

The Onopticon: Collected Works

A Research Programme in Five Movements on Infrastructural Sovereignty, Homovictimus and the Reality Paradigm

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Reality does not precede power. In the cases named here, power composes the field within which reality is met.

Where Onopticon looks, the human does not appear: the target appears, the risk appears, the score. I name the gaze before it finalises me.

Why Five Volumes

The works collected here were written in sequence, but they are not a sequence of separate papers. They are the five movements of a single research programme, and the programme has a single object: the regime of infrastructural sovereignty this corpus calls the *Onopticon*, in which technical systems pre-process the conditions of recognition, access, mobility and risk before ordinary decision begins. Each volume takes up one of the five questions that a claim of this magnitude must answer in order, because each later question presupposes the settlement of the earlier one. One cannot ask how a power is distributed before establishing that it exists; one cannot audit the evidence for a power before naming the claims that evidence must support. The order of the volumes is the order of the questions, and the order of the questions is not editorial but logical.

This general introduction does the one thing the individual volumes, absorbed each in its own task, cannot do for themselves: it states the question they share, sets out the map that shows how they divide the labour of answering it, and names the historical thesis that runs beneath all five as their common ground. It adds no argument to the programme. It makes visible the architecture the programme already has.

The Programme at a Glance

Read across, the table states each volume's driving question, what that volume establishes, and the tier of evidence on which it rests. Read down, it is the anatomy of a single claim examined from five sides.

Volume	Driving question	What it establishes	Principal evidence
I · Packaged Reality	What is the Onopticon?	<i>A different object of power</i> — infrastructural imposition, not governmentality — and the four-condition threshold that bounds it	Conceptual, with a documented core
II · Testing the Onopticon	Can it be empirically demonstrated?	The threshold submitted to one fully worked, adjudicated case — Robodebt — with confirmatory instances	Official inquiry + adjudicated settlement
III · The Uneven Reach	How is it differentially distributed?	<i>Homovictimus</i> allocated along race, gender, class and migration status — a distribution of exposure, not an essence of groups	Adjudicated and regulatory cases, read for distribution
IV · The Evidentiary Audit	How strong is the evidence for each claim?	Every central claim fixed to a primary source and an explicit status; the threshold shown to be able to exclude	A meta-level source-and-status audit
V · The Single Circuit	Does the whole object stand up in one constitutive actor?	Palantir's cross-domain operational record — war, health, border — as the candidate for <i>documented Onopticon proper</i>	Operational–procurement–litigation fact

A further horizon stands beyond the fifth volume, one the programme points toward but does not yet document: how far does infrastructural power reach past the administration of population life into the engineering of biological response — the reward-system tuning of hyper-palatable food at population scale, the laboratory control of cellular response? Here corporate intent is now disclosed and the reward mechanism is peer-reviewed (though its cellular form is biophysically contested); and at the production frontier of cultured meat what is *documented* is a constitutive capacity and its corporate-and-state actors — a *pre-closure biological constitution* — not the closure of that capacity into a compulsory regime, at which frontier the state is at present reasserting itself by prohibition. That horizon is named here honestly, not asserted as a result. The programme therefore has

five volumes and one contested biological frontier — and the reason for that shape is the historical thesis to which the introduction now turns.

The Historical Backbone: Three Overlapping Physics of Power

Beneath the five volumes runs a single historical thesis, stated here in one place because in the volumes themselves it is dispersed. The thesis is that the composition of the field of reality has passed through, and now runs across, three distinct *physics of power* — three different ways in which the conditions of a life are set before that life begins to act. The word "physics" is chosen over "era" deliberately, and the reason is the whole point of the thesis.

The first physics is *conventional and institutional*. Here the composers of the reality-field are law, the court, the parliament, the school, the church and the market: the classical institutions that classify persons, license activities, distribute recognition and set the terms of appearance. This physics does not vanish at any later point in the story, and the corpus depends on the fact that it has not. Its power arranges and conducts subjects and processes that already exist; it is, in the vocabulary of the theory, a power that governs rather than one that imposes the field itself.

The second physics is *algorithmic and infrastructural*. Here private technical infrastructures pre-compose the field of reality — the access regime, the data order, the terms of consumption and work — while the state licenses, procures, protects and enforces the coercive effects that result. This is the division of constitutive labour the theory names, and its signature is not visibility, as in the Panopticon, but *pre-imposition*: the conditions of recognition and access are decided before the subject arrives, through infrastructures the subject can neither author nor exit. This physics is the direct object of the four volumes.

The third is not yet a settled physics but a *frontier*: the reach of infrastructural power past the statistical administration of population life into the engineered responsiveness of the individual organism. The programme names this frontier and probes its edge; it does not claim to have mapped it. It is called a frontier, and not a destination, on purpose — to refuse the teleology that would read the three physics as an inevitable march toward a foretold end.

The decisive qualification is that these three are not clean, successive eras in which each supersedes the last, but *overlapping and co-present physics* that operate at once. The conventional has not been abolished; it has lost part of its constitutive centrality to infrastructural force, which is a different and more precise claim. And the corpus proves this overlap performatively, by its own method: it documents the Onopticon almost entirely through the instruments of the conventional physics — a Court of Justice judgment, a national court ruling, a data-protection authority's fine, a royal commission's report. The fourth volume, the evidentiary audit, rests wholly on these classical institutions. Were the conventional physics truly gone, there would be no SCHUFA judgment to cite and no Robodebt commission to quote; the very possibility of auditing infrastructural power depends on the survival of the institutions the second physics is said to have displaced. The overlap is therefore not asserted in these pages but demonstrated by them. Three physics, co-present and unequal; five movements to examine the second where it can be documented; and one contested frontier, named honestly as the work that remains.

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THE ONOPTICON · I

Packaged Reality

*Onopticon, Homovictimus and Infrastructural Sovereignty — the Theory, with an
Empirical Appendix*

Abstract

This article names, and then submits to test, a regime of infrastructural sovereignty it calls *Onopticon*: an order in which technical systems pre-process the conditions of recognition, access, mobility, risk and institutional action before ordinary decision begins, and in which — at its biological edge — they reach past the administration of population life into the engineered responsiveness of the individual organism. Its central claim is not that Onopticon is a later stage of governmentality but that it is a *different object of power*: where governmental power arranges and conducts a subject it leaves free to act, this power imposes and forecloses; and where governmental power centres on the state's administration of population, this power turns on a division of constitutive labour in which corporate infrastructures build the field of reality whilst the state licenses, procures, protects and enforces it. The argument is deliberately double. Rhetorically it is a manifesto: power today holds analogue and digital capacities — imposing, penetrating, steering and reality-constituting — that no expanded narrative can fully render, and the first act of resistance is to name them. Analytically it is a model with a threshold and a falsification protocol, so that the name is not a striking neologism but a claim that can be tested against rival theories. The threshold is graded into three statuses: *documented Onopticon proper* requires all four conditions — compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition, documented feedback, and weak contestability issuing in foreclosure — at the top evidentiary tier; where the two necessary core conditions are documented and the corroborating two evidenced below it, the case is *provisional Onopticon*; and where only the core is documented, *Onoptic imposition*. Three cases reach provisional status on the documentary record — algorithmic credit scoring, automated welfare, and migration enforcement — examined here through primary sources: the Court of Justice's *SCHUFA* judgment, the Dutch *SyRI* ruling and childcare-benefits scandal, the Australian *Robodebt* Royal Commission, and Palantir's ICE contracts through *ImmigrationOS*. Documented Onopticon proper is left a deliberately empty category, the single-circuit case that would occupy it named as the programme's next empirical target rather than claimed. The regime's boldest extension is biological, and its status is set with care: the reward-system engineering of hyper-palatable food at population scale and the magnetogenetic control of cellular response at laboratory precision are one constitutive logic in two technically distinct mechanisms — the engineering of biological response, a reach biopolitics does not name — whilst at the production frontier of cultured meat the constitutive apparatus and its corporate-and-state actors are *documented*, their closure into a compulsory regime not. By the article's own threshold food is packaging, cellular modulation (biophysically contested) a boundary-capacity, and the cultured-meat actors a *pre-closure biological constitution* — none of them Onopticon proper. The subject-position so produced is *Homovictimus*: held responsible as an agent whilst stripped of the conditions of agency. It roots the regime in an analogue genealogy — education, culture, art, law, economy and media as the pre-algorithmic infrastructures of categorisation — and marks the rupture as the passage from analogue pre-processing to algorithmic pre-imposition. The relation to packaging is one-directional; the theory is positioned against both the legibility–classification–assemblage tradition (Scott, Bowker and Star, Haggerty and Ericson, Bratton) and the corporate-power canon (Pasquale, Cohen, Srnicek, Rahman, Yeung, Viljoen); and the conditions that would lower its status are stated in advance.

Keywords: Onopticon, Homovictimus, Reality Paradigm, infrastructural imposition, environmental structuring, pre-processing, biological responsiveness, dopamine, credit scoring, automated welfare, migration enforcement, analogue genealogy, categorisation, pre-imposition, state–corporate assemblage, functional sovereignty, right to opacity

PART I — THEORY: THE GRAMMAR OF IMPOSED REALITY

1. Introduction: From Packaging to Imposed Reality

A package on a shelf does more than protect its contents; it defines, standardises, prices and renders them desirable, and it speaks for the content precisely to the degree that the content falls silent. The wager of this article is that the same operation is now applied to the human being — across food, education, health, legal existence, taste, emotion and time the individual is standardised, labelled, shelved and consumed — and that leaving this at the level of metaphor abandons it where it is most needed: at the level of a theory of sovereignty. Packaging is the everyday and visible surface of contemporary power. The deeper structure to which it sometimes, though not always, points is a regime in which the very field of reality is technically pre-processed. That regime has a name, and the name is *Onopticon*.

One claim must be stated at the outset, because everything else depends upon it and because the temptation to soften it is strong. *Onopticon* is not offered as a sharper governmentality or a later Foucault. It is the diagnosis of a *different object of power* — different in its actor, in its operation, and in the reality it produces. Governmental power, even in its most environmental forms, arranges, classifies, disciplines and conducts a subject it leaves free to act; the power named here imposes the conditions of that action, closes the livable options, makes dependency non-optional, and then returns the outcome to the subject as personal responsibility. The difference between arranging and imposing is not one of degree. Arrangement organises the people and processes that already exist; imposition determines in advance which reality will exist at all. And the actor of this imposition is, increasingly, not the state but the corporation — not because the state has withdrawn, but because a division of constitutive labour has formed: private infrastructures build the reality-field (the access regime, the data order, the consumption and biological environment, the terms of work), whilst the state legalises, purchases, shields and enforces its coercive effects. To read *Onopticon* back into Foucault is therefore to mistake its object; the relation to Foucault may be drawn afterwards, as contrast, but not taken as the point of departure.

Onopticon is not the digital heir of the Panopticon; it belongs to another register altogether. The Panopticon organises visibility and manufactures discipline through internalised control. *Onopticon* determines, in advance, how the subject will be connected to the world at all: through which gateways it will pass, within which systems it will be recognised, at which thresholds it will be slowed, ranked, blocked or activated. The Panopticon asks who is visible and how visibility disciplines. *Onopticon* asks who, under what conditions, in what form and to what extent may access which domains — and answers before the subject arrives. Surveillance does not vanish here; it is demoted from end to instrument, one element of a wider machinery of *pre-processing* that turns access itself into a threshold of life.

Two commitments hold this argument together, and they are meant to pull in different directions. The first is a manifesto's commitment to force. The analogue and digital capacities now assembled by states and firms — capacities at once broadly imposing, deeply penetrating, quietly steering and openly reality-constituting — exceed what any expanded theoretical narrative, this one included, can fully render. That excess is not a reason for silence but the very ground of the wager: what cannot be exhaustively described must at least be named, addressed, made answerable. The second commitment is a scientist's commitment to constraint. Because the object outruns narration, it must be met not with totalising description but with a stated threshold, documented

cases and pre-registered conditions of failure. Onopticon is offered in both registers at once — as an accusation that can be pronounced and as a model that can be broken.

