangement of tents. He commented,

The appearance of these people depends much on the climate and ease of subsistence. ...Where the climate is very severe and game scarce, they are seldom above the middle size of spare make, the features round or slightly oval, hair black, strong and lank, eyes black and of full size, cheek bones rather high, mouth and teeth good, the chin round; the countenance grave yet with a tendency to cheerful... They [labor] with an erect posture... and naturally are not industrious.⁷⁶

What do these biographies and scattered practices of registration reveal about the continuation of observational practices? Fidler and Thompson’s observations helped cement the new form of subject configured by district-inspection. Their journals reveal a regimen, a mode of conduct orientated towards a practiced cognizance of detail. The way Fidler and Thompson organized and maintained the observations they kept was consistent with the 18th-century relationship where observation of nature was bound up with a process of self-formation and refinement. Their private journals betray a form of vision that tried to capture everything, to the point where their observations became mired in quotidian details.

The private journal, organized by the disposition to observe or the divinity of curiosity, made for a poor administrative register. Two key social features characteristic of observation disappeared, or at least were suppressed, with the emergence of inspectorial practices: the intensity of singularity and a field of view that was structured as personal narrative.

⁷⁶ Thompson, *David Thompson’s narrative*, 79–80.

The naturalist sought to survey nature and the private journal reflected this mode of conduct. A survey provided a one-time glance—a detailed sweep of people, land, and things; but the grand sweep of the survey produced a document that was fleeting and impermanent. The knowledge it recorded could be referenced but its objects remained outside the possibility of subsequent ‘returns’. In other words, it was a form of documentation that delivered an intensity of detail through the singularity of the record. It is not that Thompson or Fidler failed to remark on geography or to describe a region. Thompson, in fact, went to great length to provide geographical boundaries for his observations. Rather it was that a region thus recorded was populated by slow accumulations of diary notes logged during years of expeditions and travels. It was thus impossible to reproduce the spatial field to which these observations belonged. People and place entered the naturalist’s records in lengthy, winding narratives that burned out quickly, without the possibility for systematic, regular, reproduction. Such accounts were neither standardized nor uniform.

This leads into the second point: that the journal was tied to personal accounts and narratives. Consider the instructions to Anthony Hendey from the London Council on his departure for a trade expedition:

You having a compass, hand line paper along with you therefore be very exact in keeping a journal of your travels and observations daily, observing the course, trying the depth of water, in the river or lakes, when in your canoe, or travelling by land all the way mind to remark down everything that occurs to your view daily, mentioning when you come to any river or lake the name, when you meet with any natives, the nation.⁷⁷

What was entered into the journal, what was noticed and when it was noticed, was dictated by the gaze of the individual observer. In this sense, the field of view was

⁷⁷ Cited in Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 76.

not pre-determined or external to the observer. Rather, the observer produced the field of view through his or her own activity. In this sense, the journal as a narrative did not correspond to a pre-determined social field. Even in the case of Thompson's discussion of Muskrat Country or Stoney Region, what constituted these places and their physical limits was a product of Thompson's travels and the particular posts he frequented.⁷⁸ The field produced by observation could not be made external to the narrative and thus was not stable enough to be tied to an office of administration. Moreover, as these records were private documents, there was no limit to the anecdotal. Thompson's narrative, for instance, consisted of various customs of indigenous people, altercations and his own reactions. As such, Fidler and Thompson's administrative documents, their journals and the post-logs, oscillated between an account for the company and repository of the 'duty' to observe. The presence of the observer in the text constrained the degree to which observation could be generalized in service of administration.

If the private journal was disordered and cluttered with the trivial and quotidian, what was its relationship to the formation of the district? There were two ways in which the district report drew from this system of observation. The first was the use of the categories of observation and their relationship to spatial designation. The formula in Thompson's journal of designating boundaries, listing lines of communication and rivers, the soil, the flora and fauna, the means of

⁷⁸ The naturalist's narrative was of a similar social character to that of Simmel's 'adventurer'. The narrative was at once 'accidental', the product of what falls into the naturalist's field of view and, despite "its extra-territoriality with respect to the continuity of life, it also connected with "the character and identity of the bearer of that life, and hence managed to transcend "life's more narrowly rational aspects", in Georg Simmel, *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* ed. Donald Levine (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 143.

subsistence and then finally an observation 'on the Indians', formed the categories used to populate and demarcate the district as a field of view. Second, Fidler's practice of enumerating indigenous people according to their respective tribes, categorizing them by sex, age, tabulating the number of children, was also codified in the district report. As such, the details and categories used to carry out observations would be brought into the administrative structure of the HBC and the post-log gradually reworked along the social and spatial scale of the district.

Retrenchment and District-inspection

In 1815 Andrew Wedderburn tabled a proposal to retrench the HBC's trading system. As scholars have noted, he advanced retrenchment as a profit saving device.⁷⁹ Under increasing competition from the Northwest Company, the HBC had expanded beyond its five forts and moved westward into the interior. This move west in combination with changes in the global fur market put the company in considerable financial difficulty. The costs of the trade increased, supplies had to be moved a greater distance, more posts required greater upkeep, and, as will be discussed in chapter 5, the company's supply of credit to indigenous hunters was discovered as a potential liability.

Wedderburn's plan of retrenchment included a number of proposals, many of which would not be realized until George Simpson took over as one of the governors

⁷⁹ The retrenchment system is treated in depth in Gary Spraakman and Alison Wilkie, "The development of management accounting at the Hudson's bay Company, 1670–1820, *Accounting History* vol. 5 issue 1(2000): 59–84; see also Simons, *Keepers of the Record*, 92–101; Charles Bishop, "Cultural and Biological Adaptations to Deprivation: The Northern Ojibwa Case" A paper prepared for the symposium extinction and survival in human populations, American Anthropological Association, November(1974): 7; Christopher Hanks, "Swampy Cree and the Hudson's Bay Company at Oxford House" in *The American Society of Ethnohistory* vol. 29, no. 2 (1982): 114.

of Rupert's land in 1821.⁸⁰ One of his main concerns was the lack of information about the company's new areas of operation.⁸¹ In 1815 the London Council declared, "the information of which we ought to be possessed, with respect to the present state of our establishments, is in many points imperfect, and that to which we have access, is too much scattered to be easily collected together."⁸² Information was necessary for the company to develop a more accurate knowledge about the company's establishments so as to determine where losses were occurring and if these losses were due to poor management or the nature of the posts.⁸³

How was such knowledge to be developed? A letter issued from the London Council to all officials in charge of posts 1815 decreed that Rupert's Land would be split into two departments, the Northern Department and the Southern Department. These departments were then to be subdivided into trading districts. The project started with a new cartographic form, 'the sketch of the district'.⁸⁴ As mentioned, the previous maps had been fort-centric, with the intention of sketching the supply-lines and trade routes that fell under the dominion of HBC forts. In contrast, the sketches of districts each used the same measure, with one mile represented as one

⁸⁰ The objective for this system was to improve the system of trade by giving the traders and masters "in the trade more autonomy in decision-making and incentivizing traders by giving them a larger share of the profits" see Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 92.

⁸¹ This was in fact a looming concern for the company as early as the late 1790s. The London committee was forced to acknowledge that it had "no sort of clue" about the trade and topography of Rupert's land" cited in Michael O'Lear and Joanne Yates, "Distributed Work Over the Centuries: Trust and Control in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1826" in *Distributed Work* ed. Pamela Hinds, Sara Kiesler (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002).

⁸² Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 96.

⁸³ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 96.

⁸⁴ HBCA, AM, "Sketch of York District 1815 by William Cook" 11M1 G1/26; HBCA, AM, Sketch of Carlton House, 1815–1817, by James Bird 11M1/G1/27; HBCA, AM, "Sketch of Cumberland District, 1815 by Alexander Kennedy" 11M1/G1/30/30D; HBCA, AM, "Map of Severn District 1815, by James Swain", 11M1/G1/33.

inch, and all were square-grids of bounded space. These maps were bird's-eye views of rivers, lakes and forests; some sketches indicated "Indian Gardens" or places where "buffalo frequent".

Each district was put under the command of a specific district manager who would be responsible for writing an annual report addressed to the governor of the department in which he was stationed "as to the present state of the district under his command."⁸⁵ The report was intended to extend the company's knowledge into a number of new areas. The district managers would document the rivers and lakes in their district, the nature of the country, flora, fauna, what productions would be good for trade, the number of servants that country could feed, the climate and the advantages or disadvantages to which the district was subject.⁸⁶

There was a remarkable similarity of these reporting categories to the narrative found in Fidler and Thompson's private journals. The categories that had made up the observational register now formed the basis for standardizing a new geographical form of administrative knowledge. Whereas before these categories had flitted in and out of the observational register based on the interests and circumstances of the observer, now they were permanently trained on a specific and delimited field. Whereas the categories had previously generated an endless compilation of detail, these same categories now populated the contours of a pre-established object. The district served as a definite object where the categories that were dominant in the naturalist's private journal could be tamed and brought into a standardized form.

⁸⁵ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 96.

⁸⁶ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 96–97.

Moreover, the district was intended to displace the fort and the post as the principal seats of surveillance and documentation. Economic accounts, noted the letter, would still be conducted at posts but the district was now the scale upon which the profitability and knowledge of the trade would be specified. Finally, the deployment of the district as a delimited field formed one element of constraint. When seeing through the categories of natural history, the narrative of HBC district managers was to fit more tightly to place. This was one way in which a new form of regulated social vision was given expression, insofar as it was given a clearly expressed field to populate.

The report now functioned as a means to regulate and evaluate the vision of company officials. To be sure, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries clerks and accountants had been chastised for poor handwriting or unclear accounts. Yet, for fort governors, the relationship appears to have been less strict. They were instructed to keep a 'journal of daily occurrences' but what went into these journals was left to their discretion. For instance, Philip Turnor, the naturalist and surveyor who instructed Fidler and Thompson, was told to use his journal to give the company 'his opinion on every matter that may occur'. Thus, there appears to have been no style or mode of restriction imposed on the 'gentlemen' of the trade. The report on the district and its pre-selected categories of inspection, however, generated a form of social vision that could be executed by anyone and everyone. Clerks and district managers were now both constrained by a pre-determined

register. The journal ceased to be a personal narrative or an “account of occurrences” and instead abided by the limits of a pre-determined ‘office’.⁸⁷

Initially, Wedderburn’s plan went unrealized. The shift from observation to the inspection of a delimited field was a shift that could not be engineered ‘from above’, but needed to solidify in practice. In fact, despite the guidelines, in many of the reports submitted from 1815–1821, the district was taken to be synonymous to the scale of the fort. This is not surprising for up until 1821 the trade was in flux as the HBC continued to war with the NWC. The attempts made by each company to push the other out of trading areas made it difficult to stabilize the districts as a site of registration. The ongoing trade war may have also pushed concerns over the quality of district reports aside. However, efforts to codify this new form of social vision structured at the scale of the district were renewed with the signing of the deed-poll act in 1821, the year Simpson became a governor of Rupert’s land. As the stipulations of the Deed-Poll Act (DPA) pertain to district inspection, it is worth recounting.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ This appears to have been diligently enforced. In 1821, Simpson wrote to the London Council on the conduct of district master of Athabasca Lake, a Mr. Brown. “For several months past Mr. Brown has been industriously occupied in compiling a huge volume titled ‘private journal’. This seems to be a work of great labour not only occupying his attention throughout the day but his lubrications are unremittingly devoted...Within these few days he seems very solicitous to get possession of a variety of documents which are totally foreign to him in his capacity of district master of Athabasca lake.” Simpson informed him his “business was to keep a correct, particular and concise journal for the inspection of his superiors, and Simpson requested the private journal be discontinued. See George Simpson, *Journal of occurrences in the Athabasca Department by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 227.

⁸⁸ The Act went through a number of different iterations from 1821–1824. A principal sticking point was that the HBC had been subsidizing some of the costs of the Red River Colony, as the Earl of Selkirk was on the London Council and married to the sister of Andrew Wedderburn. Obviously, the NWC had no interest in helping support this venture from the profits of the trade. See Innis, Harold, *The fur trade in Canada: an introduction to Canadian economic history* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930): 286.

First, the trade was officially divided into the Southern and Northern Department, each with its own governor. At the time of partition, the Southern Department was in economic decline, whereas the Northern Department consisted predominantly of the Rocky Mountain region that had yet to be farmed for furs. Simpson was made governor of the Northern Department (Fort Albany to the West Coast) while the aging William Williams was given command of the Southern Department. In 1826 Simpson took command of both regions.

In addition to realizing the partition of the trade into two distinct departments each with its own districts, the DPA also served to further professionalize the trade. The DPA created three distinct employment categories within the HBC: chief factors, chief traders and clerks. The position of chief factor was the highest position available in the company followed by chief trader and clerk, the intent being that clerks could gradually be promoted to these new ranks. The company also introduced a new payment structure. Rather than assigning chief factors and chief traders salaries, the act divided the company into 100 shares, 40 of which were set aside and further subdivided into 85 shares, of which chief factors received two, chief traders received one, while clerks were salaried.⁸⁹ Thus, chief factors and chief traders drew their salaries from their shares: if the company posted a profit they were issued money accordingly and if the company posted a loss they were

⁸⁹ Hudson's Bay Company. Copy of the deed poll under the seal of the Governor and Company of the Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, bearing the date the twenty sixth of March, 1821, stating the appropriation of the forty shares reserved by the principal deed for chief factors and chief traders, with their duties, the regulations relating thereto and for carrying on the trade, (London: H.K Causton) in Peel's Prairie Provinces Archives, Digitalized, Peel 144): 6-8.

responsible for their share of the loss.⁹⁰ The scope and responsibility of the office was commensurate with the potential reward or penalty.

Chief traders were responsible for coordinating the trade in a given district, and keeping track of annual outfits (the trade goods and provisions delivered to each district annually). Chief factors were tasked with superintending the entire district to which they were assigned. This meant not only liaising with chief traders but also inspecting the posts of the district, monitoring the conduct of clerks, gathering documents, reporting on the effects of the company trade policy on indigenous hunters, and keeping track of the subsistence and game available within their jurisdictions. This role of superintending the district was expressed principally in the command that chief factors not only coordinate the creation of inventories of all goods, and provisions from chief traders but also gather in annual district reports “such information as may tend to elucidate the state and condition of the said trade under their respective management at the time.”⁹¹

The system of administration that emerged following the merger in 1821 was similar to the retrenchment system. In the retrenchment system each trading district would fall under the command of a master with a clerk responsible for accounts and all books at the post, which the master of the district was to verify before handing over to accountants. Yet, the master of the district was under the command of a chief who was to “report on the general conduct of the masters under his command; and to state his opinion how far it may be advisable to make any alteration on the position, the establishment, or the mode of conduction any of the

⁹⁰ “The Deed Poll Act”, 6–8.

⁹¹ “The Deed Poll Act”, 15.

posts under his command.”⁹² The system put in place in the DPA clarified the lines of command. Clerks were not merely charged with keeping records of transactions and accounts but would also have to be mindful of the conditions around their post to be relayed to the chief factor for his report. The chief trader’s post was designed to free the chief factor from the logistical details of the district’s operation. Much like the district master envisaged in the retrenchment system, the chief factor was made solely responsible for the district report. In 1822 chief factors were asked to produce a district report that would

[Convey] every requisite information in regard to the present state, resources, and the mode of conducting trade, the number of hands employed, families supported, posts occupied means of subsistence, conduct and character of the officers, and climate, soil and vegetable productions, accompanied with a comparative statement of returns together with such further statements to improvements or disadvantages.⁹³

In addition they were

annually to furnish registers of the number of Indians attached to their respective districts or parts particularizing the tribes, the number of chiefs and followers, with extent of the country they inhabit and hunt in, together with their general character and habits of life.⁹⁴

This report was to include a more detailed registration of indigenous people in each district. In response to a number of incomplete district reports, Simpson revised the system of registration in 1824 to give clerks a more active role in furnishing this abstract.

The company records indicate that in the first decade or so clerks were never put in charge of districts. By the 1840s however, the clerk had displaced the chief factor in the production of the district report. The mode of social vision that had

⁹² Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 97.

⁹³ HBCA, AM, “Minutes of a Council Held at York Factory Northern Department of Rupert’s Land, 8th of July 1822, resolution 98. 1M814/B239/K/1.

⁹⁴ HBCA, AM, “Minutes of a Council Held at York Factory Northern Department of Rupert’s Land, 8th of July 1822, resolution 98. 1M814/B239/K/1.

been given solely to the company's commissioned gentlemen gradually became routinized to the point that it could be socially leveled and, in turn, generalized.⁹⁵ However, in the initial period following the merger the expectation was that clerks would assist in the construction of an 'Indian abstract' by making tabulations of the individual post with which they were charged.

I analyze the effects of the district on the company's representations of indigenous populations in chapters 5 and 6. First however I will sketch the impetus of rationalization behind the company's implementation of the district report and account for its gradual codification as a system of documentation throughout the 1820s. A "command" on its own could not produce the relations for a new form of social vision, rather getting the eye, the document, and place to obey a new regimen was a process that was cultivated rather than "commanded."

Growth of a New Form of Social Vision

The formation of the district-report was a process of reforming the observational register of the naturalist. It was a task of taming the details that were furnished by pairing the conduct to observe with the categories formalized by the Linnaean system. For this to occur, the internal and private disposition of the naturalist had to be standardized into a replicable 'field of view'. The formation of a new mode of social vision could not, however, be achieved simply by issuing an edict; rather it was a slow process, and resistance to its inculcation was evident in the district reports from these early years.

⁹⁵ Innis gives us an overview of the changes in the company's employment structure. See Innis, *The fur trade in Canada*, 325.

In his 1822–1823 report, the chief factor of Lac La Pluie wrote on the climate “the same as the rest of Canada”, neglected the boundaries of the district entirely, failed to acquire the ages of the indigenous women in the district and omitted the sex or age of the children.⁹⁶ In the factor’s report for Lac La Pluie District Report submitted a year later, the chief factor noted, “I shall pass over the limits and boundaries of this [district] as I know nothing of these scientific niceties.”⁹⁷ The factor in charge of Kanaquimsie River District, simply complained, “so little variation occurs in the different transactions which take place that the report on one years occurrences is but the repetition of what has been said before.”⁹⁸ His document was two pages in length and he pleaded for the district to be closed and himself reassigned as soon as possible.⁹⁹

Similarly, the requirement that chief factors integrate the narratives and registers of the clerks stationed at each post into their reports appears to have been unheeded. It was not uncommon for chief factors to lament they had not had time to visit the other posts and, as a consequence, they did not include abstracts of the Indian population, or supplied abstracts that pertained only to the fort or post where they resided. The chief factor of the Lake Seul District Report neglected to include Indian Abstract.¹⁰⁰ The chief factor’s 1820–21 report for the Lesser Slave Lake District simply included an account of the post written the year before, stating

⁹⁶ HBCA, AM, “Lac La Pluie District Report 1822–1823, by Donald Macpherson,” 1M778/B/105/e/2.

⁹⁷ HBCA, AM, “Lac La Pluie District Report 1826, by D. Cameron” 1M778 /B105/e/6. The document was written as a letter and did not include an ‘Indian abstract’.

⁹⁸ HBCA, AM, “Report for the Year 1828 Flying Post, Kanaquismie River District, William McRae” 1M778/B/70/E/6.

⁹⁹ HBCA, AM, “Report for the Year 1828 Flying Post, Kanaquismie River District, William McRae,” 1M778/B/70/E/6.

¹⁰⁰ HBCC, LAC, “Lake Seul District Report 1823–1824 by John Davies,” 1M779/B107/E/1.

“as a repetition of last year’s report is unnecessary in many of the articles, as no new information has been received, it is deemed necessary only to give a general statement of the affairs of the district for the year.”¹⁰¹

In some cases instead of the requested ‘Indian Abstract’, chief factors only relayed anecdotal information about morals and habits, giving a physical description of chiefs and whether or not they seemed ‘good natured’. In some instances, chief factors simply did not submit reports. For instance the chief factor for the Winnipeg District did not fill out a report for 1822 while his 1823 report begged the governor’s “indulgence for [his] inaccuracies.”¹⁰²

Faced with such non-compliance, Simpson’s 1823 report to the London Council remarked that the instructions on how to produce a district report had been reissued and he was confident that this time “they would be agreeable to your directions last year.”¹⁰³ After reviewing the reports from that year, however, Simpson was forced to reintroduce the instructions in 1824.¹⁰⁴

Non-compliance of chief factors was joined with poor conceptualization of what the district meant as a scale of rule. To amalgamate the conditions of each post into the scale of the district required regular correspondence with the clerks at various posts. The chief factors’ inconsistency in providing the ‘Indian Abstract’, lists of debt, and average seasonal returns for the district was a persistent issue. In 1825, Simpson noted “the general inattention and deviation” commissioned gentlemen

¹⁰¹ HBCC, LAC, “Lesser Slave Lake Report on District 1820–1821, by William Connolly,” 1M779/B115/E/2.

¹⁰² HBCA, AM, “Alexander Fort Report on District 1823 by Roderick Mackenzie,” 1M776/B/4/e/1.

¹⁰³ HBCA, AM, George Simpson’s Correspondence, Official Report to the Governor and Committee in London, June 23rd 1823 Sent From Norway House, 3M42/D/4/86.

¹⁰⁴ HBCA, AM, “Assiniboia Council Minutes, July 23rd 1824,” 3M43/D.4/87.

had displayed towards their duties, which had caused “irregularity and inconvenience.”¹⁰⁵ The resolution was that any future omissions or errors that were not the product of “forcible reasons or unavoidable causes” would result in “mulcts or other estimated damages.”¹⁰⁶ In addition to fines, Simpson also relocated disobedient and inept chief factors to less desirable districts.¹⁰⁷ There were also structural changes to facilitate the registration of phenomena at the scale of the district. Previously, chief factors were assigned to a fort or post in addition to their duties in superintending the district. By 1824 every fort and post was placed under the command of a clerk. Although they occupied an official position in the company according to the DPA, clerks were subject to frequent layoffs, as the number of posts and forts in operation varied by year with the success of each district.

Nonetheless, from 1827 clerks were put in charge of every fort or post, freeing chief factors from the duty of running the day-to-day administration. Moreover, in a bid to ensure their proper circulation within the district or ‘the performance of their duties’ each chief factor was given a horse or a dog team. In a bid to cement the authority of the office, control costs, and limit dereliction of duty, it was illegal for

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the Northern Council, July 1825, in *The Minutes of the Council Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1821–31* (London: Champlain Society for The Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1940): 135.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the Northern Council, July 1825, *The Minutes of the Council Northern Department*, 135–136.

¹⁰⁷ In the years after the signing of the Deed Poll Act Simpson reassigned many chief factors to new districts. Some were forced into resignation, some were transferred to the less productive Southern Department, and others were just shuffled to districts of little importance. For instance, after failing to manage the Red River District, Clarke was transferred to the less profitable Slave Lake. Connolly who had shown ‘efficient management’ was moved in the same year from Slave Lake to the newly opened New Caledonia District. The motives behind these reassignments went beyond the quality of district reports, but nonetheless who Simpson reassigned and to where reveals some of the mechanisms that were used to enforce compliance. See Innis, Harold, “Introduction” in *The Minutes of Council Northern Department*, xli; see also, Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 325.

any other company employee to own or use said modes of transport animals.¹⁰⁸

Thus, only the chief factor was equipped to inspect different posts and aspects of the trade at the scale of the district.

With Simpsons' changes there was a gradual stabilization of the district as an administrative view. In 1826, the chief factor of Lac La Pluie District had "[passed] over the limits the limits and boundaries of his department, as [he] knew little of these scientific niceties."¹⁰⁹ With regard to details on the trade, such as debt and the districts returns, he remarked, "this is a difficult article to dwell on."¹¹⁰ Rather than providing any details on the furs take from the district or accounts of debt provision he remarked that he was still in the habit of "acting differently with different Indians."¹¹¹ However, the 1827 report opened with "Lac la Pluie district is bounded on the East by Fort Williams and on the West by river Winnipeg and on the South by the American territory, "its extent is one hundred and forty by one hundred leagues." It then provided entries on the soil, vegetation, fur-bearing animals, climate, and subsistence.¹¹² By 1830, nearly every report provided the boundaries in longitude and latitude, was organized by set categories, and included an 'Indian Abstract' tallied at the scale of the district.¹¹³ The abstract included the names of hunters, and their 'dependents, sons under 14, marriageable daughters, young daughters, widows, their respective pelts for that year, the total hunts and the total outstanding balance for the year." Lac La Pluie's total "Indian population" was

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of the Northern Council July 1824 in *Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert's Land*, 87.

¹⁰⁹ HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report, 1826–1827, D Cameron," 1M778/B/105/e/6.

¹¹⁰ HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report, 1826–1827, D Cameron," 1M778/B/105/e/6.

¹¹¹ HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report, 1826–1827, D Cameron," 1M778 B/105/e/6.

¹¹² HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report, 1827–1828, D Cameron," 1M778 B/105/e/6.

¹¹³ HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report, 1829–1830, D. Cameron," 1M778/B/105/e/9.

recorded as 563.¹¹⁴ In short, chief factors were learning to meet the district's categories, to see within them and endeavor to fill them out.

By 1828 most of the reports turned in to Simpson had achieved a high degree of uniformity. They included title pages that outlined fifteen categories of inspection ranging from the limits of the post, the flora, fauna, means of subsistence and a census of the district's Indian population.¹¹⁵ The district achieved a stabilized form belied by "certain ways of seeing, doing and being", which ensured the formation of a singular register and, thereby, the closing of the universe of the naturalist into a singular "thinkable, rational, efficient" way of ruling."¹¹⁶ The narrative of the chief factor was gradually reduced and made into a composite of the conditions of each post within the district. For instance, the chief factor of Albany opened his 1830 District Report noting that it was composed of narratives of each post extracted from "Chief Trader Tavishes' journal and from two clerks, each charged with three posts of the district."¹¹⁷ Thus the personal narrative of the chief factor was displaced by a list of details collected and gathered from individuals within the district: a feat made possible by the company edict that all journals were company property.

Moreover, the boundaries of the district had to be adjusted according to whether or not certain posts were closed. For example, Winnipeg district "may be said to commence at the Rot Portage and extend in a tract of country from 200 to

¹¹⁴ HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report, 1829–1830, D. Cameron," 1M778/B/105/e/9.

¹¹⁵ HBCC, LAC, "New Caledonia Report on District 1827–1828, W. Connolly," 1M776B/5/e/1.

¹¹⁶ Curtis, Bruce, "Representation and State Formation in the Canadas, 1790–1850" *Studies in Political Economy*, vol. 28 (1989): 80.

¹¹⁷ HBCC, LAC, "Albany District Report 1830–1831 by Jacob Corrigan," 1M779, B3/E/16. He described his district report as being composed of a "narrative extracted from M. Tavishes' Journal...from M. Corcoran's Journal...from Corrigan's Journal." That Corrigan refers to himself in third person is also notable.

250 miles north by south and may with the same degree of certainty be computed of an equal extension east by west. North it is bordered “by the district of Norway House” in the South it meets “the lake of the woods” and it terminates on the west by Red River and fort Dauphin establishments.”¹¹⁸ Its modes of communication and transport were assessed and its geological conditions reviewed: “the district is principally marshy” and is “extremely poor and unproductive in the mechanics of life.”¹¹⁹ The Report also provided an account of the navigable rivers, the parts of the district they communicate with and, when possible, an estimate of the travel time between the forts. Following this “the value of the country and vegetable productions” was tallied according to the types of trees, the density of the forests, the extent of bog, all of which form “the workplace left by the wandering savage.”¹²⁰ The climate was discussed in connection with the soil and the extent of gardens and the acres of land under cultivation were listed. The physical infrastructures in the district were broken down into their respective forts and their quality estimated. The last section was entitled “fur bearing animals and the Indian population”, which I will take up in chapter 6.

What can be said about this gradual development? The first generation of district reports before and shortly after the Deed-Poll Act often failed to realize the scale of the district. Instead, numerous accounts remained directed towards the individual post from which the chief factor operated. This reflects the novelty of this field of view. The fort or post had been naturalized as the seat of power and thus the social-spatial limits of registration had to be actively reworked. Moreover, chief

¹¹⁸ HBCC, LAC, “Winnipeg District Report, Roderick Mackenzie,” 1M776/B4/E1.

¹¹⁹ HBCC, LAC, “Albany District Report 1826–1827, Alex Kinnelly,” 1M776/B3/e/13.

¹²⁰ HBCC, LAC, “Winnipeg District Report, Roderick Mackenzie,” 1M776/B4/E.

factors attempted to excuse themselves from writing district reports in the early years. To say 'the district remained the same' or 'nothing had changed' was not merely resistance to the production of a new social field. It also points to some conceptual confusion as to the form of documentation that was to be obtained by district-inspection.

In particular, the trade district was intended to produce a systematic and comparative knowledge of Rupert's Land. Everything was to be brought into a singular field of view through the production of a uniform and standardized form of social vision. Whether or not anything changed in one district was irrelevant. It was the continuum of districts, the total knowledge of returns, the debt of 'Indian population', means of subsistence throughout the trade, changes in fur bearing animals that would be used to calibrate future trade policy that mattered. Thus, a form of social vision was constructed not only by using standardization to stamp out the idiosyncrasies of 'observation', but was also generated by getting individuals to produce an administrative field that stretched far beyond their own 'office'.¹²¹ District-space presupposed a hierarchical division; many lines of sight consolidated into one field of view, to which only a few were privy.¹²²

The retrenchment system had been proposed as a means for the company to produce a more regulated trade to avoid financial ruin. The merger of the two

¹²¹ The messiness exhibited here in the development of the 'district' as a scale and register of social vision is intentional as it reflects the history of these processes. Developing district-inspection as a mode of social vision was not a clean-cut process. Rather, an "inspectoral practice did not spring forth ready made, but in reality was experimented, attempted contested and refined" Curtis, "Mapping the social: Notes from Jacob Keefer's educational tour", f.8.

¹²² In commenting on the breakdown of a social formation shaped by sovereign power and spectacle, Foucault suggested that the modern age was shaped by a compulsion "to procure for a small number, or even for a single individual, the instantaneous view of a great multitude" cited in Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 216.

companies only enhanced the need for more detailed knowledge of the trade establishments. The merger with the NWC left the HBC with over a 176 different posts and forts from Montreal to the Juan De Fuca Strait. Some of these posts were in disrepair, some were close to other posts, and some had been built purely for logistical purposes and were, consequently, unprofitable. Within a few years the company had consolidated its trade into 57 posts and the district report offered a means to gather the necessary information to assess the qualities of each district.¹²³

The signing of the Deed-Poll Act had also given the company a lease to 'the Indian Lands', extending the company's charter from the Hudson's Bay Basin to the Pacific Coast. The district report served as a means for the company rapidly to develop reliable, standardized information on these thousand upon thousand miles of new 'holdings'. Moreover, much as with the new posts and forts, extending the trade into these new regions considerably increased the costs of outfitting and supply. The HBC had been premised on a small network of forts, each in reach of the company's supply ships, which had made supply costs minimal. The deployment of districts was intended to make costs predictable.

The role of districted space in carrying out these processes of rationalization can be interpreted in a number of ways, some mundane, some not. The district placed moveable goods under greater administration. A "regular and correct account of all supplies furnished along the communication or property transferred

¹²³ Daschuk, James, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 59; Freeman, D.B, Dungey, F.L, "A Spatial Duopoly: Competition in Western Canadian Fur Trade, 1770–1835" in *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 7, issue 3(1981): 268–70.

from one port or district to another” was to be kept at all times.¹²⁴ Chief factors were reminded that without keeping track of these receipts they could not ‘charge the cost to the receiving district’ and so it would be charged against their district’s overall profitability. If merchandise was damaged or still in the district’s inventory after the conclusion of the trade year, its value was deducted from the district’s returns according to the costs of production in the district from where the item was originally produced or shipped.

In addition, each district was not only to trade at a certain standard based on its conditions, but the cost of labour was also rationalized by district. In particular, chief factors were to set the salary of staff according to the presupposed economic conditions of the district in which they presided. For instance, in the districts where there was a good supply of servants, Simpson set wage rates at 22£ for Steersmen, 20£ for Bowsman and 17£ for Millers. Thus, based on the information received from commissioned gentlemen, the districts of Athabasca, McKenzie River and Leper Slave Lake, were set at 24£, 22£, 19£ respectively while The New Caledonia District, being exceptionally hard work and distant, had its wage rates set at 27£ and 22£ for boatmen and millers respectively.¹²⁵

In addition, the movement of company servants was organized by district. Clerks and servants, for instance, were not permitted to travel outside their district without written permission from the superintending chief factor. To the same end, each ‘servant’ was envisioned as part of the outfit of each district. Hence, no servant

¹²⁴ HBCC, LAC, “Minutes of a Temporary Council Meeting of the Northern Department, July 1824, resolution 90,” 1M814/B239/k/1.

