

# The „vulnerable“ as „becoming dangerous“: The relevance of a Foucaultian framework for studying the „securitization“ of climate change

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# Research questions and hypothesis

## Research questions

Is the articulation of climate change as a security issue related to a shift in international climate policy?

What is the contribution of Foucault's biopolitical security dispositif to answering this question?

## Hypothesis:

What others study as failed "securitization" is better understood as a form of routine liberal risk management that has rendered climate change governable from the beginning.

# Outline of the presentation

There is a continuity of a biopolitical risk management

Different *variants* of this risk management have informed policymaking on

- Mitigation
- Adaptation
- Migration management/Disaster preparedness

Conclusions

# 1. Shifting meanings of the risk of „climate change“

## Nature of the „threat“



Emission problem

## Technology of biopolitical risk management



Mitigation

# 1. Shifting meanings of the risk of „climate change“

## Nature of the „threat“



Emission problem

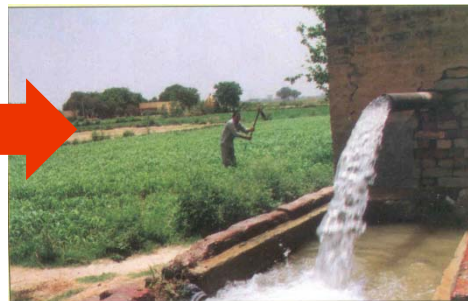


Impact problem

## Technology of biopolitical risk management



Mitigation



Adaptation

# 1. Shifting meanings of the risk of „climate change“

## Nature of the „threat“



Emission problem

2001



Impact problem

2006

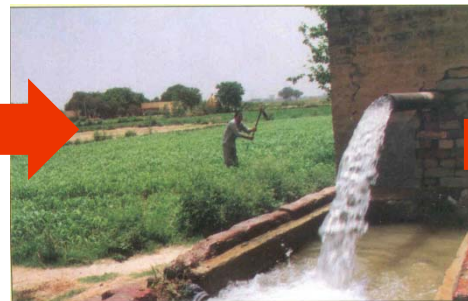


Security problem

## Technology of biopolitical risk management



Mitigation



Adaptation



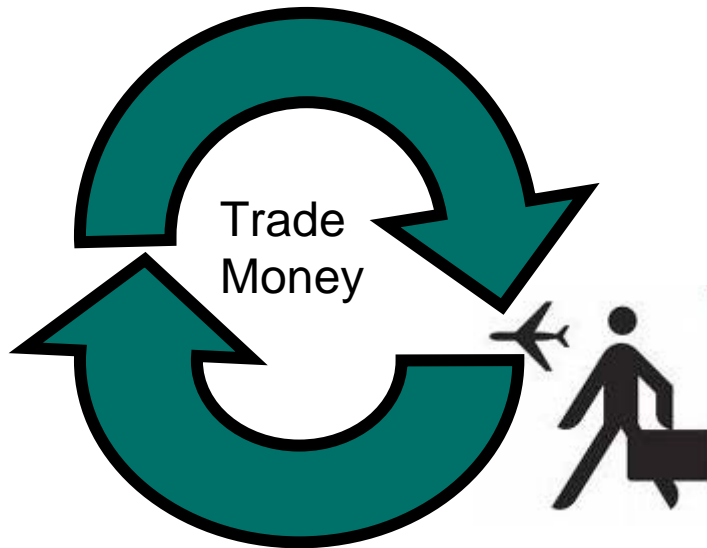
Refugee and conflict management

# No.1 Probability-based risk management (Foucault):



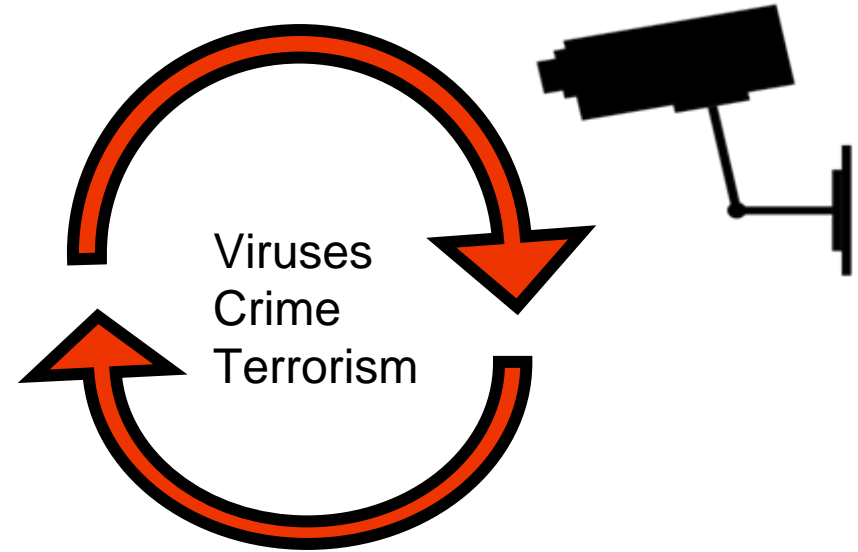
Risk management secures the population by securing circulation from elements that pose a danger to the continuation of circulation.

# No.1 Probability-based risk management (Foucault)



MORE

Maximise good circulation.  
Govern by regulation.



LESS

- Keep bad circulation at a „tolerable“ level.
- Target „risk groups“.



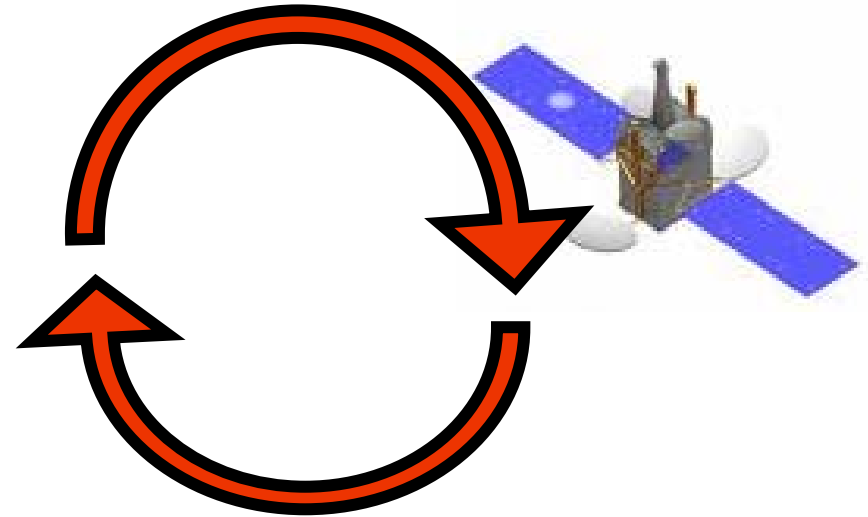
# The threat of „excessive“ emissions: Mitigation as probability-based biopolitical risk management



## NORMAL

Fossil-fuel-based capitalist economy

Maximise economic growth.