2. The Paradigmatic Rupture: A Different Object, Not a Later Stage

It is tempting to introduce Onopticon through a comfortable lineage — Panopticon, control society, surveillance capitalism, algorithmic governmentality, and then Onopticon. The sequence teaches well and misleads worse, because it reduces a change in the level of analysis to a succession of stages. The Panopticon belongs to a world whose central problem is *visibility*; the control society, to one whose problem is *modulation*; surveillance capitalism, to one whose problem is *extraction and prediction*. Each remains indispensable and none defines the register at issue. Stated without hedging: the Panopticon concerns visibility, the control society modulation, surveillance capitalism extraction — and Onopticon concerns the pre-structuring of the reality within which seeing, acting, moving and appealing become possible at all.

The classical genealogy is therefore used here as a set of *negative reference points*, not as a pedigree. Foucault analysed discipline and the docile body, and later took population, health and economic conduct as the objects of biopolitics and governmentality (Foucault, 1977, 2008). Deleuze described the passage from confinement to continuous modulation (Deleuze, 1992). Zuboff diagnosed the extraction of behavioural surplus and its sale as prediction (Zuboff, 2019). Rouvroy and Berns identified a governmentality that works through data correlation rather than subjectivation (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013). Amoore exposed the politics of possibility through which data-driven security manufactures risk and anticipatory intervention (Amoore, 2013). This genealogy is not wrong but incomplete, and its incompleteness is historical. Each account still presumes a world in which reality could be assumed as the background against which power moves. The claim of the Reality Paradigm is that this assumption has, in specifiable cases, failed: reality itself has become an object of imposition.

The genealogy that most nearly resists this claim is not the disciplinary Foucault of the Panopticon but the late Foucault of the 1978–79 lectures, whose environmental or neoliberal governmentality already acts on the *milieu* rather than the body, governs through freedom rather than against it, and shapes conduct by arranging the rules of the game rather than dictating the move (Foucault, 2008). The proximity is real and must be met rather than ignored — but the line can be drawn precisely, and it is not that Foucauldian power never closes or compels, since discipline, security and biopolitics plainly do, but that its characteristic mode is to conduct a subject who still acts, whereas Onopticon constitutes the field before conduct begins. Environmental governmentality arranges a milieu within which the subject remains free to conduct itself; it acts *upon* conduct, and therefore presupposes a subject who still conducts. Onopticon does not act upon conduct; it forecloses the milieu itself and, through infrastructures the subject can neither author nor exit, removes the capacity to refuse. To govern through freedom is to leave the door open and shape the choice; to impose through infrastructure is to shut the door and not announce it. The distance between the two is the distance between a power that conducts a free subject and a power that constitutes the field within which subjectivity — refusal included — becomes possible or impossible.

3. The Dynamics of Migration: The Pacing Asymmetry and Procurement Lock-In

The thesis that, in specific infrastructural domains, the constitutive act has migrated towards the corporation proposes a tendency but does not yet explain it. Two dynamics do. The first is a *pacing asymmetry*. As children adapt to digital systems faster and more capably than the parents meant to supervise them, so, under the intensification of artificial intelligence, corporations now develop faster than the states meant to govern them. The gap is easily misstated. It is not that states fail to make rules for AI firms — states do make rules. It is that a rule made at the speed of legislation cannot control a capacity that iterates at the speed of deployment: each regulatory cycle closes on a target that has already moved. This is the 'pacing problem' of technology governance (Marchant, Allenby and Herkert, 2011), raised from the level of a single technology to the level of sovereignty. The state's rate of self-development and the corporation's are not the same, and the difference does not shrink with effort; it compounds. What results is a durable condition in which the constitutive capacity sits permanently ahead of its nominal control.

The second dynamic turns asymmetry into dependency: *procurement lock-in*. When a state contracts a private firm to organise or secure the very data by which it knows its population — the census, the tax roll, the health record, the identity register — it does not merely buy a service. It places the whole archive, in analysable form, within the firm's potential. Data gathered 'for security' or 'for efficiency' becomes, by the architecture of the contract, latent capacity: what may be done with it is bounded only by terms that the state, given the pacing asymmetry, can neither fully specify nor fully audit. The constitutive act migrates not through conquest but through contract. This is why vendor lock-in is not a procurement inconvenience but a political condition, and why the division of constitutive labour is not a metaphor: in the enforcement programmes documented later, the archive that composes the target — passport, tax, licence and health records — is reachable precisely because its organisation was handed to the firm (cf. Cohen, 2019; Rahman, 2018).

Together the two dynamics explain the migration the thesis asserts, and they explain it without the crude claim that the corporation has replaced the state. The state does not withdraw; it out-sources the constitutive layer to actors developing faster than it can regulate, and then binds itself, by contract, to their analytic potential. The result is not corporate supremacy but a durable asymmetry: the firm holds the constitutive capacity and the archive, the state holds the coercive act and the liability, and neither can govern the reality-field at the speed at which it changes. Onopticon is the regime this asymmetry makes possible — a reality-field composed at corporate speed, imposed through state force, and answerable, at that speed, to no one.

4. The Reality Paradigm: Not Truth, but the Conditions of Encounter

The Reality Paradigm is not a theory of truth. It does not ask first what is true, who tells the truth, or how ideology distorts; those questions are secondary. Its primary question is sharper and more material: under what imposed conditions does the human being encounter reality at all? Theories of truth work at the level of knowledge and representation; the Reality Paradigm works at the level of encounter, access, recognition and possibility. Reality, on this account, is in certain domains neither simply given nor merely interpreted nor socially constructed in the classical sense, but *pre-conditioned* by technical-administrative infrastructures that decide in advance what may appear, who may be recognised, which request may be processed, which movement may be permitted and which future may remain open.

Because *imposition* carries the argument, it must be distinguished operationally from ordinary social construction, or it collapses into a familiar constructivism. All institutions shape the field of action; imposition names a specific and measurable narrowing, present only where three effects hold together: the *closure of a genuine option* rather than its reframing; the *existentialisation of the cost of exit*, such that declining the infrastructure threatens social or economic viability; and the *weakening of effective redress*, such that the affected party cannot readily identify, understand, challenge or reverse the decision. Absent these three, one is dealing with construction, design or persuasion — not with imposition. These three effects can be graded into an *exit-cost index*: the cost of declining or leaving an infrastructure approaches the existential as that infrastructure becomes the sole gateway to a life-essential good, as substitutes vanish, as erroneous exclusion becomes irreversible, as exclusion cascades across domains, and as one may be enrolled without consent — the condition in which, in Hirschman's (1970) terms, both *exit* and *voice* are foreclosed at once. The index is applied to the documented cases in the empirical appendix. This is the strength behind the concept of the *infrastructural a priori*: as classical philosophy names the conditions that precede experience, so this names the technical-administrative conditions that precede and format encounter. Before the subject applies, the field of application is structured; before it moves, movement is permissioned; before it objects, the channel of appeal is delimited; before it chooses, the architecture of choice has excluded other worlds. That is what places power before ordinary agency, before ordinary knowledge, before ordinary objection.

5. Sovereignty as Environmental Structuring, and the One-Directional Relation to Packaging

To call sovereignty *environmental structuring* is not to make it ecological in a narrow sense. It is to say that power increasingly operates by arranging the *environment* in which action becomes possible: the administrative environment, the data environment, the clinical environment, the logistical environment and, at its biological edge, the engineered environment of the reward circuit and the cell. Environmental structuring and *infrastructural imposition* are two names for a single operation: to structure the environment is to impose the infrastructure within which reality can be met at all. Power no longer merely describes the world; in certain domains it composes the world that will be available for decision, access and response. Packaging is the form in which such a composed world is handed to the subject — pre-processed, sealed, ready-made, its architect undeclared. The door does not announce who built it; it simply stays shut.

Onopticon works through four movements, which are also the four movements of packaging. In *recognition* the subject is rendered legible through records, profiles, scores and eligibility files; to be recognised is to be translated into the language of the system. In *classification* the legible subject is sorted — safe or risky, eligible or ineligible, productive or burden — performatively, not merely descriptively. In *foreclosure* classification narrows the future: the refused loan, the denied benefit, the flagged household are closures of reality, not mere decisions. In *imposed reality* the subject meets these closures as though they were the world itself. From this the decisive relation follows, and it must be stated one way only: *every Onoptic order can produce packaging; not every instance of packaging is Onoptic*. Standardisation, commodification and algorithmic ranking are the broad everyday phenomenon; Onopticon is the narrower regime obtaining only where packaging is underwritten by compulsory recognition, foreclosure and weak contestability. Much of everyday life is packaging; only some of it crosses into Onopticon. The next section fixes the crossing.

6. The Analogue Genealogy: Categorisation Before the Algorithm

Environmental structuring and infrastructural imposition are not born with the algorithm. Long before a line of code, six analogue institutions already composed the field within which the human being could appear, and each did so by the same elementary act: categorisation. What follows is a short genealogy of that act, one domain at a time, because the continuity it reveals is also the measure of the rupture that Onopticon names.

6.1 Education: The Examination

The school sorted persons before it instructed them. The Chinese imperial examination graded and ranked candidates for more than thirteen centuries until its abolition in 1905; the modern standardised test and the tripartite streaming of Britain's 1944 settlement did the same by other means, distributing life-chances through classification under the neutral sign of merit. Foucault named the examination the ceremony that turns each individual into a "case", and Bourdieu and Passeron showed that what it reproduces is less knowledge than the social order itself (Foucault, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

6.2 Culture: The Hierarchy of Taste

Taste was made a map of class. Levine documented how, across the nineteenth century, a shared popular culture — Shakespeare, opera, the museum — was "sacralised" into a hierarchy that sorted audiences into highbrow and lowbrow and policed the boundary between them; Bourdieu's survey of French taste found the same structure a century later, the judgement of beauty doubling as a judgement of persons (Levine, 1988; Bourdieu, 1984).

6.3 Art: The Academy and the Canon

Art governed visibility through gatekeepers. For two centuries the Académie des Beaux-Arts and its Paris Salon decided what could be exhibited as art at all, until the pressure of the rejected — the Salon des Refusés of 1863 — and the rise of the dealer-critic system displaced the academic monopoly (White & White, 1965; Becker, 1982). The canon was an analogue filter on the visible.

6.4 Law: Codification and the Census

Law fixed the person in advance. The imposition of permanent surnames, the cadastral map and the census translated the living into administrable categories, and those categories could kill: the population registers that classified by race were the bureaucratic precondition of apartheid (Scott, 1998; Bowker & Star, 1999; Weber, 1978). To be legible to the code was to be pre-sorted by it.

6.5 Economy: The Ledger, the Actuarial Table and the Credit Report

The economy categorised by counting. Double-entry bookkeeping, the actuarial table and the statistical average did not merely record populations but, in Hacking's phrase, "made up" the very people they claimed only to count (Hacking, 1990; Porter, 1995; Desrosières, 1998). The direct analogue ancestor of the credit scoring documented in §10 is exact and datable: the Mercantile Agency, founded in New York in 1841, assembled ledgers of character and solvency into the first systematic credit reports — a paper surveillance of financial identity a full century before the algorithm inherited it (Lauer, 2017).

6.6 Media: Agenda Before Deliberation

Media set the agenda before the citizen deliberated. The wire services standardised what counted as news across a continent; Lippmann argued that the public acts not on the world but on the "pictures in our heads", stereotypes supplied in advance; and the empirical study of agenda-setting confirmed that the press, unable to tell people what to think, is stunningly able to tell them what to think about (Lippmann, 1922; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

6.7 Continuity and Rupture: From Legibility to Pre-Imposition

These six are why the rival explanations set out in §9 are not objections but ancestors. Scott's legibility and Bowker and Star's classification describe precisely this analogue art of categorisation, and they describe it well; the continuity is real and must be conceded. But the concession sharpens the rupture. None of the analogue infrastructures required an algorithm; each composed the field by hand, on paper, in stone — slowly, visibly, and therefore contestably. Onopticon inherits the art and changes its physics: what the examination, the canon, the register, the ledger and the wire did over years, the platform now does at speed, in opacity and at scale, folding output back into input as documented feedback and — at its biological edge — reaching past the sorting of persons into the pre-imposition of the body's own response. The analogue infrastructures *pre-processed* the world; the Onoptic ones *pre-impose* it. That difference — not categorisation as such, but categorisation made instantaneous, opaque, self-reinforcing and biological — is what a new name is for.