¹²⁵ HBCC, LAC, “Minutes of a Temporary Council, July 1st, 1824, Simpson’s resolution on the scale of wages,” 1M814/B239/K/2.

was to be “transferred from one district to another without being accompanied with a satisfactory statement of his account” and in the case of transfer, any advances were to be ‘furnished’ by the district to which he originally belonged at the start of the season, “unless the person making the advances assumes [financial] responsibility.”¹²⁶

These measures were intended to make the administration and cost of each district predictable. For instance, it became clear that Athabasca district required three clerks in the summer and five clerks in the winter. It would receive a similar outfit of goods for the district’s inventory was delivered in proportion to its average season return in furs; and its provisions were calculated to sustain those assigned to the district. New Caledonia District was outfitted to sustain fifty-six staff and five women and two children (wives of staff); the district report for the year noted the drop in women and children supported by the district, which meant an excess of provisions.

Thus, the district was not only meant to reveal the true costs of administration, but also served to make the costs comparable among districts. In each report back to London, Simpson listed each individual district, including the comparative statement of returns furnished in the district report, its profitability and expected future returns, and recommended closures or consolidations. After receiving word from the London Council, he acted accordingly. In each meeting of the Northern Department Simpson relayed the planned closures and the subsequent assignments of the chief factors and chief traders for that season. One of the first matters dealt

¹²⁶ HBCC, LAC, “Minutes of a Temporary Council Meeting July 5th, 1823, resolution 166,” 1M814/B239/K/1.

with each year was the closing of districts. In 1822, Simpson split the district of Saskatchewan in two, cutting the Northern half, due to the “intransigent natives in that section.”¹²⁷ Edmonton district was put under review for similar reasons. In 1824, Norway House was reduced to a single depot in the company’s supply lines.¹²⁸ Commenting in 1830, Simpson remarked, “the upper Red River district is nearly exhausted in fur bearing animals and the posts cannot be kept up under the heavy expenses in clerks, and servants. The violent disposition of the natives means it produces nothing but provisions which can be obtained from other quarters.”¹²⁹ “It is highly expedient to abandon this superfluous and costly district entirely.”¹³⁰ As a result of these adjustments, the number of districts was reduced from 23 in 1822 to 16 in 1827.

The transition from observation to the inspection of a designated delimited social field was dependent on a number of historical formations. In part the emergence of district space was rooted in the changing architectural design of the fort. The 18th century fort had been closed and forced indigenous hunters to deposit their furs in the portholes of the exterior wall and, following this, they left. The “closed” fort posed an architectural and material limitation to the production of extended dossiers. Thus, for the ‘post’ and ‘fort’ to become a nodal point of registration, a site of surveillance and registration within the extended space of the district, it had to be opened up. The deployment of the ‘Indian Hall’ epitomized a

¹²⁷ Minutes of the Northern Council, 1822, July.

¹²⁸ Minutes of the Northern Council, 1824, July.

¹²⁹ HBCA, AM, “George Simpson’s Correspondence, Official Report to the Governor and Committee in London, 1824,” 3M42/D4/87.

¹³⁰ HBCA, AM, “George Simpson’s Correspondence, Official Report to the Governor and Committee in London, 1824,” 3M42/D4/87.

shift in the HBC towards detailed records and individualized accounts of indigenous hunters, which was necessary for collecting information about the district and, most importantly, creating the 'Indian abstract' as a form of document. The opening of the fort was part of the historical process of making people visible as a population that could be imagined as 'belonging' to the district as a fixed administrative field. The fort was thus both opened and folded into district space. It ceased to be a unit to dominate traffic or control a region and became a nodal point that could be coordinated against an external social field.

The formation of district-space required the generalization of a type of social vision. The command over people, land, and things underwent a modification from the narrative and meticulous detail of the journal of the commissioned gentlemen to a form of vision that was exercised by number of 'offices'. In particular, the role of the clerk shifted from one who simply tabulated accounts and fur returns, to one who was tasked increasingly with maintaining the social vision of district-inspection. The shift from observation, to a sustained examination of individual districts was constituted by a mode of social vision that was leveled in comparison to the observations made by naturalist-gentlemen.

If there was a leveling in social vision, part of this was connected to active practices of cultivating the district as a field of view. The fines issued for late district reports and the frequent reminders as to what information was requisite for district reports were important in solidifying the district as a verifiable field of administration. The district was used also to stabilize social vision. Dividing people, land, and things into districts was not only key to coordinate management and

rationalize costs. Rather, it served to produce a social field that was objective in form.

What constituted a district? It would have a set of boundaries; be made up of a given set of lines of communication; have soil, vegetable productions, animals, a delimited climate, a number of posts, and means of subsistence; above all, it would have a population, an 'Indian population' that would be enumerated and made knowable in terms of its yearly productivity. Eventually these categories, which had initially been observable only in an erratic fashion, became the definite conditions of place, an objective social field that any individual could populate.

In short, district-space was shot through by contingencies. It was dependent on the opening of the fort and its redeployment from a singular point of control to a nodal point in a new administrative continuum. It required the generalization of social vision and the transference of the categories of observation into the conditions of the district itself. It needs to be emphasized that social and material practices had to interlock for district-space to emerge as a stable administrative field.

There is a close relation between the formation of spatial fields and the historical formation of social vision. How space is made into a governable field is tied to the different ways in which the eye and record are configured. District space was tied to a distinct way of organizing sight, standardizing its categories and taming it by jurisdiction. The documentation of objects, in all history periods, is thus an act of spatial codification. Insofar as documentation places objects in a distinct set of spatial-temporal coordinates (in certain historical formations the absence of these coordinates forms its own spatial field) it constructs the relation of these

objects to other things. The district, then, reflects a distinct form of spatial order that was premised on standardized categories of inspection and a permanent, bounded field of view.

Moreover, the impetus behind the HBC's project of districting needs to be kept in sight. The introduction of district space and the district register extended the company's knowledge of its trading establishments and gave it a firm and equal grasp of the all indigenous people, land and flora and fauna that fell under its dominion. Such information was made all the more requisite with the areas leased to the company by the Crown in the Deed-Poll Act. As well, the district was put in the service of rationalizing the costs of the company's extended operations.

Thus, one can think of district-space as a technique for holding things in place for routine inspection: a means to bring a number of people, objects and things into permanent view. In bringing these objects into permanent view the district allowed the company to construct a comparative spatial order. It is comparative internally: the returns of the district, the state of the population, and levels of debt are subject to internal comparison, each subsequent district report was intended to make reference to the report that preceded it. Yet, the district was also comparative across space, a means to compare returns, compare costs, and coordinate policy accordingly. In Part III will show that these comparative features of districting were put in service of the state on an extensive scale.

Chapter 5

District Space and Productive Labour

Thus far I have traced the processes that made the district into a field of rule. The opening of the fort, the joining of the post-log with “the report” and the company’s distribution of the categories of natural history over place, created the HBC district as a specific mode of designating and knowing ‘space’. In this chapter I outline how seeing, thinking, and acting within districts modified the relations of rule used by the HBC. Focusing on how districts formed part of an HBC strategy to make indigenous people into ‘industrious’ economic subjects, I interrogate how the provision of credit and the census were used to tie indigenous populations to specific districts. I then explore how HBC officials determined the overall economic productivity of the district through annual comparisons, and, at the same-time, used districts to record and track the annual hunting returns of individual hunters. Through these techniques of rule, the company drew a line between industrious and indolent indigenous hunters. For the company this form of knowledge could be used to close districts, tear down posts or find ways to ‘motivate’ populations of indigenous hunters to be more productive.

The District, Debt and the Dossier on the Hunter

Recent scholarship has focused on Canada’s colonial history as a process of dispossession. Cole Harris has argued that ‘native’ surplus labour was never considered a worthy object of appropriation. Speaking about the HBC and the Canadian state in the late 1860s, Harris noted “capital was far more attracted to

opportunities of native land than to the surplus value of native labour.”¹ As Harris suggests, the political geography of Canada was, in part, shaped by the reserve system and the exclusion of indigenous peoples’ surplus labour value. Indeed, from the late 1860s on, capitalist social relations and settlement were cellular in form, at least in what became the western provinces. Innis, too, argued that capitalist social relations did not mature in Canada until the late 1860s.² Thus, the historical (and contemporary) placement of reserves, at times hundreds of kilometers from the nearest railway or highway, suggests that they were established without the intention of rendering ‘native surplus value’ accessible. The argument that Canada’s history of settler colonialism privileged the dispossession of land and resources over the expropriation of indigenous labour is apt.³

However, this interpretation largely ignores the HBC and its economic relation to indigenous hunters in early part of the 19th century. Harris, for instance, describes this earlier period as a period dominated by commercial capital. “After commercial capital reached the coast in the 1780s and 1790s, and the interior in the first decade of the 19th century, trade became the basis of the relationship between natives and non-natives.”⁴ Making passing reference to the use of “violence, sexual liaisons and cross-cultural borrowing” he argues that with the exception of a few acres outside the palisades of the company forts, land and, therefore, labour

¹ Cole Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from An Edge of Empire” in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* vol. 94 issue 1(2004): 173.

² Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 391.

³ Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossess?; Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC press, 2002); Colin Samson, “The dispossession of the Innu and the colonial magic of Canadian Liberalism” in *Citizenship Studies*, vol. 3 issue 1(1999): 15; Russell Smandych, “Colonialism, settler colonialism, and law: settler revolutions and the dispossession of indigenous peoples through law in the long nineteenth century” in *Settler Colonial Studies* vol. 3 issue 1(2013): 82–101.

⁴ Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossess”, 168.

remained outside the company's rule. It is necessary however to look farther back than the late 1850s to study the social forms and practices that have structured Canadian colonial relations. This is not to suggest that 'modern' capitalist social relations existed in this earlier period but rather that the HBC used districts to help stabilize semi-capitalist social forms in its management of indigenous hunters. In particular, three elements were deployed through the mechanism of the district: the separation of productive and unproductive labour, determination of the social average of the hunt, and the regulation of subsistence via the command of mobility. These practices are evident in the district reports (1822-1829) of William McRae and Angus Bethune.

The relations of exchange between the HBC and indigenous hunters pose some complicated questions. A number of scholars build on Innis to conclude that if indigenous people found themselves dependent on the HBC, this was due to the collapse of beaver stocks. Bishop suggests that dependency on the company was a product not only of declining beaver but also the end of moose, caribou and other big game that had provided leather for clothing and food supplies.⁵ Ray similarly argued that depressed native resource economies led to crisis in subsistence and, thereby, to greater dependence on the HBC supplies.⁶

These analyses are, to an extent, debatable. First, and perhaps most obviously, this line of argument suggests that the HBC ended up ruling over indigenous people

⁵Charles Bishop, "The Emergence of Hunting Territories Among Northern Ojibwa" in *A Ethnology* vol. 9 issue 1(1970): 1-15.

⁶ Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998 [1974]): 117 and Arthur Ray, "Some conservation schemes of the Hudson's Bay Company 1821-50: An examination of the problems of resource management in the fur trade" in *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 1 issue 1(1975): 49-68.

and dictating their conditions of existence, simply as a response to an 'unfortunate' set of ecological circumstances. The relation of dependence was a natural outcome. However, this reading skips over the fact the HBC's profitability was dependent upon the productivity of indigenous labour. Moreover, this line of thinking also implies that from 1670 to the mid-19th century, the trade relationship remained the same. Indigenous people, deprived of their natural economies, merely had less to offer, less to fall back on, and subsequently became more reliant on posts for their existence.⁷ This presents HBC economic relations as largely static unchanging 'barter' relations. I argue, however, that there was a concerted effort to create conditions of exchange that would give the HBC greater control over indigenous people.

Consider, for instance, the following letter to the London Council in 1822,

It will be a work of time to reconcile them to the new order of things...I have made it my study to examine the nature and character of the Indians and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of subordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us... this measure ought to be pursued rigidly next year as if they do not improve and no credit not so much as a load of ammunition, given to them until they exhibit an inclination to renew their habits of industry.⁸

The author was clear that in areas less under control, the policy would have to adopt a more subtle form.

⁷ George Colpitts has made a compelling argument that the period identified by scholars as a profound moment of ecological collapse and degradation (from 1820 onward) likely has less to do with an objective decline and more to do with the information that was captured in chief factors district reports. The sudden degradation in Rupert's Land and instances of starvation was, in part, a product of more extensive reporting practices than those carried out in Post-Logs. See George Colpitts, "Accounting for environmental Degradation in Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade Journals and Account Books" in *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 19 no. 1 (2006): 1-32.

⁸ Letter presumed to be from Simpson in the Selkirk Papers, XXIV, 72, cited in Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 290.

In the plains however this system will not do, as tobacco, and spirits the staple articles of trade, for one year, they will recover their bows and spears and lose sight of their smoking and drinking habits, it will therefore be necessary to bring to those tribes round by mild and cautious measure, which may soon be effected.⁹

The new regime was to impose 'proper subordination' and rule by restricting credit to those deemed productive. Where the means of subsistence (crafting instruments for hunting, making clothes from leather) were not fully under the command of the HBC, the policy would have to be lighter.

Even with a real depression in resource economies, there were also concerted efforts to develop "a new order of things." The third critique of the ecological reading of indigenous dependence has to do with the timing of this ecological crisis. Bishop notes that until 1800, subsistence and game were still plentiful enough to leave the Ojibwa independent of HBC posts. They traded for pleasure rather than survival. It is only after 1820 that they could no longer survive without resorting to a trading post."¹⁰ It seems far too coincidental that this "wholesale ecological shift" occurred when the company was reorganizing its operations and had declared that it would try to 'bring and [keep] the Indian in a proper state of subordination'. In other words, because the period identified by the ecological crisis scholars is contemporaneous with the period when the district and its registers were uniformly deployed, it seems appropriate to examine the district and its effect on the social relations of trade.¹¹

⁹ Letter presumed to be from Simpson in the Selkirk Papers, XXIV, 72, cited in Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 290.

¹⁰ Bishop, "Cultural and Biological Adaptations to Deprivation: The Northern Ojibwa Case" A paper prepared for the symposium extinction and survival in human populations, *American Anthropological Association*, November(1974): 12.

¹¹ The other difficulty with this ecological crisis, as noted by George Colpitts, is that scholars are reliant on the ecological narratives that surface in the District Reports. Returns on fur and also chief factors' frequent discussions of 'Starving Indians' are taken as proof that

Piecework and its Subjects

Until the formation of district space, the company had little ability to carry out individualized registrations of indigenous people and debts. As Bishop notes, indigenous people could take debt at many different forts and posts in a given season and the company was without any means to keep track of them.¹² Moreover, the freedom to move among multiple posts also meant that it was hard to make any outstanding debts meaningful. If a trader recalled that a group of hunters had not repaid advances received in the previous season and was therefore unwilling to issue new provision, hunters could simply go elsewhere. For instance, in 1790 Governor Robert Goodwin lamented “there is no dealing with them and if I refuse them powder and shot they [just] go somewhere else for the supply.”¹³ Moreover, without a formalized record, it was often impossible to separate those who had paid off their advances from those who had not. Magnus Birsay, governor of the Osnaburgh post, noted that he rarely collected debts, as he “didn’t like to affront the Indians by insisting on they paying of other men’s debts.”¹⁴ As a result the furs were not successfully commoditized.

Indigenous societies simply could not adapt to ‘depleted resources bases’. Yet, as Elizabeth Vibert points out ‘starving’ was at times used to designate Indigenous people who simply refused to trade with the company or to engage in what was deemed productive behavior and, thus, starving could also refer to people who were without HBC provisions and goods see Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807–1846* (Oklahoma: Oklahoma University press, 1997), 276–277. In this sense, the extent to which a state of ecological decline can be read through the remarks of HBC officials on starvation should be contentious and, at the very least, considered in relation to the moral categorization of licit and illicit modes of subsistence that the company’s notion of starvation also served to denote.

¹² Bishop, “The Emergence of Hunting Territories Among the Northern Ojibwa”, 7.

¹³ HBCC, LAC, “Osnaburgh House Post Journal 1790–1791,” 1M111, B155/a/5.

¹⁴ HBCC, LAC, “Osnaburgh House Post Journal 1796–1796,” 1M111 B155/a/11.

There were, of course, standards of trade and advances were ideally paid to each hunter at the rate of 12 Made Beaver (MB), which was the amount deemed necessary to outfit them for the season. However, it appears the company could not enforce these standards. As advances were taken in goods from multiple posts and then only partially paid back, the company had essentially given some goods away for free. In the worst case scenario for the company, advances were taken and went unpaid. In a better scenario, the furs paid to the company were not actually equivalent to the MB the company issued for them.

Marx wrote “piece-wages [are]...the most fruitful source of reductions in wages, and of frauds committed by capitalists.”¹⁵ To this may be added, only if the capitalist has complete power to set the value of the wage, which in the case of the HBC occurred indirectly as the means of subsistence in ‘trade goods’. Thus, without the ability to police and enforce credit, there appears to have been no means to get hunters “to strain [their] labour-power as intensely as possible” which certainly would have been in the company’s interests.¹⁶ The company was by no means unaware of this problem, which it had tried to address in the past. As early as 1738 the London Council had asked governors to “keep a warehouse book and enter therein every particular parcel of goods or skins traded with the Indians and also the quantity and sorts of goods traded for these skins.” The response was that this was impossible as governors were not able to set uniform prices on goods and MB was constantly adjusted or modified to entice new hunters or to keep old ones from getting involved with French traders, and later the NWC. Outstanding debt would

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital vol. 1* (London: Pelican Press, 1991 [1867]), 694.

¹⁶ Marx, *Capital vol. 1*, 695.

not only vary in value from year to year but also by season. Thus, records of credit would be of little use in appraising the 'real' costs on the company books and would be cumbersome to create.

The other issue was that those who came to forts to trade were unknown to governors and often never returned, making a record of their debt and transactions largely unknowable. This is evident not only from the absence of 'Indian Debt' books before 1821 but also in the company's records. For instance, in 1817, Governor James Tate reported his dissatisfaction with a young clerk for failing to deduct spring advances from a party of Indigenous traders who claimed they had already paid their all debts at another post.¹⁷ That there was no debt book for Finlayson to consult suggests that the practice was simply to take a uniform rate of the furs that were returned in the spring (i.e. to assume every hunt had been advanced). The system may have simplified the administration of debt for the company but was obviously unjust for hunters who had not taken out the full advance. Such quarrels between fort factors and hunters over debt were a common thread in the post-logs from this period.

How does the constitution of the district help to resolve these problems? As noted earlier, district reports were intended,

annually to furnish registers of the number of Indians attached to their respective districts or parts particularizing the tribes, the number of chiefs and followers, *with extent of the country they inhabit and hunt in, together with their average debts given, returns brought to the company, general character and habits of life.*¹⁸

¹⁷ HBCC, LAC, "James Tate Governor Report of Henely House," 1M779/B/117/e/1. Curiously, this document is entitled a 'district report' but it focuses solely on Henely House and does not abide by the categories of the district reports that emerged following the 1821 merger.

¹⁸ HBCA, AM, "Minutes on the Assiniboia District" [1823-1824], 3M43/D/4/87, [my italics].

This mode of documentation could not, however, be achieved without restricting the movement of human beings. As we have seen, part of the problem with policing debt was the ease with which hunters moved among numerous different posts. There does not appear to be a specific provision for dealing with this problem in the DPT or in the instructions for the district reports for that year. Instead, the solution emerged only after Angus Bethune raised the alarm in his Albany District Report for 1823:

Two of the Severn Indians came to me this spring with the intention of trading their furs and by that means defrauding their own trader they had tolerable good hunts which I took from them for their debts at both places [Albany District and Severn District]... This is the first instance they have had of our determination to put a stop to their practice of fraud and which was done in the presence of about 30 Indians [a show was made of it]. A report, however, reached moose factory that those two Indians had come from Severn District with the intention to remain at Albany District as they formerly belonged to it, this I believe is incorrect. Their intention was positively to get as many goods as they could from me and return to Severn to play the same game there...without a strict understanding between Severn and Albany the business of these districts would be carried at a loss.¹⁹

In the Northern Department's council minutes that year, Simpson added two new regulations to be enforced. First, it was decreed that chief factors would "interchange of Indian debt with Gentlemen in charge of neighbouring districts to prevent fraud."²⁰ As such, the so-called 'Indian Abstract' became an even more vital document in the district report, as it now had to be available for circulation in neighboring districts. Second, "indigenous people would not be permitted to leave the districts to which "the gentlemen [had] assigned them."²¹

The new practices offended old HBC hands such as Thomas Vincent, and

¹⁹ HBCC, LAC, "District Report from the Albany Department, Angus Bethune-1823," 1M776, B/3/E/8.

²⁰ HBCC, LAC, "Minutes of a Council Held at York Factory Northern Department of Rupert's Land, July 8th, 1823," 1M814/B239/K1.

²¹ HBCC, LAC, Minutes of the Northern Department Council, July 5th 1823, 1M814/B239/K2.

former governor of Whale Lake, who expressed his distaste for the new regulation: “It is impolite and injurious to the trade and consequently to the interests of the company to forcibly restrict Indians to particular districts.”²² He feared the regulation would cause indigenous people “to avail themselves of the resources of the country, clothe themselves in leather and fur animals and live independently [of the HBC] or perish miserably in attempting to do so.”²³ No other chief factor raised similar concerns in a district report.

By the end of the 1820s, this system of confining indigenous people to specific districts had been further refined. Simpson wrote to the London council in 1828 “we are endeavoring to confine the natives throughout the country by families to separate and distinct hunting grounds.” Restriction established at the scale of the district was intended to hold families in specific locations via information gathered through the Indian abstracts over the decade.²⁴ The regulation was still in effect as late as 1844.²⁵

Debt was dependent upon a particular form of spatial calibration. As a social relation it required individualization and identification. Today, there are many systems in place to ensure that the ‘individual’ is stable enough for debt to be tracked to specific persons. In the colonial history of the HBC the matter was not so easily settled. The ability of indigenous people to pass in and out of the company’s field of administration destabilized debt. The so-called ‘Indian abstract’ provided a

²² HBCC, LAC, “Thomas, Vincent, Albany District Report 1824–1825,” 1M776/B/3/e/10.

²³ HBCC, LAC, “Thomas Vincent, Albany District Report, 1824–1825,” 1M776/B/3/e/10.

²⁴ HBCA, AM, “Simpson Outward Letters Outward Report to London, 10th of July 1828,” 3M6/D.4/16.

²⁵ The chief factor of the Saskatchewan District was accused of misconduct for trading with Cree and Chipewyan people who were on the books in the nearby district of La Cross Lake. HBCA, AM, “Simpson, Letters Inward, Edmonton, December 1844,” 3M67/D5/12.

registered identity, but as evidenced by Bethune's concerns, this was not sufficient, as having an identity at one collection of posts in one district did nothing to prevent 'fraud' at others. The solution? Stabilize debt by coordinating the registers of each district as one continuous network.

What had started as a practice of bordering space for the purpose of administration was reworked to control the mobility of people. Tying people to distinct places required conceiving of districts as a continuous system. Each district, despite being a discrete social field, was tied to the next through a shared system of 'documentation'. The district functioned initially to make people visible within its delimited field and then to make them known throughout an extended grid-work. Thus, the power of the district was both in the capacity it provided to pinpoint a particular set of internal conditions and in that it allowed records of individuals to circulate over a continuous social field.

As these new regulations were put into effect the phrase "attached to respective districts" was replaced by the phrase "belonging to the district," which reveals a great deal about the effect district space had on relations of rule. At the start of the 19th century indigenous people were not subject to regular and stabilized forms of documentation. Now, they "belonged" to a district and, thereby, to the company, to be treated as objects of management. Chief factors would have an increasingly pastoral role. They were to ensure the "Indians" that belonged to their district were assigned to a hunting ground where there was enough game for them to subsist. As we shall see, they managed them as forces of production and encouraged them to take a proper attitude towards their debts, that they were able to do so depended on a proper arrangement of space.

Moreover, having a mechanism to police mobility and ensure that furs hunted in the district remained in the district was necessary for the annual returns of each district to reflect its productivity accurately. These same techniques of spatial designation structured the emergence of the hunter as a labouring economic subject.

Bethune's Albany district report used the accounts of post clerks in his report on the profits derived from each post and on the state of the establishment.²⁶ Consequently, although he lacked detailed firsthand knowledge of the features of each post, Bethune was able to call to hand the number of hunters contained 'in [his] district' and reported that their primary hunts have been 'chiefly in martins' but "they also [killed] a few beaver and otters."²⁷ Although Bethune could not give an account of "the character of each individual hunter at present" he was able to relay information about four notable hunters. He did not refer to them by name but instead listed them according to their 'number' in the district debt book: 'No. 20. This man gave me amongst other furs forty large winter beaver, not one cub and thirty winter otters, he has made the best hunt of any'. 'No 1. And No. 39 are brothers, good hunters but presumed dead'. 'No. 7 and No. 8 traded furs for ammunition' 'but, [Bethune suspects] are headed to Severen district to get more debt'.

²⁶ Angus Bethune was a holdover from the NWC and negotiated the amalgamation of the two companies in 1821. Although he was assigned as the chief factor to Albany District, he had spent most of his career west of the Rocky Mountains, and had little knowledge of Albany.

²⁷ HBCC, LAC, "Report from the Albany Department, Angus Bethune, 1823-1824," 1M776/B/3/E/8.

By the following year Bethune was confident enough to remark on the character of the 'Indian population'. His 'Indian Abstract' listed the debts of 57 indigenous hunters for the last three years and remarked on their moral conduct. The level of detail he provided underscores the role the district played in supporting a gaze that was both extensive and capable of sustained individualization.

'No. 1, an old man who is unable to hunt much, he has become of late more infirm. Should be removed to a place with good fishing. Starved last winter.' 'No. 4 a young man can hunt well when he pleases very indolent should not get credit' 'No. 7 a bad Indian but can hunt when he likes very well, should not get debt'. No. 10 was "A tolerable good hunter fond of paying his debt." "No. 11, a good hunter always exerts himself. When he fails paying his debt it cannot be attributed to indolence." "No. 51, died."²⁸

Like Bethune, William McRae noted in his 1823 Flying Post district report that his "stay in this quarter has not been long enough to enable [him] to procure the information necessary to form a district report but [he was] unwilling to be silent altogether".²⁹ He conceded that he had yet "to visit in person the different trading posts in the district and those in a subordinate station [clerks] had yet to furnish him with such information."³⁰ However, by consulting the records from the previous year he found 'forty Indians on the books', all of them "were very poor" with the district's total debt in excess of a thousand martins.³¹

Like Bethune, by the following year McRae produced a more detailed district

²⁸ HBCC, LAC, "Albany District Report, 1824–1825, Angus Bethune," 1M776, B/3/e/9.

²⁹ HBCC, LAC, "Flying Post District Report 1823–1824, William McRae," 1M778/B70.e/1.

³⁰ HBCC, LAC, "Flying Post District Report 1823–1824, William McRae," 1M778/B70.e/1.

³¹ HBCC, LAC, "Flying Post District Report 1823–1824, William McRae," 1M778/B70.e/1.

report. The decline of animals, the spread of disease amongst the hunters, the size of the district in relation to the needs of subsistence, and number of deaths were all made known.³² Again, through this arrangement the hunter was identified by their debt and average returns and consequently, assembled as moral-economic subject. "No. 3 'this man hunted well formerly but is now old and decrepit, his hunt consequently diminishes yearly, he brought this spring but 36 martins." "No. 12 "brought but 22 martins which is not above half his usual amount." "No. 14 'brought 80 martins and the same quantity last year, maintained seasonal average."³³

As evidenced by these reports, the social field of the district was used to create a clear line between the indolent and the industrious. By being able to record each hunter's returns it was possible to assess his productivity. If there was a wide variation between years, chief factors often elaborated on the 'circumstances of the district'. The chief factor of Moose Factory district in 1826 remarked that many hunters and their families in the district were "ill during the fall" or that "a want of provisions" undermined the hunt.³⁴ In the 1829 Lac Pluie Report, it was noted that the district's returns were affected by the winter, which "lasted from the fourth of November until the 1st of May, leaving the Indians in a deplorably helpless state" and that "there has been a universal scarcity of provisions among the Indians during the past winter."³⁵ Consequently, many of them hunted nothing. "Their utmost efforts being required to preserve themselves from perishing by hunger intake was a third

³² HBCC, LAC, "Flying Post District Report, 1825-1826, William McRae," 1M778/B70/e/4.

³³ HBCC, LAC, "Flying Post District Report, 1825-1826," William McRae," 1M778/B70/e/4.

³⁴ HBCC, LAC, Moose Factory District Report, Joseph Burly, 1826," 1M782/B186/e/10.

³⁵ HBCC, LAC, "Lac La Pluie District Report 1829-1830," 1M778/B105/e/9.

or a half...none whatsoever an average hunt.”³⁶

Through these qualifications, the district’s average was gradually determined and hunters were classified as industrious or indolent depending on their performance relative to that standard. It is perhaps possible even to read the district’s average as the ‘social average’ at what the rate of production ought to be. The relation to the hunt was effectively quantified and made into a total that was tracked year in and year out and policed accordingly.

Only so much of the conduct at play here is disclosed in these reports, but it appears part of the chief factors’ task was to relay whether a lower output was due to seasonal scarcity or other causes. Thus one could report that No. 21 failed his hunt due to his support of No. 1, an “old man’ [who] had caused other hunters to starve due to his intrusion on them.” However, when neither scarcity nor dependence could be attributed to a poor season the assessment was ‘indolence’. The power chief factors gained from this system of reporting should not be understated. It became possible to limit credit or cut off credit entirely to those who made no ‘seasonal exertions’. Moreover, an economic assessment was paired to a moral assessment. Did the hunter make an effort to pay off his debts? Was he reliable? Did he stay within the district? In short, was he a “good Indian?” Each hunter was given a limited dossier, updated each year to include their seasonal average, outstanding debt, and their ‘moral conduct’. As was debt stabilized as a relation, so was an individualized character that was framed in reference to the productivity of labour.

³⁶ HBCC, LAC, “Lac La Pluie District Report, 1829–1830,” 1M778/B105/e/9.

These techniques of documentation gave rise to a new form of subject. The Linnaean taxonomy had produced a specific way of seeing, recording and observing human beings. 'Stature', reproductive habits, size of body, shape of face, diet, were the registers for classifying human beings and, in particular, formed the registers of so-called savage life. The observational register did not contain the conditions of possibility for knowledge of life that was both individualized and totalized. This earlier representation of life as a typology of general features was visible in the HBC. Even in early reports, chief factors still remarked about the 'moral character' of the 'Indians'. Thus in an 1815 report of Whale River post, the clerk opened with this description of the indigenous population: "they are *in general* a very lazy indolent race of men" or "the general character of the northern Indian, is honorable and provident, they are compared to the lower tribe endowed with a "more engaging less robust disposition."³⁷

With the deployment of the district as the field of view it was no longer just a case of 'general characteristics or habits'. Instead, the chief factor had a list of individuals and the moral assessment became rooted in particular relations of debt and measures of annual productivity. The district segmented life, rendered it immobile and in doing so transformed disparate remarks on fur, geography, buildings, hunts, and debt, into the annual state of the district. Hunters who had moved in and out of the company's registers were now imagined as being locked in place. They "belonged to the district" and their annual returns indicated whether the district was in abundance or undergoing a "season of scarcity." Hunters became knowable

³⁷ HBCC, LAC, Thomas Adler's Whale River Post Report, 1815," 1M778/B372/2/E/1, [my italics]]; see also HBCC, LAC, "District Report on Isle a la Crosse, 1822–1823, James Keith," 1M778/B89/e/1.

to the extent that they could be reformed, spurred towards industriousness. This leads into the last point.

The ability to monitor each individual year in and year out informed a number of new tactics to moralize this new economic control. It was not uncommon for chief factors to devote some section of their report to the best methods to inculcate industrious behaviour into the “Indians on the books.” For instance, “My custom when giving out debt”, waxed Chief Factor Cameron, “is I take each Indian who is present and ask him to name the articles he is most in want when he names an article that I think he can do without I tell him so and make him acknowledge his inability from poverty of his lands to pay such a heavy debt.”³⁸ John Davies, Chief Factor of Lake Seul District, advised on how best to police the lines between indolent and industrious. To inculcate “industrious and provident habits” he gave out ammunition and other articles of the hunt at a cheaper standard of trade when they were purchased with goods. However, when the exchange was made on an advance, it was subject to the regular and more expensive standard. Thus, the chief provided the moral regulation necessary to stabilize debt as a relation; to ensure responsible and industrious conduct was taken up towards debt. As Marx noted, “every social form of property has morals of its own.”³⁹ I can find little evidence any of these schemes ‘worked’, but, nonetheless, these little moral projects were the prerogative chief factors were given over their districts. In these delimited administrative grids, each

³⁸ HBCC, LAC, “J. D. Cameron’s Lac La Pluie District Report, 1825–1826,” 1M778 B. 105/e/6

³⁹See Karl Marx, *Draft Notes on the Civil War in France* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971): 171. The hunter was discursively constituted in ways that supported the economic relation of piecework. See Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, “Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology...” *The British Journal of Sociology* vol. 44, issue no. 3 (1993): 473–499.