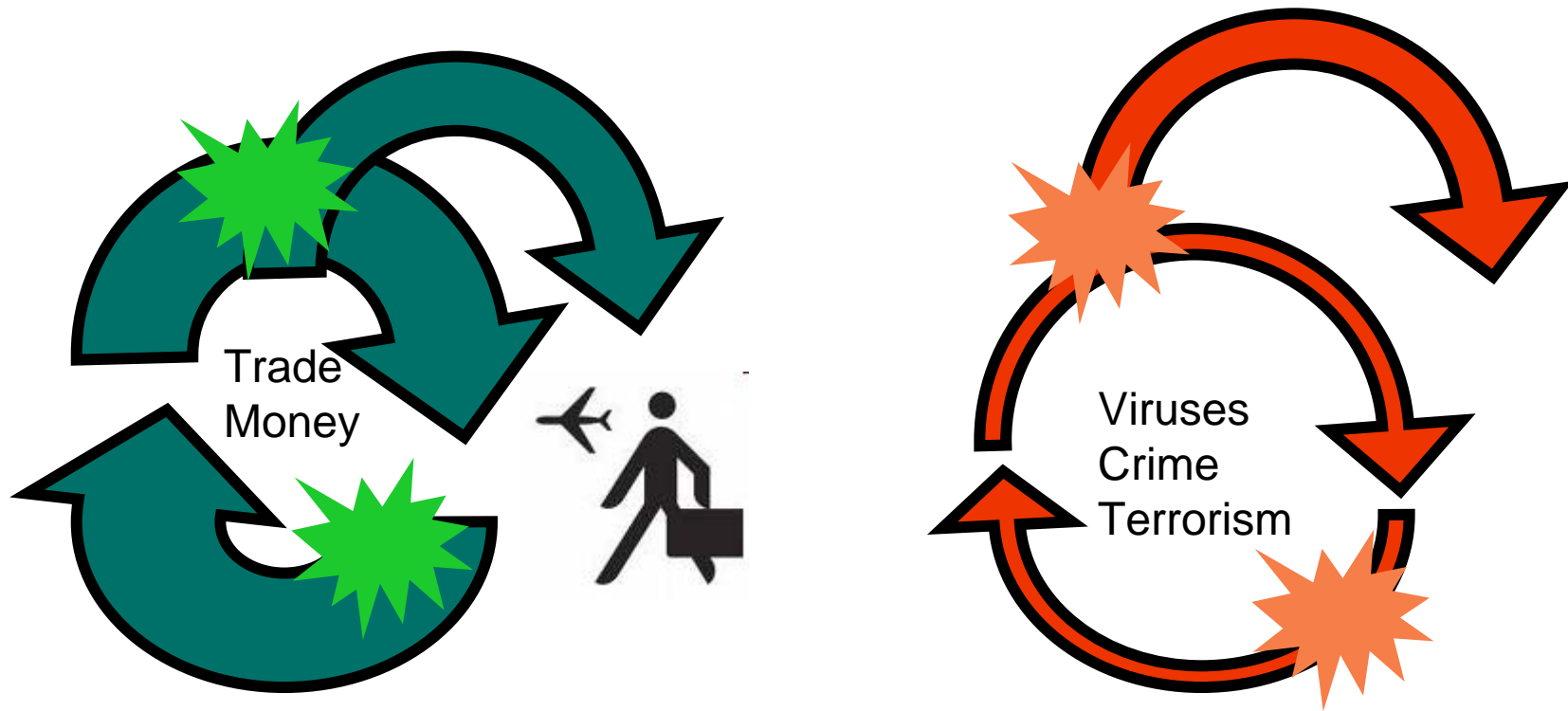


## The PROBLEM

Excessive emissions causing climate change

Keep greenhouse gas emissions at a „tolerable“ level.

# No.2 Risk management through contingency (Dillon)



Risks escape calculability.

Securing the population by navigating contingency.

Securing the population by enhancing the capacity to transform and regenerate.

# The threat of „dangerous“ impacts of climate change: Adaptation in two forms of biopolitical risk management

## „Scientific framing“ (dominant)

- Vulnerability= susceptibility to impacts of climate change
- Adaptation= moderate or offset damages of predicted impacts
- Focus on technology
- Risk groups= vulnerable economic sectors, regions and people