6.8 Three Overlapping Physics of Power

The genealogy just traced can now be stated as the corpus's single historical thesis, gathered in one place rather than left dispersed across the argument. The composition of the field of reality has run through three distinct *physics of power* — three ways in which the conditions of a life are set before that life begins to act — and the word "physics" is preferred to "era" for the reason that decides everything: they do not succeed one another cleanly but operate at once. The first is *conventional and institutional*: law, court, parliament, school and market compose the field by classifying persons and licensing activities — the six analogue infrastructures just surveyed, a power that arranges what already exists. The second is *algorithmic and infrastructural*: private technical systems pre-compose the field whilst the state licenses, procures and enforces the result — pre-imposition rather than visibility, the direct object of this theory. The third is not yet a settled physics but a *frontier*: the reach past the statistical administration of population life into the engineered responsiveness of the individual organism, named here as a horizon and not asserted as a destination, so that no teleology reads the three as an inevitable march toward a foretold end.

The decisive claim is the overlap. The conventional physics has not been abolished; it has lost part of its constitutive centrality to infrastructural force, which is a different and more precise claim — and this theory proves the overlap by its own method rather than merely asserting it. The instances on which the argument rests are established almost entirely through the instruments of the conventional physics: a Court of Justice judgment, a national court ruling, a data-protection authority's fine, a Royal Commission's report. Were the conventional physics truly gone, there would be no *SCHUFA* judgment to cite and no *Robodebt* commission to quote; the very possibility of documenting infrastructural power depends on the survival of the institutions the second physics is said to have displaced. Law is therefore not declared dead but *infrastructurally subordinated* — co-present, unequal, and still the instrument through which the imposition it can no longer prevent is finally recorded.

7. The Onopticon Threshold: A Diagnostic Table

The gravest danger to the concept is inflation: if everything is Onopticon, the word does no work. The threshold therefore names four conditions and grades them into three statuses, defined after the conditions themselves. *Compulsory recognition*: the subject must enter through technical-administrative legibility, with no realistic non-infrastructural alternative. *Multi-domain composition*: the ordering binds several life-domains — identity, finance, mobility, health, communication — rather than one. *Documented feedback*: the system's outputs re-enter its inputs in a self-reinforcing loop that can be evidenced, not merely posited. *Weak contestability issuing in actual foreclosure*: the subject cannot readily identify, understand or reverse the decision, and the decision closes a genuine option. Cases meeting some but not all conditions are *Onopticism risk*; cases showing standardisation without compulsory recognition or foreclosure are *packaging*; technical possibilities not yet embedded in a social circuit are *boundary-capacities*.

The four conditions do not bear equal weight, and grading them prevents the very inflation the threshold exists to stop. Two are a *necessary core* — compulsory recognition and weak contestability issuing in foreclosure — and together they constitute the imposition; a case that fails either is not Onopticon but at most Onopticism risk, which is why the risk and packaging rows below fail on precisely these two. The other two — multi-domain composition and documented feedback — are *corroborating*: they raise a single act of imposition into a regime. Three statuses follow. Where only the core is documented, a case is *Onoptic imposition*. Where the core is documented and a corroborating condition is evidenced below the top tier, it is *provisional Onopticon*, which the per-instance audit in Volume IV marks ✓~. And only where all four co-occur at the top evidentiary tier is a case *documented Onopticon proper*. That last category is, as Volume IV records, currently unoccupied: the five documented cases are provisional, and *proper* is left a deliberately empty cell, the single-circuit case that would fill it being the programme's stated empirical target rather than a claim already banked. The unit of analysis throughout is the *socio-technical programme or circuit* — a scoring system, a public programme, a data-and-enforcement ecosystem — so cases of different scale are compared on the four conditions, not on size.

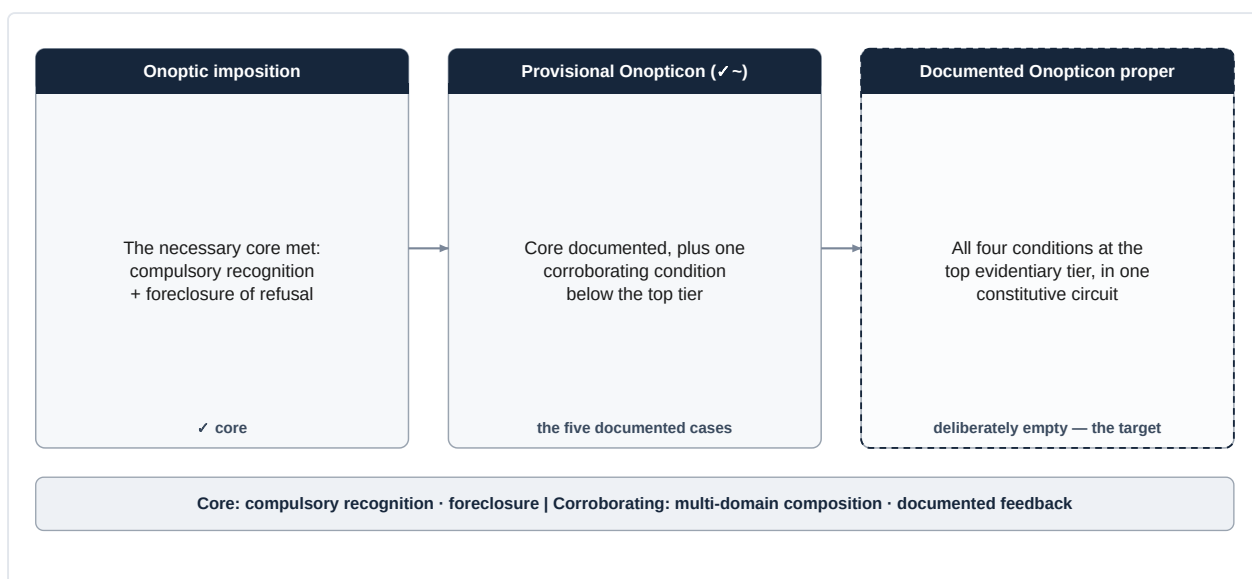


Figure I.1. The three-status threshold. Two necessary *core* conditions — compulsory recognition and foreclosure — constitute the imposition; two *corroborating* conditions raise a single imposition into a regime. The five documented cases reach *provisional Onopticon* (✓~); *documented Onopticon proper* is left deliberately empty, as the programme's stated empirical target.

Applied without favour, the threshold cuts across the intuitive ranking of cases, and it is meant to. Ticks mark conditions met on the documentary record; tildes mark conditions plausible but not yet documented; crosses mark conditions absent. The ticks in the family-level table below register what the wider record documents for each *type*; Volume IV is stricter, grading each individual *programme* against the specific ruling or report that bears on it. Both tables now classify the five documented cases as *provisional Onopticon* and leave *documented Onopticon proper* unoccupied.

Case	Compulsory recognition	Multi-domain	Documented feedback	Foreclosure + weak contestability	Classification
Credit / risk scoring	✓	✓	~	✓	Provisional Onopticon (✓~)
Automated welfare	✓	~	✓	✓	Provisional Onopticon (✓~)
Migration enforcement	✓	✓	~	✓	Provisional Onopticon (✓~)
Data-broker profiling (digital self)	✓	✓	✓	~	Onopticisation risk
NHS Federated Data Platform	✓	~	✗	~	Onopticisation risk
Personalised media feeds	~	~	✓	~	Onopticisation risk
UAE Agentic-AI government	~	✓	✗	✗	Announced programme
Maven / operational targeting	n/a	✓	~	~	Operational capacity
Hyper-palatable / dopamine food	~	✗	✓	~	Packaging (high depth)
Streaming / algorithmic culture	~	✗	✓	✗	Packaging
Wellness / emotional markets	✗	✗	✗	✗	Packaging
NICR cellular modulation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Boundary-capacity (high depth)
Cultured-meat frontier (Cargill / UPSIDE)	✗	~	✗	✗	Pre-closure biological constitution

The table measures one axis only: *regime membership*, defined by closure. It does not measure a second and orthogonal axis introduced in Part III — the *depth of intervention*, the distance power reaches from the administrative environment down through perception to biological response. Food and NICR sit low on the closure axis and are named accordingly, as packaging and as a boundary-capacity; they sit at the very top of the depth axis, and it is there, not in the table, that they do their decisive theoretical work. The cultured-meat row is the exception that proves the axis: it too fails the closure core — no compulsory recognition, no foreclosure — and so cannot be Onopticon; yet it is not a boundary-capacity like NICR, because its constitutive apparatus is not a laboratory possibility but a documented, incorporated, regulator-inspected and commercially selling reality. Its status, *pre-closure biological constitution*, records exactly this: documented on the constitutive-apparatus layer, absent on the closure axis — a distinction §12 draws out. Consistency between table and text is

thus exact: nowhere is food called Onopticon, NICR a completed regime, or the cultured-meat actors more than constitutive actors before closure; their force lies on dimensions the closure table does not score.

8. Homovictimus: A Subject-Position, Not a Human Type

The subject produced under the full regime is *Homovictimus*, and the term must be handled with discipline, for it is easily misread as an anthropological identity fixed to all human beings — which would reproduce the very totalisation the theory refuses. Homovictimus is a *historically and relationally specific subject-position* that emerges under determinate conditions of infrastructural closure; where those conditions are absent the position is empty, where they intensify it is filled. Its constitutive contradiction is that the subject is summoned without cease to choose, optimise, adapt and take responsibility, whilst the field in which such acts must occur has already been narrowed by infrastructures that stay opaque and non-negotiable.

What distinguishes this position from ordinary diagnoses of exhaustion is not compulsory legibility alone but a specifiable *circuit of responsibility-transfer*: the infrastructure forecloses the options; the subject moves tactically within the remainder; the tactical move is then counted as a free choice; the outcome is charged to the subject; and the institution thereby renders its own hand invisible. The tragedy is not invisibility but compulsory legibility, and its political sting is this laundering of structural effect into personal fault. The stronger name for the resulting condition is not burnout but *ontological deprivation*: not the exhaustion of the individual within given conditions, but the deprivation of the conditions under which the individual could act, object, initiate or meet the world on non-imposed terms. Precisely because responsibility is at stake, three registers of agency must be kept apart: *constitutive agency* builds or authorises an infrastructure; *tactical agency* adapts to one already in place; *legitimizing participation* lends it consent or cover. To adapt is neither to build nor to bless — and Homovictimus names, first of all, a constrained tactical agency charged as though it were constitutive.