'gentleman' conducted and evaluated yearly experiments intended to produce more productive labour, reduce debt, and render hunters compliant.

Chapter 6

District Space, Population and the Growth of a Variable Milieu

As argued in chapter 2, the 18th-century registers of human life were not anchored in specific space–time coordinates. Rather, for life to become regionalized nature had to take on a social form as a conditioning relation to population. Although this transformation cannot be attributed to a singular historical force, in this chapter I argue that the power of district reports to combine knowledge of population, economic productivity, and subsistence with a general topography of the district formed a key technology in giving population a milieu. This chapter develops this argument in two sections.

First, I provide a discussion of how district reports produced population as an object, focusing on the development of the practice of the census of population as a technique stabilized by the register of the district report. In this I sketch the materiality of population as a category of administration. Second, after discussing the conditions of possibility for population to emerge as an object of administration, I turn to how the ability of chief factors, Simpson, and the London Council to read districts reports as the conditions of particular environments supported a nascent form of biopolitics. I develop this point by analyzing the company's conservation strategies of the late 1820s and 1830s.

District Reports and Population Abstracts

The creation of the district constructed a social field that was populated by a uniform set of categories. Initially, indigenous people were given representation in

the 'Indian Abstract'. The Indian abstracts contained in the first wave of district reports gave the HBC new capacities of rule. One year after the introduction of the district report, the company used the information contained in the reports to locate and remove unproductive populations from HBC forts and outposts to the Red River Colony.¹ In addition, one can see from the post-log of Francis Heron that population was being conceptualized less as an object defined by the laws of nature and more as a force that was conditioned and conditioning of nature.² The 'Indian abstract' presented the conditions of possibility for these shifts.

The abstract was a mode of documentation that individualized people as 'hunters', each with his own debt and moral assessment. The individualization was marked. The 'Indian Abstract' initially pertained to an aggregation of economic subjects. "I have 54 Indians on the books", "forty-six Indians are entered in the books", or there are "127 hunters in the Indian debt book."³ Thus, the district-register at first only made the lives of native hunters visible as part of the district's productive forces. This conceptualization is perhaps made clear in McRae's 1828 district report,

Notwithstanding the death of five hunters and the one hand who traded almost nothing, there is no diminution in the amount of returns compared with last year. To account for this it must be observed that many young men growing up whose hunts are on the increase and several Indians who were absent from the district are now more regular in attendance. From these circumstances a further increase, particularly in martins, may be confidently expected.⁴

The hunter was captured in the district report as a force to be cultivated,

¹ *Hudson's Bay Company: a brief history* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Company Press, 1934), 23.

² HBCC, LAC, "Francis Heron's Fort Garry Post Journal, 1825-1826," 1M153/B235/a/7.

³ HBCC, LAC, "Flying Post District Report, 1823-1824," 1M778/b70/e/1; HBCC, LAC, "Moose Factory District Report, 1825-1826," 1M782 B186/e/10; HBCC, LAC, "Mackenzie River District Report 1826-1827," 1M782/B200/e/8.

⁴ HBCC, LAC, "Kanaquimsie River District Report, 1828," 1M778/B/70/E/6.

maintained and considered as a potential economic resource for the company to manage. Yet, this would not be the sole extent of the company's knowledge. Rather, as we shall see, one aspect of district inspection is the ease with which the register is extended, the simplicity a system of districts offers in recalibrating the social field to produce new information in a rapid and uniform manner. In turn this new information can modify the character of the district effectively so as to extend what truly belongs to its register. In 1828 the district register was extended from merely the inspection of hunters, their seasonal returns and their habits. The register took into consideration the indigenous population belonging to the district.

List of Indians at Albany and fit 1823

0

	Wanamun in the year 1823	Wanamun in the year 1824	Wanamun in the year 1825	Wanamun in the year 1826	Wanamun in the year 1827
1. Amareechaps	43	47 1/2	54 1/2	3	51 1/2
2. Otermanash	37	40 1/2	77 1/2	94 1/2	"
3. Coppernick	83 1/2	52	105 1/2	36 1/2	99
4. " 1. Son	44	31 1/2	75 1/2	18	57 1/2
5. " 3 1/2	3 1/2	29 1/2	33	5	28
6. " 3 1/2	"	"	"	2 1/2	"
7. Coppernick	97	30	127	36 1/2	90 1/2
8. " weather	10	"	"	"	10
9. " Son	56	34 1/2	90 1/2	30 1/2	60
10. " weather	37 1/2	59 1/2	96 1/2	106 1/2	"
11. George Sutherland	81 1/2	81 1/2	163	69	94
12. " 1. Son	99	36 1/2	135 1/2	30	105 1/2
13. " 3 1/2	59	36	95	95	"
14. " 3 1/2	13	35	38	45	"
15. " 4 1/2	77 1/2	25	32 1/2	36 1/2	"
16. Ootkumankushick	96	52	118	49	99
17. Jack Nipling	64	58 1/2	122 1/2	56	66 1/2
18. " Son	38	27	65	65	"
19. Jack Spruce's 2. Son	24 1/2	68	92 1/2	38	54 1/2
20. Sonny	106 1/2	30	136 1/2	25	111 1/2
21. Itzquattishick	"	135 1/2	135 1/2	115	20 1/2
22. Elnash	60 1/2	66	126 1/2	23 1/2	102
23. Moashon	6	40 1/2	46 1/2	51 1/2	"
24. Missinaggon	52 1/2	"	52 1/2	2 1/2	50
25. Mistoffy	"	49	49	49	"
26. " wife	1	5	6	6	"
27. " Son	49 1/2	72	121 1/2	75	106 1/2
28. Ootkumankushick	30	74	104	64 1/2	39 1/2
29. Ootkumankushick	"	30	30	24	9
30. Ootkumankushick	1	36 1/2	37 1/2	21	16 1/2
31. Ootkumankushick	36	116 1/2	50 1/2	24	25 1/2
32. Ootkumankushick	40	24	114	80	121

In the column to the far left is a list of names of the hunters, each of which is assigned a corresponding number that Bethune used to refer to habits and returns of specific individual hunters. To the right of the table are four columns outlining the hunter's returns and debts for the last two seasons. This is the mode of registration that dominates the early years of the district report. By 1828, however, another form of document is included in the district report.

General Abstract of the Indian Population

Tribes	Single Men		Age		Married Men		Married Women		Children		Total					
	Single	Married	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls				
1 Tuxtepec	1	2	12	15	.	.	.	.	1	16	15	7	4	1	2	7
2 Nacotines	4	15	12	14	11	11	4	4	47	17	16	13	5	7	26	26
3 Taltotines	2	2	29	35	1	1	8	6	34	16	14	11	3	5	16	16
4 Alnah & Chin	4	20	94	135	6	7	1	14	91	50	36	30	7	10	510	510
5 Chitkotines	2	52	130	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	184
Grand Totals	13	91	307	249	18	14	13	30	188	98	75	57	16	24	1196	1196

In 1828 there was a shift in the district reports. It was no longer a case of simply relaying the number of 'Indians on the books'. The district report now included a census sheet titled 'list of Indians belonging to the district'. All indigenous males over the age of fifteen were registered as hunters, next to this was a column of the hunter's wives, their sons under fifteen, their marriageable and young daughters, and an additional column of the number of widows and orphans.

For instance, the district report of Lac La Pluie in 1829 includes the following breakdown of population: 117 men, 116 women, 116 boys, 35 married women, 106 girls, 13 widows (no orphans), for a total of 563. The 1829 Mackenzie River District Report included 171 hunters, 122 women, 149 boys, 11 girls, and no widows while noting the numbers of each registered at the different posts within the district —e.g. Fort Liard, Fort Simpson, Fort Norman and Fort Good Hope.⁵ Thus, the district was wedded to population. It no longer functioned simply to police the debt and mobility of hunters but formed the basis of the census, a means to hold an entire people in place and to develop a rudimentary knowledge of their geographical position.

In 1837 the London Council issued the following directive to improve the effectiveness of the register:

That gentlemen in charge of the districts and forts on both sides of the mountains be instructed to forward as accurate a statement as possible of the Indian population within their districts as the governor and committee are anxious of obtaining a census of the whole country through which their operations extend.⁶

The following year Simpson sent to the London Council a 97-page document entitled "Indian Population of Sundry Districts, 1838."⁷ The document has gone

⁵ See HBCC, LAC, "Lac la Pluie District Report, 1829–1830," 1M778/ B.105/e/9; HBCC, LAC, "Mackenzie River Report, 1829–1830," 1M782, B200/e/9.

⁶ HBCA, AM, "George Simpson's London Report, 1837" 3M46 D4/105.

⁷ HBCA, AM, "Indian Population of Sundry Districts, 1838," 1M903, B239/z/10.

largely unnoticed in academic scholarship. For instance, Harris notes that census of indigenous populations was a tactic of control that emerged with the reservation system but in fact it had an earlier history in the Districts of Norway House, Athabasca, Lac La Pluie, Mackenzie River, Swan River, Slave Lake and Saskatchewan.⁸ The census documented people at the various posts in the district and then provided a total tabulation by district. Each entry included the earlier categories, with an additional tabulation of the “deceased Indians in the district.”⁹

Thus, the emergence of population was grounded in practices of economic individualization. It was the initial use of the district to individualize indigenous people into the category of hunters that created the conditions of enumeration. It appears that once hunters were categorized, their identities held by place, it became possible to interrogate them further and to enumerate women, and children, none of whom were given names, but merely tallied as each hunter’s dependents. As Hanks noted, the company became concerned in the late 1820s with the liabilities of the individual hunter, including how many lives they supported.¹⁰ This resulted in the

⁸ Harris, “How did Colonialism Disposess”, 176; HBCA, AM, “Indian Population of Sundry Districts, 1838” 1M903, B239/z/10.

⁹ The impetus behind this push for a complete and accurate census is difficult to locate. It may have been a response to a small pox epidemic that took place in the winter of 1837 that ravaged Oregon to British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the North West Territories. The epidemic was rumoured to have claimed the lives of “three fourths of the tribes” in these areas. See HBCC, LAC, “Todd Williams, Fort Pelly Post Journal 1837,” 1M117 B/159/a/17. Thus, it is possible the census was mobilized to compare the extent to which ‘the company’s populations’ had declined.

¹⁰ Hank’s study focuses the management of the HBC in the Albany District. He notes the company took efforts to discontinue ‘polygamy’ as it feared the potential cost of supporting the families of deceased hunters, see Hanks, “Swampy Cree and the Hudson’s Bay Company at Oxford House”, 104. One cannot help but notice the way in which European cultural standards shaped this approach. Polygamous family structures probably would have mitigate the economic loss sustained by the company when a family lost a hunter, as the practice of having extended families that could include multiple children from different

development of a census that included the numbers of women and children in a district. This formation points to the materiality of population, its reliance on the calibration of record to the right form of 'space'.

Second, for the company to develop a conception of indigenous people as population, the district was enforced as an internally bounded enclosed space that held people in place. The fort was retrenched from a site of rule to a nodal point of registration, used to build up knowledge of people, trade, and things at the scale of the district. As knowledge of population appears to have grown out of the economic registration of hunters, the openness of the fort was also a factor. The so-called Indian Hall was open enough to allow for the interrogation of individuals. In other words, the relative openness of the 19th-century fort compared to the enclosed fort of the 18th century also played a role. What is striking is how the district report served to connect these rudimentary censuses to a set of local conditions that we can conceptualize as the 19th-century milieu of population.

At the close of Part I, I sketched a series of conditions that made up the vision and register of 18th-century observation. In particular, life had been slotted into different orders of nature as a typology. Human beings were organized according to natural laws, outfitted for each order of life. This belief structured the vision of the naturalist in a specific way, seeing life in terms of general characteristics —the stature, diet and reproductive features for an entire 'order of men'. Thus, it was a form of documentation that did not specify life or produce internal variations within an order. I charted the way the Linnaean 'man' was displaced by an individual

parents would reduce the demands placed on the company to support certain families (not to mention hunters were not the sole source of a family's subsistence.).

dossier - specific individuals, with their specific rates of productivity and moral character. Yet the district register gradually engendered a form of population that was read through the conditions of the field of the district. Population was put in relation to a comparative milieu with visible internal variations.

In particular, district-space had the function of making people visible. Using a coordinated system of registration, the district took on the form of restrictive space. It was only once it became possible to believe that each hunter was confined, tied to his particular district by debt and by list of identities circulated between chief factors, that individual hunters were elaborated into population. Thus, HBC district-space was an integral component in the formation of population as a scale of rule. However, simply developing this rudimentary form of census was not sufficient to rule through a biopolitical representation of life. Knowing people as numbers is a practice with a long history.¹¹ Rather, if we accept Foucault's reading of biopolitics, population becomes biopolitical not simply because men, women, and children are made into numbers but because this numerical representation of life is bound up with other projects—the drawing up of resource tables, knowledge of morality, geographic conditions. It is by putting people in relation to these other forms of knowledge that it becomes possible to consider human beings as biological subjects conditioned by and conditioning of an extended environment. What are the means of subsistence, the climate, the soil, the topography, and the birth rate? How do these things come to relate to one another so that they bear down on life itself?

¹¹ For a discussion on other forms of enumeration see Curtis, "Foucault on Governmentality and Population: the impossible discovery", 505–533.

There has been an historical problem in locating the material practices, sites, and people where these forms of knowledge were gathered together. Foucault tried to resolve this issue by theorizing police projects as a central force in the formation of biopolitical knowledge, but this only served to add another level of theoretical abstraction to what remained an historical issue. Redwood-Rose similarly argued that to understand the historical process of biopolitics and biopower, one had first to understand a prior historical formation of geopower, a mode of encoding space “which linked governmental knowledge (both statistical and cartographic) with the governed population by constructing a geo-coded landscape.”¹²

Again we are left with the problem of locating the situations and forms of knowledge that brought a geo-coded landscape and knowledge of human beings together. It is this problem that Elden has attempted to rework by suggesting geo-power and biopolitics were unified in governmental discourses. Yet the concrete practices that brought these forms of knowledge remain unclear. This problem stems from reading knowledge as an object produced within some form of rationality that was later assembled in projects of rule. In contrast, the history of the district report suggests that it is concrete projects that condition forms of knowledge, actual practices that bring things together in such a way that new forms and relations become visible and expressible in practice.

In particular, the district report presents the context through which a number of categories of knowledge were brought together. The soil, the climate, animals, means of subsistence, the state of trade, and the ‘Indian population’ were all grouped in one register and then delimited to make up the internally bounded space

¹² Ruben Redwood-Rose, “Governmentality, Geography and the Geocoded World,” 470.

of the district itself. The significance of this should not be overlooked. The accumulation of district reports enabled the London Council and George Simpson annually to ponder the sixteen or so districts of the Northern Department. The company's intent was to use these reports to organize economic policy. Should the district be closed? Should some of the posts be discontinued? Should a specific trade quota be enforced? These are hardly biopolitical questions, but they were questions that required a comparative view: how did the returns of the district compare to last year's? How do its returns compare to those of the other districts? So in short, the district report was a document that brought these categories together specifically for the purposes of administration.

The contemplation of the district report by the London Council and Simpson constitutes but one side of the equation. The other is the form of social vision that tied chief factors, chief traders, and clerks to their districts of operation. Each chief factor was assigned to a specific district and if deemed competent he often remained in the district for at least several years.¹³ In this role, the chief factors were required to be attentive to the district and to inspect people, place and things through the categories of the district report. Thus, the chief factor gradually came to "know" the indigenous population of the district—the productivity of the hunters, their moral conduct, and the number of wives, of young women eligible for marriage, the widows and families that had starved during the year.

Thus, the chief factor's task of moral regulation, of instilling productivity and policing debt, gave him an intimate knowledge of population and its conditions of

¹³ See Innis, "Introduction" in *The Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert's Land*, xli.

life. He had also to develop a basic topographical knowledge, inspecting the district in terms of its soil, climate, animals, means of subsistence, and geological features. Thus, in ruling through districts the HBC relied on a figure whose social vision was produced by attentiveness to population and land, production and resources, subsistence and the moral and biological lives of human beings. The ensemble of relations that made up the district, its comparative character and the categories that populated it as an administrative field, formed the material conditions that made it possible to read population as an object conditioned by a definite 'milieu'. Of course, the material conditions for 'something' and its formation are two different processes. In short, what is the evidence that the register produced a biopolitical representation of life?

District–Population–Milieu

I do not want to overstate the role district-space played in structuring a biopolitical representation of life in the HBC. After all, the interests of the HBC were commercial interests. If biopolitics is a project to administer life and to increase the vitality of a population, then much of this falls outside the company's interests. I hope to show below, however, how the district became read as the milieu of population, a site that exercised various forces over those who belonged to the district. As Ray and others have noted, following the merger of the HBC and Northwest Company in 1821, the company was forced to confront the 'exhausted conditions' of beaver stock in its districts.¹⁴ The main solution was to try to

¹⁴ Simpson, *Journal of occurrences in the Athabasca Department by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report*; Ray, "Some Conversation Schemes," 1975; Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*; Bishop, "Cultural and Biological Adaptations to Deprivation: The Northern Ojibwa Case."

encourage indigenous people to hunt new animals such as muskrat, otter, red tail deer, and bear, which required developing an intimate knowledge of the forces that governed the production of these animals in different districts. Ray's discussion of the company's attempts to predict muskrat populations offers some insight.

As he shows, by scrutinizing the district reports from 1822 onward Simpson was able to note that the muskrat population in each district bore a relationship to the rainfall and water levels the district experienced. The reason, Ray notes, is that muskrats are dependent on aquatic plants for most of their diet and higher water levels impact the rate at which these plants grow. Hence, heavy rainfall meant a decrease in the muskrat population while extremely low levels of water increased the prevalence of disease amongst the population. Simpson then used this knowledge gleaned from reports on the district's climate from 1822 and 1823 to predict that the district's returns would not increase until 1826.¹⁵

Simpson also understood that this cycle in the muskrat population was connected to the rise and fall of beaver. By developing a knowledge of the impact of 'climate' on the muskrat population and the number of years of muskrat hunts each district could sustain, Simpson was able to estimate how long it would take each district to replenish its stock of beaver; and, thus, assigned each district a hunting quota in relation to the time it would take each district to be replenished.

Athabasca 5,000	Norway House 20
Saskatchewan 5,500	Island Lake 100
English River, 650	Severn 200
Cumberland 150	Nelson River 400
Swan River 400	York and Churchill, 300 ¹⁶
Winnipeg 50	

¹⁵ Ray, "Some Conservation Schemes", 53.

¹⁶ *Minutes of the Northern Council 1827*, July, 201.

Each district was thus assigned a specific rate based on its internal conditions and forces of renewal. Ray's main point is that these schemes of conservation ultimately failed.¹⁷ However, the more interesting point is the way the district became a comparable site through which the forces governing its discrete animal populations were made visible. Such knowledge was not new. Peter Fidler had attempted to sketch a relation between hares and Lynx in 1820. However, whereas Fidler had proposed a general law, for Simpson, each district would have its own rate at which the beaver population recuperated and policy could be coordinated accordingly.

These attempts to discover the particular conditions of each district were typical of a number of initiatives. For instance, in the year after the starvation at Fort Garry, the London Council recommended the construction of a winter road from York Factory to Fort Garry so supplies could be sent rapidly if another famine occurred in the Red River Colony. Simpson however decided against it, as the road would encourage emigration. Simpson feared that in the event of future famines the inhabitants would scatter in all directions, "dispersing themselves all over the country anywhere possible to obtain subsistence." Not only would the colony be deserted, but also his new scattered population would undermine the trade of the company.¹⁸

Simpson's solution was to introduce a new register—the consumption report:

detailing the expense and cost thereof, and distinguishing under separate heads the consumption p. officers mess, officers families, engaged [servants], engaged families,

¹⁷ Ray, "Some Conservation Schemes", 57.

¹⁸ HBCA, AM, "George Simpson's Report 1826 to the London Council," 3M42, D.4/89.

together with that of the strangers and Indians, besides a general abstract of the Indian population, exhibiting the supposed number of men, women, and children of both sexes; and that all clerks in charge of posts be directed to furnish similar accounts and statements.¹⁹

The following year the report on the Caledonia District included a record of the foodstuffs consumed compared against officers, engaged men, officers families, engaged men's families, strangers, dogs, Indians and voyagers.²⁰ Through this technique subsistence was broken down by different social standards and represented across place through the field of the district. Officers and families consumed double that of engaged men, dogs could be maintained on nothing more than 234 pieces of dried salmon.

Thus, knowledge of the rates of consumption could be developed for each district. While the consumption report was intended as a cost-saving scheme that would cut extravagant rates of consumption, looking at subsistence at the scale of the district also produced a comparative form of knowledge that placed the metabolic demands of men, women and children in a specific locality, and, in turn, gave them form as living beings. By drawing on the registers of each district connections amongst things were developed and traced out as conditioning relations or points of 'imbrication' between different phenomena. Topography, climate, food sources and living beings came together visible as the conditions of life itself. Life was regionalized.

This use of districts to sketch conditioning lines between the different categories of the district register is visible in how chief factors analyzed the condition or habits of the indigenous populations 'belonging' to their districts. For

¹⁹ HBCC, LAC, "Minutes of the Northern Department 1826, July, resolution 157," 1M814/B239/K/1.

²⁰ HBCC, LAC, "New Caledonia Report on District 1827-1828," 1M776/B/5/e/1.

instance, in his 1823–1824 Lake Seul District Report, Chief Factor John Davies entered a number of considerations that had an impact on the productivity and subsistence of the indigenous population of his district. Information on the level of snowfall, the number of moose and deer and the uneven distribution of population revealed the regularity of seasons of scarcity within certain districts. Although Davies noted that the effects of scarcity would be limited “were the indians of industrious and provident habits”, his solution was to “improve the conditions of district” by getting ‘the Indians’ to cultivate the soil and “dwell more at one place” all of which “would benefit the trade.” His report thus linked together conditions to account for life and productivity.²¹

The 1825 District Report by William McRae provides a similar record. The report noted that the district was suffering from “yearly diminishing beaver and other game” and indicated the decline can be noted in the annual returns of the district enclosed. The cause was that “the Indians are too much crowded” and “possess too small a portion of land to allow it alternate returns.”²² This forced McRae and the indigenous people in his district to subsist chiefly on hares, but by March this supply had been exhausted.

In the 1826–1827 Report, McRae noted that the district suffered “universal scarcity of provisions” chiefly “hares.” Because the hunters of the district were entirely engaged in self-preservation, the districts returns were on average lower by a third.²³ McRae questioned the viability of the district in his report.²⁴ The following

²¹ HBCC, LAC, “Lake Seul District Report, John Davies, 1823–1824,” 1M779/B107/e/1.

²² HBCC, LAC, “Kanaquimsie River District Report, McRae, 1824–1825,” 1M778/B70/e/4.

²³ HBCC, LAC, “Kanaquimsie River District Report, McRae, 1826–1827,” 1M778/b/70/e/5.

year the conditions were little changed. McRae noted, “the return of beaver is less than of last year” and the stock of animals in cat and rat has undergone “little variation” and thus, was still poor. Moreover, he noted that while in the past he had commented on the “difficulty of procuring subsistence” this year had seen this “distress still further aggrieved” and there was an incident of cannibalism in the district.²⁵

The report took these economic and ecological conditions into consideration and then turned to a discussion of how these conditions related to the population the economy of the district needed to support. McRae remarked, “it is seen by the return of the population how numerous the Indians are who contribute to make up the few packs collected here” and, consequently “the small portion [of furs] furnished by each hunter.”²⁶ In his district report McRae provided a population return where he underlined that there were currently 25 hunters in the district and a total indigenous population of 190.²⁷ He concluded that the expense of transporting trade goods to the district was not worth the cost. The ecological decline of the district and the limited economic productivity of the population made it a poor asset. Consequently, Flying Post District appears to have been closed and moved elsewhere by 1830.

McRae’s report is yet another example of how categories of the district report brought together a number of forces as the local conditions of administration.

²⁴ MacRae remarked, that with the limited grass left in the district and with “substitutes growing scarce” “the time [was] not far distant when the cattle must eventually perish” HBCC, LAC, “Kanaquimsie River District Report, McRae, 1826–1827,” 1M778/B/70/e/5.

²⁵ HBCC, LAC, “Kanaquimsie River District Report, McRae, 1828,” 1M778/B70/E/6.

²⁶ HBCC, LAC, “Kanaquimsie River District Report, McRae, 1828,” 1M778/B70/E/6.

²⁷ HBCC, LAC, “Kanaquimsie River District Report, McRae, 1828,” 1M778/B70/E/6.

Knowledge of population, geography, subsistence, ecology expressed in the “variation of species”, and economy was brought together as the regionalized relations of life to place.²⁸ We can glimpse of this regionalized relation of life to place in other reports. The Lac La Pluie Report for 1828, for instance, measured the extent of the district’s country, its topography, the growing seasons and yields of its wild rice, and the poor quality of its soil. These general features preface the district report for Lac La Pluie in 1830 and were referenced in relation to the population abstract for the district, which totaled 563 indigenous people. The chief factor concluded that the size of the population in relation to the terrain and means of subsistence of the district “leaves the Indian in a deplorably helpless state.”²⁹

These reports, of course, do not contain a representation of human life as an object shot through with internal statistical regularities. None of the HBC reports I have read provided an account of the rates of mortality and procreation or a statistical account of the number in any district likely to starve. Nonetheless, the district report provided a nascent formation of biopolitical knowledge. Indeed, the district report allowed a set of specific conditions to be outlined, such as the limits of the district in relation to the population. District-inspection grouped these categories together in way that made them visible year after year, and thus enabled comparison within the district and between it and others.

As such, it became possible to draw up a set of relations between resources

²⁸ McRae didn’t like the district to which he was assigned. He was adamant from the outset that the district had little to recommend it. It was probably much to his chagrin that he was stationed there for six years. The development of the census may have been something he relished as it gave him the opportunity to demonstrate in number the imbalance between hunters and the population.

²⁹ HBCC, LAC, “Lac La Pluie Report, D. Cameron, 1829-1830,” 1M778/B.105/e/9.

and human beings that rendered life into an object conditioned by biological forces. Scarcity was no longer the general threat outlined by Malthus but was grounded in the district and subject to the specific relations in place. Hence, if biopolitics was a form of power structured by drawing up relations between resources, subsistence and human life, then the district both accumulated these forms of knowledge and produced a form of documentation that sought the links amongst these branches of knowledge. Each district was made visible in terms of the local conditions to which it was subject, and thus had its own internal economy of relations.

Alex Kenney commented on the arrangement of his district in 1827:

The country [indigenous people] have to roam through is very extensive but extremely poor as there are no large animals of any kinds to be found in it they live chiefly on partridges and rabbits during the winter supplies of gin and salt geese from the factory reasonably. The country near the sea coast is not unproductive of small fur animals such as martins, foxes and otters and it is in my opinion to supply the natives occasionally with food at the factory as it is only by these means they are able to pay their debts and exist through the winter in a country where even the most industrious Indians are often forced to their skins [eat their clothes].³⁰

Thus, the conditions determining the trade and subsistence were revealed in each locality and policy could be coordinated accordingly. Some districts had faster rates at which buildings decayed, particular rates of renewal, specific conditions of scarcity and different trade seasons. Thus, the district was gradually populated as a form of milieu, the environment of both the economic subject of the hunter and the biological object of population. In short, if the company developed a hold over the environment to such a degree that it tried to calibrate conservation policies in relation to each district, these policies occurred simultaneously with a form of knowledge that used the delimited space of the district to link life to a discrete environment. Indigenous people not only “belonged to the district” they were made

³⁰ HBCC, LAC, “Albany District Report, 1826–1827,” 1M776/B/3/E/13.

to belong to the milieu the district held together in its registers.

It is worth reiterating what it is about the district that makes it integral to these forms of knowledge and practices of rule. The district was used to delimit things. It produced an artificial spatial field that was imagined as distinct from those around it. Through the district it became possible to focus on a given number of things, defined boundaries, specific terrain, a set number of species of animals and a “stable” number of human beings. Moreover, as a field of inspection it became possible to overlay the objects gathered up through the categories of the district. In localizing a set of conditions it became possible to view each district as a container of these conditions and, thus, subject to variable forces. As I will demonstrate in Part III, once put in service of the state, district-space stabilized a far more thorough knowledge of how the conditions present in any district impacted the life of its population. We shall see that these two characteristics were exaggerated in England by the scale at which district space was mobilized.

Finally, in terms of troubling the analysis of police and biopolitics presented by Foucault, here is a history of biopolitical knowledge that has little to do with police science or any attempts to secure the splendor and wealth of the state.³¹ Rather, it is a history of biopolitics grounded in the context of managing the fur trade over an extensive terrain. The district-register reveals that biopolitics emerged from a spatial-register that formed slowly and was made first in the materiality of ‘the report’ rather than, say, a political rationality of state rule.

The district thus allows us to see the contingency of biopolitical knowledge and, for the HBC at least, its initial isolation from state rule and overarching grand

³¹ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 327.

political rationalities or arts of government. In this study, then, biopolitics were found in an attempt to bring people, land, and things together in a permanent form of 'comparative place'. This point is crucial because it is when biopolitics is read as a form of knowledge produced by the coordination of a form of space with practices of registration, it ceases to be a supernatural form of political rule and instead is made 'mortal' with contingencies and failures—features of political rule that Foucault elegantly foregrounded in his earlier work. The census of population and identities of indigenous hunters were never stable, to say nothing of whether or not any district report ever revealed the true conditions of available subsistence. People moved between districts and they doubled up on debt.³² In other words, the practice of documenting people, land, and things at the scale of the district was never fully capable of stabilizing the identity of its economic subjects. Thus, here is a history of biopolitics grounded in material processes and happenstance—relations that are often overlooked when the concept is used elsewhere—and certainly are not given sufficient attention when the history is read through vague rationalities of 'police'.

The Colonial District

I have argued that the district should be understood as an historical technique that reworked the 'right of seizure', the initial right through which the HBC inherited its domain. This process of reworking the 'right of seizure' cannot be given a singular line of historical formation, nor was this process something pursued consciously by the HBC administration. Rather, the district was introduced by the

³²For instance, it was common for Chipewyan and Inuit people to exchange their furs with each other and then submit them to their respective districts to circumvent conservation strategies. In either case the actual number of available furs in each district was skewed. See Daschuk, James, 2013, *Clearing the Plains*, 64; Katherine Reedy-Maschner and Herbert Maschner, "Marauding Middlemen: Western Expansion and Violent Conflict in the Subarctic" in *Ethnohistory* vol. 46 (1999): 712.

HBC as part of a cost-saving initiative. Breaking the trade down into districts allowed for profitability to be compared and for the costs of administration to be rationalized. In the bid for more thorough information over what was ruled, and, in turn, economic and social rationalization of people, land, and things, the district displaced the fort as the scale upon which the company's operations were conceptualized. This shift involved the redeployment of the 'fort' from a site geared solely for accumulation via exchange into a site that was implicated in the inspection of a broader social field.

One of the consequences of this new scale of administration was that chief factors could document the seasonal exertions, migrations and use of debt of the indigenous hunters of their districts. As a form of measurement and spatial partition, ruling through districts produced a new form of subject. The 'Linnaean human', the orders of race, and the knowledge of people in abstract general forms had corresponded to a distinct technique of recording and registering detail. In the earlier HBC records, the naturalist's journal formed a subject that corresponded to, and reinforced, the economic relations of the right of seizure. The attempt to standardize district reports and develop a detailed, permanent knowledge of people, land, and things, created the conditions of possibility for the company to move past general typologies and produce an individualized subject.

This was achieved through the compartmentalization that resulted from ruling through a system of districts. The bounded grid the district represented was meant to ensure that the return of furs reflected the 'real' abundance or scarcity of the hunting grounds in each district. If the district's hold over its resources was put in jeopardy then its 'real rate' of profitability could not be known. By documenting

hunters, furs, debt and dependents as objects localized in one specific district, discrete from other economies and forces, both the measure of profitability, and the productivity of individual hunters were guaranteed as 'true' reflections of actual conditions. In turn, the hunter was made to belong to the district and trade exclusively with its posts and, thus, his productivity reflected the real decline or increase of outstanding debt thought to belong to the district. And, thus, the hunter existed as subject because human beings were confined to the limited administrative field of the district.

It is by holding these fields together that it became possible to determine the economic viability of the district and thus whether it should be moved or closed; but also, it was within this same system of spatial codification that the district's register was given the capacity to move past the general account of life and the discourses of races of men. In moving past this generalization, the district served as the basis for a field of view capable of individualizing life, drawing lines between the industrious and the indolent, the credit worthy and the so-called "bad Indian." The hunter's economic subjectivity was belied by a distinct spatial economy that maintained the certainty of the assessments made by each chief factor.