## „Human security frame“ (marginalised)

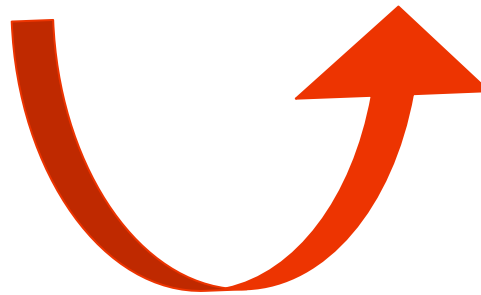
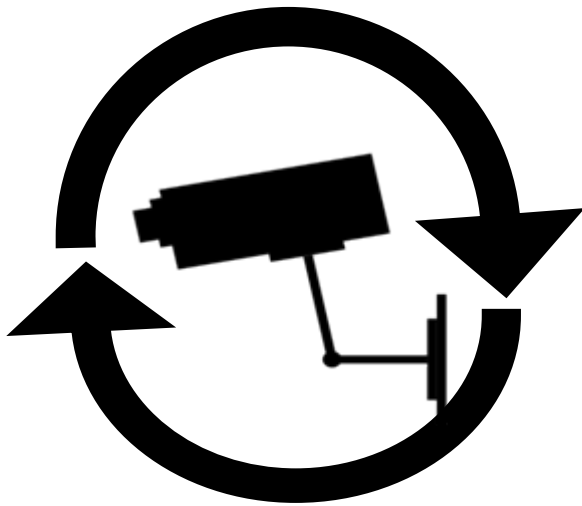
- Vulnerability = a product of reduced access to entitlements
- Adaptation= enhance capability to cope with change
- Focus on empowerment
- Risk groups= currently disadvantaged groups



# No.3 How „risk groups“ can be rendered governable as „dangerous“ (Bigo’s ban-opticon)

Secure the circulation of the masses

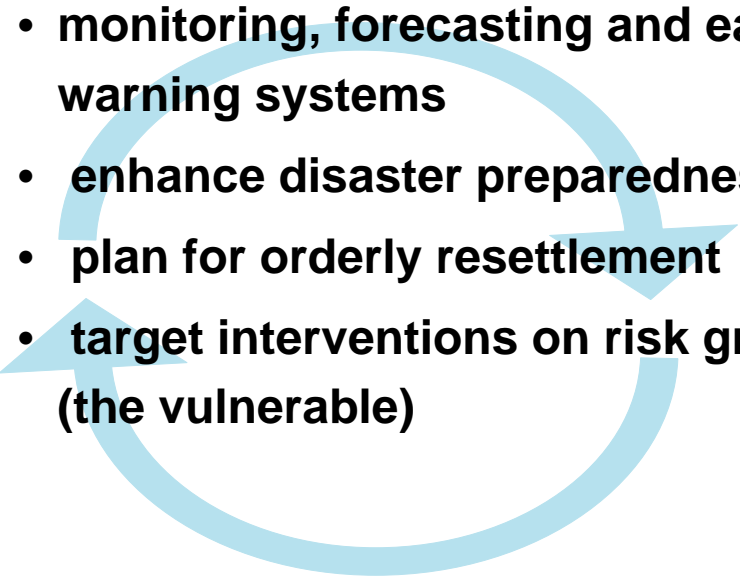
Ban the few „dangerous“



The „risk groups“ can be marked as „dangerous“ to circulation.

# The „securitization“ of climate change in Foucaultian perspective

## Routine biopolitical risk management of *secondary* climate change impacts

- **Keep disruptions at tolerable level**
  - **monitoring, forecasting and early warning systems**
  - **enhance disaster preparedness**
  - **plan for orderly resettlement**
  - **target interventions on risk groups (the vulnerable)**
- 

# The „securitization“ of climate change in Foucaultian perspective

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## Risk groups as becoming „dangerous“

- *Vulnerability indices* can be developed further to project when the „vulnerable“ might be „becoming dangerous“
- „humanitarian“ interventions, more border controls etc. could be legitimated



# Preliminary findings

1. Climate change has been rendered governable by the biopolitical security dispositif from the beginning.
2. The identified „threat“ posed by climate change has changed over time, so have the practices of risk management.
3. What others have analysed as (failed) „securitization“ of climate change is better understood as routine risk management of the secondary impacts of climate change.
4. Routine risk management can under certain conditions enable illiberal practices/sovereign power.