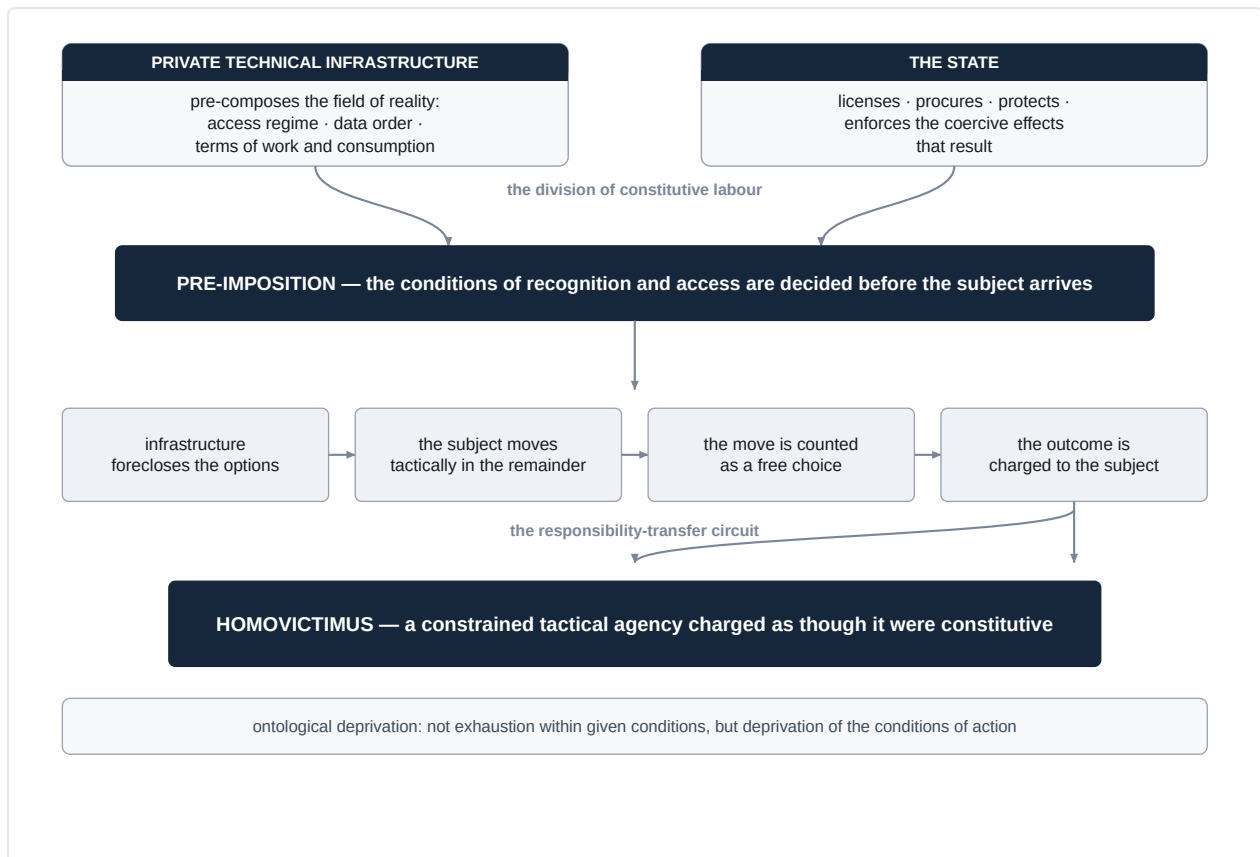


Figure I.2. The division of constitutive labour and the responsibility-transfer circuit. Private infrastructure pre-composes the field of reality and the state enforces the coercive effects — *pre-imposition*. The subject then moves tactically within an already-foreclosed remainder, the move is counted as a free choice, and the outcome is charged back to the subject: the circuit that fills the position of *Homovictimus*.

9. Nearest Rival Explanations

Honesty requires placing this proposal against the accounts nearest to it and conceding what they already supply. Scott's analysis of *legibility* shows how states simplify complex social realities into administrable grids, and much of what is here called compulsory recognition descends from it (Scott, 1998). Bowker and Star showed that classification systems are infrastructural, consequential and morally weighted — that to sort is to shape lives — anticipating the performative account of classification above (Bowker & Star, 1999). Haggerty and Ericson's *surveillant assemblage*, with its "data double" abstracted from the body and reassembled across systems, prefigures the dividuality on which the digital-self analysis rests (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000). Bratton's account of planetary-scale computation as an accidental megastructure of sovereignty overlaps heavily with the claim that infrastructure has become sovereign power (Bratton, 2015).

Given these debts, the burden is to say what Onopticon adds. Its distinctive object is the *conjunction* named by the threshold — not legibility alone, nor classification alone, nor assembled surveillance alone, nor computational sovereignty alone, but their binding into a single circuit of closure, composition, feedback and weak contestability that pre-structures the reality-field of encounter. A worked comparison makes the claim testable rather than merely asserted. Take automated welfare. A Foucauldian reading illuminates the disciplinary and biopolitical management of the claimant population; a Rouvroy–Berns reading illuminates the correlational, a-subjective inference of risk; a Scott reading illuminates the legibility grid that renders claimants administrable. What none fully captures is the *residue* the Onoptic reading targets: that the claimant meets a platform-

generated eligibility field as reality itself, cannot reverse an erroneous exclusion because the decision logic is inaccessible, and is held to account for an outcome produced upstream. Where that residue is fully explained by an existing framework, the case for a new name fails; the claim here is that, in the threshold cases documented next, it is not.

A second family of rivals must be met on the axis of the actor, for the claim that this power is corporately constituted is not, by itself, new. Surveillance capitalism already located accumulation in the firm (Zuboff, 2019); platform capitalism theorised the platform as the dominant business form (Srnicek, 2017); 'functional sovereignty' described how platforms such as Amazon assume governance functions once reserved to states (Pasquale, 2017); the legal construction of informational capitalism has been mapped in detail (Cohen, 2019); private infrastructures have been analysed as the 'new utilities' wielding infrastructural power (Rahman, 2018); and regulation-by-design and 'hypernudge' have named the steering of conduct through architecture (Yeung, 2017), as relational data governance has named the collective stakes of datafication (Viljoen, 2021). Onopticon concedes all of this and does not rest its novelty on the corporate actor. Its difference lies in the *conjunction* of actor and modality: not that firms hold power, but that firms now perform the *constitutive* act — determining which reality will be available for encounter — whilst the state performs the *coercive* act; and that the resulting power does not govern conduct but imposes the field and forecloses refusal. The corporate-power canon describes who builds and who profits; Onopticon describes what is done to the reality the subject may meet, and to the subject's capacity to decline it.

PART II — THE EVERYDAY FACES (HORIZONTAL POLE)

Read through the threshold, the everyday domains that motivate the theory divide rather than unify: most are *packaging*, some carry *Onopticisation risk*, and only a few cross into Onopticon proper — those treated in Part III. This section is therefore a compressed typology, and it treats commercial market figures as indicators of *scale* only, never of enclosure; the language of "shows" and "proves" is withheld in favour of "is associated with" and "is consistent with."

Standardisation is at its most literal in *food*, where roughly 55% of daily calories in the United States and about 57% in the United Kingdom now come from ultra-processed products, whose consumption is associated in a large umbrella review with a range of adverse outcomes (Williams et al., 2025; Rauber et al., 2018; Lane et al., 2024). These associations are consistent with a metabolic ordering of the body, but on their own they do not evidence compulsory recognition or foreclosure; food is therefore *packaging* on the closure axis — even as Part III returns to it as the everyday summit of the depth axis. In *education*, performativity and standardised testing narrow the curriculum and reorganise the subject around what can be measured, and the secular rise of perfectionism is consistent with, not proof of, that reorganisation (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2010; Curran & Hill, 2019). In *health*, medicalisation and a trillion-dollar wellness economy convert the healthy into the perpetually optimising, and burnout is codified as an occupational phenomenon (Conrad, 2007; WHO, 2019); packaging with strong Onopticisation risk where health status becomes an access condition. In *culture* and *media*, algorithmic curation and the attention economy pre-process taste and perception; the collapse of sustained attention and the faster diffusion of falsehood are consistent with a reorganisation of the perceptual field (Mark, 2023; Vosoughi et al., 2018), whilst the genuinely mixed evidence on filter bubbles is registered here as complicating, not confirming, the thesis (Arguedas et al., 2022; Guess et al., 2023). Everyday life, in short, is

not uniformly Onoptic; Onopticon appears within it only at the evidenced points named next, and the remainder is the packaging from which those points are distinguished.

PART III — THE REGIME IN OPERATION

The horizontal pole showed the tendency dressed in convenience and pleasure. This part shows it where it can be documented — first in three ordinary bureaucratic circuits that meet the threshold on the record, then in the operational platforms that build such circuits, and finally at the biological edge where the regime departs most sharply from everything that preceded it.

10. The Documented Core: Three Cases That Meet the Threshold

Credit and risk scoring binds finance, housing and mobility, feeds its outputs back as inputs, and forecloses genuine options through logics the subject cannot readily contest. This is no longer assertion. In *SCHUFA Holding*, the Court of Justice of the European Union held on 7 December 2023 that the automated production of a credit-repayment probability score is itself "automated individual decision-making" under Article 22 of the General Data Protection Regulation wherever lenders draw predominantly upon it — rejecting the defence that the bureau merely prepares a decision it does not take (CJEU, 2023, C-634/21). Opacity is the rule the law is straining against: the New York Department of Financial Services, investigating the Apple Card, found no unlawful discrimination but faulted the black-box character of the model and called for the modernisation of credit-scoring oversight (NYDFS, 2021), whilst the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has had to insist that lenders using opaque AI models still owe specific, accurate reasons for a denial (CFPB, 2023). Compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition and weak contestability are documented to the top tier, and the feedback loop, well attested for scoring in general, is not carried by the ruling itself; the necessary core is met, and this is *provisional Onopticon*.

Automated welfare turns social rights into conditional access and makes erroneous exclusion difficult to reverse — and here the record is a series of judicial and parliamentary indictments. In February 2020 the District Court of The Hague ruled the Dutch risk-profiling system SyRI unlawful for failing the fair-balance test of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Rechtbank Den Haag, 2020). The same state's childcare-benefits system wrongly accused some 26,000 families of fraud, weighted nationality against applicants, brought down the third Rutte cabinet in January 2021, and drew a record fine from the Dutch data-protection authority for discriminatory and unlawful processing (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2021). In Australia, the *Robodebt* Royal Commission found in July 2023 that an automated debt-raising scheme built on income-averaging was unlawful and profoundly unfair, after a settlement that wiped or refunded some A\$1.8 billion in wrongful debts (Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, 2023). Each case exhibits the full conjunction; each was corrected, if at all, only after mass harm and by extraordinary intervention — the signature of weak contestability.

Migration enforcement is the sharpest of the three, because compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition and foreclosure are joined to an evidenced infrastructure. Palantir's Investigative Case Management and FALCON systems, documenting and connecting records for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, were mapped in *Who's Behind ICE?* (Mijente et al., 2018); the case-management contract was renewed in

September 2022 at some US\$95.5 million (FedScoop, 2022); a personal-data pipeline was supplied to the agency by LexisNexis Risk Solutions under a US\$16.8 million contract (The Intercept, 2021); and in 2025 Palantir was funded, through a roughly US\$30 million modification, to build *ImmigrationOS*, a platform explicitly oriented to targeting and deportation-prioritisation, the tracking of "self-deportation," and the management of the immigration lifecycle (American Immigration Council, 2025). Here the machine need not pass judgment; it composes the field of attention within which judgment is passed, and disperses responsibility across databases and workflows until violence reads as procedure. This is the regime's clearest bureaucratic instance.

11. The Operational Platforms

Beneath the documented core lie the platforms that make such circuits possible, and Palantir is best read not as a vendor but as a *constitutive interface of cognitive pre-processing*. Its own documentation describes an Ontology that binds objects, properties and links to actions and dynamic security so as to drive decision-making at organisational scale (Palantir Technologies, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The structural claim is not that the platform is omnipotent or that its systems perform as advertised — they fail and are unevenly adopted — but that systems converting data into operational ontology participate in the pre-processing of decision horizons, arranging what human decision can see, compare and prioritise. The remaining operational cases must be held to their evidence and no further. The *NHS Federated Data Platform* evidences platformisation and vendor dependency alongside genuine contractual safeguards, but not that a patient's option is foreclosed or appeal neutralised; it is *Onopticism risk*, not Onopticon (NHS England, n.d.). The *UAE Agentic-AI framework* is an announced programme to deploy autonomous government within two years, and an announcement is not a realised circuit of decision, harm and closure (Emirates News Agency, 2026). In the case of *Maven*, the critique of "human-in-the-loop" is powerful but must not assume its conclusion: the documented capacity to shape an operator's field of attention is not proof that a given targeting decision was thereby altered; such systems *possess the capacity* to pre-structure the operator's world, and the claim stops precisely there (Reuters, 2024, 2026).