The making of semi-capitalist social forms in the HBC's colonial regime was thus tied to a distinct mode of codifying space. This codification was necessary both in making processes of capitalist production, profitability and the objectification of labour visible, and also in stabilizing the discursive subject that had formed in correspondence to these relations. Thus, it is not just the case that forms of space are made to receive certain subjects after the fact or that power acting on subjects over and over again 'naturally' produces space as the environment of these

interventions. Subject formation is vested in the matrix of space and time made 'common' to the social formations of different historical periods.

As I will argue in Part III, in the 19th century the district formed the predominant matrix of time and space for social relations. The subsequent chapters examine the district in service of the English state. Examining the district as a technique of state is important in revealing both the continuities that accompanied the districting of space and also in pointing to how the use of districts to produce fields of administration for various state agencies brought the district to bear on domains of rule that were not within the purview of the HBC. I will demonstrate though that many of projects that were made possible by ruling at the scale of the district—the isolation of life to a distinct set of conditions, attempts to stabilize identification and control the mobility of human beings—were reproduced, albeit on a greater scale, when the district was picked up as a technique of state.

Part III

Chapter 7

Theorizing the District in Service of State

It is difficult to study the processes through which the district came to service the state. In part, the challenge stems from how heavily the district was utilized as a technique of rule, and that it was an organizational register of knowledge. As a technique, the district is blurred by its double existence as a way of designating people, land, and things as fields of management subject to practices of inspection and administration, and as a mode of revealing internal conditions, circulations, and phenomena that increasingly subsume the biota in the social. In this chapter, I will theorize the effects of the district in relation to the following areas: Bureaucracy and Spatial Measure, Milieu-Population, and State Formation as Cultural Revolution.

Bureaucracy and Spatial Measure

The centralization of knowledge has long been understood as integral to the formation of the bureaucratic structuration of the modern state form. It involves legitimizing facts, making them durable, and storing them. This is the process of the rise of rule by bureaucracy and the formation of offices in service of the state. As Weber argues:

The management of the modern office is based upon written documents (the files), which are preserved in their original or draught form. There is, therefore, a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts. The body of officials actively engaged in a

public office along with the respective apparatus of material implements and the files make up a bureau.¹

The last remark about the apparatus of material implements is noteworthy. What stands behind the file materially? The file is an instrument of rule that is precise, fast, permanent, and unequivocal in its “truth.”² The file may be mobilized to gain some insight into the state of affairs, yet the power of the file rests in the predictable, continuous accumulation of its objects. This much is stated in the naming: a single file is a document, while a bureau is a collection. Much of the power that can be exercised with files rests in a form of political rule, and therefore in knowledge that is comparative in nature. To be calculative (as calculation relies on the file but the file does not automatically engender calculative projects) and predictive, the file requires that the “fixed official jurisdictional areas” of the office correspond to a definite spatial order.³ A file requires a clear set of limits. Like any form of classification, the file does not deny the existence of relations and processes that stand outside it; rather, it presupposes these occurrences and works to guard against them in order to keep its categories stable and clear.

Yet the file as fact is also subject to certain conditions of truth. Indeed, and this forms the condition of the mid-19th-century centralization of knowledge: to be responsible, effective, and economically prudent, government must be based on the “facts of the matter.” From Bentham to Chadwick, there is a moral revolution on the basis of the fact and the origins of knowledge of government. As Bentham laments, too often the notions of justice, morality, and ethics formed the knowledge of how to

¹ Max Weber, “Bureaucracy” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* ed. Gerth and Mills (New York: Oxford University press, 1946), 197.

² Weber, “Bureaucracy,” 214.

³ Weber, “Bureaucracy,” 196.

conduct policy. Chadwick reiterates this sentiment when he claims that he had never known any investigation,

Which did not revere every main principle and almost every assumed chief elementary fact on which the general public, Parliamentary committees, politicians of high position, and often the commissioners themselves were prepared to base legislation.⁴

In short, the fact and the file were connected historically. The relation between the fact and the file extends the link of the centralization of knowledge to the other process on which the modern file depended: inspection. Corrigan and Sayer note that there was a parallel between “the centralization of certain facts” and “definite forms of inquiry and regular report[ing] that form[ed] the basis of facts and knowledge [centralization].”⁵ The centralization of knowledge in bureaucratic offices was a process that hinged on the mobilization of inspection, the capacity to inquire into a whole range of phenomena (such as population, convicts, mining communities, mines, railways, paupers, sewage, and illness), and to develop these areas into files that informed policy.⁶

Where did the district fit into this process? A number of new domains and objects of rule were made visible with the centralization of knowledge as file. It was possible to compare population growth, monitor trade, measure poverty, and track morbidity. These projects did not depend merely on proper systems of registration or better and more routine censuses and inspections. While these are necessary, they are insufficient. It is essential that there are stable fields of administration that

⁴ Edwin Chadwick, “Results of different principles of legislation and administration in Europe; of competition for the field, as compared with competition within the field, of service” *Journal of Statistical Society* vol. 22 (1859): 127.

⁵ See Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 125.

⁶ For a truncated discussion of inspection and centralization of knowledge see Curtis, “Representation and State Formation in the Canadas, 1790-1850”, 59–87.

produce the “place” of the file.⁷ A file on population, for instance, relies on some form of partition. While national populations end at borders, internal registers, accounts of mortality, unemployment, wealth, and criminality depend on internal demarcation for their legibility. The file, when it pertains to disaggregated objects, lasts only as long as the demarcation that makes up this disaggregation holds. Once objects that have been kept separate merge in the gaze of the clerk and the administrator, the previous records lose their purchase on the present. The modern file, therefore, presupposes a distinct form of spatial codification.

In mid-19th century England, this form of codification was the district and its registrars and inspectorates. The development of the bureau was contingent on material techniques of demarcating and partitioning people, land, and things into contained fields of administration. As Eric Evans states, “administration to be effective must be dynamic not static”, and, therefore, to capture conditions as dynamic relations required a “permanent, self-contained bureaucracy for each field of activity.”⁸ While Evans is perhaps correct to state that mid-19th-century bureaucracy was increasingly pressed to rule within a realist horizon, I argue the directionality of relations is less straightforward.

The formation of fields of activity paired with bureaucratic registers created the conditions of the file, from which dynamism and internal forces arose. Indeed,

⁷ We may understand the district to form part of the provenance of the colossal accumulation of data that emerged over the 19th century. Hence, the district is but yet another hole in the apparent objectivity of archival data. Land was partitioned, sight was modeled, and an entire conduct of documentation was produced to create the neat distinctions that now aid the archival researcher. For more on data provenance and the reflexivity of knowledge production see Bruce Curtis, “Data provenance, metadata, and reflexivity: Comments on method” *Encounters in Education* vol. 15 (2014): 43–61.

⁸ Eric Evans, *The forging of the modern state: early industrial Britain, 1738-1870* (London, New York: Longman, 1996): 303.

the rise of printed numbers in England from 1820 onwards was premised on the establishment of the “where” of the file.⁹ The avalanche of printed numbers and the relatively quick development of bureaucratic machinery were precipitated by a whole host of divisions and grid-works imposed over grid-works that grew from the registration district of 1838. The district and district registers proliferated from this point onward. In 1839, the British House of Commons passed an act to establish district prisons, which was followed in 1844 by an act to establish mining districts and an act to establish admiralty districts. There was a score of other similar acts: an Act to establish District Asylums was drafted in 1845 and extended to Scotland in 1852; an 1851 Act to use districts to calibrate Poor Law charges was defeated; and, in 1862, an act to establish highway districts was introduced.¹⁰ As Corrigan and Sayer observe, it was during this period that state inspectors spread like contagion; there were factory inspectors in 1833, inspectors of prisons in 1835, inspectors of schools in 1839, inspectors of mining populations in 1842, and of the mines themselves in 1850.¹¹

If it is therefore the case that the modern form of state, as a centralized apparatus, was codified in the “reports, investigations, commissions, and the compilation, storage and publication of statistical data on finance, trade, health,

⁹ Hacking, “Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers.”

¹⁰ “A good system of prison discipline” was carried into effect and “at the least cost” was to be ensured through a system of prison districts that would establish one large prison per a district.” See (52) *District Prisons. A bill to encourage the establishment of district prisons*, February 25, 1839, *Parliamentary Papers Online*, 1–22. Justices of the peace were given a clear jurisdictional field and criminality was also given a place: crime was reported and prosecuted by district, the costs therein localized. Mining districts were introduced “to produce a systematic registration of all mines and mining activity in England and Wales” and as a mean to prevent the loss of life and “limit the fruitless expenditure of labour and capital.” See *Mines Registration. “A bill for establishing district registers of all mines and mining operations in England and Wales,” Parliamentary Papers Online*, 1–34.

¹¹ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 125.

demography, crime, education, highways and transport, agriculture and industry,”¹² these documents were stabilized by the spatial measure of the district. Mid-19th-century state formation was characterized by a revolution in the centralization of knowledge and rule of facts. This was because the district stabilized the cycle of inspection–centralization–intervention that made up the revolution. I propose that it is possible to extend this theorization in order to cover the making of bureaucracy and local conditions.

The making of local conditions was intimately connected to this process of the centralization of knowledge. E.P. Hennock suggests that part of this process entailed a shift from ruling local places through regionalized standards and—with the formation of representative centralized state agencies—the construction of rule through “centrally” determined minimum standards.¹³ As Curtis contends, however, the shift from ruling through locally determined standards and centrally determined forms demanded a revolution in the representation and production of knowledge about local conditions.¹⁴

In an examination of British North America, Curtis argues that the rise of a centralized state form replaced earlier forms of government where rule was carried out by large, land owning proprietors with intimate knowledge of their localities.¹⁵ Rule was stabilized through the connected lines running between the labour

¹² Bernard Cohn and Nicholas Dirk, “Beyond the Fringe: Nation-State, Colonialism and the Technologies of Power” *The Journal of Historical Sociology* vol. 1 no. 2(1988): 25.

¹³ EP Hennock, “Central/local government relations in England: an outline 1800–1950”, *Urban History* vol. 9 (1982): 40.

¹⁴ Bruce Curtis, “Official Documentary Systems and Colonial Government: From Imperial Sovereignty to Colonial Autonomy in the Canadas, 1841-1867 in *the Journal Historical Sociology* vol. 10 issue 4 (1997): 389–417.

¹⁵ Curtis, “Official Documentary Systems and Colonial Government,” 390.

indentured in estates and parish relations. In contrast, centralized government, with bureaucratic apparatuses of knowledge creation and control, demanded awareness of “all localities in a standardized form.”¹⁶ The making of local conditions represented as the branches of a centralized bureau, then, required “infrastructural work: definitions of time, of space and territory, weights and measures.”¹⁷

The district was a core project of measure and control that shaped this infrastructural process of state rule. In particular, the representation of people, land, and things as stable objects of administration that were reliably inspected and recorded as knowledge of state, required that place was also visible in some form. The locality of rule was reimagined as distinct from the processes and phenomena that circulated in adjacent localities. The displacement of local standards and the standardization of local conditions of rule by external rules and codes were both required. The process of gathering knowledge and transmitting projects and directives required the remaking of people, land, and things as local conditions. It was not merely a case of reworking the parish-estate as a local site of administration; the centralized state form required reimagining place and people together as discrete, stable, and fully visible “fields of management,” which became the new spatial order of the centralized state form of the locality.¹⁸

¹⁶ Curtis, “Official Documentary Systems and Colonial Government,” 390.

¹⁷ Curtis, “Official Documentary Systems and Colonial Government,” 390; Cohn and Dirk, “Beyond the Fringe.”

¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales* (London: Clowes and Sons Stanford Street, 1835).

State Formation as Cultural Revolution

What does it mean to reflect on the district in relation to state as a “cultural revolution” as argued by Corrigan, Sayer and Curtis?¹⁹ The Cultural Revolution(s) analysis reveals three dimensions of state. First, transformations in forms of state are linked to new practices of representation (i. e., what is represented, who has the authority to represent it, and the material forms in which it is codified). As Corrigan and Sayer write,

How things are (allowed to be) is not simply a matter of ideological assertion (and consensus is never ideational); it is concretized in laws, judicial decisions (and their compilation as case law) registers, census returns, licenses, charters, tax forms, and all the other myriad ways in which the state states and individualities are regulated...This is how we are collectively (mis)represented—not abstractly, not ideally, but in the very forms in which rituals and routines of state operate.²⁰

If one of the core relations of state is the control over representation, then representation needs to be understood as subject to cultural revolution in terms of both how things are represented and the material rituals that inscribe representation in the legitimacy of state forms. Second, the cultural dimensions of state formation extend to the values we are made to internalize. This involves conduct and speech, what is considered worthy of notice, and the internal moral standards we are summoned to assess our character and with which we construct our identities.²¹ Last, understanding state formation as a cultural revolution means seeing the state itself as an ongoing project. State formation involves a constant process of adjustment, extension, and incorporation of new practices that are made

¹⁹ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*; Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?: Inspection, Education and State Formation in Canada West*; Curtis, Bruce. “Mapping the Social: Jacob Keefer’s Educational Tour, 1845.” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1993).

²⁰ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 197.

²¹ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 198.

first materially and culturally in social agency. In short, state formation “works within us,” not above us.²²

At first glance, a study of districts appears far from these cultural and moral dimensions of state formation. However, the gulf between the district and the cultural-material “state revolution” shrinks when the district is framed as a technology of representing state. This thesis can be developed in several ways. Foremost, the making of districts became a technique to recast people, land, and things as distinct, internally bounded localities of administration. The district formed a technology through which the internal order of state was fabricated out of people, land, and things previously thought to be unrelated. In addition, the district, as a technique of representation, was pivotal in the moral construction of representative authority. Districts formed the local conditions or the “state of things” over which state officials presided. At the same time, the use of districts to isolate certain objects of political rule (mining districts, pauper districts, registration districts) constrained the narrative of the official.

The elements that constituted “a district” and the “features” of the district that were made into forms of knowledge for communication amongst officials were processes of moral formation that span professionalization, normalized lines of sight, and the production of distinct forms knowledge deemed to be of “state.” Districts and the formation of district registers became part of a process of economizing narratives or reports of rule. Earlier commissions drew on the residents, ministers, local gentry, and “enlightened men” to construct an account of the conditions under inspection. The district mobilized singular accounts of place,

²² Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 200.

and increasingly replaced narrative with statistical representations. This formation in service of the state draws a stark contrast to how knowledge over people, land, and things was conveyed in the registers of observation. Last, districted space was another site in which individuals were represented as abstract liberal subjects. Transforming people, classes, and sexes into the abstract data of population was a chief function of district registers. In the process, life was not only, in Weberian terms, “rationalized,” but the bourgeois conception of abstract life “independent of social status and material circumstance” was reinforced and given representation in the biological life of population.²³

Population–Milieu

At the start of *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault introduced the concept of the milieu as a “notion, a pragmatic structure,” as a form of imagined space where natural and artificial givens exercised a relation over life. The milieu marked an important juncture in sovereignty, where the sovereign was “no longer someone who [exercised] his power over a territory on the basis of geographical localization.”²⁴ Sovereignty instead became a form of power that dealt with nature, “the perpetual intrication of a geographical, climatic, and physical milieu with the human species.”²⁵ For Foucault, the milieu appeared to drop out of history. Its significance was that it provided a space where the project of security first emerged; in this sense, sovereign power discovered a political technique that would later form

²³ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 187; Marx, *Grundrisse*, 157.

²⁴ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 23.

²⁵ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 23.

the biopolitical relations of rule, which Foucault argued eventually surpassed the framework of sovereign rule.²⁶

Few other scholars have taken up the concept of milieu. Terranova focuses on the milieu as a discursive construction of liberalism that generates the market by producing subjects that are conceptualized as the embodiments of nature/life.²⁷ Milieu is thus seen as an ordering tool used by political economists to structure the relation between life and the (neo)liberal market.²⁸ Much like Foucault, however, Terranova treats the milieu as nothing more than a heuristic device through which to read the thinking and ideas of certain people (e.g., officials and theorists). This is unfortunate because, I argue, Foucault's discussion of the milieu raises some important points. If population became an object of rule governed through its relation to place and the conditioning of people and biota, then it follows that population was connected to, and supported by, particular techniques of representing and measuring place. Population too must be imagined within a certain temporal-spatial continuum. The district functioned as a physical container, a register that melded topography and population. Unlike the milieu (which seems to operate in Foucault's account as unitary grid-work through which the effects of place on life are revealed), the district had the power to accent the many vicissitudes of population, economy, crime, and vital statistics.

Moreover, Foucault provides an interesting observation, namely that sovereign power played a role in the measures and arrangements that made

²⁶ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 23.

²⁷ Tiziana Terranova, "Another Life, The Nature of Political Economy in Foucault's Genealogy of Biopolitics" in *Theory, Culture and Society* vol. 29 no. 6 (2009): 240–241.

²⁸ Terranova, "Another Life," 240.

population visible. While never really taken up in *Security, Territory, Population*, this idea opens up the possibility of reconsidering population and districts as formations bound up with sovereign power. In developing this point, I build on the scholarship that posits the need for a more robust relationship between sovereign power and the formation of population.²⁹ My argument is that the practice of the census, in addition to requiring sovereign classifications and processes of social leveling, relied on techniques of measure and division that ostensibly appear quite peripheral to people counting. By shifting focus from the heuristic concept of the milieu to “districting,” it is then possible to reveal how population emerged in the 19th century as a statistical object traversed by the laws of large numbers.

The registration district must be viewed as both a field of administration through which census was conducted and as a technique used to calibrate census. In particular, the district formed a statistical artifice that broke down the aggregate produced by census into populations with internal rates and dynamic forces shaped by their particular local conditions. The district structured life in such a way that comparative numbering assigned population a range of internal forces.³⁰ Moreover, as a system of administration, the district formed a direct tie between state agencies

²⁹ See Philip Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology 1834–1914; an essay with selected papers* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968); Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics and the Census of Canada 1840–1875* (Toronto: Toronto University press, 2001); Hacking, “Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers”; Edward Higgs, *Life, Death and Statistics: Civil Registration, Censuses and the work of the General Register Office, 1836–1952* (Hatfield, Hertfordshire: Halstan & Co. Ltd. Szeleter, 2004); Lawrence Goldman, “Statistics and the Science of Society in Early Victoria Britain: An Intellectual Context for the General Register Office” in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 4 issue 3(1991): 415–434.

³⁰ I am treading carefully around the idea of ‘statistics’. Although the district appears to have been connected to statistics as a ‘science of the state’, I remain ambivalent about drawing lines to statistics as it appears today as a modern enterprise of objectification and abstraction. My hesitation stems from the technical computing practices that accompanied districting. I have opted instead for the term ‘comparative numbering’.

and population. Finally, the district was the basis for the opening of multiple domains of rule, and, in this sense, it deployed population as object of state rule in multiple sites. The district, therefore, stabilized the government of population as an art of rule distinct from sovereign power. Given these qualities, the registration district fits into the process of state formation as a technique of measure that linked together a number of processes, namely inspection, bureaucratization, a cultural revolution of state, and the rule of population.

The district can be understood as a technique that emerged in a context similar to, but distinct from, that of the HBC trading districts. In particular, the district was analogous to the Poor Law union (i. e., the system of combining parishes for Poor Law administration), which eventually overtook the union in England as a way of measure and arrangement. To this end, the union (and later the district) first emerged in England to generalize management in a new form.

Part of this new way of management limited pauper migration from union to union. Thus, there was an attempt to police migration to differentiate between migration that abided by the demands of market relations and migration that threatened to destabilize wage-relations. The union (and later the district) monitored these two processes and made these flows visible. It provided a “field of management” through which the Poor Law could be generalized and made systematic in operation. The production of uniform grid-works of administration that were greatly extended from the field of the parish was part of a push to develop objective criteria of relief. Finally, the union created a relation central to liberal government: rationalized, predictable “accounting.” Separate jurisdictional spaces of administration were necessary in the production of economic-accounting. The

district, therefore, emerged as part of a strategy to stabilize capital and produce more systematic accounts. Through a discussion of Jeremy Bentham's plan for the New Poor Law, the next chapter will address the processes through which the district was put in service of the state.

Chapter 8

The Rise of the District in Bentham's Inspection-House Principle

In this chapter I examine the role district inspection played in Jeremy Bentham's proposals for a new Poor Law system. Bentham's writings draw attention to districts as intended ways to construct relations of inspection and surveillance across a spatial order that was systematically uniform, networked, and comparable. As such, Bentham's writings highlight the social character of district space and help to identify the generalization of district space as a mid-19th-century technique used by state projects in England, such as the registration district and Edwin Chadwick's plan for a system of constabulary districts (which I will discuss in chapters 9 and 10, respectively). Bentham's system of districts was replaced by the Poor Law union: a combination of parishes that often privileged the power of local landowners at the expense of the centralized political rule Bentham had advocated. In the nearly districted spatial order of the Poor Law, however, these initial themes of rule—objective rule and the calibration of capitalist social relations—were continued and intensified as the district became the predominant form of spatial order in mid-19th-century English society.

I develop this argument by analyzing Bentham's writings on the district as an administrative technique that could have potentially organized the new Poor Law system. I then will review how the implementation of the Poor Law displaced the district with the union as a field of administration. Although this shift departed from Bentham's plan, the union provided the scaffolding for the emergence of the

registration district in 1838. I conclude this chapter with an analysis of the spatial order codified by the union as a “field of management.”

Districts Imagined

Much of Bentham’s attention on the Poor Laws involved defending a large-scale establishment of the Poor Law administration over the then dominant small-scale parish-based administration. Bentham’s thoughts on the current system of relief were far from sanguine:

Looking at the existing parochial divisions, at this and that other parish, begotten by chance in the night of darkest antiquity, I see them as an aggregate of heterogeneous fragments, essentially incapable of entering any consistent elements into the composition of any tolerable regular or convenient system.¹

The parish system was fragmented. The lines of jurisdiction were essentially arbitrary and the system as a whole was not coordinated with any consistency towards a calculated end. For Bentham, what the administration of the poor required were planned divisions in a system of administration that was regular and uniform in its effects. Bentham contrasted the parochial, arbitrary parish establishment to the large-scale establishment. Much of his intellectual energy was devoted to proving that a large establishment would be more efficient, subject to better government, and cheaper than the parish establishments. Bentham couched his argument in terms of cost as he considered which system would be the most frugal for managing the permanent problem of indigence.

For Bentham, a more cost-efficient system was to be achieved through the introduction of an “engine of management not yet displayed to public view, the

¹ Jeremy Bentham cited in Driver, Felix, 1993, *Power and Pauperism The Workhouse System, 1834–1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 37.

inspection-house principle.”² Such a large establishment system brings an “assemblage of persons and things...[previously] too vast for comprehension [into] the most perfect and accurate comprehension...all embracing, steady and uniform comprehension which lies spread out, in every minutest part of it spread out at the same-time.”³ In other words, how was inspection of everywhere and everything achieved? As I will show, it was both a question of architecture and, like the HBC districts, a process of codifying spatial order to “generalize inspection.”

Inspection is derived “from a regular system of industry houses, spread over the face of the country with a tolerable regularity, in form a piece of net-work, none of them separated by too great a distance.”⁴ This network was not to be confused with a chain (which is a linear function from post to post), as it was to operate through multiple lines of communication that ran from industry house to industry house, the distance between each calibrated to regularize and economize the exchange of information.⁵ It was at the interface of regularity and distance that the district formed an integral apparatus for the generalization of inspection.

Bentham carefully outlined the spatial organization for his industry houses. He proposed that each district were to be equal in size and population. The 15,000 parishes were to be governed through 200 industry houses.⁶ Assuming no extra population, these 200 Industry houses were to cover all of England and Wales with

² Jeremy Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses” in *Collective Works of Jeremy Bentham: Writing on the Poor Laws vol. 1* ed. Michael Quinn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1796]): 204.

³ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses,” 204.

⁴ Jeremy Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared” in *Collective Works of Jeremy Bentham: Writing on the Poor Laws vol. 1* ed. Michael Quinn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1797]): 66.

⁵ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 66.

⁶ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 105.

“4 to a county.” Each district was designed to be “exactly square and all of them equal” in size.⁷ Once executed, the arrangement would have divided England and Wales into perfect squares that were 15 miles in length for a total area of 225 square miles.⁸ This measure, Bentham claimed, would even ensure that the shoreline formed the boundary of maritime districts. The old “parochial lines of jurisdiction founded in the darkest night of antiquity” was to be replaced by 200 identical districts that were each governed by a single industry house.

Bentham went on to describe how this system of spatial division would distribute the activity of inspection and record making. If the 15,000 parishes were broken down and made governable by 200 Industry houses, this presented a ratio of 75 parishes or parish-like places to each industry house. Bentham proposed that the industry house be built as near the center of the district, as “circumstances will admit.”⁹ This way no parish would be more than 7.5 miles away and, thus, the distance from the industry house of one district was no more than fifteen miles from its neighbour. In part, these measures were to ensure that the entire pauper population was, at any time, “removable to the industry house.”¹⁰

The regulation of the distance from the industry house to any of the satellite parishes also ensured that inspectors and other staff could travel “on foot...in the course of the shortest days from the extremities of the corresponding district to the seat of the establishment.”¹¹ This was deemed invaluable to facilitate the planned inspectorate’s routine visits to industry houses in a timely manner. Moreover, by

⁷ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 105–106.

⁸ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 106.

⁹ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 145.

¹⁰ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 145.

¹¹ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 145.

placing the industry house in the center of a square district, it was possible to have assigned staff to concentric rings of responsibility. If each industry house was made responsible for 80 parishes, and since the industry house was positioned to render the ten parishes nearest it circumjacent, it allowed them to be supervised by the staff of the industry house in their “surplus time.” Outside this first ring of administration, seven sub-districts, each which contained ten parishes, were to be managed by individual staff and kept within range of the supervision of the central industry house. The interior of the district was to be arranged in concentric bands oriented around the house of industry. The industry house governor, envisioned as in charge of the entire district, was placed at the center of the district, his authority and superintendence dispersed outward through the entire district and mediated through the concentric organization of the seven sub-districts. Through this arrangement,

the minutest phenomena might be noticed almost without trouble, in regard to the tract of country immediately visible from the house: and general notices might be collected in more or less abundance and with more or less accuracy, from the whole of the district to which the house belonged.¹²

This management of the flow of the minutest phenomena from the district to the industry house was intended to ensure the regular, uniform comprehension of the assemblages of people and things that Bentham proposed to put under constant government. Furthermore, each industry house was attached to a central office in the Metropolis and was to receive weekly reports from industry houses on a number of topics (such as pecuniary transactions, political inferences on management and medical registers). The office, referred to as the “office of general

¹² Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 101–102.

inspection” and headed by an inspectoral General of the Poor, was to collect these “weekly accounts and records into abstracts that would be published annually for public and legislative purposes.”¹³ Each industry house, therefore, was required to transcribe minute phenomena into regular standardized books, which were to be available at all times for public consultation.¹⁴ This system, Bentham noted, “puts everything at all times under the eye of persons of all ranks on whom management depends.”¹⁵

Standardization of the Field

Bentham’s attempt to impose a system of districts that was comprised of measured and uniform physical distances highlights the relation of the district to the stabilization of inspectoral practices. In Bentham’s spatial edifice of 200 districts in perfect squares of 225 miles, even the organization of the shoreline was included. Bentham’s stated intent in producing this grid-work of districts equal in size and shape was to ensure the uniformity of population and land under each governor’s superintendence. In many respects, this reveals Bentham’s own ignorance of population as an object of rule. Fishing through unpublished censuses of parishes, Bentham estimated the population of England and Wales at 9,000,000 and assumed that the inhabitants were distributed equally. Such an assumption that population density was uniform across the entire United Kingdom reflected the lack of a regular

¹³ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 67.

¹⁴ Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 68.

¹⁵ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable from a System of Industry Houses,” 204.

census.¹⁶ This misjudgment underpinned Bentham's use of the district as a technique to produce a uniform relation of people to place.

Standardizing the population of districts was, without a doubt, a practical measure. Uneven numbers hindered the effectiveness of the "industry-house" and its capacity to intake paupers. In order to make construction as economical as possible, each industry house had to be uniform in size, number of dwellings, square acres of airing yards, gardens, and in every other way.¹⁷ If the district's population was too numerous, the construction of uniform industry houses was not feasible. The importance of standardization to Bentham's inspection principle, however, extended further than these practicalities. The function of inspection in Bentham's project was, in part, an attempt to construct an ideal environment in which to learn lessons of government. Chadwick later echoed this sentiment in his description of the Poor Law as "an experiment in the treatment of a moral plague."¹⁸ For Bentham, inspection allowed for the recording of facts and information so that government could be established on real, lived conditions (rather than on moral, ethical, and metaphysical concepts).

These real conditions formed the basis of a singular policy of administration and provided the knowledge to perpetually modify the system. Treating each district as a contained field of management allowed inspectors to find examples where the administrative process was cheaper or more effective. For inspection to operate and uncover the most effective and efficient ways to administer the poor,

¹⁶ Bentham admits that special measures would be necessary for cities that were more densely populated. However, the rural south and rural north are taken to be on average equal in their populations.

¹⁷ Bentham, "Pauper Systems Compared," 24.

¹⁸ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, 18.

the objects that fell under the eyes of individual inspectors who operated remotely from one another had to be made equal in form and content. As Bentham wrote of the small establishment system, “everything is particular, everything is out of reach, and everything is out of knowledge.”¹⁹ Good effects were only exposed and verified if they unfolded in a social field that was uniform and standardized. The true principles of operation, the lowest costs of food, the correct wages for in-house work, the necessary number of medical staff, and the true rate of morbidity amongst the pauper population could then be discovered. For Bentham, realist knowledge of conditions required that the conditions themselves were fabricated. Crucially, for Bentham, the district destroyed political rule premised on “averages.” He explained that it was through the uniformity of districted space that singular policies could be adopted with the confidence of their universal applicability.²⁰

District inspection in Bentham’s writing represents a disciplinary formation of power. The district was at once a real physical measure of land and a type of place that was utopian.²¹ Political rule based on real facts and objective observations was possible because of the delineation between nature and the socio-political realm. In the creation of uniform assemblages of land and population, variation was made into the product of management and not as the influence of exterior conditions. In this way, Bentham’s district formed a type of analytical space that was seemingly

¹⁹ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses,” 183.

²⁰ “The mode of calculation by averages would, on such an occasion be equally discouraging... In a certain poor house, the daily expense of diet has amounted (say) to 9 a day: be it so: be it the same in a hundred poor houses. But under Count Rumford’s plan of management the diet of an equal number of persons having equal wants and maintained in an equal degree of health and strength amounted but to 2 a day. Would 9 be the fair sample of the expense? Would even 5 (the average) be a fair sample? By no means: 2 d and no more than 2 d is the true mark,” Bentham, “Pauper Systems Compared,” 64.

²¹ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 50.

immune to effects and points of variation outside those produced by his own system of political management.

There was also a certain logic that came to dominate districting as a technique throughout England in the 19th century. It was only in fabricating a standardized continuum of place that points of variation were incorporated into a realist horizon of political rule. Bentham's system of districts was intended to ensure that the variation belonged to the same species of things. The district was meant to produce a singular unit, multiplied two hundred times, that would bring a multiplicity of people, land, and things into one assemblage. It was only once the particularity of locality was destroyed and overlaid by an abstract measure that internal forces within these assemblages were accurately registered. Thus one type of locality, the parish that "remained particular and out of knowledge," was replaced by the local conditions of the district which were taken as the true sites of variability.²² Local conditions of rule emerged as the locality ceased to be local (and, in chapter 9, I will demonstrate that this effect of the district was integral to the construction of state relations).

The second effect of the district on inspection was similar to the HBC district report. As a hybrid of physical and idealized analytical space, Bentham's district narrowed what was seen, what was recorded, and, essentially, what was of consequence to inspection and political rule by pre-determining how the district was populated. For instance, Bentham envisaged that each industry house would employ a medical curator who, in the course of supplying treatment, was responsible for recording the following: name, age, marital status, abode, year,

²² Bentham, "Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses," 183.

month, day, place, symptoms, prescriptions, termination of complaint, cure, incurability or instance of death.²³ Similarly, a register of the weather was to be kept as means to track the relation of temperature to certain phenomena and illness within the district.²⁴ Through the development of these registers and turning medical staff into inspectors of the poor, Bentham hoped to furnish an accurate, consistent system of reports that could be disseminated amongst the medical community, “for the information of parliament and the public at large.”²⁵

Inspection was both economized and regularized through the use of the district to standardize a set field of management. A pre-determined set of objects was highlighted as for inspection and recording. For Bentham, the district was a means to tame inspection and to limit its scope to objects that were thought as specific to the district. This is important to note because other episodes of inspection in the 19th century reveal that those things considered normal and appropriate were based on the inspectors’ always changing objectives. Curtis demonstrates this point with his discussion of Jacob’s 1845 educational tour journal, where moral relations assumed by Keefer to be proper formed the basis for later official modes of codification.²⁶ In Bentham’s writing, the district pre-populated the objects under inspection insofar as the district was designed to hold a number of givens in place (such as the pauper population, disease, and weather).

Calibrating Distance and Communication

²³ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses,” 101–102.

²⁴ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses,” 103.

²⁵ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses,” 103.

²⁶ Curtis, “Mapping the Social: Notes from Jacob Keefer’s Educational Tours, 1845,” 51–68.

For the HBC, the geography and seasonal variations made the district a difficult object of effective inspection. The inability of the chief factors to travel throughout the entire district and generate reports led to the proliferation of clerks, which, in turn, produced new problems of management. The separate post reports (that were amalgamated into a singular district report and sent by canoe to Montreal) shaped inspection in the HBC. Although the observation that geography and distance limited inspection borders on the prosaic, the prosaic shapes political rule. To tame the problem of physical space, Bentham deployed districted space. As a perfect square, each district rationalized inspection by inscribing it into distance.

Placed at the center of the district, Poor Law inspectors and medical inspectors were never to be more than 7.5 miles from the furthest extremity of the district or a maximum of 15 miles from the industry house in the next district. In this lay out, the lines of communication were maximized for movement and circulation. "General notices" were to be circulated with "abundance and more or less accuracy throughout the whole of the district" and sent to the General Office quickly enough to produce weekly publications of reports from each industry house.²⁷ The district in Bentham's scheme thus provided an ideal physical arrangement of people, land, and things to support inspectorial practices and the flow of information. He designed the district to ensure that its peripheral points were as accessible as possible to circulating authorities.

An analysis of Bentham's treatment of districts connects to Foucault's discussion of the panopticon. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that discipline (as a set of practices which involves hierarchical observation,

²⁷ Bentham, "Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses," 103.

normalization, and constant attention) was formed in the structures of the blockade, the workhouse, the barracks, schools, and other such institutions. With the advent of police, these forms moved outside the interior physical space of these institutional sites and circulated over the entire social field.²⁸ The district reveals the material determinations involved in this “great escape.” In a social field traversed by inspection, space must be rationalized. Arrangements of people, land, and things must be fabricated in order to generate an accessible form of space for authority. If by the close of the 19th century, as Netz asserts, political rule was no longer measured in the control of isolated points, but in the exercise of a consistent command of area, Bentham’s introduction of districting erased the boundaries of older social forms of political rule. This allowed officials the opportunity to recalibrate physical distance to new forms of rule.²⁹ In his *Report on the Affairs of British North America* (1838), Lord Durham cited the failure to rationalize distance for the purposes of inspection as a chief cause of the “irregularity of government administration.”³⁰ John Austin, the philosopher of jurisprudence, and disciple of Bentham, reiterated these points in his defense of “centralization.”³¹

Obviously, the calibration of physical distance to political administration ceased to be a pressing concern in political rule. Railways, paved roads, and telegraphs made the district’s uniformity of physical distance less important to the practice of inspection. Nonetheless, the measure of the district was yet another

²⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 223; Stuart Elden, “Plague, Panopticon, Police” *Surveillance and Society* vol. 1 issue 3 (2003): 247.

²⁹ Netz, *Barbed Wire*, 63.

³⁰ John George Lambton Durham, *Lord Durham’s Report* (Toronto: McClland Press 1963, [1838]): 110–111.

³¹ John Austin, “Centralization” in *The Edinburgh Review*, vol. 85, issue 171 (1847): 223.

effect that both wedded inspection to districts and economized inspectorial practices.

The District as the Architecture of Inspection

Foucault argues that the panopticon generalized the disciplines and allowed them to circulate over the social body.³² Foucault's thesis, as Yar notes, has been critiqued extensively due to his failure to account empirically for how panoptic practices circulate outside the institutional sites posed by Bentham.³³ For the purposes of this discussion, the problem lies in Foucault's limited consideration of the panopticon in relation to Bentham's later writings on the inspection house principle and the Poor Law. When put in the context to Bentham's writings on the district, the panopticon ceases to be "the" diagram of power and it instead forms part of an extended system of inspection.

In other words, there is a curious symmetry between the plan of the district and the panoptic mechanism Bentham proposed for the industry house. As noted, the distance between the industry house and its 80 connected parishes was carefully calibrated to support the constant communication of power between the governor and local parish administrators. Inspection radiated inward over the interned pauper and outward over lower officials circulating within the governor's district. Outside the monadic cell of the district, the General Inspector's Office in

³² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 212.

³³ Majid Yar "Panoptic Power and the Pathologisation of Vision: Critical Reflections on the Foucault Thesis" in *Surveillance and Society*, vol. 1 issue 3(2003): 254–271; Norris, C, Armstrong C, *The Maximum Surveillance Society: The Rise of CCTV* (Oxford: Berg press, 1999).

McCahill, M. *The Surveillance Web: The Rise of Visual Surveillance in an English City*. (Devon: Willan Press, 2001).

London was to receive weekly reports of the 200 outlying districts. In other words, this system involved circles within squares, caged by a singular observation post. The panoptic space of the industry house meshed seamlessly with the concentric sub-districts of the district, and the district itself monitored from the central office. The artificial interior space of the industry house is couched in an equally artificial exterior space where inspectors and registers circulate and flow between industry houses and the “office of general inspection.”

The diagram of the panopticon, then, does not belong solely to closed interior spaces but extends all the way to the district as a geometrically planned field of administration. Foucault suggests that “Bentham dreamt of transforming [the panopticon] into a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in time and space.”³⁴ The arrangement of the general inspection office vis-à-vis the 200 districts and the relation of the district to the carefully planned interior space of the industry house produced a spatial order of rule that would later be replicated by the GRO office in service of the state. Had Foucault stepped outside Bentham’s diagrams, this issue of theorizing the escape of inspection, surveillance, and records from interior sites would have been greatly clarified. After all, what good is a system of classifying individuals, sorting out social differentiation, and creating docile subjects if the knowledge produced through these processes remained lodged within these little observatories?

The planned geometric space of the industry house connected to the geometric space of the district, which connected to the field of district in view of the general

³⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 209.

inspector's office. As a consequence, the apparatus combined the production of knowledge with the superintendence of the system as a whole. Inspectors, governors, medical curators, wardens, all served on different scales of one geometric "hierarchical network." If it appears that a network of mechanisms were placed "everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in time and space," this perhaps has less to do with the panopticon and its formula of generalization and more to do with the connection of the panopticon to the district as distinct form of spatial codification.³⁵

The Poor Law Realized

The implementation of the Poor Law, however, took place, not in the district, but in the administrative space of the union. At a glance, the two units seem so similar in effect that the implementation of the union instead of the district appears semantic. In the first annual report of the Poor Law of 1835, the commissioners even occasionally refer to unions as districts. Yet, it was unions, not districts, that were formalized and that had consequences for the form of rule established with the Poor Law.

The production of unions approximated some of the effects on political rule Bentham had tried to initiate through his system of districts. For instance, the first annual Poor Law report stated,

The most convenient limits of unions which we have found has been that of a circle, taking a market town as a centre and comprehending those surrounding parishes whose inhabitants are accustomed to resort to the same market. This arrangement was found highly convenient for the weekly attendances of the parish officers and some portion of the guardians and other auxiliaries to good management.³⁶

³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 209.

³⁶ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales* (London: Clowes and Sons Stanford Street, 1835), 12.

Although Bentham's perfect grid of squares remained unrealized, the unions were developed with the aim of economizing the movement of authorities. Moreover, individual parishes were amalgamated into singular polities with a uniform office of government, a designated workhouse, a board of Poor Law guardians, and inspectors and medical officers assigned on a union basis. However, the uniform network of inspection Bentham had envisioned with the district was not realized. Although it granted government the power to destroy the old boundaries of the parishes and to incorporate them into new assemblages, the Poor Law Act allowed certain parishes to opt out and produce their own combinations. While Bentham had engineered a system where the industry house formed a nodal point in a set number of parishes, the "workhouse" was put in service of a much larger pool of parishes and was rarely placed in the center of a union as Bentham had advised. There are several reasons for this discrepancy in the systems.

First, the implementation of the Poor Law was uneven. It was more uniform and extensive in the south of England (where agricultural crises had caused the greatest social dislocation) than in the north (where industry was predominant).³⁷ Much of the north of England was not even incorporated into the system until 1837.³⁸ The *1835 Annual Report on the Poor Laws* lamented that "in all only 1/10 of the entire population of England and Wales was under the command of a union board of guardians." To some extent this reflected the latitude that the 1834 legislation gave landowners to incorporate themselves as unions. Often, Poor Law commissioners were forced to work around previously existing unions and new

³⁷ Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (Hounmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan press, 1999), 25.

³⁸ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, 42.

unions that had formed in opposition to the law. The geography of the system thus contained patches effectively out of reach of Poor Law administration, which accordingly could not be rationalized to facilitate an easier economy of inspection or registration.

Second, the landowning class did its best to steer the “unionization” process. Of the seven commissioners who deliberated on Poor Law policy initially in 1817, three were Oxford educated landowners.³⁹ The gentry, which was undergoing its own class reformation, exerted its influence on the formation of the policy. It was, after all, this group that had been the most innovative in developing structures for ruling the poor extensively over the 18th century.⁴⁰ This effort to influence the administration of the Poor Law continued in parliament as well, where the gentry was well represented. In other words, while a centralized system of districts would have limited the class power of the gentry, the Poor Law union offered some hope of the consolidation of the gentry as a political class.⁴¹ Landowners and magistrates, workhouse managers, and parish officers were already an allied force in the superintendence of the poor. If Bentham’s districts were taken up, the countryside would have been wiped clean of previous jurisdiction and estate lines of authority. In this case, local proprietors would have had to negotiate power with a board of guardians comprised of different players, as well as hand administrative power over to professional agents and inspectorates.

³⁹ Peter, Mandler, “The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus” in *Past and Present* no. 117, Nov. (1987): 149.

⁴⁰ Mandler, “The Making of the New Poor Law,” 149.

⁴¹ See Driver, *Power and Pauperism*; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Toronto: Rinehart Press, 1944); Peter Dunkley “The landed interest and the New Poor Law: a critical note” in *English History Review* vol. 88 no. 349(1973): 836-841; Brundage, A, “The landed interest and the New Poor Law: a reappraisal of the revolution in government” in *English Historical Review* vol. 87 no. 343(1972): 27–48.

The gentry's opposition to districts and subsequent support of Poor Law unions that maintained the status quo of traditional boundary-lines was hardly surprising. Moreover, resistance to the centralization of district-inspection was relatively simple. Gilbert's Act (1782), a legal mechanism to combine parishes under singular workhouse systems, gave the landed classes the precedent to create their own jurisdictions of poor relief. Thus it was not uncommon for the Poor Law unions to be coterminous with the property lines of estates. Consequently, whenever possible, parishes were selected for each union in terms of their political value, which resulted in a highly uneven number of parishes in each Poor Law union. For instance, Kent's 211 parishes formed 13 unions, while Oxford's 185 parishes formed five (a difference of roughly 16 to 35 parishes per union).

Third, while Bentham's district had been designed to ensure complete standardization of Poor Law functions, the formation of unions appears to have been the product of competing class interests. While inspection, workhouses, and policy were set on the scale of the union, the taxes levied for Poor Law expenditure were billed to individual parishes.⁴² The benefit for the landowning class is clear. The Poor Law drafted in 1834 retained a longstanding practice of assigning parish residence by birth. This meant that if an individual moved to a new parish to work but was laid-off, fired, or became sick or injured, he and his family would have to return to his parish of birth to be eligible for any form of relief. Along with a number of other changes to the Poor Law, in 1844 this practice was slightly modified, which gave workers the chance to establish residence in a new parish after working there

⁴² Maurice Caplan, "The New Poor Law and the Struggle for Union Chargeability" in *International Review of Social History* vol. 23 issue 2(1978): 268.

for five years. As each parish had to tax its local proprietors for 51% of its own Poor Law expenditure, this gave landowners, who often owned all the available land for rent in a parish, the incentive to limit the number of people able to move to their parish. New dwellings were rarely constructed and cottages, allowed to fall into disrepair, were torn down and never replaced.⁴³

That the union existed solely as an administrative unit (and not as a fiscal entity) was due to the landowning class's concerted efforts. In fact, for over 34 years bills were drafted and debated in Parliament in a bid to move from parish chargeability to union chargeability. In 1857 a bill was introduced to charge for Poor Law expenditure at the scale of the district but "country gentlemen" in the house deliberately delayed the bill.⁴⁴ As such, class interests over the centralization of political rule shaped the extent to which the administrative grid of districted space emerged with the implementation of the Poor Law. Nevertheless, the district remained the desirable field of management for some of those involved in developing the new Poor Law. This may explain why the 1844 revisions sought to establish Poor Law inspection on the scale of the district.

As these events demonstrate, much of what Bentham initially outlined was modified beyond recognition or simply ignored.⁴⁵ Moreover, the design, scale and sheer number of industry houses Bentham proposed were deemed too costly to be

⁴³ Caplan, "The New Poor Law and the Struggle for Union Chargeability", 274.

⁴⁴ Caplan, "The New Poor Law and the Struggle for Union Chargeability", 284.

⁴⁵ Curiously, in earlier drafts on the collateral effects of house of industry houses, Bentham outlined the idea that industry houses could, using reasoning that echoed some of Plato's thoughts in the *Republic*, train orphans, deprived of parental ties, into a militia loyal to the nation and, also, that Houses of Industry might be used to inculcate musical talent in the poor, to raise the tone of the nation. These suggestions didn't get worked in to the New Poor Law, and sadly musical militia orphans remain nothing more than a digression in the history of social policy. See Bentham, "Collateral Uses Derivable from a System of Industry Houses", 124.

realized.⁴⁶ As Mandler notes, the landed aristocracy had already come to understand that property was best defended through free labour than through “relief.”⁴⁷ The political cleavage in the centralization of power as represented by the new Poor Law determined the extent to which Bentham’s conception of district-inspection initially took root.

In the next chapter, I outline the rise of the registration-district as a successor the Poor Law union. Before doing so, however, it is useful to reflect on some of the relations of rule that Poor Law commissioners saw as calibrated by union–districted space. I focus on two processes—the making of rational economic agents and the forging of political objectivity—as they appear in the recommendations of the First Annual Poor Law Report.

Distance, Disinterest and “Objective Ties”

The First Annual Poor Law Report sometimes used the term district to speak about functions of Poor Law unions and sometimes it appears to advocate the introduction of districts as a means to extend “fields of management.”⁴⁸ The implementation of unions, the making of new boundaries, and the development of Poor Law machinery were most closely scrutinized in the 1835 report. This is hardly surprising as the arrangement of rule into centrally determined and controlled unions was a novel development in 1835. The report discussed how the size of unions could be used to calibrate desirable relations of political rule. Remarking on the different size of unions, the Poor Law commissioners suggested, “that the

⁴⁶ Work house construction, for instance, was geographically uneven and accorded in fits and bursts throughout the latter half of the 19th century, see Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, 92.

⁴⁷ Mandler, “The Making of the New Poor Law”, 149.

⁴⁸ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 11.

extension of the field of management [in unions] was not only viewed as a resource for abating the animosities generated by the old system.”⁴⁹ Management at the scale of the union was also to be viewed as a “resource against pernicious animosities between class and class.”⁵⁰ In the old system, where the single parish had contained the whole field of government over the poor, “management was frequently warped to serve individual or sinister purposes.”⁵¹

The 1835 report went on to suggest that in small unions, “the mischievous influence of local interests” continued to thrive. Consequently, in those small unions, “dispensers of relief act more closely within the sphere of their own connections” and, thereby, proprietors are more frequently “called upon to decide upon applications from their smaller tenants or dependents.”⁵² Similarly, proprietors “who serve parochial offices are exposed to solicitations from their own labourers; and all retail shopkeepers have too frequently decided upon claims to relief preferred or supported by their own customers.”⁵³ This perversion of interests in favour of personal connections impacted parish officers as well: “Officers who would not deviate from the strict path of duty are exposed to serious sacrifices from giving offence to one or the other class of applicants by the rejection of their claims.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 11.

⁵⁰ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 11.

⁵¹ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁵² *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁵³ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁵⁴ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

In contrast, larger unions were “generally found [to be free] from the undue interests prevalent in narrow localities.”⁵⁵ To support this claim, the report included an interview with a member of the board of guardians of the Wycombe union, Rev. Charles Turner. Wycombe was an obvious choice for selection as it was sixty miles in circumference and contained a total of 33 parishes. When asked, “have you felt any inconvenience or derived any benefit, from the circumstances of Wycombe union being so large?” Turner responded:

I think we have derived great benefit: there being so many guardians from distant parishes acting on so large a scale, the possibility of intimidation and of favouritism is entirely destroyed...I also find this consequence, that from the extent of the district great experience and knowledge are brought together and concentrated in one operation; so that if one parish is in error as to any point of management of fact, it is corrected by the superior intelligence and information of some other parish. There is much more intelligence in a board of guardians than in a vestry, the board being composed of the gentry and most respectable inhabitants of this large union whose attendance is regular and as close as can be expected.⁵⁶

From this testimony, the report concluded that a balance had to be struck. It stated:

“The field of management should not be so large as to prevent the members of boards of Guardians embracing the whole of the details, for the control of which they should be responsible.”⁵⁷ At the same time, as the size of unions affected the possibility of curbing petty interests and skewing the provision of relief in favour of personal connections, “further extension” was to be pursued as the “business becomes methodized.”⁵⁸

Of interest here was the use of distance and size as means to codify objective disinterested relations of rule. The small locality pitted class against class, landlord against worker, and landowner against industrialist. It also created the possibility

⁵⁵ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁵⁶ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 11.

⁵⁷ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

for the machinery of the Poor Law to be used for selfish-ends (coded as local interests) and it made duty impossible, either through the interference of personal ties in the distribution of relief or in the temptation to distribute relief so as to curry favor. In contrast, with their extended fields of management, unions were to produce political subjects tempered by a plurality of competing wills into abiding by the duty of their offices. Impartial, objective relations of rule are codified by physical distance. The liberal subject—the abstract individual capable of adjudicating all matters fairly through universal disinterest—is forged in circles of sixty-mile circumference!⁵⁹

The Deciding “Distance” of Homo Economicus

One of the principal stated purposes of the Poor Law was to rectify practices that had “undermined the free agency of labour by destroying the hazard of free agency by dispensing with the fear of want.”⁶⁰ The intended use of the Poor Law to ensure individuals had no choice but to engage in wage labour or to accept internment in a workhouse was well known. This “choice” was incentivized by making the conditions of the workhouse, with its ten-hour workday, menial tasks, poor diet, and separation from loved ones, altogether unbearable.⁶¹ In addition, there was also an attempt to incentivize free labour by using distance to limit the movement of people as paupers and to accelerate the movement of people as rational economic subjects.

Once again the Poor Law commissioners examined the union of Wycombe as a

⁵⁹ “Spatial relations not only are determining conditions of relationships among men, but are also symbolic of those relationships” in Simmel, “The Stranger”, 143.

⁶⁰ Report, cited in Driver *Power and Pauperism*, 24.

⁶¹ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, 145.

model of calibration. Unlike Bentham's model of the Poor Law district, the workhouse in Wycombe was placed at the far end of the union, distant from a number of the union's parishes. The commissioners noted that this made "sending the pauper to it" inconvenient.⁶² However, this distance was also celebrated "as a superior check upon application of relief."⁶³ Indeed, as the report suggests, a pauper of idle habits may make an experiment and try the workhouse...[he will however] have great reluctance to be sent to such a distance."⁶⁴ It was concluded that "the distance [in fact] will act as an incitement to industry."⁶⁵ Furthermore, the uniformity of relief offered in each parish was presented as a means to curb unwanted migration. As the Poor Law commissioners suggested, under the old system, paupers had an incentive to establish residence in parishes where better rates were offered. The new system of extended fields of management with uniform conditions was designed to curb attempts made to migrate or to demand more from their own parishes. The union was posed against the pauper as a grid-work that both equalized conditions and used its own measure—the distance of parishes to the workhouse—to restrict the desire to seek relief.

Not unlike the HBC's hunter, the pauper was targeted as a subject to be made stationary within the union. The unchecked circulation of paupers threatened to overrun parishes, exhaust resources, and create the possibility of moral contagion between free labourers and the unemployed who received outdoor relief.⁶⁶ The very act of charging parishes for Poor Law expenditure made the movement of the

⁶² *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁶³ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁶⁴ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁶⁵ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁶⁶ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 8.

casually employed undesirable, as a sudden influx caused a spike of rates, which prompted local proprietors to throw land out of cultivation and shut down local parishes.⁶⁷ As a form of spatial order, then, the union was in many respects enforced as a container. It was a grid in which pauper populations were to be held and gradually reduced or “depauperized” through absorption into local markets and the deterrence of the workhouse. In many respects, the process of “depauperization” assumed that the population of the union was fixed and geographically static.

If the configuration of distance and practices of removal and containment had coalesced in the union to restrain paupers and get them to engage in market exchange, then the desire of Poor Law commissioners to effect a circulation of labour was at odds with the way distance had been calibrated to regulate the mobility of paupers. Indeed, the stated intent of the Poor Law commissioners was to produce “spontaneous migration without [political intervention].”⁶⁸ A scheme was put in place to effect the movement of “pauper” populations from agricultural unions to unions with a manufacturing base. The first scheme that induced individuals to behave as rational economic subjects took place at Bledlow Bucks. In a bid to direct “pauperized labourers” to “the sources of the highest wages”, the commissioners attempted to get families in Bledlow Bucks to voluntarily migrate in response to manufacturers in two northern unions.⁶⁹

The assistant commissioner went from house to house of the families considered to be in extreme distress and offered engagements in other unions for 24 shillings a week per family, a rate that was, according to the report, four times the

⁶⁷ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 22.

⁶⁸ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 12.

⁶⁹ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 22.

earnings each family currently received: “Not one family could in the first instance be induced to accept the offer. The majority intimated they would prefer to renounce their ‘parish pay’ rather than remove” to a new union.⁷⁰ In the end, 83 individuals migrated from the parish to new unions.⁷¹ For the commissioners, this was proof that if the market was given free reign it would create “spontaneous migration” of labour. At the same time, this migration was not to be unleashed fully due to fears the market would be unable to absorb the surplus labour.⁷² The same mechanisms of spatial calibration used to restrict the pauper population double as a disincentive to the formation of the economic conduct needed to support the social relations of free labour (i. e., relocating for higher wages). The system was designed to limit the movement of paupers, to restrict their travel, and, in so doing, to ensure the system was politically and fiscally rationalized. As the Bledlow trial revealed, these same restrictions enforced at the scale of the parish were at odds with the circulation of labour that the union, and later the space of the district, was intended to support.

The Poor Law system used distance to produce incentives to industry, to limit the movement of paupers, to divide those in the habit of indigence from those in real need. In short, distance—or rather the space of the union and its effective hold over the pauper—was a form of migration control. Capitalist production, the uptake of new labour, and its training and exploitation was further rationalized externally by the administrative grid-work of the union. The destabilizing tendencies of mass migration and the potential for the unemployed to congregate or even combine in

⁷⁰ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 22.

⁷¹ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 23.

⁷² *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 23.

manufacturing centers could be avoided by using the union as an internal system of “migration control.” Families were to be absorbed individually, and the desired end of “spontaneous migration” was ultimately rationalized through an extensive command of people and their access to “place.”

Last, this double purpose of the Poor Law union-district presents a clear historical fissure between the HBC’s use of the district to limit the circulation of hunters and increase their productivity and the use of districts in England to produce the comparative registers of space that would have given labour the incentive to circulate. Whereas the HBC district was premised on structuring accumulation through the restriction of movement, the union *cum* district in England had a more complex role of restricting undesirable flows of paupers while encouraging the construction of rational economic conduct amongst free labour.

Chapter 9

Registration Districts and the Further Codification of the Milieu

To develop the argument that the district grew out of the Poor Law union as a generalized technique of state rule in English society,¹ this chapter analyzes how registration districts created the space-time coordinates to conceive of population as a comparative object of rule. I will demonstrate that the registration districts in England made it possible to extend and refine a milieu that was similar to that which emerged with the HBC district. I point to how the registration district created a conception of population as a comparative object that was conditioned by the law and processes of its particular district. This chapter starts by developing the links between the Poor Law union and the formation of the registration district and the GRO. I pay particular attention to how Thomas Lister, the first Registrar-General, set up the registration district to ensure the registrars of each district could adequately inspect their populations. I then discuss how William Farr expanded the registration district by instructing registrars to provide more detailed reports of their conditions. Farr's demands for more intricate data tied population to a milieu with internal social-biological dynamics that could be expressed as statistical comparisons. After a discussion of Farr's employment of the district to organize findings from the census and to render the Cholera Epidemics of 1849 and 1851

¹ This generalization can be seen in the bills to establish districts that passed through the English Parliament during this period. 1839: a Bill to "Establish Prison Districts"; 1844: a Bill "To Establish District Registers of all Mines and Mining Operations in England and Wales"; 1862: an Act to Establish Highway Districts; 1840: an Act to Establish County and District Constables"; 1842: "A Bill to Encourage the Establishment of District Courts and Prisons", etc.

intelligible, I conclude that seeing and acting on populations at the scale of the district was integral to state rule.

The Registration District and the General Registrar's Office

From its inception in the 1836, the Registration Act put the registration district in the physical and administrative custody of the Poor Law unions (established two years earlier). As other scholars have noted, the registration districts largely coincided with the Poor Law unions.² The Registration Act also explicitly laid out that the Poor Law commissioners of England and Wales would be responsible for “the keeping of the said ‘register’” as well “as the control of the officers, clerks and servants” employed in its production.³ Consequently, the GRO left the initial hiring of district registrars to the discretion of Poor Law guardian boards. Writing in 1837, Thomas Lister, the Registrar-General, specified only that registrars “were not appointed for more than one district” and that the position should contain “persons whose character for intelligence, diligence, honesty and regularity of conduct and whose ability to write and keep accounts with neatness and accuracy may render them in the opinion of guardians capable of fulfilling the duties of a registrar.”⁴ Many of the registrars were medical officers and clerks from

² Goldman, “Statistics and the Science of Society in Early Victoria Britain”, 418; Fred Lewes “The GRO and the Provinces in the Nineteenth Century” in *Social History of Medicine* vol. 4 issue 3 (1991): 479; see also Edward Higgs, *Life, Death and Statistics: Civil Registration, Censuses and the work of the General Register Office, 1836-1952* (Hatfield, Hertfordshire: Halstan & Co. Ltd, 2004); Muriel Nissel, *People Count- a history of the General Register Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1987).

³ “Registrations of births [as amended by the Lords] intituled, an act for registering births, marriages and deaths in England”, 1836 *Parliamentary Papers Online*(524), 1.

⁴ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter from the registrar-general to clerks of board of guardians, respecting the formation of the registrar's districts*, 1836, September 9th, pp. 48 from Online Historical Population Reports, Registrar General Digitalized Archives [italics in text].

various Poor Law unions.⁵ Hiring Poor Law medical commissioners as registrars was desirable, as they were the only people empowered to certify death. Having them perform the duties of registrar economized the process and lent greater certainty to classifications of death. The employment of medical commissioners also cemented an institutional tie between the Poor Law guardian boards and registrars, which gave the latter the ability to make use of the information of the former.⁶

The Registration Act put a great deal of responsibility on Poor Law guardians to select registrars, at least until the GRO had received the funds to hire a registrar general and staff. Yet, with little idea of what was supposed to be obtained by registration districts and even less direction, Poor Law guardians were slow to act. Although the bill that legislated registration districts passed in 1836, the districts were not put in place until the fall of 1838. The reason for this, notes Edward Higgs, was that there was a great deal of uncertainty within the GRO about its mandate and, subsequently, the forms of information these registration districts were intended to produce.⁷

The confusion around the GRO's mandate was a product of the office's political origins. The GRO was part of an act intended by Lord Grey to appease the dissenters among his electoral base who demanded an end to discriminatory civil registrations carried out by the parish system—an issue that had cut across the right to religious

⁵ Of the 2,193 registrars 416 were officially medical officers attached to poor law boards, 111 were supporting medical staff and 3,00 were Poor Law inspectors, see Lewes, "The GRO and the Provinces in the Nineteenth Century", 491.

⁶ For instance, in the Poor Law union that comprised the district of Bath (the city of Bath was not in fact a district) the superintendent registrar was the clerk to the Poor Law Guardians and five of the seven registrars for the sub-districts were Poor Law medical Officers. Thus, the registrar's records were never out of each of the Poor Law guardians. See Lewes, "The GRO and the Provinces in the Nineteenth Century", 486.

⁷ John Eyler, *Victorian social medicine: the ideas and methods of William Farr* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1979), 73.

freedom and the inheritance of property. The impetus behind the establishment of the office thus came from the push for religious freedom and sound records of the lines of kinship for the purpose of transferring property. These rather parochial concerns remained the stated objectives of the GRO from its inception until the last two decades of the 19th century.⁸

Whether the registrar's office could accomplish something more was a contentious issue. Edwin Chadwick was keen to use the GRO to collect statistics that would have enabled private insurance companies to produce more accurate and reliable premiums. Men like William Farr and Sir John Clarke, however, thought the GRO should be used to produce knowledge of vital statistics for public health.⁹ Without a system of registration, England lagged behind Holland, France, Belgium, Italy and Austria, all of which had some agency devoted to vital statistics. The addition of these functions to the GRO would have required more funds and potential amendments to the Registration Act, which had already been contentious to pass because of its potential religious implications.¹⁰ In a bid to chart a safe course, Lister was appointed as the first General-Registrar in 1837. With few political aspirations and little knowledge of vital statistics, Lister probably appeared as a benign choice as he would not overstep the scope of the office laid down by the Registration Act. Nonetheless, with no training in statistics, Lister set to work on a

⁸ Higgs, *Life, Death and Statistics*, 45.

⁹ see Higgs, *Life, Death and Statistics* and Elyer, *Victorian social medicine*.

¹⁰ It appears that the act was held up for over a year by Anglican members of the House of Commons who did not want to see power of registration pass out of the hands of local parishes, see Cullen, M.J., "The Making of the Civil Registration Act of 1836" *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* vol. 25 issue 1. (1974): 54 . The bill also suffered from the skepticism of the gentry. One Lord attempted to block the bill as he thought that such a system should not be put in place "just to gratify the statistical fancies of a few philosophers in order that they might know how many person died, and how many were born in a year" Cullen, "The Making of the Civil Registration Act of 1836", 55.

proposal for Poor Law guardians to create registration districts in their respective unions.

Deploying the Registration District

As specified by the Registration Act, the GRO's districts were to coincide with unions. Other than this, there was little direction as to how these districts were to be created. The problem was compounded by the fact that a large part of England and Wales were not codified as unions. To overcome this problem, Lister issued regulations to Poor Law guardians and justices of the peace on how to plan and record a registration district that would meet with the GRO's approval. Poor Law guardians were tasked with producing a clearly defined and delimited field of administration. They were to state the number of square miles of their proposed district, whether any portion of the proposed district would be detached, and the size of the population if known. Most importantly, the guardians were to describe the boundaries of the district and note if it was coincident with any medical or relieving district of the union in which the guardians officiated.

Lister reiterated that it was imperative "no part of [any union was to] be excluded from such districts."¹¹ In preparing their districts, Poor Law guardians were instructed that as much "uniformity of the system" as possible was desired although this had to be balanced against expedience so as to avoid delay. Speed was essential as proposed registration districts had to reach Lister by October 1837. To facilitate the completion of the task, Lister established principles to help the

¹¹ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 47.

guardians achieve the “desirable attainment of uniformity.”¹² Above all, it was requisite

that area and population should be considered conjointly and each with reference to the other. When the population is dense, the area should be proportionately contracted—that when it is thinly scattered the territorial extent [of the district] should be proportionally increased.¹³

Lister’s reasoning was not to extend or contract districts to produce equal quantities of population throughout each district (though this would be an effect), but to “equalize the labour of the registrar” as far as possible. “With respect to the amount of population which a registrar’s district may comprise” Lister was ambivalent about enforcing any strict number.¹⁴ Rather, as a guideline, it was suggested that as far as possible each district will function “best for the purposes of registration when it contains about 5,000 persons. It was estimated that a population of this size would produce less than 300 entries of births and deaths a year.”¹⁵ A population of 5,000 was deemed desirable as it was better that districts were not designed so as to “fully employ [the registrar] but to ensure that it was “improbable that any birth or death [would] remain unnoticed.”¹⁶

Furthermore, Lister suggested that the boundaries of each district be established so as “to avoid a multiplicity and intermixture of divisions.”¹⁷ Districts that created boundaries which bisected parishes or which terminated at their edges were undesirable. It was also expedient “that a registration district should invariably be one connected portion of territory and not consist of two or

¹² *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 47.

¹³ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

¹⁴ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

¹⁵ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

¹⁶ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

¹⁷ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

more detached portions.”¹⁸ These regulations were necessary to facilitate the registration of population, a task greatly complicated by any settlement that was dissected by multiple districts, and to ensure communication.¹⁹ Lister stressed that if faced with the choice of maintaining coherence between the new district and pre-existing ancient boundaries or ensuring proper “communication,” guardians were to operate on the principle that “facility of communication [was] of greater importance than adherence to an ancient boundaries.”²⁰ These characteristics of districted space formed the historical conditions that shaped the use of registration districts as the milieu of population.