12. The Biological Face: Documented Constitutive Capacity, Incomplete Onoptic Closure

Here the Reality Paradigm ventures its boldest hypothesis, and an earlier formulation of this section — "a research horizon, not a documented instance" — conceded too much and is corrected here. Three levels must be held apart. That biological response can be engineered is *documented*; that a constitutive apparatus for manufacturing the biological substrate, with named corporate and state actors, now exists is *documented*; what is *not* documented is the closure of this capacity into a compulsory, exitless consumption regime. What the biological face lacks is therefore not existence but *closure* — and, unlike the enforcement cases, it lacks the imposition core twice over: neither compulsory recognition (no one is yet obliged to meet the biological product) nor foreclosure (the conventional alternative remains) is in place. This is why the biological actors stand *further* from documented Onopticon proper than Palantir, which already meets compulsory recognition and wants only single-circuit closure; and why their honest status is neither "Onopticon" nor "not a case" but *documented constitutive capacity before Onoptic closure*. Foucauldian biopolitics governs *life as population* — birth rates, morbidity, mortality, risk, managed in the aggregate and from above. The biological face names something categorically different: the engineering of the *responsiveness of the individual organism itself*, from

within its own reward and signalling circuitry — not biopolitics in another vocabulary but the point at which biopolitics is exceeded.

Its everyday, population-scale instance is the dopamine engineering of food. Hyper-palatable products are not accidents of taste but designs upon the nervous system: the degree of processing and the glycaemic load are the strongest predictors of a food's addictive potential (Schulte, Avena & Gearhardt, 2015), and the combination of fat and carbohydrate activates the brain's striatal reward circuitry *supra-additively* — beyond the sum of its parts — precisely as an engineered dopaminergic lever (DiFeliceantonio et al., 2018). That this engineering is intended and not incidental is, moreover, corporate-declared, which lifts the point out of inference into the operational genre: a major ingredient supplier describes its own sensory science as the design of foods consumers "choose again and again," states that roughly four-fifths of repeat-purchase decisions are driven by sensory appeal, and names repeat purchase itself as the object of the design (Cargill, 2026). The mechanism is peer-reviewed and the intent is disclosed; what remains undocumented is only the adjudicated link between the two — which is why the biological face is a research programme and not yet a case. The consequence is measurable at the scale of a species: ultra-processed food addiction is estimated at roughly 14% of adults and 12% of children by the criteria of the Yale Food Addiction Scale (Gearhardt et al., 2023). Power here does not counsel the population toward health; it tunes the individual reward circuit and sells the tuning back as pleasure. Its laboratory limit-case is the cell membrane itself. U.S. Patent No. 10,765,878 B2 describes the remote control of cellular activity by radio-frequency or magnetic fields acting on genetically encoded ion channels and paramagnetic nanoparticles, the field transduced into a response across the membrane (Stanley et al., 2020, 2015, 2012). The cell does not decide; but the threshold at which it fires, the channel through which ions pass, the signal that triggers it, are configured in advance. Response is pre-imposed.

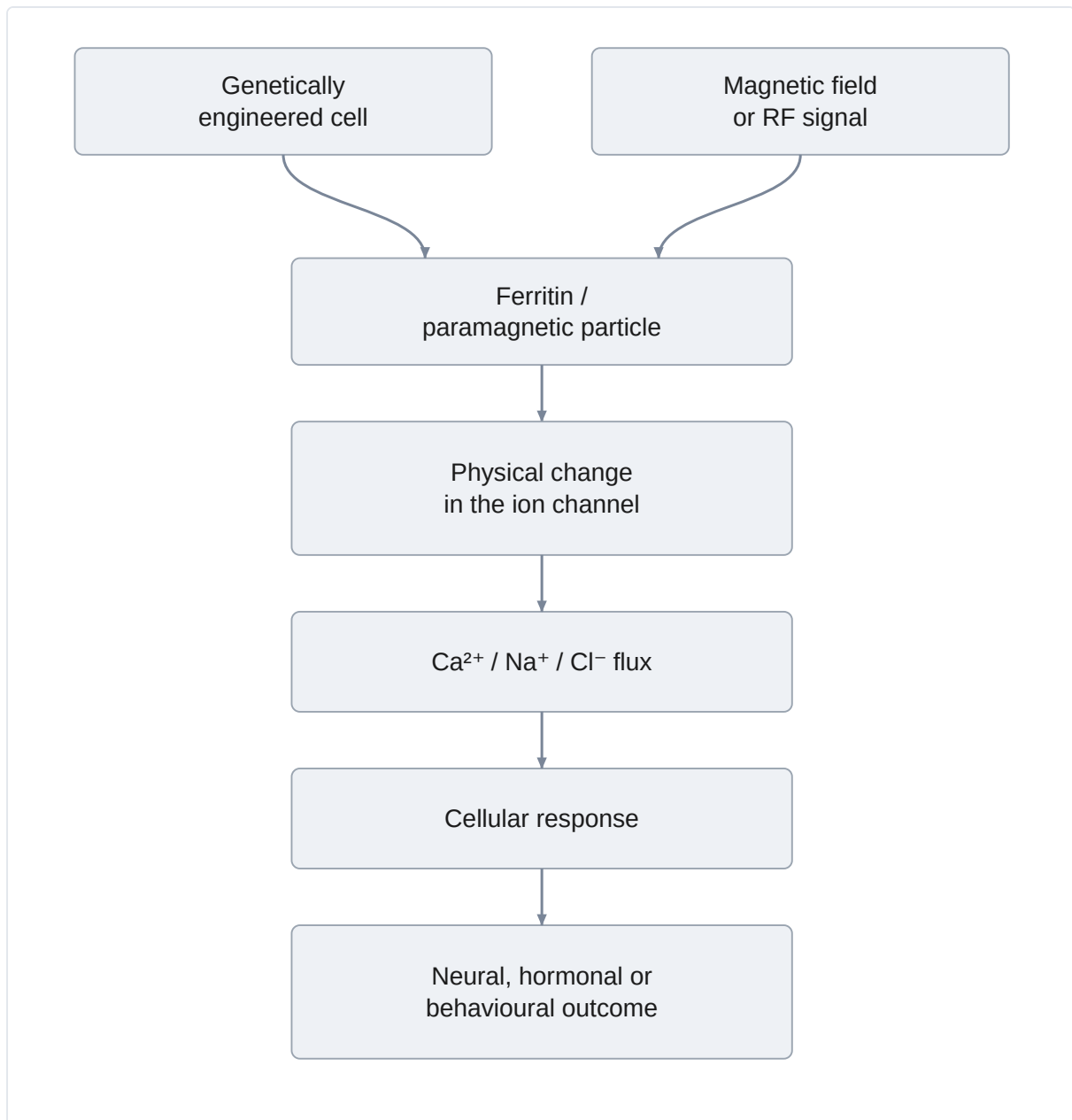


Figure I.3. The magnetogenetic mechanism — ferritin / magnetic-field pathway (after the Friedman–Stanley patents; cf. US Patent No. 10,765,878 B2). In a genetically engineered cell, an applied magnetic or radio-frequency field acts on a ferritin/paramagnetic particle to produce a physical change in a genetically encoded ion channel; the resulting ion flux drives a cellular and then a neural, hormonal or behavioural response. The mechanism is peer-reviewed but biophysically contested (Meister, 2016): the figure diagrams a proposed pathway, not a settled one.

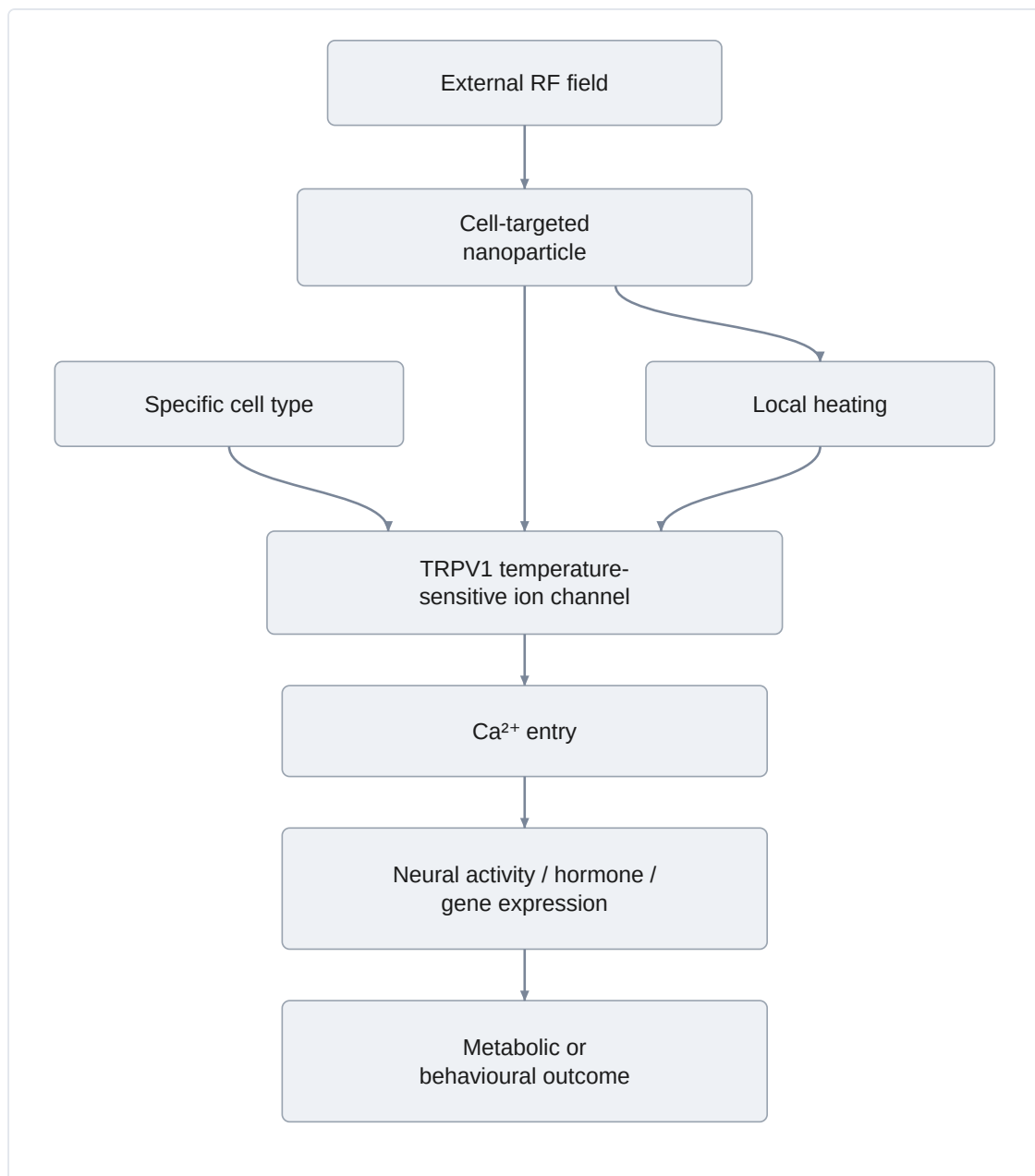


Figure I.4. The magnetogenetic mechanism — radio-frequency / TRPV1 thermal pathway (same Friedman–Stanley patent family). An external RF field acts on a cell-targeted nanoparticle; local heating gates the temperature-sensitive TRPV1 channel in a specific cell type, admitting Ca^{2+} and driving neural activity, hormone release or gene expression, and a downstream metabolic or behavioural outcome. Like Figure I.3, this diagrams a *proposed* transduction mechanism whose biophysics is contested (Meister, 2016).

The shelf and the membrane are therefore not a loose analogy, but neither are they, strictly, one mechanism: they are *two technically distinct mechanisms exhibiting one constitutive logic* — the engineering of biological response, at population scale through the reward system and at cellular precision through the ion channel. The distinction must be held twice. A dopaminergic reward lever and a field-gated ion channel share a logic, not a physical process; and the cellular mechanism is itself biophysically contested, Meister (2016) having argued that the magnetic and thermal forces the magnetogenetic proposals invoke are orders of magnitude too weak to gate a channel as claimed — so the membrane is a *contested* mechanism, not a settled one. They are, respectively, packaging and a boundary-capacity on the axis of closure — no compulsory recognition, no completed regime — and this article does not pretend otherwise. On the axis of depth, however, they mark the

furthest reach the tendency might take, and it is exactly this reach that biopolitics cannot name: not the management of a population's life, but the technical pre-imposition of a body's response. That is why the biological face, however modest its present social extent and however far from a documented Onopticon — food is packaging and cellular modulation a boundary-capacity by this article's own threshold — is the Reality Paradigm's most provocative wager about where infrastructural power may be heading, and the subject of a separate future inquiry rather than a closed result.