In particular, the registration district was produced with the intent of equalizing the labour of the registrar in order to ensure that each respective district required the same quantity and quality of labour for its surveillance. Artificial space was deployed in a bid to destroy the relations established by “ancient” boundaries—a critique that runs parallel to Bentham’s concern with the parochial and fragmented divisions of the “parish system.” The information required by Lister to create a district was also enough to demarcate a field of intervention. Acres, population, boundaries, and other intersecting districts as established by the Poor Law were sufficient to populate a field. At the same time, the size and extent of the district was meant to ensure that no birth or death went unnoticed. Lister stressed the importance of the proportionality between land and people as an issue of “visibility.” What did not surface in Lister’s consideration of the registration district was whether or not each district would function as a space to compare populations.

¹⁸ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

¹⁹ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

²⁰ *First Annual Report of the Registrar, Appendix A Circular Letter*, 48.

Lister noted that having 5,000 people per a district was optimal for the purposes of registration but he made no reference to the importance of having equal populations for the purpose of studying populations.

By 1838 the country was divided into 626 districts, each of which was overseen and managed by a superintendent-registrar. Of these, 603 districts were exactly coincident with the Poor Law unions. Eighteen districts comprised two to four unions and five comprised the remaining 40 unions, the least populated.²¹ Each registration district was broken down into sub-districts, each headed by a registrar and often a registrar's deputy. The sub-district formed concentric circles that emanated outward from the superintendent registrar for the entire registration district. Each Poor Law union was made into a district or, in the case of "populous unions," further divided into sub-districts. The superintendent in each district was responsible for collecting certified copies of births and deaths on a quarterly basis. The superintendent would then inspect the returns and send them to the General Registrar's office. The certified copies were then "examined, arranged and indexed at the General Register Office" and compiled into an Annual Report.

Tied up with the Poor Law administration system, the registration district was not intended, initially at least, to build biopolitical knowledge of population. Rather, the formation of the registration district as the milieu of population was a gradual process of accumulating the knowledge of districts as the "place" of population. For that matter, the formation of the registration district was shaped by Farr's own

²¹ Farr, *Second Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 8.

interest in uncovering the “laws of population” and developing a vital statistics of England.²²

Districts in Service of the State: Toward A More Extensive Milieu

Lister had produced the registration districts with the intent of ensuring that no birth, death, or marriage fell outside the notice of the registrar. He did not intend the districts to produce comparative knowledge of “population” as an object or to develop extensive information about the state of each population. In the wake of a well-received essay on “Vital Statistics,” Farr was given a temporary position at the GRO to compile the census returns made available through the Registration Act. After one year of employment Farr was awarded a full-time position.²³ His new role extended the GRO into two new initiatives: the use of registration districts to develop information for insurance firms, and the use of registration districts to produce vital statistics about the population. Looking to achieve the new mandates of the GRO, Farr sought to deepen the register of the district into a milieu.

In 1841 Farr requested his clerk distribute a circular to the metropolitan district registrars that asked them to include additional information in their district returns. They were to specify the areas and then the streets of their districts that had the greatest number of deaths in the last three years, and remark on where disease related deaths prevailed. Upon locating these unhealthy spaces, the registrar was then to provide an account of the principal occupations of the populations in

²² Farr, *Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 296.

²³ As both Eyler and Higgs note the Treasury did not readily accept Farr’s new position and the expansion of the GRO’s mandate. The Treasury raised concerns that medical statistics “could mislead [the government] in matters of great importance.” Although the Treasury relented and provided the funds for Farr’s position, its misgivings limited the funds that were available to Farr. Farr and three full time clerks were responsible for tabulating the 847, 149 entries sent from district registrars. By the time Farr retired the same volume of work was carried out by a staff that numbered over a hundred.

these areas, their diet, sources of heating and their salaries.²⁴ Notably, the circular informed the registrars that no “special investigations” would be necessary to complete these questions. It was “[taken] for granted that [they were] well acquainted with the [sanitary] condition of the district of which [they were] registrar.”²⁵ Moreover, “the limited space in the form of return will render great condensation in your statements necessary.”²⁶ It was in this same year that Farr stressed the importance of the knowledge of “site, habits, diet and employments” of the inhabitants in each district in the formation of a “prevailing law of mortality.”²⁷ This extensive set of data formed what Farr later referred to as the “topographical order” of each district.²⁸

The instruction to registrars to “compare the healthy and unhealthy portions of their districts” was intended to identify whether the mortality rate was caused by exceptionally unhealthy conditions within the districts.²⁹ In other words, he sought to ensure the measure of mortality reflected the actual conditions of the district. The broader project, however, was to populate each district so as to develop an account of social, geographic, economic and biological conditions. Each registrar became responsible for building up a “community of facts,” and, in so doing, human life was given a “milieu.” Each district was inspected so as to make its unique conditions visible and identifiable within one continuum of space unified under a system of registration.

²⁴ Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 472.

²⁵ Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 473 [sic].

²⁶ Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 473.

²⁷ Farr, *Fourth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 12.

²⁸ Farr, *Report on the mortality of cholera in England and Wales*, ii.

²⁹ Eyler, *Victorian social medicine*, 83, 93.

In the *Annual Reports of the Registrar-General (ARRG)* that followed Farr's appointment, one can see the emergence of a form of knowledge built from the contact points of population, districts, and statistical laws. For instance, in the fifth ARRG, Farr discovered that the total deaths in all of England's country districts were 132, 116, whereas in town districts the figure was considerably higher, 185, 966.³⁰ Noting that over the last four years the rate of mortality for country and town districts was respectively one in 52 and one in 37,³¹ Farr searched for the internal laws governing the disparity between the two classes of district. He noted which diseases were more common in country and town districts and whether they proved more fatal in one type of district than another. He then considered how each district limited or encouraged access to the "necessities of life" (classified as water, food, physic, clothing, firing, lodging and cleaning).³² Working his way through these conditions, Farr concluded that the "mortality of town districts has a certain relation to their density."³³ The district formed the primary unit through which this theory was rendered visible. By taking thirty registration districts that were "inhabited by very much the same class of people" and that had similar sewage and water supply, he divided these districts in three groups of ten ranked according to each groups

³⁰ Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 406.

³¹ Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 410.

³² Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 412.

³³ Farr, *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 419; Elyer has provided an interesting discussion on how Farr's concerns with density and mortality first developed in his early AARG reports informed his zymotic theory of disease, and would occupy the next forty years of his long career. See John Elyer, "William Farr on Cholera: The Sanitarian's Disease Theory and the Statistician's Method" *Journal of the History of Medicine* April (1973): 79–100.

different rates of mortality. Farr then compared the conditions of life in each district.³⁴

There are other examples of this technique of arranging districts to uncover the internal laws and patterns that make up the “laws of population.” Farr expended great effort examining average ages of marriage by district, the rate of death in childbirth, and which types of diseases are more common in mining, agricultural or manufacturing districts.³⁵ For the purposes of this discussion, the point is that it was the dual deployment of the district that allowed it to form the milieu of these “laws.” On the one hand, the district functioned as a spatial-field of population that demarcated a certain number of individuals as a discrete, statistical population. As a spatial field, it could be arranged and selected to best illustrate the internal variations that govern population (in the case of above example, the rate of mortality in town and country districts). On the other hand, as a form of documentation, the district allowed for a whole series of details to be combined: the necessities of life, the square acres, the property-value of homes, rivers, streams, sewage, topography, and forms of labour (classes of people).

It was in the combination of these two functions that the district came to operate as the milieu of population, as one can see, for instance, in the Cholera Report of 1852 and Farr’s late essay, “Life and Death in England.” The Cholera Report reveals the dual function the district played as a physical topographical unit and as a grid-work that could continually be rearticulated and redeployed over

³⁴ *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 420.

³⁵ “Average age of Marriages in England and in each of the divisions, counties and districts in 1851” in *The Fourteenth Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, 26-27; “Causes of death of males and females in England” in *The Eighteenth Annual report of the Registrar-General*, 128-143.

populations until a set of internal phenomena was made visible. In order to illustrate how documenting population through districts had the power to connect life to a definite milieu, I will examine how disease was caught up in the interface of these dual deployments.

In 1850, George Graham, the Registrar-General, was approached by the General Board of Health “to make out a return of all cases of Cholera that had occurred in England and Wales, distinguishing sex and age.”³⁶ The task was given to Farr who transformed the return into a *Report on the Morality of Cholera 1848–49* (henceforth referred to as the *Report*). Indeed, the *Report* makes extensive use of the census categories: age, cause of death, occupation, place and time, all are modes of classification supported by sovereign rule.³⁷ Farr opened the report by praising the role of the district registrar in “recording the name, sex, age and occupation of every person who dies in England—as well as the time, place and cause of death.”³⁸ He noted that it was because “this system of observation and record was in operation” throughout the entire kingdom when cholera broke out that he was able to furnish the report.³⁹

Farr noted that the *Report* gave medical men, state officials and the public the capacity to “trace in place and time the great epidemic through 17 millions of people, settled over a wide extent of the country, in all the various circumstances of

³⁶ William Farr, *Report on the mortality of cholera in England, 1848–49* (London: W. Clowes for HMSO, 1852): A2.

³⁷ Naomi Williams, “The Reporting and Classification of Causes of Death in Mid-Nineteenth Century England” *Historical Methods*, vol. 29 issue 2(1996): 58–71.

³⁸ Farr, *Report on the mortality of cholera in England*, i.

³⁹ Farr, *Report on the mortality of cholera in England*, i.

life.”⁴⁰ The quarterly abstracts generated for the entire kingdom produced a record of “the rise, progress and decline in particular districts” of the disease. The GRO, noted Farr, was in fact overcome by the sheer volume of information it was able to extract from the registration districts. If all details the GRO possessed about the 72,180 deaths attributed to the disease were listed, it would produce an “octavo volume of about 2,500 pages.”⁴¹ As such, the *Report* needed to be designed to provide the “salient facts relating to each locality in a condensed form.”⁴²

The *Report* was produced through three series of abstractions. In one series, the raw number of males and females who died in the cholera epidemics of 1848 and 1849 were compared. The second series regionalized these deaths into the 623 districts of England: “The districts are arranged in topographical order as is adhered to in all the reports. Each district stands in its place, [even] if no death from cholera was registered within its limits.”⁴³ Finally, the districts that were the least and most affected were compared. Using census data from 1841, Farr provided an estimate of the “lowest number that could have been exposed to the attacks of the disease” in each district.⁴⁴ Farr’s stated aim in the report was not to provide a definitive answer to what cholera was or how it spread but to uncover the “conditions of cholera” in relation to “the external environment that determines its prevalence and its degree of fatality.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Farr, *Report on the mortality of cholera in England*, b.

⁴¹ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, ii.

⁴² Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, ii.

⁴³ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, ii.

⁴⁴ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, ii.

⁴⁵ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, i.

Farr suggested that “by collecting the districts together in which the mortality was high we find this striking result: that 46, 592 of the 53,293 deaths from cholera” in the 1849 outbreak “occurred in 134 of 623 districts” and, thus, “only 6701 deaths took place out of 10 millions of people on 49228 square miles of territory.”⁴⁶ By using the space of the district to ground the outbreak in a statistical geography, Farr provided an account of the disease in relation to the different “conditions of existence” of various populations. For instance, the disease was found to be “three times more fatal on the coast than in the interior of the country.”⁴⁷ Moreover, “cholera reigned wherever it found a dense population on the low alluvial soils of rivers, round the estuaries of the Thames and other tributary waters.”⁴⁸ Farr also called to attention the relation of each district’s geology to the prevalence of the disease. “The epidemic was not generally fatal on the primary geological formations—on the granite, the Silurian or the Devonian systems” and “a few scattered cases occurred in the marshy districts...but the mortality was inconsiderable, and below the average.”⁴⁹ Upon reviewing the conditions of subsistence in each district it was discovered that the rates of the disease were lowest in districts where people’s diets consisted mainly of “meat, bread, rice, potatoes, apples.”⁵⁰

Before analyzing what the cholera report can tell us about the formation of the district as the milieu of population, I want briefly to discuss Farr’s essay *Life and Death in England*. The discussion will then draw together these documents and texts

⁴⁶ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, l.

⁴⁷ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, lii.

⁴⁸ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, lii.

⁴⁹ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, lvii.

⁵⁰ Farr, *Report on the mortality of Cholera in England*, ci.

into an analysis of district space on population and the spatial coordinates of biopower. In *Life and Death in England*, Farr showcased the primacy of the district in organizing a relation of life to place and the degree to which this circumscribed projects of state. Farr opened the essay with the claim “how the people of England live is one of the most important questions that can be considered” and the ages and causes at which they “die is scarcely of less account.”⁵¹ Knowledge of both is essential in “teaching men how to live a longer healthier and happier life.”⁵² The essay was structured by “a series of tables” comprised of the persons living and dying in the years 1861–1870:

distinguishing them into units representing males and females of different ages and occupations, losing life year after year by various causes in about 627 districts extending from the borders of Scotland to the English Channel and from the Irish Sea to the German Ocean. The deaths in the several classes have to be compared with the population enumerated at three decennial censuses, in corresponding groups.⁵³

The expressed aim of these groupings was to reveal, through enumeration, the relation mortality “bears to other orders of facts.” In Farr’s eyes it “every death from every cause” was connected to an average number of attacks of sickness.”⁵⁴ There was also “a relation betwixt national primacy; numbers turn the tide in the struggle of populations and the most mortal die out.”⁵⁵ In this sense, by studying each district it was possible to uncover the “relation between death and the mean lifetime of man.”⁵⁶ The image Farr summoned to express this last relation is that each life is a line formed by the point of termination with birth as its point of origin. Men,

⁵¹ William Farr, “Life and Death in England” in *Vital Statistics: a memorial volume of selections from the reports and writings of William Farr* ed. Humphreys NA (London: The Sanitary Institute of Great Britain 1885[1875]): 88.

⁵² Farr, “Life and Death in England,” 88.

⁵³ Farr, “Life and Death In England,” 88.

⁵⁴ Farr, “Life and Death in England,” 88.

⁵⁵ Farr, “Life and Death in England,” 88.

⁵⁶ Farr, “Life and Death in England,” 88.

remarked Farr, “born together [are] represented by an indefinite number of such lines of life.”⁵⁷ The task was to show the relation “between dying by different causes and the living at every stage of the march of a generation through time.”⁵⁸ How are these internal forces that govern the march of a generation to be stabilized and enumerated in way that renders them intelligible and knowable? The method Farr advanced was to “[arrange] the districts of England in the order of their mortality.”⁵⁹ Farr utilized a number of different tables to illustrate the conditions of each district upon average rates of mortality. For example:

Number of Districts.	Range of Mortality : Rates per 1,000 Living.	Persons to a Square Mile.	1861–70.			
			To 1,000 PERSONS LIVING.			
			Average Annual Deaths.	Average Annual Births.	Average Annual Excess of Births over Deaths.	Average Annual Increase of Population in middle of period.
ENGLAND & WALES } 619	15–39	367	22·4	35·1	12·6	12·4
54	15–17	171	16·7*	30·1*	13·4	15·8
349	18–20	195	19·2	32·2	13·0	8·8
142	21–23	447	22·0	35·6	13·6	16·2
56	24–26	2,185	25·1	38·1	13·0	15·3
16	27–30	6,871	27·8	39·1	11·3	8·9
1	32	12,172	32·5	37·3	4·8	3·2
1	39	65,834	38·6	37·6	–1·0	–12·3

⁵⁷ Farr, “Life and Death in England”, 88.

⁵⁸ Farr, “Life and Death in England”, 89.

⁵⁹ Farr, “Life and Death in England”, 89

Of 1,000,000 CHILDREN BORN ALIVE in the HEALTHY DISTRICTS in ALL ENGLAND, and in the DISTRICT of LIVERPOOL, the NUMBERS dying under Five Years of Age from NINETEEN GROUPS of CAUSES.

	HEALTHY DISTRICTS.	ENGLAND.	LIVERPOOL DISTRICT.
DEATHS FROM ALL CAUSES - -	175,410	263,182	460,370
TOTAL ZYMOTIC DISEASES - -	49,761	87,099	171,009
Small-pox - - - -	602	3,331	5,175
Measles - - - -	5,257	11,507	25,514
Scarlatina - - - -	11,373	17,959	26,818
Diphtheria - - - -	4,184	2,425	3,395
Whooping-cough - - -	9,650	14,424	32,551
Fever (Typhus, Enteric, and Simple) - -	2,807	5,401	9,297
Diarrhœa and Dysentery - -	9,354	20,344	51,911
Cholera - - - -	399	1,129	4,255
Other Zymotic Diseases - -	6,135	10,579	12,093
Cancer - - - -	110	71	62
Scrofula and Tabes Mesenterica - -	5,335	8,115	11,694
Phthisis - - - -	2,656	4,469	5,116
Hydrocephalus - - - -	6,604	9,296	14,972
Diseases of the Brain - -	22,692	40,065	49,840
Diseases of the Heart, and Dropsy - -	1,304	1,507	2,038
Diseases of the Lungs - -	27,884	41,476	79,893
Diseases of the Stomach and Liver - -	4,431	4,778	4,874
Violent Deaths - - - -	4,232	5,175	17,107
OTHER CAUSES - - - -	50,401	61,131	103,765

The division of life into three different orders of healthy districts, average districts, and unhealthy districts, was a mode of representation that Farr developed in the 1850s.⁶⁰ A similar division of classification appeared in the second report of the annual General Registrar (however, that table provided only recorded the annual death rate by union). It was not until the registration district was mobilized that life tables obtained the comparative depth as revealed in Farr's 1875 essay. With these means of specification Farr was able to "assert that any excess mortality in English districts over 17 annual deaths to every 1,000 living is an excess not due to the mortality incident to human nature but to foreign causes."⁶¹ A division was then

⁶⁰ Elyer, *Victorian social medicine*, 79.

⁶¹ Farr, "Life and Death in England," 91.

made possible between the forces of death intrinsic to the human organism and those foreign causes that “[could] be repelled” or even “conquered through hygienic expedients.”⁶²

There are several points that can be drawn by analyzing the cholera report and Farr’s essay together. Farr’s attempt to deepen the register of Lister’s district gave shape to a far more encompassing milieu. As revealed in the Cholera Report and the essay on “Life and Death in England” the district was a site in which verifiable conditions of life could be viewed, documented and compared. Subsistence, disease, morality, sanitation, elevation, and geographical features all were to be understood as the forces behind any variation in the extent and quality of life. A remark from one of Farr’s contemporaries reveals the extent to which the district had become the unquestionable milieu of population.

So completely applicable to sanitary and economic purposes have these mortality tables become, that, now, towns are calculated up as salubrious or insalubrious by the death-rate returns which they present. Give one of us who has mastered these tables the death rate of a place and the prevailing causes of death for a sufficient period to prove that the regular death rate is before us, and we can determine, with fair exactitude, what is the state of the drainage, the water supply, the general condition of the inhabitants and the number of public houses, although we may never have set foot in the [district], nor have read nor heard of it beyond the tale of the register. The proverb that “pestilence walketh in the dark” is no longer true; pestilence measured and registered walketh at last in the open day.⁶³

One did not even need to visit the district. Knowledge of its general conditions, its topography, economy, and sanitation was enough to know (and render calculable) the living conditions of the district’s population. The district, initially introduced as a technique of demarcation, quickly became the conditions of life itself. As a system of

⁶² Farr, “Life and Death in England”, 91.

⁶³ Eyler, *Victorian social medicine*, 129.

classification, the measure of the district became both a public and private practice of “biosocial measure.”

How will one know the milieu of population? How will one establish the forces that affect life? The district formed the *parameters* for these investigations. A private essay submitted to the Royal Statistical Society in 1850, “Origin and Spread of Cholera in the 8th District of Plympton,” reveals how fully the categories used to populate districts became generalized as mode of thought.⁶⁴ To inquire into the origin and spread of Cholera in the 8th District of Plympton, one had to consider “the physical features of the district and the social and industrial condition of the people.”⁶⁵ The author commented on the country, its soil, its rivers, and the means of subsistence available in the district, and “the moral habits and customs of the population.”⁶⁶ In placing life in a discrete milieu, the author drew on a textual formula that could have just as easily belonged to a Hudson’s Bay Company district report. By the mid-19th century, then, the categories of the district had stabilized as the conditions necessary to remark on life itself. John Glyde’s *Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century: physical, social, moral, religious and industrial* (1856) relied on a description and analysis of the districts of the county with the aim to reveal “the actual condition of Suffolk in 1851.”⁶⁷ What is the significance of the durability of these registers used to make up the district as the milieu of population?

⁶⁴ A.C MacLaren, “On the Origin and Spread of Cholera in the 8th District of Plympton St. Mary, Devonshire” *The Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 13 no. 2 (1850): 103-134.

⁶⁵ MacLaren, “On the Origin and Spread of Cholera in the 8th District of Plympton,” 103.

⁶⁶ MacLaren, “On the Origin and Spread of Cholera in the 8th District of Plympton,” 106.

⁶⁷ John Glyde, *Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century: physical, social, moral, religious and industrial* (London: Simpkin, Marshal and Co, 1856), 1.

In the conclusion to the discussion of the HBC district, I suggested there was a remarkable durability of this register insofar as the same categories were used to construct the localities of colonial rule throughout the 19th century. From a cursory examination I demonstrated that the registration district shifted from a container of life to a more specific relation of the statistical rates present in each district. What was it about the registration district that allowed population to take on this biopolitical form? Certainly, Farr's expertise and avid interest in vital statistics was a factor.⁶⁸ It is also important, however, to recognize the materiality of the GRO's document base. In both the Cholera Report and "Life and Death in England," the internal laws of population were revealed through acts of shuffling districts. Whether it was desired to uncover the relation between density and mortality, cholera and topographical features, or healthy and unhealthy districts, the process was one of compiling groups and isolating particular districts to magnify the effects of particular conditions.

This act of shuffling established a range and it became possible to define the limits of normal ranges. Thus the district operated to hold life in relation to a series of possibilities. For instance, it was possible to compare death when it strikes in relation to the proportion of acres to individuals in each district and to aggregate this relation into an average through which the districts can be grouped. Similarly, life could be brought to bear against diseases. Through these processes the conditions of healthy and unhealthy districts is specified. The district returns provided by all 627 registrars made it possible to arrange and shuffle the documents

⁶⁸ Elyer provides an excellent overview of how Farr's intellectual and social life was enmeshed with the formation of the GRO. See Elyer, *Victorian social medicine*.

until a regionalized relation of life and place became visible. The sheer quantitative scale of the district formed the material conditions to isolate and group people and place until variations could be codified as internal conditioning relations.

By bringing together these registers as a formula to interrogate the “actual conditions of things,” the “conditions of existence” were made. Foucault theorized that it was in the 19th century that living beings who hungered, laboured, depleted, and died emerged. This being was understood as a production of certain “conditions of existence” or “conditions of life.”⁶⁹ The emergence of modern “man” was not simply a product of grammar becoming language, natural history becoming biology, and wealth becoming economics. Part of this shift involved the formation of particular space-time arrangements that made population conceivable as a scale of rule (of which the district was one form).

Indeed, the parameters set out by the district—that everyone everywhere could be known through the same registers of subsistence, geology, moral habits, flora, and fauna—created a uniform set of conditions of existence through which the modern subject could be examined and inspected. Once these conditions of existence were set, an interrogation of the particular forces that traversed these conditions (such as cholera, crime rates, or moral decay) could be made and “discovered” as the milieu conditioning the life of a particular population. The power of district inspection was that by standardizing the registers that made up the conditions of existence, different types of milieus could proliferate thousands of times over.

⁶⁹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 298–299.

If political rule shifted from the right of death to administering life on the scale of species life, in the mid-19th century this shift was grounded in the dual function of the district. The district at once functioned as a grid-work through which the life-cycles and characteristics of people could be objectified and individualized by a distinct register into some small aspect: the rate of disease, propensity for crimes against property, or forms of economic activity. People had a means to calibrate life as datum, a technique that occurred retroactively to census. The compounded effect of this calibration powerfully impacted the intellectual tone of state officials like Farr. Seemingly, before their very eyes, a form of life emerged that was “divested of all colour, character passion, and the infinite individualities of life.”⁷⁰ The district locked this life in view by building up a registry of observable facts and held human beings “in various relation[s] to time and place,” which offered to break open “the complicated phenomena of national life.”⁷¹ The function of the district was to construct comparative life precisely by providing a uniform, regularized field of view in which particularity was limited at all costs (as Bentham had indeed proposed).

⁷⁰ *Supplement to the Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General* (London: Clowes and Sons, Her Majesty’s Stationary, 1875): iii.

⁷¹ *Fifth Annual Report to the General-Registrar*, 37.

Chapter 10

Constabulary Districts and Making Labour Productive

In this chapter I argue that districting was further taken up in England as part of a project to make labour productive. By analyzing *The First Report by the Commission Appointed to Inquire as to the Best Means of Establishing An Effective Constabulary Force* (henceforth referred to as “the Constabulary Report”), I highlight how a system of constabulary districts was introduced with the intent to stabilize capitalist social relations in two ways. First, districts were advocated as a means to stem the mobility of idle labour and to enforce wage labour as the only access to the means of subsistence. Second, districts were introduced to create a consistent, systematic documentation of the identities of “idle labourers” which was communicated to ensure “criminal” elements were not able to avoid detection.

I develop this argument through a discussion of how the Constabulary Report (1839) problematized “the migratory criminal” and “the vagrant” as criminal elements whose ability to travel through the open countryside of England and Wales without being identified by any police system marked them as threats to the security of property. I analyze how the Constabulary Report critiqued the then current systems of policing the circulation of stolen property as too limited and fragmented, as well as address how constabulary districts were introduced as the solution to criminal mobility. I close by outlining the ways the eventual deployment of a system of constabulary districts was representative of two processes of 19th-century rule: the spread of “standardized space” and “continuous enclosure.”

The Constabulary Report: Problematizing Mobility

The Constabulary Report was commissioned to determine the “insecurity of persons or property in particular districts” in the countryside of England and Wales. It stressed that without a regular police force in rural districts, Parliament was unable to know the true rate of crime. Citing the example of one “rural district” (that “extended from north to south sixteen miles and from east to west nearly twenty miles”) where only one report of “criminal activity” (stealing a loaf of bread) was brought before a magistrate, it claimed criminals circulated through districts and avoided detection and registration.¹ As the commissioners suspected that this absence of crime was in fact a product of inadequate modes of detection, they asked the magistrates: “are there within your division any persons who have no visible or known means of obtaining their livelihood honestly and who are believed to live by habitual depredation or by illegal means?” The answers, apparently, were returned as “a few,” “we cannot ascertain,” “there may be persons of this description but we have no means of ascertaining their numbers,” and “it would be difficult to give their numbers with anything like accuracy.”² Without a system to collect information about particular offenses, there was “no pursuit, no detection and no punishment,” and no “constitutional kind of prevention” that comes from the surveillance “of persons of known or suspected bad character.”³

Given that Chadwick and Lefevre both played a role in the development of the Poor Law system and its focus on vagrancy, the events that followed were hardly

¹ *First Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire As To The Best Means of Establishing an Efficient Constabulary Force in the Counties of England and Wales* (London: Clowes and Sons For Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1839), 3.

² *First Report of the Commissioners*, 7, 15.

³ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 7.

surprising. The magistrates' failure to develop dossiers on individuals and to produce accurate returns on the number of offenders in their "divisions" was linked to a new form of criminality, "migratory depredators."⁴ The report was traversed by concerns with the threat the mobility of criminals posed to wage labour. The vagrants' ability to circulate between districts allowed them to beg in one district and then move on before their presence was made known to authorities. The unconnected nature of local magistrates allowed criminals to "prey on property" in one location and travel far enough way to avoid identification. The lack of a regular system of police left property in transit highly vulnerable to theft. Without the ability to regulate the movement and produce knowledge of the crimes committed by these mobile elements, not only was the character of the offenders in each district unknowable, but also the rate of crime in a given population could not be calculated.

The commissioners concluded "the most pernicious crimes against property in rural districts [were] committed by bands of depredators who [migrated] from the larger towns as from centers; the metropolis being the great center from which they spread over the country."⁵ The operation of metropolitan police forces in most of the major cities in England had forced those in the "habit of vagrancy" to provincial towns and the countryside.⁶ The report suggested that two classes of criminal had developed: a class made up of those who were "habitual depredators, house-breakers, horse stealers and common thieves," and "another class of vagrants

⁴ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 13.

⁵ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 1.

⁶ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 16.

properly so called who seek alms as mendicants.”⁷ The first class of criminal was referred throughout the report as a “traveller.”⁸

In a series of interviews with magistrates of rural towns and villages, the commission inquired as to where the cause of crime in their villages or cities originated. The magistrates from Northop commented, “this division being within the reach of populous towns of Liverpool and Chester, marauders from these places occasionally visit us...there can be no doubt that the greater portion of the [crimes where committed by] strangers from all directions.”⁹ Similarly, the police in Bristol noted,

We have from fifty to sixty persons who live by poaching and committing petty thefts in the country during night. There are a considerable number who have *no visible means of getting their living*. They go into the country where there is no police and commit various depredations on the inhabitants [my italics].¹⁰

The commissioners expressed the primary concern that these migratory depredators obtained subsistence outside “honest labour.”¹¹ This conceptualization is made clear through the types of crimes the commission attributed to travellers: theft of wood,¹² stealing turnips, poultry, the theft and slaughtering of sheep, taking beehives, and theft of potatoes.¹³ The mobility of criminals was thought not only to

⁷ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 13.

⁸ The making of the ‘traveller’ was a curious process of subjectification. The confessions of the condemned were scattered throughout the report. The mobile criminal was interrogated on the number of miles they travelled in a day, their points of call, “how often they changed neighbourhood”, and how many days a year they spent in ‘honest labour’ or in employment. The open countryside, the unregulated inn, these sites were recast as a threat to wage-labour, and the very freedom of movement, integral to free-labour, surfaced as a variation of Hobbes’s ‘Masterless Men’. See *First Report of the Commissioners*, 25.

⁹ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 14-15.

¹⁰ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 15.

¹¹ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 37.

¹² Karl Marx, “Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood” in *Rheinische Zeitung* Nos. 298, 300, 303, 205, 307, trans. Clemens Dutt, Oct. 1842.

¹³ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 38.

produce a “state of insecurity of the property of laboring men,” but also to undermine market exchange as the only source of subsistence.¹⁴ Thus, the report effectively linked the capacity of individuals to avoid wage labour to the unprotected nature of rural towns, as well as to the inability of authorities in these places to produce accurate registers that would have allowed migratory criminals to be monitored and tracked.

The vagrant class of criminal was subject to a similar problem: “There are upwards of eighteen thousand commitments per annum of vagrancy, which suggests a far larger body from which the offense arises.”¹⁵ “The habit of wandering abroad under cover either of distress or some ostensible though illegal occupation constitutes a great source of delinquency.”¹⁶ Like thieves, vagrants “generally lodge in some neighbouring town from whence they issue on their circuit of mendicity during the day.”¹⁷ The magistrates from Somerset noted, “we believe that nearly all the depredations committed within our division are...committed by vagrants or person who run about the country without any visible means of subsistence; but from whence they come we are unable to state.”¹⁸ Or, as the magistrate from North Riding York stated, the “country extending in most parts over a wild and unpopulous district for about twenty-one miles east, south and west, the houses were so detached from one another” that vagrants avoided the industrious house with impunity.¹⁹

¹⁴ *First Report of the Commissioners*, 11.

¹⁵ *First Report of the Commission*, 30.

¹⁶ *First Report of the Commission*, 30.

¹⁷ *First Report of the Commission*, 31.

¹⁸ *First Report of the Commission*, 31.

¹⁹ *First Report of the Commission*, 31.

Drawing on interviews of imprisoned vagrants, the report highlighted how they demoralized “honest labour” by obtaining better subsistence than they could be have done by honest industry.²⁰ Again, the issue was framed in terms of how the vagrant’s mobility undermined the sanctity of the market as the only source of subsistence. No doubt Chadwick, who had five years earlier implemented the Poor Law to ensure wage labour was the only means of livelihood, would have met these findings with some incredulity. The report noted that vagrants were normally marked by the vices of “indolence or the pursuit of easy excitement.”²¹ Normally, these traits would have restricted their interest in “[removing] to other districts,” but the relative strength of police in metropolitan centers had “driven such numbers to rural districts.”²² As the examples in the report indicated, these newcomers were able to collect alms without being pushed towards industry because their identities were not known to local proprietors.

In this sense, the commissioners’ concerns of establishing police in the countryside were couched in terms of the impact migration had on subsistence. That criminality was related to the procurement of subsistence outside capitalist wage relations is hardly novel, but that it constructed this criminality as “migratory depredation” is revealing. In order to be stabilized, wage labour required a police system that was extensive to the entire kingdom. Moreover, mobility and “illegal subsistence” were attributed to the problem of identification. Notably, the report provided little discussion on how residents of a district pilfered and poached for their own subsistence, which certainly would have been a possibility. Rather, the

²⁰ *First Report of the Commission*, 37.

²¹ *First Report of the Commission*, 34.

²² *First Report of the Commission*, 34.

main concern was with “strangers” and travellers who moved into a rural district and thieved or begged “with impunity” because they were unknown to magistrates and local authorities and, by the time they become known, were often gone. As I will demonstrate, the report advocated the formation of “districted space” as a means to solve both of these problems.

Property “In Transitu”

The Constabulary Report went on to examine the “state of property on the highways” and declared that the “high importance to a commercial community of giving security to commercial produce in transit” cannot be overstated.²³ It concluded that while violent robberies were virtually eliminated “systematized petty thefts of great importance in the aggregate” continued at pace, especially along the country’s canals. The commission suggested that “canal boats which travel by night are frequently made use of by regular thieves for the transmission and disposal of stolen property” to adjacent districts.²⁴

Notably, the report advised against the use of special police forces or private constables to deter this theft. Private forces hired for the sole purpose of policing the canals and the conveyance of goods would have created “numerous bodies [of police] not only not co-operating with each other but, as is shown by past experience, conflicting with and thwarting each other.”²⁵ A system of canal police employed by private companies had produced a system that was irregular and positioned in so many “fortresses” around the depots and warehouses of individual companies. In this system, there was little concern for depredations against the

²³ *First Report of the Commission*, 48.

²⁴ *First Report of the Commission*, 49.

²⁵ *First Report of the Commission*, 55.

public or depredations committed against other companies.²⁶ Consequently, the movement of goods along canal systems was without regular surveillance and, in turn, goods were stolen from the canals and sold in adjacent districts.²⁷

How could the circulation of migratory criminals, and the circulation of commodities, best be controlled? The answer, according to the report, was to develop “a general and combined system of districts.”²⁸ Similar to “the administration of the Poor Law,” districted police would create “a system of extensively combined action” that would give rise to “a uniform and extensive force.”²⁹ Such a system would have economized the number of men needed to police rural districts and would have, in turn, become more extensive and efficient. It is worth highlighting how the district was presented in the report as a solution to the specific problems of circulation and movement. The commission ultimately deployed the district as a form of spatial codification representative of a project of “continuous enclosure.”

How would the districting of police resolve the issue of migratory criminal populations? The report stated that the core problem was the large population of “depredators or vagrants [who] habitually migrate from one part of the kingdom to another, the metropolis and the larger towns being centers from which they issue out upon the surrounding country.”³⁰ The solution was to impose a system of administration on a scale that ensured no county was separated from the rest of the kingdom, which was achieved through “a general and combined system of

²⁶ *First Report of the Commission*, 56.

²⁷ *First Report of the Commission*, 56.

²⁸ *First Report of the Commission*, 166.

²⁹ *First Report of the Commission*, 128.

³⁰ *First Report of the Commission*, 166.

districts.”³¹ Ruling on the scale of the district was intended to have two effects against migratory criminals.

First, “in a uniform system of districts rapid communication [between districts] and a community of action became possible.”³² Migratory criminals and vagrants succeeded because they were able to move through districts and commit crimes without the information of these crimes passed along to adjacent districts. A system of districts would have met the primary test of efficient policing in that it would have produce stable registrations of the “persons and habits of delinquents as well as obtain information as to offences committed.”³³ Thus, the alignment of police by district ensured that dossiers on vagrants and on the migrant depredators were as mobile as the criminals themselves. Additionally, a uniform, extensive system of districts allowed officials to develop a true knowledge of the rate of criminality.

Second, a system of districts would have deployed police surveillance in a uniform system. Indeed, in recognition that police measures in one town or county “[did] not stop criminality but [in fact] shift[ed] a portion of it or [drove] depredators into adjacent districts,” the report suggested a comprehensive system of standardized measures where the number of police would be supplied “[in a] varying force requisite for each district.”³⁴ The preventive efforts for the protection of one district “must frequently be applied not within the district, but in other and distant districts.”³⁵ In development of this system, the paths, roadways and lines of

³¹ *First Report of the Commission*, 182.

³² *First Report of the Commission*, 182.

³³ *First Report of the Commission*, 184.

³⁴ *First Report of the Commission*, 160.

³⁵ *First Report of the Commission*, 160.

communication that existed between districts could be brought into an extended system so that “all districts [were] equally well guarded.”³⁶

The report developed a formula derived from the experience of the Metropolitan police. Each district was to be assigned one constable per 1,769 inhabitants or one constable for 4,403 acres.³⁷ Through the equal application of police to population and land, every corner of the kingdom would have been equally guarded so that no district was more vulnerable than another. In addition, 300–400 mobile constables were to be hired and relocated in response to increases in criminality. The additional forces would “bring all roads and lines of communication where depredations or crimes of any sort [were] comparatively infrequent” into a regular system of patrol and surveillance. This assignment of forces, the report noted, would have been relatively impossible to undertake in a system of isolated, local forces guarding their own interests.

What of the protection of commercial property? The report suggested that an extensive system of districts would have ensured that the regulation of smuggled and pilfered goods did not just operate along the line of the coast and along canals. Rather, police would have functioned extensively throughout the country to ensure that criminals did not “run the line” and operate with immunity. The Constabulary Report conceptualized districts as a way to extend rule from canals, highways lines, and coastal checkpoints to a grid-work that extended evenly across space and time.

The report concluded that in order to set up a system of districts equivalent in capacity, it would have been expedient to send a “superior officer to confer with the

³⁶ *First Report of the Commission*, 160.

³⁷ *First Report of the Commission*, 160.

local magistrates and prepare and report as to the requisite arrangements, on which the proper force would be *appointed for the district and put in action.*"³⁸ By 1842, the year after the bill for the New Police system passed, the returns of these inspections were made. These returns listed by name and number the police districts created in each county, and included information on the population in each district, the number of constables assigned, the number of jails and "strong-rooms" in each district, the cost of maintenance, the miles of road, and the total operation expense of each district. Such practices are best understood as the spread of standardized space and continuous enclosure.

The Spread of Standardized Space

As I argued in chapter 8, for Bentham the district served as the basis for "the most perfect and accurate comprehension...of every minutest part" of Poor Law administration.³⁹ The uniformity of the system not only limited the costs of administration but also facilitated knowledge production. Only when people, land,

³⁸ *First Report of the Commission*, 179 [italics in text]. The task of ensuring that police could deal with the conditions of their respective districts could only be achieved, apparently, by creating more districts! In the same year Chadwick's report was released, Rawson. W. Rawson drafted "An inquiry into the Statistics of Crime in England and Wales." Using summary convictions made by prison inspectors and returns from local courts, Rawson sought to "determine the districts into which several counties of England and Wales should be [divided] for the purposes of comparison" see Rawson, Rawson, "An Inquiry into the Statistics of Crime in England and Wales" in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* vol. 2 no. 5 (1839), 335. He decided to divide the country into agricultural, manufacturing, mining and metropolitan districts. Through these districts he developed the following tendencies, "Malicious offences against property [were] nearly 60 percent above the average in agricultural districts and somewhat greater in the counties surrounding the metropolis. Arson [was] infrequent in agricultural districts. "Manslaughter and murder" [were] above the average in manufacturing districts. "Poaching [was] rare mining districts." "In agricultural districts...crime [was] considerably below the average at the early periods of life among the males but rather above it among the females" In manufacturing districts, during the early periods of life it rather exceed[ed] the average in both sexes under the age of 12, but in the next three periods of life the proportion f[ell] below the average in both" Rawson, "An Inquiry into the Statistics of Crime in England and Wales", 344. One district, it appears, produced another.

³⁹ Bentham, "Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses", 204.

and things were made into standardized spatial units was it then possible to compare different schemes of management and, consequently, to discover the optimum mode of administering relief. The details were to be distilled all the way down to the nature of work, number of inmates, square feet, and lowest cost of diet capable of sustaining human beings. Moreover, the placement of people, land, and things into a system of districts was integral to the circulation of knowledge. Inspection radiated inward and outward and effectively traversed the entire system.

The system proposed by the Constabulary Report was not quite as lofty in its aims but the principle remained the same. For political rule to be expedient, space had to be fully standardized. Each district was to have a certain number of officers in ratio to the total population or the total acreage. The purpose was not merely to manage the costs of administration—although the report made it clear that this is a consideration—it was to ensure that, rather than the consolidation of force in urban centers or a presence in provincial towns, districts would have supported a police system that was uniform and capable of equally guarding over the “entire kingdom.” Each person, each parcel of land, was to be part of a district so that not even the “minutest place” or occurrence went unnoticed.

Moreover, by rationalizing police through “a general and combined system of districts,” the communication of information would have been more extensive and rapid as it flowed from one district to another, rather than having been the object of constables and town watches that operated in singular and isolated localities. Through the use of districts to produce a standardized field of rule without a singular headquarters, the dossier on the criminal and the vagrant became durable enough to travel from one location to another. The district served to bring people,

land, and things into one continuum populated by the same authorities and the same principal forces; and, in so doing, the political space of rule shrunk. As Bentham put it, “no place was particular, and no place was out of knowledge.”⁴⁰

When thinking of space-time compression, the telegraph, the railway, the car, the jet plane, and Internet communication technologies come to mind. Yet there is a prehistory from the late 18th to mid-19th century, when the barriers distance and time posed to knowledge and command were beaten down by mere acts of standardization. The threat of a criminal population that was able to “poach, pilfer and beg” with impunity could be resolved, at least in the minds of Chadwick and Bentham, through the standardization of the locality in one extensive network. In this model of power, movement was curbed, not through physical mechanisms, but through the assurance that every part of the country was equipped with an equal distribution of forces and connected to the same system of information. Thus state rule was represented as a form of power that was ubiquitous and totalized. The district was intended to bring all social phenomena, and all places, into a uniform and totalized system of administration. It is with this point that I can now trace the act of districting to the stabilization of capitalist social relations through acts of “continuous enclosure.”

Continuous Enclosure

In the discussion of the HBC system of districts, I suggested the district was directed towards social relations that anticipated capitalist production than towards social relations that were more explicitly capitalist in form. The Constabulary Report was an instance when the district was put directly in service of stabilizing

⁴⁰ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses”, 183.

capitalist social relations. That the 19th-century police system was concerned with the defence of capitalist wage-relations from “idle populations” is far from a new claim.⁴¹ However, what is perhaps novel was the way this idle population was problematized. In short, “idle labour” was too “mobile.” The issue was not merely that migratory criminals and vagrants earned a livelihood outside the market or that they demoralized honest labour by enjoying a more comfortable existence from begging, but that they maintained this mode of existence through their mobility due to the unprotected nature of “rural districts.” This set up leads the discussion back to the thematic of spatial codification and the subjects that were imagined or presupposed within these forms of spatial order. To function, the wage relation had to be given a social presence everywhere, even in places where capital had yet to put people to work. “Free labour” was not just sustained by depriving people from the means of subsistence and forcing them to engage in capitalist exchange. It also required, at this time at least, that the entire social field was calibrated so that mobility of labour, which was requisite for capitalist development, did not result in people resorting to locations and spaces where private property was weak and the wage relation was less developed.

The system of police districts proposed by the commission appeared, in part at least, to be mobilized in service of “continuous enclosure.” After all, the purpose of districting space was to ensure that poaching, cutting wood on private estates,

⁴¹ George Rigakos, “To extend the scope of productive labour: Pacification as a police project” in *Anti-Security*, edited by Mark Neocleous and George S. Rigakos. (Ottawa: Red Quill Books, 2011), 57–83; Mark Neocleous, “Social Police and the Mechanisms of Prevention” in *The British Journal of Criminology* vol. 40 issue 4(2000): 710–726; Driver, *Power and Pauperism*; E.P Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (New York: Vintage Press, 1963), 266–268.

thieving, and begging could not take place with impunity in the unprotected countryside. By the proper calibration of police force per an acre or per a person, the chances of detection of such individuals were to be equalized throughout the kingdom. The wage relation was stabilized then, not merely through the deployment of police, but through their deployment in a continuous, uniform system. Knowledge of crime and of the perpetrators was intended to be communicated across the whole social field to ensure there was no recourse to subsistence outside the wage relation or the workhouse. In this scheme, district space played the role of producing a spatial order that extended the grip of the wage-relation far outside the sphere of production. It can be argued that capitalist production not only emerged from historical processes of dispossession, but also depended, in the 19th century at least, on the development of uniform and standardized social field that ensured mobility alone would not be enough to escape the social relations of capitalist production.

The Continued Inversion of the Spatial Field

One line of inquiry that ran through this history of district space was the creation of interior conditions: the practices and forms of knowledge that informed a relation of rule which was not confined to headquarters or trade routes, but which operated over a social field comprised of internal relations between things and their points of constitution and conditional axes. For instance, the HBC district reworked the 18th-century fort's social field of navigation routes and trade lines and the fort's corresponding register fixed to its walls and gates. The constabulary district aimed to address a similar set of concerns.

The Constabulary Report disclosed that the "old police system," as laid down by the statute of Westminster, was a system of local constables and town watches

that operated from designated headquarter sites. "The great towns are to be walled, the gates "shall be closed from the sun setting until the sun rising,"⁴² and "six men will guard the gates of cities, twelve men the gates of boroughs, and six or four men the gates of towns."⁴³ They were to watch over their respective posts from sunset to sunrise. Any stranger that passed by these gates during these hours was to be arrested.⁴⁴ It was a distinctly localized affair. Constables were responsible for keeping a list of "sir names and qualities of all such persons dwelling or residing in any of their said parishes, liberties or precincts."⁴⁵ Outside the walled city, surveillance only extended along "the highway leading from one market town to another. These trade-lines were to be "cleared within 200 feet of the one side to 200 feet on the other side...so that there [was] neither dyke, tree nor bush whereby a man may lurk to do hurt."⁴⁶ This was the pre-districted form of spatial order: rule extended to main roads and causeways, and everything beyond was not under consistent surveillance.⁴⁷ Districted space, as expressed in the Constabulary Report, was meant to lay down particular ordinances for the regions outside headquarter

⁴² The Statute of Westminster reproduced in *First Report of the Commission*, 89–90.

⁴³ The Statute of Westminster reproduced in *First Report of the Commission*, 90–91.

⁴⁴ The Statute of Westminster reproduced in *First Report of the Commission*, 90–91.

⁴⁵ The Statute of Westminster reproduced in *First Report of the Commission*, 91.

⁴⁶ The Statute of Westminster reproduced in *First Report of the Commission*, 90.

⁴⁷ The parish, and the workhouse ceased to be their own sites and instead were integrated into the spatial field of the district. The magistrate and the city constable ceased to exercise control over the gates and the market roads and instead were merged into the extended field of the constabulary district. Likewise, the HBC fort or post became one node in district space. A similar project occurred in the United States when Joseph Totten was charged with the creation of a system of national defense. His task was to transform the individual fort into a general system where all forts "were considered to be mutually supporting and reciprocally related to each other and to the whole." Willard Robinson, *American Forts: architectural form and function* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977): 86. In this sense, the district formed part of a sea-change shift in the 19th century from a spatial order grounded in headquarters to a relation of rule that was extensive and continuous over an entire social field.

sites, as well as to incorporate them into a comprehensive social field that extended evenly over everyone and everything, which destroyed the “unregistered” world of the “open countryside.”

This form of spatial imaginary not only took on significance with the rise of capitalist production, but it also supported the rule of population. For Foucault, the art of government signaled the shift from ruling “territory and *consequently* on the subjects that inhabited it” to ruling the internal conditions of the state.⁴⁸ Over the 17th and 18th centuries, sovereign power was directed against spaces that had remained outside earlier configurations of rule. “Squares, markets, roads, bridges, and rivers” emerged as objects of regulation, especially within police apparatuses.⁴⁹ Thus, power shifted from consolidated headquarter sites to a form of rule concerned with both an interior of conditional relations between land, people, and things, as well as a more extensive social field.

It was these various projects that used districts to administer people, land, and things which provided some impetus to transform the scale and scope of rule. Power, and therein violence, as Netz notes, was located and expressed in specific headquarters. By the mid-19th century, colonization differed from previous historic epochs as it took on the form of a systematic control of land, people, and things. Fortified settlements along the coast were no longer effective modes of economic control.⁵⁰ Through a constellation of technologies (e.g., railways, telegraphs, and

⁴⁸ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 96 [my italics].

⁴⁹ Pasquale Pasquino, “Theatrum Politicum: The genealogy of capital- police and the state of prosperity” in *The Foucault Effect Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 111; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 223.

⁵⁰ Netz, *Barbed Wire*, 63.

barbed-wire), rule shifted from a symbolic hold over land via headquarter sites to a process of actively seeing and managing an extensive social field.⁵¹ For Netz, it was barbed wire in particular that transformed the use of natural barriers into planned and systematic structures. Barbed wire allowed humans to enclose thousands of miles of land, which effectively gave states the capacity to control the flows of people within this gridded space. Thus, barbed wire and its ecology produced the means to demarcate into existence, and control, a vast social field.

Barbed wire and districts do not seem to have operated in the same way. Barbed wire remains viscerally violent as it bites and chews flesh. Districts, on the other hand, standardize land, people, and things by designation. They assigned people to a register and built up their conditions of existence. Where barbed wire and district space do connect, however, is in that they both formed part of 19th-century processes of inverting the spatial field of rule. The district rationalized and calibrated political rule by creating the administrative fields that served to make people, land, and things visible as objects of rule.⁵² This shift in the spatiality of rule was precisely what was achieved by these systems of districts during the 19th

⁵¹ Netz, *Barbed Wire*, 64.

⁵² The difference between the district and the administrative view of the survey was rooted in the disparity of the permanence of the two forms of registration. The cadastral survey was more extensive and produced cartographic representations of people and land but the survey, given its scale and intensity, was not a practice that could be continually carried out over the same people and places with the same regularity with which district inspection was practiced. As Scott points out “the cadastral map is very much like a still photograph of the current in a river. It represented the parcels of land as they were arranged and owned at the moment the survey was conducted.” Eventually though the changes that took place in land, population, and industry rendered the map’s static hold over local conditions obsolete and “the actual social phenomena the [map] presumes to typify” soon outstrips the simplification of the survey. See, Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 46. In contrast, districts were not a one-time glance that brought a whole field of things into a static and unyielding view. The pairing of districts with inspection was meant to produce an intimate and continual knowledge of each district. One was tasked with knowing things as they were, updating the record accordingly, so that one could speak with confidence on the ‘state of the district’.

century. From the reworking of pre-existing forts, outposts, parishes, and country towns into district space, vast assemblages of people, land, and things were stabilized and made subject to regular inspection. The district was a technique of producing an artificial environment that was best suited for certain forms of political rule; in particular the creation of forms of knowledge that both individualized and totalized people, land, and things as objects of government.

Ruling through artificial environments is not unique to the 19th century. Foucault's analysis of discipline from the 17th century onward is in large part a discussion of artificial spaces. "Analytical space" is central to disciplinary power and can be traced through the architectural designs of factories, workhouses, prisons, schools, hospitals, and town plans.⁵³ The difference between these earlier analytical spaces of disciplinary power and the space of the district was that the earlier artificial spaces relied on the physicality of enclosed institutional sites and not on extensive fields of regulation. Hence, Foucault's question about how the disciplines escaped the closed fortresses of the 18th-century to operate over an extensive social field. As I demonstrated in chapter 8, it was not just the science of police that liberated rule from cloistered spaces.⁵⁴ Rather, part of this transformation was

⁵³ See Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 15–19; Elden, "Plague, Panopticon, Police", 240–253.

⁵⁴ "While on the one hand, the disciplinary establishments increase, their, mechanisms have a certain tendency to become 'de-institutionalized' to emerge from the *closed fortresses* in which they once functioned and to circulate in a free state, the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted...one also sees the spread of disciplinary procedures, not in the form of enclosed institutions, but as centers of observation disseminated throughout society" in Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 211–212, [my italics]. The police "apparatus [must] be coextensive with the entire social body and not only by the extreme limits that it embraces but by the minutes of the details it is concerned with. Police power must bear over everything ...it is the dust of events, actions, behavior, opinions— 'everything that happens'" Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 213.

effected by using the artificial administrative space of the district to rationalize hundreds of miles, road, mines, and thousands of people into systematic continuums of gridded space. It was through techniques of making artificial inspectoral landscapes that it became possible to invert political rule from headquarter sites and institutions into a form of power that was encompassing and systematic over what were previously “open” or, at least, disconnected forms of space.

By examining the registration district and the Constabulary Report I have highlighted some of the effects of districted space. The registration district provided the means to organize the census while the district formed the milieu for population. The organization of police districts generated a uniform system of administration that limited the degree to which “undesirable populations” used their mobility to escape the relation of wage labour. The district was implicated, therefore, in two crucial relations of modern political rule: the regulation of capitalist production and the formation of a biopolitics of population. The next chapter considers some further links between district space and the “gritty” processes of state formation.

Chapter 11

The District: A Template For the Modern State Form

I have followed “districting” as a technique that was used to create a milieu for population and to calibrate the new police force. As a register, the district was incredibly robust. Indeed, as demonstrated here and exemplified in Bentham’s writings, the district was a technique of standardization that allowed for real comparison. The particularity of the locality was crushed and replaced by a pre-determined set of local conditions, under which the social, economic, and political causes of variation were made known. Yet the career of the district in service of the state went a little further. In this chapter I focus on the following three relations that the district helped to anchor and codify as characteristics of the modern state: the rationalization of the interior, the economization of inspection, and the formation of objective relations of rule. Having established how these relations surfaced once rule was carried out through districts, now I flesh out these relations by examining the district returns from pauper districts, factory districts, and coal mining districts produced in England during the mid-19th century.

Rationalization of the Interior

The first return to consider is for factory inspectors in 1839. For their return, each inspector specified the number of days in the past twelve months they had been in their districts, the number of factories inspected during this period, and the time spent on route. “My lord I have to state, that between the 1st of July 1838 and

the 30th of June 1839, I was 152 days within my district,"¹ records the return from J Stuart, Esq. It also includes an account of the total distance he had travelled. He noted that he was instructed "to make a general circuit in one of my quarters of the year, by visiting all the chief seats of the factories in my district; and also inspecting such of the factories in every part of the district on the rivers and rivulets."² He followed this circuit over a distance of 7,171 miles during that year. Given the distance he covered, he frequently worked for 14 hours a day, "certainly on an average for not less than ten hours a day for the time I am in my district."³ A similar format persisted throughout the documentation of state activities. Inspectors of "were to write their names, their respective salaries and the districts for which they act, and the number of coal mines in their respective districts, and how frequently they visited them."⁴

**DERBYSHIRE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, LEICESTERSHIRE, AND
WARWICKSHIRE DISTRICT.**

22 February 1859.

Inspector :—John Headley, Derby ; salary 606 *l.* per annum.

The district of inspection comprises the counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire.

Number of coal mines—

In Derbyshire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	170
In Nottinghamshire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
In Leicestershire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
In Warwickshire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
TOTAL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	221

Visits of inspection since my appointment, November 1855 - - 687

¹ "Factory inspectors. A return of the number of days, in any period within the last twelve months, during which the inspectors of factories have been in their districts" House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, 390(1839): 1.

² "Factory inspectors," 1.

³ "Factory inspectors," 2.

⁴ "Factory inspectors," 2.

NAME of UNION.	NAME of DISTRICTS into which Divided.	Population of each District.	Acres in each District.	Number of Medical Officers in each District.	Salary Paid to each.
ENGLAND.					
BEDFORD:					£. s. d.
Ampthill . . .	Ampthill	5,593	12,262	1	100 - -
	Westoning	4,115	10,275	1	100 - -
	Shitlington	4,136	12,055	1	90 - -
	Cranfield	2,698	8,000	1	50 - -
	Workhouse	-	-	1	60 - -
Bedford (a) . .	Bedford and Cardington, and workhouse.	9,852	14,519	1	140 19 7
	Bedford and Kempston .	9,514	13,398	1	72 11 6
	Goldington	2,363	11,600	1	24 0 7
	Barford	2,513	10,180	1	41 10 3
	Harrold	3,207	12,100	1	38 12 -
	Risely	2,769	12,550	1	30 8 9
	Sharnbrook	2,892	13,210	1	24 4 6
	Turvey	2,341	10,030	1	23 17 9
Biggleswade . .	Biggleswade, and workhouse	6,088	14,200	1	160 - -
	Shefford	6,556	13,830	1	90 - -
	Potton	5,404	14,000	1	80 - -
	Stotfold	2,675	6,300	1	25 - -
	Tempsford	1,746	6,800	1	18 - -
Leighton Buzzard .	Union, and workhouse .	17,141	37,080	1	270 - -
Luton	Luton	12,784	15,233	1	65 - -
	Barton, and workhouse .	1,764	6,500	1	60 - -
	Dunstable	4,342	2,301	1	40 - -
	Houghton Regis	2,213	4,681	1	40 - -
	Markyate-street	3,080	11,074	1	50 - -
Woburn	Woburn, and workhouse .	6,742	16,343	1	120 - -
	Toddington	5,335	14,397	1	70 - -
	TOTAL	120,426	303,717	26	1,884 13 11

Rationalization works here in two ways, the first of which, in the Weberian sense, is to denote the calculability of administration. As noted in the discussion of both Bentham and the HBC, the district was linked to concerns over financial efficiency. The district was used to rationalize the costs of state administration. The number of officials assigned to the district, cross-listed against a number of "souls," factories, mines, and a given number of acres could be correlated with their salaries. District space made it possible to break relations of state down into their component parts, and to know precisely the presence of officials, their routes, and the number of objects under their command or inspection. Thus, if the district was used to bring a field of view into existence (of criminals, population, mines, factories,

courts, and so on), part of this function was to make sure these new interior sites of rule were fully known and calculable and so were centrally coordinated and standardized. The district return as a routine form of knowledge production created the basis of centralization as well as transformed administration from the application of law to knowledge of the minute mechanisms needed to coordinate officials against objects of knowledge and intervention with as little cost as possible. This is one way in which the district revealed its place in the formation of state rule. It gave to state agencies a knowledge of the number of officials needed for a given number of objects in a given field of space, which were broken down by cost. In this way, the district revealed the “true” costs of administration: the number of men needed per an exact geographical area was rendered calculable and the localities that most rapidly decreased the stock of officials were underscored.⁵ As such, relations of state were not merely made visible but the knowledge was developed for these relations to be repeated with predictable effects.

⁵ In May 1839 the Statistical Society of London was called upon “to collect and enquire into Vital Statistics Upon the Sickness and Mortality Among the Metropolitan Police Force.” The report divided the Metropolitan Police into 17 districts in London. “In order to maintain this force “it is found necessary to recruit annually as many as 1,100 new members, the vacancies being created by 1,068 who are removed or retire from the force and 32 who die, every year” in “Report of a Committee of the Statistical Society of London, Appointed to Collect and Enquire into Vital Statistics upon the sickness and Mortality among the Metropolitan Police Force, 1839, in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 2 no. 4, 193. It concluded, “the most healthy are those of Whitehall, Westminster and Kensington; the least healthy are those of Holborn, Finsbury and Hampstead “Report of a Committee of the Statistical Society of London” 193–195. By looking at the records of the police forces distributed in these districts, it concluded “the average amount of sickness suffered by each man in one year was 10.33 days...in the least healthy districts above-mentioned, the average yearly sickness to each man was 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ days” In the most “healthy districts, there were only 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ days of sickness yearly to each man” Report of a Committee of the Statistical Society of London”, 195. Given that all the officers past through the same screening procedure and were recruited in a state of “sound and vigorous health” the variations in sickness is to be caused by the “particular locality or district” to which each man is attached.

The historical formation of the modern file required more than salaried officials, public offices, and permanent systems of registration and fixed jurisdictional areas. In addition, the file was supported by a distinct codification of space. In order to be comparative, the file of the district needed to be capable of individualizing objects within a totalized field of collection. Officials had to be able to declare with certainty that their objects were in fact “their own” and that what was recorded was specific to their locality and office. On the one hand, the act of districting stabilized the file’s relation to its office—hence the proliferation of districted space as highway districts, coal mining districts, prison districts, registration districts, and military districts all correspond to distinct public offices and agencies—while on the other, the question of the file’s particularity (i.e., the use of files to demarcate and hold a given set of objects that could be compared within these jurisdictions) was not solved with the bureau alone. For the file to grasp hold of things and give them representation, these things needed to be tamed and given “edges.” In this sense, the file as a technique of registration needed to be coincident to distinct fields of spatial measure that provided every object their place and limit.

The district was one form of measurement through which a particular historical form of file took shape. It was in the grid of the district that accidents, diseases, strikes, and criminality were recorded in a way that was both precise and individualized and yet slotted into a field of view that produced the edges of modern phenomena. Industrial accidents, disease, and mining deaths were brought together and made to typify the “state of the district” or “the returns of my district.” Indeed, this phrasing reveals the imaginary of the district as a container of localized forces, accidents, diseases, strikes, paupers, and roadways. It was necessary that these

forces were not generalized but grounded in a specific locale because confining these forces enabled comparison between them. It was only by comparison that an internal rate that belonged to each district could be uncovered. Hence, the district was always referred to as “uniform” or a “combined system of administration.” Without a districted spatial order, the locality of individual districts could not be established or verified. The forces that belonged to them, that influenced their rates of criminality, their rates of disease, of birth and of death, did not come into view for they remain particular “so as to put them outside of knowledge.”⁶ The second form of rationalization was expressed in the reconstruction of social relations into objects that were imagined to condition a distinct locality. By districting space, life became legible as a state of forces, which made it possible to target interventions. The use of districts to localize social relations as the conditions of the individual district is illustrated in a district report produced by a Poor Law Inspector on pauperism in Lancaster in 1870. The document reveals how the district was imagined to have its own ‘natural’ rate of pauperism created by conditions unique to the district.

The return, which was demanded after the cotton famine that had rocked much of Lancaster in the late 1860s, opened with a breakdown of the inspector’s district into 55 Poor Law Unions.⁷ It was structured in three sections: Table A was used to contrast the present state of the unions in Lancashire and of some in Chelshire and North Derbyshire” during the cotton famine;⁸ Table B recorded the

⁶ Bentham, “Collateral Uses Derivable From a System of Industry Houses”, 183.

⁷ Copy of the Report of R.B Cane, Esq. Poor Law inspector, dated 20 January, 1870, and addressed to the right Hon. G.J Goschen, M.P., on the pauperism of the inspector’s district, which comprises the whole of the county of Lancaster, and parts of the counties of Chest, Derby and York, in Parliamentary Papers Online (69), 1.

⁸ Cane, “Pauperism (Lancaster &c.)”, 1.

number of persons on relief the Christmas of 1868; and Table C showed the number of people receiving relief in the district at the end of Christmas 1869. By reviewing these tables, Cane constructed two different rates of pauperism: one that was exceptional and a cause of crisis, and another that was an increase due to seasonal variation, taken to be in line with the normal conditions of the district. Through the use of the past records of district, administrators were able to differentiate between pauperism caused by seasonal layoffs and pauperism caused by the depression of industry.⁹ Districted space provided a measure of land, people, and things that were culled for statistical data, and, as shown with Farr, created a space where such data was distributed and the results of census aggregation broken apart to make big numbers intelligible as a continuum of internal, regionalized laws over life. But, and this is key, the district had an ontology and set of effects that were separate from statistical knowledge.

In giving objects edges, confining them to a distinct social field and subjecting them to continuous annual inspection, district knowledge made it possible to generate internal rates by annual comparison. It was a simple comparison that relied on the certitude that the people, in this case paupers, belonged to the given district and therefore formed part of its internal “state.” In other words, by rationalizing people, land, and things into knowable “interior” sites of the state, the district produced a mode of social vision that was complementary to statistics but born of different practices. In some ways the rationalization of the district points to

⁹ This point is important in countering the claim that may be leveled against me that I have done little more than document the rise of ‘statistics’ awkwardly through the ‘district’. The district without a doubt links up with the project of statistics, or at least is complementary to these projects.

an alternative history of statistics insofar as district space reveals that the comparative knowledge of internal rates that statistics has come to command first took root in the deployment of uniform, rationalized grids of inspection. Statistics was not merely the science of the state, but it was a science that initially relied on infrastructures furnished by processes of state formation.

Economization of Inspection

What is it about the district that has the function of *economizing* inspection? There are, I think, three processes to address. The first is that the abstract space of the district allowed state officials to create their own geographical scale of inspection. After all, why not calibrate inspection at the pre-existing physical place of the parish or city or the county? The problem with having made inspection or even registration coincident with these pre-established political boundaries was that the district was meant to produce an administrative field of view that optimized how people, land, and things were revealed and subjected to regular inspection. The scale of the city was too small and too costly to be used as a field of inspection. The scale of the county, while perhaps large enough for a single inspector, did not guarantee that it housed the right objects of inspection. As evidenced by the coalmine district returns, to get an appropriate number of mines under inspection, single districts had to be extended across several counties. One way, then, in which the district economized inspection was by producing an optimal field of administration that obeyed the limits of cost and objects of concern rather than the “natural” field of view established by the borough, the parish, the county, or the

nation.¹⁰ This was one way in which the district economized inspection by ensuring that the field of view was optimal in terms of fiscal costs and that enough objects were put before the inspector to create an objective and “true report” on each district.