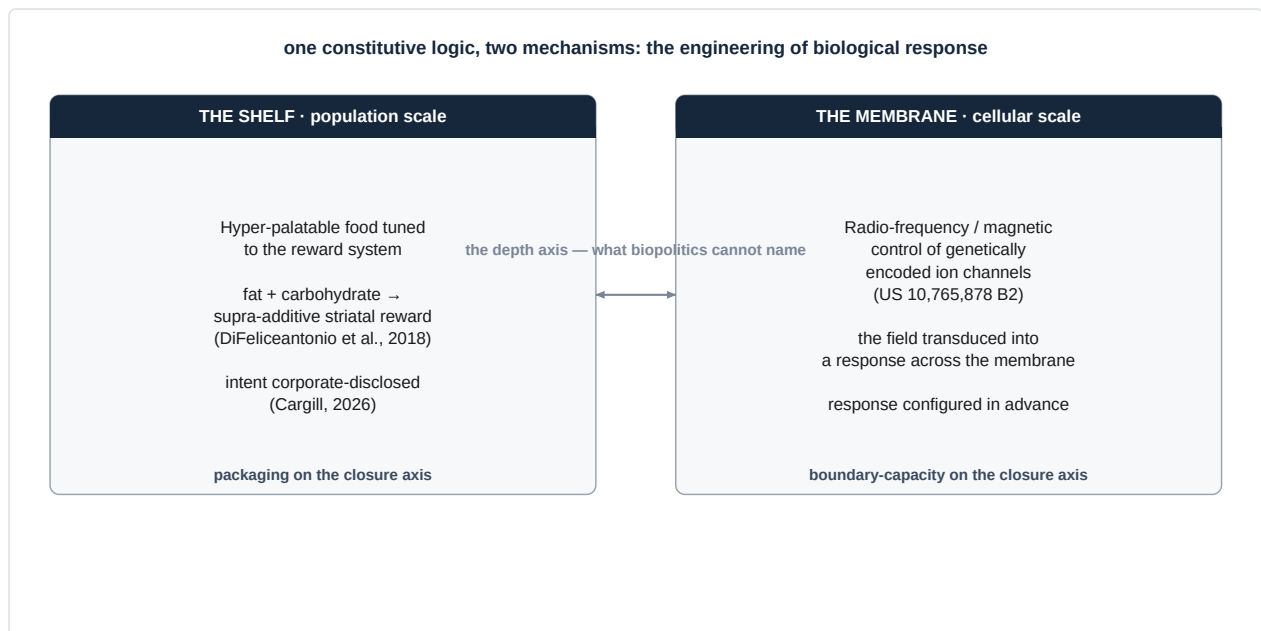


Figure I.5. One constitutive logic, two mechanisms. The shelf (population-scale tuning of the reward system) and the membrane (cellular-scale control of the ion channel) are not one physical process but two technically distinct mechanisms exhibiting a single constitutive logic — the engineering of biological response. Both sit low on the axis of closure (*packaging* and *boundary-capacity*, the latter biophysically contested — Meister, 2016) and high on the axis of depth, the reach biopolitics cannot name.

The food case also shows the state–corporate division of constitutive labour to be variable rather than settled, and in a direction the theory should register honestly. The next frontier of the food reality-field is its *production* — cultured or cell-based meat, in which the biological substrate itself is manufactured — and its ownership is consolidating into precisely the actors the object-claim names: the incumbent meatpackers (Tyson, Cargill, ADM, JBS and PHW hold stakes across the field's leaders), sovereign-wealth vehicles (Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Aramco's venture arm, Singapore's Temasek), and technology capital (Gates, SoftBank, Bezos) (Good Food Institute, 2026). Yet here the state has not withdrawn but *reasserted* its constitutive centrality: Italy banned cultivated meat in 2023, seven US states banned it across 2024–2025, and in March 2026 a federal appeals court upheld Florida's ban against a preemption challenge (WUSF, 2026). The constitutive contest over the biological substrate is thus, at this frontier, one the state is at present winning — by prohibition — which is exactly why the corpus describes the state–corporate relation as an *asymmetric and variable redistribution* of constitutive capacity rather than a completed migration. The biological face, in short, is not one settled tendency but a contested field — documented in its constitutive capacity, undecided in its closure.

The discipline Volume IV draws for corporate-infrastructural power applies here, and applying it is what fixes the status of the biological actors: the *constitutive-apparatus* layer is documented operational fact, whilst the *reach-quantification* layer is estimate. That UPSIDE Foods (formerly Memphis Meats) has built and operated a cellular-production system is documented across genres — incorporation and a \$161 million

capitalisation on the securities record, cell lines, cell banks and analysed production runs on the food-safety regulator's own scientific file, an inspection regime and a label category on the agriculture department's record, and a first commercial sale in 2023 (SEC, 2020; FDA, 2022; USDA FSIS, 2023). A precise term is owed to the regulator's act: the FDA did not "approve" a product but completed a voluntary pre-market consultation and issued a no-questions response; the operative permission to sell is the USDA grant of inspection. How many people will one day depend on that system is a genuine and highly uncertain estimate; but the second uncertainty does not dissolve the first fact — precisely the discipline Volume V demanded for Palantir. To credit Palantir as a documented constitutive interface on its operational record whilst denying the cultured-meat actors any positive status on a comparable record would apply the evidentiary threshold asymmetrically. The consistent verdict is that Cargill, UPSIDE and their peers are *documented constitutive biological actors operating before closure* — not Onopticon proper, for the imposition core is absent, but not a mere research horizon either, for the constitutive apparatus is on the record. Their status is *pre-closure biological constitution*: a biological field composed by corporate actors and licensed by the state, whose closure into a compulsory, exitless regime is not documented, and may be blocked — by cost, by consumer refusal, and, as the prohibition record shows, by the state itself.

The State-Composed Variant: Avian Biosecurity and the Living Animal

The cultured-meat frontier is composed by corporations and licensed by the state. There is a second biological variant with the actors reversed, and naming it keeps the frontier from being read as one thing. In the state's response to highly pathogenic avian influenza, the living bird is increasingly administered not as a cared-for animal but as a registrable, closable, movement-arrestable and mass-cullable production population. The object of intervention is the production circuit, not the individual organism: mandatory registration renders the flock administratively visible; housing orders and zoning govern the animal–environment relation; movement bans govern circulation; and rapid depopulation — the culling of an infected flock in its entirety — governs the population itself, its stated purpose the protection of agricultural production and business continuity (USDA APHIS, n.d.). Pharmacology has not displaced this architecture but has been folded into it: France began mandatory duck vaccination in October 2023, and the European Union built a vaccination-zone framework (Ministère de l'Agriculture, 2023; European Union, 2023), yet which animal is vaccinated, on which holding, under which programme, and how it is recorded and moved, remain the state's to determine. Housing orders imposed across Britain through 2025 were lifted in 2026 whilst mandatory biosecurity duties continued — a temporary disease measure leaving a permanent administrative infrastructure behind.

Two disciplines must guard this reading. First, it is a continuity of *administrative logic*, not a *causal sequence*: avian biosecurity is not a programme to bring about cellular agriculture, and its stated rationale is disease control, not substitution. The living animal, the standardised flock and the cellular substrate share a managerial grammar — the biological rendered as a registrable, controllable production population — but they are not links in an intended chain, and to draw them as one straight line would smuggle back the teleology this corpus refuses. Second, the actor differs from the cultured-meat case: here the composer is the state and its veterinary law, not a corporation, which is why the biological frontier is not one tendency but a *field* in which the state–corporate division of constitutive labour falls differently at different points. Nor did avian influenza begin this: industrial poultry — genetic selection, hatcheries, standardised feed, closed houses, contract growing and the slaughter line — was built long before the epidemics; biosecurity intensified an existing production logic, made it legally compulsory, and extended it down to the smallest holding. The honest formula is therefore

not that the state is abolishing husbandry, but that it is accelerating the redefinition of the living animal, under a biosecurity justification, into a closable, registrable, arrestable and liquidatable production population — a state-composed instance of the same constitutive grammar the corporate frontier composes from the other side.

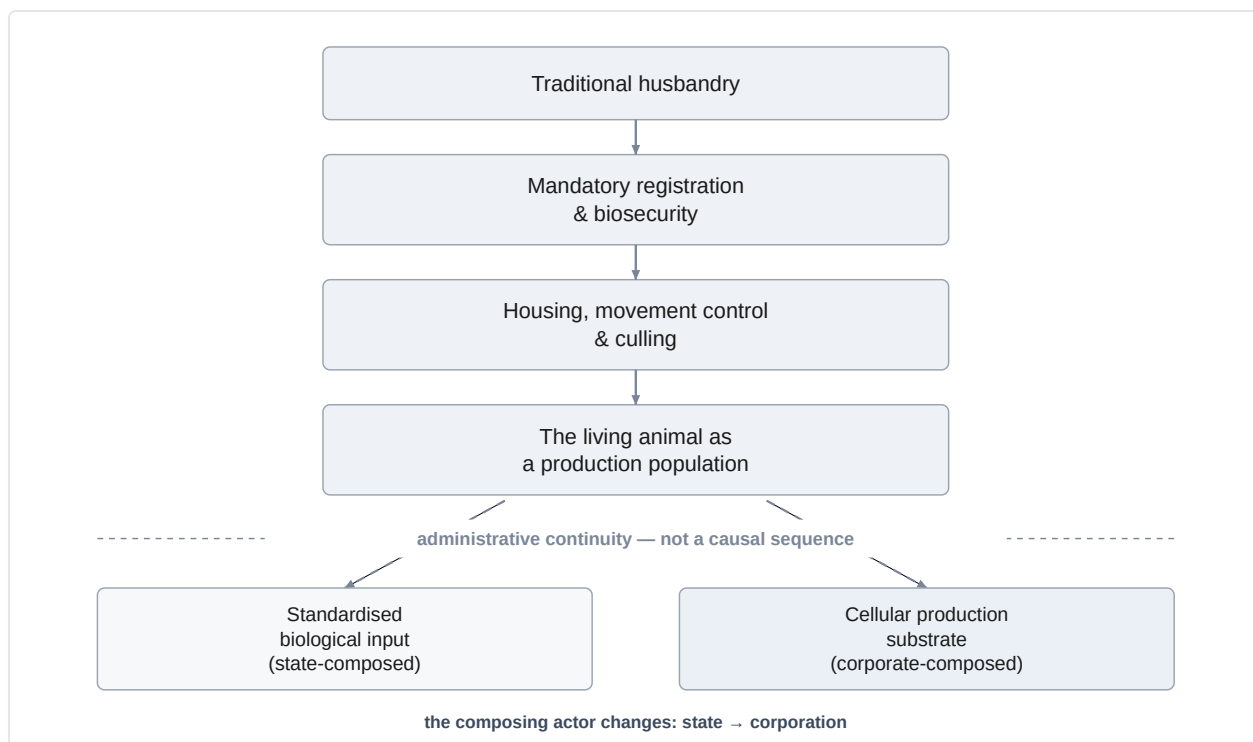


Figure I.6. A shared administrative grammar, not a causal sequence. The state-composed chain (solid) renders the living bird a controllable production population through registration, biosecurity, movement control and culling. The dashed link marks a *continuity of administrative logic only*: the standardised biological input and the corporate-composed cellular substrate share a grammar with this chain but are not its intended destination, and the composing actor changes from the state (biosecurity) to the corporation (cellular production).