Indeed, Chadwick argued for the creation of medical districts that put one medical officer in charge of a district that comprised factories, industry houses, lunatic asylums, and cities in one field of view. He reasoned, “narrow ranges of observation” were often “perplexed by idiosyncrasies” and if too localized the inspector was “enveloped by the causes they were meant to inspect.”¹¹ When observation was restricted to “only one establishment it may be said to be excluded from efficient knowledge even of that one,” and “examples abound...of the errors incidental” to “narrow or small fields of inspection.”¹² Once again, as in the creation of the Poor Law Unions, there was an ideal distance for inspection: a district that was large enough to avoid having knowledge rooted in singular localities and in limited fields of view but also small enough that it was effectively known and brought into a field of efficient and systematic inspection. Arrangements tended towards both the efficiency of inspection over a large geographic field and the use of this field to group objects deemed salient. That the objectivity of inspection, the ability of officials to truly know the state of the district, went towards extended fields of administration was hardly a coincidence—the cost and limits of administration were graphed to the making of “efficient knowledge.”

¹⁰ See Lewes, “The GRO and the Provinces in the Nineteenth Century”, 479–496.

¹¹ Edwin Chadwick, *Report on The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* (London: Clowes and Sons Press, 1842), 195.

¹² Edwin, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, 195.

Districted space rationalized the forces at the disposal of state agencies and confined a series of relations and phenomena to a distinct locality. Officials spoke of “the state of the district,” “the state of crime in agricultural districts,” and “the number of accidents in my district.”¹³ While seemingly banal, such phrases reveal a particular way of looking at the world, and deciding where phenomena belonged and how they revealed the character, the health, and the morality of populations. This technique of generalization was essential to the coherency of the modern file and comparative space. The question that follows is how do these processes of rationalization link up with inspection?

To find an answer, I must step back to the outline of “observation” provided in chapter 2. In the 18th century, the observational registrar was without limit. A minutia of things were recorded and entered into a separate taxonomy. Flora, fauna, rivers, land, and human beings were all recorded in the naturalist’s journal. The observational register formed a text that was cluttered and, despite the careful taxonomies built up within the Linnaean system, sprawled outward, which obscured “the lines of communication” or conditional axes between the naturalist’s objects. Part of this was that nature rather than the district was the object to be populated. Naturalists filled in nature’s laws and fleshed out the inner details of life that were taken as proof of the divine and as a consecration of one’s own piousness.

It was this field of view that district-inspection displaced, but not by abandoning the laws of nature. Throughout the 19th century the laws of nature were kept in mind: “The universe is regulated upon a uniform and immutable system which regulate the animal division of nature... mankind is not exempt from these

¹³ Edwin, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, 195.

laws.”¹⁴ It was that nature ceased to occupy the dual function of both a place and as a source of the laws that govern life. The district colonized place and, as such, it was within the state of the district that the laws of nature were best deduced, as they were revealed in the regional character of human existence. The effect of this displacement was simple enough. Knowledge moved from the infinite place of orders of nature to a spatial field that had clear limits of application. Using district space to divide up population, criminals, police, roadway, mines, and factories not only produced clear limits on inspection but it stabilized these limits as consistent fields of view. By having made the district the field of view than having constructed a field of view through an endless survey of nature’s objects, one was at last able to refine and focus the impulse to observe into a stable practice of inspection.

It became possible to use circulars, memos, and notes to ensure that uniform knowledge was produced over what were once disparate subjects, remote tracts of land, and unconnected objects. The power in this technique was not simply in producing a regime of centralized control, or the ability to ensure that everyone, everywhere produced the same knowledge of people, land, and things, but that the limited space of the district allowed for a minutia of details about people, land, and things to be tamed into a concise and specified narrative. For instance, the inspection of coalmine districts started with an account of accidents, deaths, and the number mines in each district. However, this limited field of inspection could be further refined to produce a more extensive field of knowledge.

In 1859, inspectors of coalmine districts were requested to report on their districts in greater detail. They inspected thirty new categories ranging from nature

¹⁴ Rawson, “An Inquiry into the Statistics of Crime in England and Wales”, 316.

and amount of ventilation to the number of safety lamps and safeguards against steam pressure.¹⁵ The use of districts effectively economized inspection as they gave each inspector a clear spatial field that they were charged with populating.

Confining the social vision of officials to specific districts made it possible to rapidly repopulate the district without the loss of a uniform representation. In one set of returns, coal mining districts brought into view the rate of industrial accidents and the mortality of labour. In the next return, a new set of objects were then rapidly assembled: the nature of the machinery, its efficiency, which sections of the kingdom had modernized, and the effects this modernization had on mortality. Inspection was economized by district-space not only in that what was defined by the boundaries of the district but also sight itself was continually set in a new cast and refined by the most appropriate categories.

As discussed in Chapter 2, this process recalls Foucault's focus on the 18th century as period typified by a history of detail. The outcome of this disposition to collect detail, to rule through "the knowledge of little things," however, is left at loose ends in Foucault's account. To be sure, it was not that attention to detail vanished or was displaced by a more utilitarian and austere form of realist "government." Detail in reports abounded: open pits, the number of doors in mining operations, the temperature of bathwater in workhouses, miles of road, number of safe-houses, and records of the cause of death are just a few of the categories covered. What stopped this information from spilling over into an unmanageable

¹⁵ Returns of the Number of Coal Mines with such several districts respectively and of the visits of Inspection in every such districts since the Act 18 & 19, And for the same period of the Number and Dates of Accidents in every District whereby more than one death was occasioned and of the Nature of every such Accident" 1859 House of Commons Session 1(177), 4.

minutia? Such detail was brought under control by its division into discrete frames of reference. Districted space allowed an inspector to efficiently read the same place multiple times over through different categories, while another inspector read the same type of place through an entirely different set of categories as per their jurisdiction (the greater the coincidence in regimes of inspection, the better).¹⁶ Detail abided by the district's spatial codification, which meant that inspection, led initially by "choice" men pursuing their own ends of classification, was stabilized and consolidated into an object managed through a singular line of political authority. Circular-by-circular and memo-by-memo, what constituted the administrative field of any system of districts was continually recalibrated and what was inspected refined. In the end, this process was similar to adjusting the focus on a microscope so as to redefine what is seen on the slide. If one imagines this being done with a "thousand different microscopes" year-by-year, it becomes clear why, during the mid-19th century, there was an explosion of bureaus and an avalanche of printed numbers in service of the state.

Districts as Objectivity

In their 1834 report, the Poor Law Commissioners noted that the extension of unions destroyed class animosities or local parochial interests.¹⁷ I can trace how the measure of the district was used to help engineer the "objectivity" of the state official. In examining *Report on The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population And On The Means of Its Improvement* (1842), Chadwick no longer confronted the

¹⁶ This appears to have been Lister's and later Chadwick's point. The combination of pairing inspection to discrete localities produced the necessary 'community of facts' to truly reveal the laws of population, or the actual moral, social, and economic condition of a locality.

¹⁷ First Annual Report on the Poor Law, 1834, 12.

question of objectivity solely through the question of distance but through a process of proper allocation. As Chadwick noted, it was common that local medical officers “entered into conflicts caused by the prejudice of their personal interests.”¹⁸ The solution “was [that] some person unconnected to the district be sent to examine the afflicted place initiate proceedings.”¹⁹ A similar proposition that police were to be drawn from a trained force “unconnected with the district to which they are assigned” is found in the Constabulary Report. Again, the idea was that this placement ensured that the efficiency of police officers was not hampered by patronage or local connections. The individual officer was placed in a district to which they were an outsider and moved accordingly.²⁰

The point is that the assignment of officials to areas to which they had no personal connections limited their capacity to manipulate the office for their own ends (or in service of the interests of those close to them). There is another aspect here about the cultivation of the objectivity of political rule. The district officer, the register, and the inspector were deployed as “strangers.” Depending on the form of district under their charge, they monitored the population, criminality, paupers, and mines, but had no personal connection, no personal knowledge, of these things. They were, in fact, to approach the district through the duties and registers of their respective office. Therefore a certain degree of social distance was leveraged through the district, and it was this distance that informed the objectivity of the

¹⁸ Edwin, *Report on The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, 192.

¹⁹ Edwin, *Report on The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, 192.

²⁰ This recommendation was not only included in the creation of police districts. The registers of Mining districts were also limited in terms of their local connections as much as possible. See A Bill For Establishing District Registers of all Mines and Mining Operations in England and Wales, House of Commons Papers Online (567), 1st of August 1844, pp. 4-5.

district officer's assessments and of their registrations.²¹ This so-called objectivity of ruling through at the scale of the district was perhaps epitomized in the role of the inspector. The factory inspector travelled a circuit of over 7,000 miles, mine inspectors visited 158 mines annually, and the highway covered by the inspectorate often ran between more than 21 parishes. Given the amount of space they covered, the inspector was a highly transient figure, moving in and out of many sites in the course of a single day.

Even in this cursory account, it is clear that it is necessary to consider the role of the district in cultivating relations of state that had the appearance of being objective, and, therein, legitimate. The making of inspection as a 'disinterested and impersonal' practice of documentation was not only established through a uniform system of classification that ensured all people, land, and things were subject to the same form of assessment. Of course the creation of a uniform system of classification and categorization was an important component in normalizing inspectorial practices (as once something obtains a universal form it also obtains an objectivity in so far as it appears to exist outside any individual). Yet, another part of the process was that the alignment of the political official's life to a spatial field fostered an impersonal conduct. By having the inspectors travel thousands of miles

²¹ Simmel analyzes the economic relations that initially conditioned the emergence of the stranger, namely that of the itinerant trader in "The Stranger". Yet, perhaps the rise of the district also offers a history of institutionalizing the 'stranger' as relation of state. Indeed, the idea, for instance, that the stranger is "connected with the characteristic of objectivity" especially in those individuals 'who move on' is in many ways speaks to the practice of district-inspection. In fact Simmel completes the loop and brings the position of the stranger back to relations of domination by suggesting that 'the alien', the 'outsider' played a role in the making of political rule. See Simmel, Georg, "The Stranger" in *Georg Simmel: Individuality. and Social Forms*, ed. Donald Levine (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1971 [1908]), 144–145.

throughout a year, or by having them moved to a district where they had no ties, artificial space was used to inculcate a particular representation of rule.

Chapter 12: Conclusion

I started this dissertation with a sketch of observation in the 18th century and linked this study of observation to the Hudson's Bay Company. My intent was to demonstrate that the 18th-century observational practice of recording people, land, and things not only developed a seemingly infinite knowledge of detail but also created a distinct set of spatial-temporal coordinates. Observation established a comparative spatial order in which beings were brought together as typologies, and in which their relations to one another were grounded in nature. Yet this social form of nature did not place life in a conditioning relationship with place as it was differentiated into stable, discrete departments. The "savage orders of man" was a hierarchy crowned by the European. All the way up to Malthus, this relation of human beings to nature did not support a biopolitical representation of population.

In the case of the HBC, while staff and amateur naturalists recorded nature and produced accounts, the knowledge they produced did not demarcate people and place into stable, distinct fields of administration. The HBC presided over a spatial order with a right to rule everything, but it had little knowledge of the interior conditions that made up this spatial order. The spatial field orbited the fort and was punctuated by trade routes and expeditions and a compendium of observations gathered about place. Consequently, HBC's claim to rule was grounded in sovereign right than in a stable, uniform administrative field.

District inspection altered this spatial order in two notable ways. First, the "fort" ceased to form the company's field of administration. Instead, the act of

documenting people, land, and things was recast at the scale of the district. The district represented a spatial field that was distinct, semi-permanent, and subject to the logics of comparison. Second, the development of these units of space that were administrated as distinct entities allowed for a uniformity of classification. Each district was evaluated on the basis of its geographical conditions, flora, fauna, means of subsistence, rates of decay, consumption, and population. The categories of observation were reworked into a means to inspect specific people, land, and things. This deployment not only produced knowledge of the internal conditions of Rupert's land, but it revealed the variation among these internal conditions. Viewed through the scale of the district, population was made into an object that had a conditional relation to the land, and the land itself was broken apart into multiple related categories: subsistence, flora, fauna, annual economic production, a number of people, and so on. The creation of district inspection, therefore, introduced a series of relations that were imagined as interior conditions of place, which was, in turn, made into a distinct set of forces.

As a consequence, the representation of indigenous people in HBC documents was modified. Throughout the 18th century the company had categorized life through generalized typologies of general character, stature, facial structure, and habits. The district, in contrast, created the material capacity to individualize indigenous hunters, record their debt, their productivity, their temperament, and the size of their families. This form of administrative knowledge created a dossier that revealed the economic conditions of life, scarcity, productivity, and average rates of consumption. In this way, district space, in part, formed the conditions for an individualized subject to take shape in a colonial imaginary that had initially

centered on typologies of man found in the orders of nature. The other effect achieved by ruling through districts was the conceptualization of indigenous people as a population conditioned by unique conditions—namely, the environment—of their respective districts. If biopolitics was a form of knowledge built by the recording of population, drawing up tables of resources, and knowledge of subsistence, the district report became a book of biopolitics. Economic individualization and the aggregation of life as a biopolitical object revealed the two extreme poles of power that the district unified in one document.

The first half of the dissertation dealt with how 18th-century practice of observation was reworked into 19th-century practices of district inspection, which led to the development of new practices of documenting people and place. The second half focused on how the district was put in service of the English state. The circumstances under which the district was envisioned and deployed in England were similar to those of the HBC.

Like the HBC system, the district in service of the state also administered people, land, and things, but in doing so it became connected to a number of other projects. Registration districts allowed for population to be compared across England and Wales. The Constabulary districts produced information about criminal subjects and, ideally, limited their ability to move through the countryside without hindrance. As a technique of state administration in England, the district broke down an extensive dominion into standardized and consistent units, within which the movement of people, their consumption, and the sale and inventory of goods were all rendered into calculable knowable objects. The arc of the district suggests that rationalization went alongside with spatial measurement. The rationalization of

people, land, and things into calculable and discrete units did not just rest on the bureau, but it demanded a spatial codification. Principally, the district as a landscape of administration conditioned, in a reciprocal manner, the historical form of documentation represented by the district report.

Through this study I attempted to unearth the importance of documentation by showing it had a tangled and complex history. Placing the HBC and processes of English state formation side by side, I have revealed the remarkable uniformity of the district both as a basic tactic of measure and as a mode of registration. Taken together, soil, geography, means of subsistence, population, climate, and moral habits became a general formula to produce a local set of terms for administration, and, in the case of the registration district, the conditioning milieu of population. The system of documentation expressed by district inspection—a form of social vision that spanned the HBC and well as state agencies—reveals the extensive and disparate sites that developed the modern social-spatial field of the 19th century. While district space was meant to be uniform and standardized, the agencies and institutions that produced this spatial form were both within and outside of the purview of state. I note this not to discount state relations, but to point to the complexity of these relations and their reliance on social practices, sites, and projects of rule that existed outside of and were aloof to state relations.

The other objective of this thesis was to offer a technical history of 19th-century practices of documentation and to show how these practices were picked up in different modalities of rule, namely by a mercantile company and by state agencies. As a technique used by the HBC, the district formed part of a project to rationalize trade and manage indigenous people as economic subjects. In contrast,

as a technique of state, districting had a more profound effect on both the representation of population and the command of the mobility of individuals. This relative sophistication of the district in service of the state was arguably because of the resources and means state agencies had to sustain a system of districts on a quantitatively greater scale. This, in turn, led to a qualitative transformation of the effects of the practice itself, which is an important reiteration of the difficulty of studying the state.

In particular, one of the effects of state projects is the power they can have in consolidating practices of rule, and, in the process of consolidating them, representing them with the ethereal social character of “being of state.”²² In some ways this makes state relations all the more difficult to locate historically in that the process of state formation suppresses the pre-state history of certain practices. The status of the state as a chief ideological abstraction and as a means to transform relations of domination into disinterested relations of rule, necessitates, to some degree at least, that the social classes and institutions responsible for building up the practices and conducts that become state relations, disappear from the narrative.²³ It is therefore tactically important to preserve the district’s historical relationship to colonial rule and “the conduct to observe.” Without this history, the

²² The consolidation of relations and articulating relations of domination and exploitation into offices can be read as hegemony. The state does not entrench itself further by spreading into civil society. The fundamental economic relations of society that are consolidate by relations of social and political domination find their longevity and their legitimacy by being reworked as relations of state, and in being developed this way they are often absolved of their specific social-historical class character. See Antonio Gramsci, “*The Art of Science and Politics*” in *Antonio Gramsci: Selected Writings 1916–1935* ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000 [1926]), 222.

²³ Curtis notes this was the ‘success’ of the educational inspectors. Despite engineering a practice central to modern state administration, these men themselves vanish from view, leaving behind a practice that appears to have no bearing to any particular social class. See Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men*.

district too easily slips back to the status as a unit of measure that is aloof to the domination of human life. It is arguable that the more consolidated state relations appear, and the degree to which they seem objective and under the locomotion of state agencies, the less visible these relations are in terms of their historical specificity. In the case of the district, this history was one of colonial domination of alien populations.

In turn, this historical arc of the district links the state back to disparate and relatively minor social fields and practices. Techniques that rationalized trade, tied people to place, and developed systems of registration produced a form of report that appears to have achieved uniformity and ubiquity over the 19th-century social field. I am not, however, suggesting a direct line of causality. The HBC trade district did not single-handedly determine the historical trajectory of the district as a mode of documentation since there are other episodes and sites where districts were employed. What I propose is that there should be interest in understanding how a technique that appears to have first developed to administrate and rule alien populations in colonial holdings surfaced back in the home world.

I provided a technical history of spatial rule and documentation as a bid to move away from approaching territory from a high level of abstraction. In other words, I started from the direction opposite to Elden's account and worked on territory as a category of rule born from a cellular historical formation. As Marx argues, abstract concepts and categories of thought are conditioned by concrete formations.²⁴ What was needed, then, was a study of micro-practices, those social relations that created the concrete conditions through which the district was

²⁴ Marx, *The Grundrisse*, 101.

deployed as a generalizable technique of spatial codification. By way of conclusion, I will briefly outline some provisional lines for future study that arise out of this project.

The Reservation System

In *The Fur Trade In Canada*, Harold Innis concludes, “Canada emerged as a political entity with boundaries largely determined by the fur trade.”²⁵ Innis, of course, refers to the provinces and lines of rule running between Ottawa and Montreal over the resources located in the West. It is possible, however, that Canada’s spatial history was influenced in ways that extend beyond the supply lines of the fur trade and the resource geographies that solidified into the arrangement of provinces. What about the political geography that was codified by the emergence of the district as a particular mode of documenting human beings and assigning them to a distinct locality? The echoes of the HBC’s administration through districts in the formation of Canada’s reservation system may be a relevant area for further inquiry. Such a study could be approached through the continuity of biopolitical knowledge, and the command of human mobility and inspectoral figures that ran from the HBC district to the modern reserve system.

In terms of biopolitical knowledge, by the 19th century, schools, factories, prisons, asylums, and reservations ceased to be marginal institutions and instead formed the cornerstones, in British colonial projects at least, of the colonial civilizing process. What many of these projects required—and here the prison has been most effectively singled out as a biopolitical project—was a biological understanding of human life. For instance: how many square feet did a human being need to live, how

²⁵ Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 370.

many calories were needed per a day, and what were the best systems of ventilation needed to keep any given number of people alive? While these considerations were not the aim of these reformatory apparatuses, they formed the basic knowledge necessary to effectively confine living beings to a fixed space for an indeterminate period of time. Although Stephen Legg has suggested that this calculative form of bio-knowledge obtained a marked degree of sophistication in the early 20th century,²⁶ the relationship between the HBC district and the modern reserve system may represent an important episode in the transference of biopolitical knowledge of life in Canada.

The HBC district combined the knowledge of a population, its delimited space of geographical location, and its total available means of subsistence. While this knowledge was necessary for the company's rationalization of the fur trade and its closure of failed districts, it also allowed the HBC to conceptualize indigenous people as fixed populations whose biological needs could be measured against the subsistence and land available to them. In addition to being organized by district, the reservation system started with similar assumptions. Peter O'Riley, one of the first surveyors and creators of the reservations in British Columbia, premised the reserves on the same forms of knowledge. When a reserve was created, the total population of the tribe was considered in relation to the acres of land, means of subsistence, soil quality, and fresh water sources. Each family in a tribe was to be given one hundred acres for living, but this was never uniformly enforced.²⁷

²⁶ see Legg, "Governmentality, congestion and calculation in colonial Delhi."

²⁷ In British Columbia, for instance, the measure was ten acres, see Kenneth Brealey, "Travels from Point Ellice: Peter O'Reilly and the Indian reserve system in British Columbia" in *BC Studies* no. 115/166 *Autumn/Winter*(1997): 190.

The reservation system's method of targeting "native" life in order to reduce the social, economic and cultural existence of human beings to a spatial order premised on minimum biological requirements first made an understated appearance in the HBC's system of districts. The linkage between the district and reservation, then, is concretized in the personal biographies of Canada's colonial officials. For example, Sir James Douglas, who has been credited with the production of a skeletal system of the first reservations on Vancouver Island, was the first colonial governor of Vancouver Island as well as an HBC chief factor.²⁸

Both systems of organization (districting and reservations) restricted the mobility of indigenous people. The reserve system established in the late 1870s (up until the 1920s) was deployed with similar considerations on the arrangement of space to regulate mobility.²⁹ There are a number of ways this took place. First, there was the process, carried out unevenly, of allocating land in the reservation as hunting grounds/ ground for cultivation. In theory, each reservation assigned a given measure of land proportioned to each family on the reserve. The acreage was intended to provide each family with the means to sustain itself by cultivation or hunting. Similar to the hunting grounds given out by the HBC, these allocations were intended to be large enough to keep families rooted to a specific tract of land.³⁰ Simpson, for one, attempted to have chief factors confine indigenous people to particular districts by withholding supplies from indigenous people who belonged to other districts.

²⁸ Richard Mackie, "The Colonization of Vancouver Island" in *BC Studies* no. 96, Winter (1992): 8.

²⁹ See Harris, "Chapter 9, Native Space" in *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, 415.

³⁰ Brealey, "Travels from Point Ellice," 190.

The reserve system operated through a similar mechanism as it made rations and provisions available only to those who stayed on their assigned reserve. The infamous, and only partially enforced, pass-card system was intended to formalize the restriction on indigenous people's mobility and to provide officials with "control [over] and knowledge of [indigenous peoples'] movements" off the reserve.³¹ Given these connections, future scholars should consider conducting a genealogy of the reservation system as a form of spatial documentation and confinement that grew from an earlier attempt to rule indigenous people through the HBC district.

The last area of potential future inquiry is the curious resemblance between the paternalist and pastoral care of chief factors and Indian agents. Indian agents, it appears, took over the inspectoral duties of HBC chief factors and the HBC's system of administration after the transfer of Rupert's land.³² The reports collected by Indian agents bear a strong resemblance to the district reports made by chief factors. Although more parsimonious than the HBC district report, the format and information of the Indian agents' reports were similar. Each reserve was discussed as a post within the district and the reports listed the buildings, the resources, the means of subsistence, the total production, a census on population (whether it increased or decreased), and a consideration of moral habits.³³

³¹ FL. Barron "The Indian Pass System in the Canadian West (1882-1935)" in *Prairie Forum* vol. 13, no. 1 spring(1988): 39.

³² For instance, in his acknowledgements in his work on the *The Fur Trade in Canada*, Innis thanks both the company for supporting his tour of the 'Mackenzie River District', and T.W. Harris, the Indian Agent assigned to the district working out of Fort Simpson. See Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, i.

³³ See 64 Victoria Sessional Paper No. 27 A. 1901, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1900*, submitted by Clifford Sifton, (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, for the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty).

A dedicated study of the first generation of Indian agents in Canada would be worthwhile. Future scholarship can address issues such as: were the Indian agents drawn from HBC staff, did they consult with HBC officials, and did they have access to the district reports produced by the HBC? This line of inquiry may further support my theorization that the district became a generalized technique of rule by pointing to yet another empirical site where the practice of district-inspection was incorporated as a practice of state administration. Moreover, it would also contextualize the lines of continuity and rupture in how indigenous people were documented and ruled in Canada during the 19th century.

Districts and Zones

Another area of research that arises from this project deals with the forms of spatial designation that have displaced the district. While the district is now something of a banal spatial designation in contemporary relations of rule, administration, especially of population, requires some form of space-time imaginary. If the space-time imaginary of the district was historically particular to the relations of 19th-century rule and state formation, which space-time coordinates anchor relations of rule today? To get at this question it may help to contextualize the reasons why districts have fallen away as a mode of codifying space for the purposes of documentation and administrative rule.

As discussed, rule through districts was based on a number of contingencies. The mode of travel and the systems of recording and transmitting information were part of the conditions of the district's emergence. Technological innovations in the speed of travel and the ability to record and transmit information without physically transporting documents all compromised the viability of the district as the space-

time coordinates of documentation. For that matter, the effects of districting—surveillance, uniformity, and spatial standardization—have now been replicated by other technologies of rule, which has left the effects of districts somewhat indeterminable from other techniques of rule.

Moreover, population as a principal object of district administration has slipped beyond the grasp of the district. The district is no longer the milieu of population. One reason for this shift is the relative sophistication of statistics. In 1844 the district was critiqued as a false comparative measure³⁴ but that critique was never taken up. Today, however, the argument that the district was a false measure of the laws that governed life would resonate with statisticians. The variability in disease, longevity, and criminality can no longer be sourced to the social-biota register of the district. In comparing districts, after all, there is neither a control study nor a means to show that the laws over life represented by the district are anything more than correlation. While the district had once supported the statistics as “the science of the state,” the rise of modern statistics outstripped the district’s viability as the measure and milieu of population.

Today the branches of knowledge that accompany the rule over life, from health to criminality, are in the course of retreating from the agency of place. The

³⁴ The critique takes place in a brief debate between Edwin Chadwick and F.P.G Neison in the *Statistical Society Journal* in 1844. Neison’s critiqued Chadwick’s advocacy of districts to measure different life expectancies of men and women of various occupations. See Chadwick, Edwin, 1844 “On the Best Modes of Representing Accurately by Statistical Returns.” Neison argued that because distributions of populations in districts were not equal it was impossible to use districts to locate any real measure of life expectancy. Although Neison’s argument would have resonated with statisticians today, he was maligned. See F.P.G Neison, 1844, “On a Method Recently Proposed for Conducting Inquiries into the Comparative Sanatory Condition of Various Districts, with Illustrations, Derived from Numerous Places in Great Britain at the Period of the Last Census” in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* vol. 7 issue 1.

mood in cognitive psychology and even population health has shifted from social, economic, and cultural conditioning forces to the genome.³⁵ Most of these studies are careful to eschew the idea of a “criminal gene” or a “cancer gene.” Instead, they make their start by presenting the genetic world as a product of social and biological interplay. The consequence, nonetheless, is that genes are now a container traversed by unique but comparable internal forces. Every life is now a “district” onto itself. Under such conditions there is little need to develop a grip over life and place in the way that the district operated in the 19th century. In one historical formation, population was ruled through the standardized uniform environment of the district, in another, this “artificial space” now works directly on human beings at the scale of their unique internal biological forces. If the conditions of society no longer support the district as the imaginary of documentation and rule, then what form of spatial codification has emerged in its place?

A future study might consider the history of the district in relation to the “zone.” Drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben, Edkin argues that “the modern judicial order of the west” depends on a “zone of indistinction” where our biological life and political life are made to meet with a marked indeterminacy.³⁶ For Edkin, these zones of indistinction are material: work camps, concentration camps, refugee camps, and war-zones. Ong in turn devotes an entire chapter to the question of

³⁵ See Willem H.J. Martens, “Criminality and Moral Dysfunctions: Neurological, Biochemical and Genetic Dimensions” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2002): 170–182, Christopher Ferguson et al, “Genetic, maternal, school, intelligence and media use as predictors of adult criminality: A longitudinal test of the Catalyst Model in adolescence through early adulthood” *Journal of Aggression*, vol. 22 issue. 5 (2013): 447–460.

³⁶ Jenny Edkin, “Sovereign Power, Zones of Indistinction, and the Camp” in *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 25 issue 3(2006): 6.

zoning political life in Southeast Asia.³⁷ Other scholars have taken up the question of the relationship between spatial practices of zoning and neoliberal society. From a slightly different vantage point, Barry develops the concept of techno-zones in order to discuss strategies of ruling social and political forms of space.³⁸ These studies, however, rarely ask about the historical formation of the zone and its relation to previous modes of generating administrative spaces. When attempts are made to historicize “zones,” they are taken to be the product of neoliberal rationalities.³⁹ Yet the zone appears, in some ways at least, as the conditional negation of 19th-century district space.

The district served to bring people, land, and things into a uniform, and therefore comparable, spatial field. As a strategy, it allowed for relations of state to be standardized into a permanent social field of administration. The zone can be analyzed as an eruption or a departure from the standardized spatial order of districted space. The zone denotes a state or crisis where the uniformity made possible by using districts to hold life and general processes has been broken. When zones appear now, they are often in reference to social, economic, and biological crisis. One speaks of “Ebola zones,” “conflict zones,” “hot-zones,” or even, “suicide zones,” all of which designate spaces of disruption or assemblages of people, land, and things that are irregular and present a problem or obstacle to the regularity of social life and political rule. The relation then of the district to the zone is that the

³⁷ Aihwa Ong, “Zoning Technologies in East Asia” in *Neoliberalism as Exception* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 97–220.

³⁸ Andrew Barry, “Technological Zones” *European Journal of Social Theory* vol. 9 issue 2(2006): 239-253.

³⁹ Mathew Kuriakose, “Neoliberal Zoning and the new Spatialities of Exception in India” *International Journal of Social and Allied Research* vol. 2 issue 3 (2014).

zone cannot be contemplated until the social field has been standardized and made into a stable object of regulation (until the equilibrium condition or “internal” state of population is made known vis-à-vis the bureau).⁴⁰ Without the district’s infrastructure to bring life and resources under regular inspection and standardization, the social anxieties and political concerns expressed by the zone make little sense.

Similarly, when zones are deployed, they are imposed as departures from the regularity of political rule. Zones are a form of spatial order that belong to a declaration that an area will fall under a new set of practices and will be conceived of within a field of rule that departs from how relations of state are otherwise organized. Green-Zones, Economic Development Zones, and Export Processing Zones all designate a form of place that will be ruled to manage a particular problem; once this problem is solved, the zone vanishes, though often not without a residual landscape. Unlike the district, the zone does not work to centralize land, people, and things within a permanent, standardized, and gridded imagination. The zone is not in and of itself a technique of inspection though it can be equipped with inspectorial practices. As a form of codifying space, the zone is an impromptu designation and largely a means to quarantine the social, economic, and political conditions established within the space of the district from a set of exceptional

⁴⁰ The zone takes shape ‘physically and socially’ in contradistinction to the increasing pacification of social life. For pacification and the formation of the bureau see Weber, *Essays on Sociology*, 213. Norbert Elias remarks on the spatiality of pacification in his discussion of the taming of forests, meadows, mountains, and roadways from sites of danger into calculable regions that elicit little fear. We may see how the district’s uniformity and standardization of land people and things into predictable registers marks it as one technique of producing a pacified environment. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (London: Blackwell Press, 1978): 41.

practices that could not be sustained across the entire social field. After all, to do so would be to negate the designation that the zone is meant to spatially codify.

A future research project could examine what appears to be one of the first zones to make an etymological and physical appearance in the 20th century: the war zone. As a form of spatial codification, the war zone both designated a set of practices quarantined from the rest of the social field and, at the same time, denoted disruption of the standardized spatial order represented by the district. Districts and zones as modes of codifying space might tell us something about the history and dynamics of capitalist societies. They stabilize productive relations, introduce variability to overcome the limits posed by standardization, and they are essential in balancing the forms of power represented by the concept of biopolitics.

There is a grand historical irony that the young men and women in World War I were, in many ways, the social-biological products of district rationalization. They were born into districts, their health was optimized by those who took up Farr's conception of healthy and unhealthy districts, and they were even collected for war by military recruitment districts. No element of their life processes was left untouched by districted space. After all this careful accounting and auditing of the biosocial forces that made up the "march of a generation," they were deposited in the war zone to be killed en masse. Thus there was the peculiar meeting of one form of spatial measure tied up with the administration of life and the other form that epitomized what Foucault referred to as the sovereign's right to murder.

Provisionally, it may be interesting to think of the war-zone as a distinct set of spatial-temporal coordinates devised to organize the destruction of the life and the productive forces (represented as things) accumulated by district-registers. The

career of the district in the 19th century may help us understand why the zone makes its historical appearance from the 20th century to the present as a space of irregularity or disruption. Its coherency now marked by its opposition to the uniform, stable, and calculable—in short, pacified—spatial order of district space.

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