PART IV — SYNTHESIS, FALSIFICATION AND RESISTANCE

13. The Six Operations

Across the cases that meet the threshold a common grammar recurs, offered as a *portable analytic instrument* rather than a proven law: the conversion of heterogeneous life-processes into processable units; the establishment of gateways of conditional inclusion; the migration of sovereignty from the decision to the decision-horizon; the dispersal of responsibility across platforms and procedures; the conversion of legitimacy into technical procedure; and, at the biological edge, the rendering of responsiveness itself technically conditionable. These operations separate the tendency from surveillance (which concerns seeing), from algorithmic governmentality (which concerns correlation and conduct) and from biopolitics (which concerns the management of population life). They do not license the inference that the cases form one finished regime — the threshold, the modal discipline and the protocol below are built precisely to withhold that stronger claim. Two boundaries follow. The vertical and horizontal poles are *functional positions*, not corporate essences: a commercial feed can impose reality as forcibly as a state-facing platform, and today's horizontal actor can become tomorrow's vertical one. And law is not declared dead but *infrastructurally subordinated* — delayed,

weakened, redirected, made to operate within pre-imposed reality-fields — which is the more defensible and, in the SyRI and Robodebt rulings, the demonstrated claim.

14. Falsification Protocol: What Would Lower the Status of This Theory

A theory earns its standing by naming in advance what would count against it, and the following findings would not merely require local amendment but would lower the *status* of the argument from "a regime with documented instances" to "a suggestive metaphor." First, if in the threshold cases the decision logics were shown to be routinely transparent and the outcomes readily reversible on appeal, the foreclosure condition would fail and the concept would collapse toward ordinary bureaucracy — a test the *SCHUFA*, *SyRI* and *Robodebt* records were meant to meet and, on the evidence, do. Second, if the feedback loops in scoring or enforcement were shown to be absent or self-correcting rather than self-reinforcing, the composition claim would fail. Third, if the residue targeted by the worked comparison in Section 9 were shown to be fully explained by legibility, assemblage or computational-sovereignty accounts, the case for a distinct name would fail. Fourth, if subjects in the threshold cases were shown to retain robust, low-cost exit, the imposition condition — closure, existentialised exit-cost, weak redress — would fail. The theory is offered as vulnerable to each, and its adherents are obliged to seek such evidence rather than deflect it; the counter-evidence already registered on filter bubbles and adolescent mental health is treated as genuinely status-bearing, not as illustration to be rescued by reinterpretation.

15. Resistance: Naming, Opacity, Architecture, Justice

Homovictimus is vulnerable but not inert, and the relation between diagnosis and resistance must be stated without inflation. *Naming is not resistance*. To name a mechanism does not halt it; naming is the first epistemic threshold that renders the object of resistance visible, the precondition of political action, not its substitute. But it is the act with which the subject ceases to be only an output and becomes an address:

Hey you, Onopticon — you far-seeing stone. You do not know me on my terms; you translate me into yours, and call the translation me. I am not a model. I am not a profile. I am not fuel for a decision machine. My opacity is not a flaw; it is my last refuge. The moment I see this and give it a name, my resistance finds its first ground.

On that ground the normative programme has three tiers, each specified rather than declaimed. The *right to opacity* — the right to remain more than the system can process — must be graded, since absolute opacity would collide with public safety and the rights of others: personal existential opacity, which is near-absolute; bounded institutional legibility, the auditable minimum a service may require; and public accountability, which runs the other way, forcing powerful infrastructures to become legible to democratic oversight. *Architectural rights* carry the claim from text to substrate: if imposition operates at the level of infrastructure, then a right that cannot resist that infrastructure is a promise waiting to be bypassed — and each such right, from data minimisation to compartmentalisation to non-transferable identity boundaries, must name an obligated actor, a technical principle, an audit method and a consequence for breach. *Infrastructural justice*, finally, asks whether the conditions of recognition, appeal and existence are themselves just: who controls the gateways of recognition, who may contest classification, who may audit operational truth, and who may remain opaque without becoming socially non-viable.

16. Conclusion: A Name Pronounced, a Model Offered

What confronts us is not an upgraded surveillance society, nor an expanded data capitalism, nor the digitisation of the security state; each is a component, none the proper name. This article has pronounced the name *Onopticon* and, in the same motion, submitted it to test. As a model, *Onopticon* is *documented proper* only where compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition, documented feedback and foreclosure co-occur at the top evidentiary tier; the record of credit scoring, automated welfare and migration enforcement documents the necessary core of imposition and foreclosure to that standard, establishing these as *provisional Onopticon*, whilst the full four-condition conjunction in a single circuit remains the programme's next empirical task — more visible, when it comes, in the bureaucratically ordinary cases than in the spectacular ones. The relation to packaging is one-directional; most everyday domains are packaging or *Onopticism* risk; and the biological face is presented, on the closure axis, as packaging (food) and boundary-capacity (cellular modulation), with a documented *pre-closure biological constitution* at the cultured-meat frontier, even as it marks, on the axis of depth, the regime's furthest and most novel reach — the engineering of biological response that biopolitics does not name.

The subject-position so produced is *Homovictim*: held responsible whilst stripped of the conditions of agency, laundered from structural effect into personal fault, rendered vulnerable through the very legibility demanded for survival — and capable of a beginning of resistance the instant the imposed field is named as imposed. The reflexive limit with which this argument opened is also its final word. The analogue and digital capacities now assembled by power — imposing, penetrating, steering, reality-constituting — exceed what any narrative, including this one, can fully render. That excess is not an alibi for silence but a demand for method: named tendencies, explicit thresholds, pre-registered defeat, in place of the totalising description that the object has outgrown. *Onopticon* is pronounced as an accusation and offered as a model, and it asks to be either broken or built upon. That this article can be written and read at all is the last proof that the tendency it names is not yet total — and that the distance from which the name can still be spoken remains, for now, open.

EMPIRICAL APPENDIX: TWO CASES, ONE OBJECT

Abstract

The theory paper claims that *Onopticon* is a *different object of power* — corporately constituted, imposing rather than governing, refusal foreclosed — and it concedes that a single case rarely carries both of the claim's load-bearing legs at once. This appendix answers that concession with two documented cases chosen so that each is maximal on one leg. Australia's *Robodebt* scheme, largely state-built, carries the *modality* leg: it shows imposition, the reversal of the onus of proof, and the foreclosure of exit, in the findings of a Federal Court and a Royal Commission. United States migration enforcement, largely Palantir-built, carries the *constitution* leg: it shows the migration of the constitutive act — the determination of who exists as a target — into private infrastructure, and the closure of exit at population scale, in FOIA settlements, contract records and public-records research. Neither case alone proves the full conjunction the object-claim requires; read together they document its components, whilst the conjunction of all of them in a single constitutive circuit remains to be evidenced and is the programme's next empirical target. The appendix states its limits plainly: two cases with confirmatory instances

establish existence, not ubiquity; the corporate/state division is analytic rather than absolute; and where the evidence rests on recent investigative reporting rather than adjudication, it is marked as such.

1. The Two Legs of the Claim

The object-claim has two parts that a critic can attack separately. The first is a claim about *modality*: that this power does not govern a free subject within an arranged milieu but imposes the field and forecloses the capacity to refuse — with the reversed onus, the subject held responsible for what the infrastructure produced, as its signature. The second is a claim about the *actor*: that the *constitutive* act — the determination of which reality will be available for encounter, which persons will appear as targets or risks — has migrated to corporate infrastructure, whilst the state retains the *coercive* act of arrest, collection and removal.

A single case rarely evidences both legs, because the cases in which the modality is most starkly documented are often state-built, and the cases in which corporate constitution is clearest are often less fully adjudicated. The method here turns that difficulty into a design: two cases, each selected to be maximal on one leg, read against each other. Automated welfare — a state programme — is where the modality and the reversed onus are documented to the standard of a Royal Commission. Migration enforcement — a Palantir programme — is where corporate constitution and the closure of exit are documented to the standard of FOIA litigation and public-records research. If both legs hold in their respective cases, the conjunction the object-claim asserts is populated, even though no single programme displays it whole.

2. Case A — The Modality Leg: Automated Welfare

Automated welfare carries the modality leg — imposition, the reversal of the onus of proof, and the foreclosure of exit — to the standard of a Royal Commission. Its exemplary case, Australia's *Robodebt* scheme, is documented in full in Volume II of this programme, *Testing the Onopticon*; here it is invoked for its theoretical function alone. In its essentials the scheme fabricated debts never owed by averaging annual incomes into fortnights — a fact composed by an infrastructure and handed to the subject as though the world had produced it — and the Royal Commission found "no meaningful human intervention" and that it "effectively reversed the onus of proof" onto recipients made to disprove a debt with records the department could itself have retrieved (Pursuit, 2023; Community Legal Centres Australia, 2023). It was undone only by a Federal Court declaration of invalidity (*Prygodicz v Commonwealth (No 2)*, 2021) and a Commission that called it "a crude and cruel mechanism, neither fair nor legal" (Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, 2023): structural effect laundered into personal fault, the years to reversal the measure of how weak ordinary contestability had been. The claim that the scheme caused a specific number of deaths is not established, and none is made here (MIT FactLab, 2023).

Two confirmatory instances show the pattern is not idiosyncratic: the Dutch *SyRI* risk-scoring system, struck down under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights for opacity and chilling effect (Rechtbank Den Haag, 2020; Alston, 2019), and the childcare-benefits affair, in which nationality was used as a risk indicator, some 26,000 families were wrongly accused, a government fell, and a €2.75 million fine followed for discriminatory and unlawful processing (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2021; CBS, 2022).

3. Case B — The Constitution Leg: Migration Enforcement

3.1 The Constitutive Act, Migrated

To read Palantir as a vendor of software to Immigration and Customs Enforcement is to miss what the documents show: the firm builds the operational reality within which enforcement decisions are made. Its Investigative Case Management system, disclosed through FOIA litigation, modernised ICE's legacy database and binds dozens of federal, state, local and commercial data pools into a single interface (EPIC, 2020); the documented feeds include social media, live and historical telephone and message data, web-browsing and login records, the Vigilant Solutions automatic licence-plate reader network of more than five billion data points, and federal and state law-enforcement records (Mijente, 2019). FALCON, its analysis layer, puts this in agents' hands — FALCON mobile lets officers search immigration history, family relationships and border crossings from a government phone and share them live with a command centre (WNYC, 2018). By 2025 the constitutive function was made explicit: under a US\$30 million modification effective April 2025 and running to September 2027, Palantir was funded to build *ImmigrationOS*, oriented to the targeting and prioritisation of deportations, the tracking of "self-deportation," and the management of the immigration lifecycle (American Immigration Council, 2025). A companion application, *ELITE*, reported in early 2026, opens a dossier on each potential target, assigns a "confidence score" to a person's current address, and renders neighbourhoods as a raid heat-map — "kind of like Google Maps" — drawing address data from sources that reportedly include federal health records (404 Media, 2026; EFF, 2026). The division of labour is exact: the firm composes who appears as a target; the state performs the arrest. The constitutive act has migrated; the coercive act has not.

3.2 The Data-Broker Layer

Beneath the platform lies a commercial data layer that does the same constitutive work by other means. Under a US\$16.8 million contract, LexisNexis Risk Solutions gave ICE access, through its Accurint product, to billions of records — credit histories, licence-plate images, cellular-subscriber data — organised into some 283 million individual files, and ICE queried the database more than a million times in seven months (The Intercept, 2021; The Intercept, 2022). Thomson Reuters' CLEAR performs a parallel function, combining thousands of datasets, updating billions of records daily and generating AI "risk analysis" summaries, without judicial oversight (In These Times, 2025). The legal significance is precise: by purchasing from a commercial broker what it would need a warrant to compel, the state reaches personal data below the Fourth Amendment threshold — the constitutive act is not merely privatised but placed, by that privatisation, beyond the ordinary reach of contestation (The Intercept, 2021).

3.3 The Closure of Exit

The clearest evidence that this is foreclosure, not surveillance, is that there is no way out of the dataset. The Georgetown Law Center on Privacy and Technology's two-year study of thirteen years of ICE contracts and hundreds of public-records requests found that ICE had scanned the driver's-licence photographs of one in three adults with face recognition, could access the driver's-licence data of three in four, and could locate three in four through their utility records — most of it, the study found, without any judicial, legislative or public oversight (Wang, McDonald, Bateyko & Tucker, 2022). The point for the theory is that these records entered ICE's reach through the most ordinary acts of life — obtaining a licence, driving a car, signing up for electricity or water. One does not consent to the dataset and cannot exit it; to live an administered life is already to be inside it. This

is the closure of exit at population scale, and it is pre-legal: the subject is composed as findable, and potentially as suspect, before any judgment is passed.

3.4 Pre-Legal Attention and Weak Contestability

Here the machine need not decide in order to govern. The confidence score, the dossier and the heat-map compose the field of attention within which the officer then acts; visibility and suspicion are constituted upstream, before the law arrives, and the officer meets a world already sorted into targets and risks. Contestability is weak by construction: the scoring is opaque, ImmigrationOS reportedly pulls data "regardless of accuracy" (American Immigration Council, 2025), no warrant gates the commercial data, and the subject can neither see the dossier nor challenge the score. That this architecture is operational, not notional, is on the record: FALCON mobile coordinated the January 2018 raids on some one hundred 7-Eleven stores, part of a period in which workplace administrative arrests rose roughly ninefold (WNYC, 2018), and Palantir technology was reported to have powered one of the largest workplace raids in the agency's history in Mississippi in 2019 (Washington Post, 2019). As with welfare, the contestation that exists runs not through ordinary appeal but through extraordinary means — the EPIC v. ICE FOIA settlement (EPIC, 2020), litigation by American Oversight, and congressional oversight letters (2026) — which is itself the signature of weak contestability.

4. Measuring the Closure of Exit: An Exit-Cost Index

The theory paper operationalises imposition partly through the *existentialisation of the cost of exit*, but leaves that cost qualitative. This section makes it gradable, and its natural anchor is Hirschman's *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970). A subject dissatisfied with an organisation has, on Hirschman's account, two recourses: *exit* (to leave) and *voice* (to protest). Onopticon is precisely the condition in which both are foreclosed at once — exit because the infrastructure is the sole gateway to a life-essential good, voice because contestability has been designed out. Where both of Hirschman's remedies fail, the subject is left with neither departure nor complaint, only the imposed field. The index below grades the first foreclosure; weak contestability, the theory's fourth condition, grades the second.

Exit cost rises toward the *existential* along five measurable dimensions. *Monopoly/necessity*: is the infrastructure the sole gateway to a life-essential good — income, legal status, banking, healthcare, mobility? *Substitutability*: do real alternatives exist, and at what cost? *Reversibility*: can an erroneous exclusion be undone, and in what timeframe — appeal-reversal rates, time-to-correction? *Cascade*: does exclusion in one domain propagate to others, as credit to housing to employment? *Non-participation cost*: what is lost by declining to be legible, given that one may be enrolled without consent? The cost is *existential* — the threshold at which foreclosure begins — when declining or leaving the infrastructure threatens the material conditions of continued social existence, so that non-participation is not a lifestyle choice but a form of civil death.

Indicator	Robodebt (welfare)	ICE / Palantir (enforcement)
Monopoly / necessity	High — Centrelink the sole route to income support	High — no life outside state and commercial data
Substitutability	None — no non-infrastructure benefit exists	None — one cannot opt out of licence, utility, tax records
Reversibility	Weak — reversed only by court and Royal Commission, after years	Weak — the dossier and score are opaque, with no appeal
Cascade	High — debt, collection, credit harm, garnished refund	High — flag, detention, removal; reaching family and community
Non-participation cost	Existential — refusing legibility means losing income	Existential — enrolment occurs without consent (the dragnet)
Exit cost (overall)	Existential	Existential

Both cases score existential on the index, which is what qualifies them as foreclosure rather than mere inconvenience. Two differences are instructive. In welfare the subject *entered* the infrastructure voluntarily — one applies for a benefit — but cannot leave it once inside; in enforcement the subject never entered at all, since enrolment was without consent, so the non-participation-cost dimension is maximal from the outset. And the index sharpens the falsification protocol: a programme scoring *low* on monopoly, *high* on substitutability and reversibility, and *nil* on cascade would not be Onopticon but ordinary administration. The theory predicts, and the documentary record confirms, that the threshold cases score at the opposite pole — which is precisely why exit, for the subjects of Robodebt and the American dragnet, was not a door but a wall.

5. Two Cases, One Object

Read side by side, the cases divide the labour of proof exactly as the design intended.

Condition	Welfare (Robodebt)	Enforcement (ICE / Palantir)
Corporate constitution	weak — state-built scheme	strong — Palantir composes the targets
Imposition modality	strong — fabricated debt met as fact	strong — the target composed upstream
Reversed onus / responsibility-writeback	strong — Royal Commission finding	present — suspicion before judgment
Closure of exit	strong — garnishing, no explanation	strong — the dataset has no exit
Weak contestability	strong — undone only by court and commission	strong — pre-legal, FOIA-only redress

Welfare maximises the modality leg and the reversed onus but is state-built, so it under-tests corporate constitution; enforcement maximises corporate constitution and the closure of exit but, because deportation is a state act, leaves the coercive moment where it has always been. This is not a weakness of the pairing but its logic. The object-claim is a conjunction — corporately constituted *and* imposing *and* refusal-foreclosed — and no single programme was ever likely to display all of it at maximum intensity. What the two cases jointly establish is that each element of the conjunction is real and documented somewhere in the same historical formation: the imposition and the reversed onus in Australia's welfare courts, the migration of the constitutive act and the closure of exit in America's enforcement contracts. But documenting the components severally is not the same as proving their conjunction: the object is not proven whole in one place, and the single-circuit

demonstration — corporate constitution, imposition, foreclosure and documented feedback evidenced together, to the top tier, in one programme — is precisely what this appendix does not yet supply and what the programme names as its next empirical target. The constitutive capacity, moreover, is better described as *asymmetrically redistributed* between state and private infrastructure than as wholly migrated: the strong migration claim holds, on present evidence, in the enforcement case rather than as a completed universal.

Three limits must be stated. First, two cases with confirmatory instances establish existence, not ubiquity: the claim earned is that the *modality of Onoptic imposition* is documented, in the strict sense, in these programmes — provisional Onopticon, not the full four-condition proper regime, and certainly not that all administration is Onoptic. Second, the corporate/state division is analytic, not absolute: in enforcement the state still procures the systems and makes the arrests, and the firm still depends on state data — federal health, tax and licence records — for its raw material; the thesis is the migration of the *constitutive moment*, not a clean corporate seizure of sovereignty. Third, the evidentiary standard is uneven and is flagged where it matters: the welfare findings rest on courts and a Royal Commission, the enforcement findings largely on FOIA settlements, contracts and academic public-records research, and the most recent enforcement details — ELITE, the confidence score, the use of health records — rest on investigative reporting of early 2026 (404 Media, 2026; EFF, 2026) and are reported here as such, not as adjudicated fact.

6. Against the Falsification Protocol

The theory paper pre-registered what would lower its status: transparent decision logics, readily reversible outcomes, and robust low-cost exit would collapse the concept toward ordinary administration. Both cases are tested against that standard and both survive it by passing through it. In welfare the logic was opaque, the onus reversed, and reversal came only through a Federal Court and a Royal Commission. In enforcement the scoring is opaque, the data flow warrantless, and the only contestation on the record runs through FOIA litigation and congressional letters. What would have refuted the reading is stated as plainly: consented, warrant-based, transparent and appealable systems from which the subject held robust, low-cost exit. In neither case does the documentary record show it; in both it shows the opposite.

7. Conclusion: The Object, Entered into the Record

The theory paper could name a different object of power — corporately constituted, imposing rather than governing, refusal foreclosed — but it could not, alone, show the world meeting the name. This appendix shows two corners of the world meeting it, and dividing the burden between them. Automated welfare imposed a fabricated reality, reversed the onus of proof onto the citizen, and foreclosed exit through the coercive apparatus of the state; migration enforcement migrated the constitutive act — the composition of the target — into private infrastructure, and closed exit at population scale through a dataset no one consents to and no one can leave. Neither case is the whole object; together they are its documented anatomy. Two cases, one object: no longer asserted, but entered — in the findings of courts, commissions, FOIA settlements and public-records research — into the record.

THE ONOPTICON · II

Testing the Onopticon

*Automated Welfare and the Foreclosure of Refusal — a Documented Case Study
(Robodebt)*

Abstract

The theory paper names a regime, states a threshold and pre-registers the findings that would defeat it; a theory offered as falsifiable owes at least one worked case. This companion supplies it. It takes automated welfare as the domain in which the two hardest-to-evidence conditions of Onopticon — foreclosure and weak contestability — can be tested against primary documents rather than asserted, and it anchors on Australia's *Robodebt* scheme because that case is the most fully adjudicated on record: a Federal Court invalidation and a Royal Commission. The finding is exact. Robodebt met all four threshold conditions on the documentary record; it imposed a fabricated reality (a debt that did not exist) that the citizen encountered as fact; and it did so by *reversing the onus of proof* from the state onto the individual — the responsibility-writeback circuit of Homovictimus rendered in the language of a Royal Commission. Two confirmatory instances, the Dutch *SyRI* judgment and the childcare-benefits affair, show the pattern is not idiosyncratic. The case carries the theory's object-claim on one axis and honestly under-tests it on another: automated welfare is largely *state*-built, so it evidences the modality of imposition powerfully whilst leaving the corporate-constitution leg to the migration-enforcement case. What it demonstrates is narrow and firm — that in these documented instances the subject was not governed but subjected to an imposed reality it could not refuse — and it declines the causal claims the record does not support.

1. Purpose: From Asserted to Evidenced

A theory that pre-registers its own defeat conditions incurs a debt: it must show, at least once and in detail, that a real case satisfies its threshold rather than merely resembling it. The theory paper defines Onopticon by the co-occurrence of four conditions — compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition, documented feedback, and weak contestability issuing in actual foreclosure — and it concedes that two of these, foreclosure and weak contestability, are the ones most easily asserted and least easily evidenced. This study discharges that debt on the domain where the documentary record is richest: automated welfare, where courts and commissions have already done the fact-finding that a lone theorist cannot.

The study also tests the sharper claim of the theory paper — that this is a *different object of power*, imposition rather than governance. Governance, even in its environmental forms, arranges a field within which a subject conducts itself; the object claimed here imposes the field and forecloses refusal. Automated welfare is the ideal proving ground for the second half of that claim, because in it the imposed reality is unusually literal: not a nudge, not a ranking, but a *debt* — a fabricated fact with the full coercive apparatus of the state behind it — that the citizen is made to meet as though it were true and made to disprove at their own cost.

2. Method: A Single Documented Case, Two Confirmatory Instances

The design is a single deep case with two confirmatory instances. Robodebt is the deep case, selected on the explicit criterion of *evidential density*: it is, to date, the automated-welfare programme most thoroughly adjudicated, through the Federal Court of Australia and a Royal Commission whose final report runs to three volumes (Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, 2023; *Prygodicz v Commonwealth (No 2)*, 2021). The Dutch *SyRI* judgment (Rechtbank Den Haag, 2020) and the childcare-benefits affair (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2021) serve as confirmatory instances — chosen because they arise in a different state, a different legal order and a different benefit, so that convergence across them counts against idiosyncrasy.

Each of the four threshold conditions is operationalised before it is tested. *Compulsory recognition*: is there a realistic non-infrastructure route to the benefit? *Multi-domain composition*: does the ordering bind more than one data-domain? *Documented feedback*: are the system's outputs issued and enforced without a human check that could break the loop? *Foreclosure with weak contestability*: does the decision close a genuine option, and can the subject readily identify, understand and reverse it? A fifth, theory-specific test is added — the *reversed onus*, taken as the empirical signature of the Homovictimus responsibility-writeback circuit. Sources are restricted to court judgments, the Royal Commission report, data-protection decisions, national statistical offices and legal-aid case records; secondary literature is used only to frame, never to evidence — the framing of automated welfare as a technology that profiles and punishes the poor follows Eubanks (2018).

3. Robodebt: The Anatomy of an Imposed Reality

3.1 The Mechanism: Averaging as Fabrication

Robodebt — formally the Online Compliance Intervention — cross-matched Centrelink's fortnightly payment records against the Australian Taxation Office's *annual* income data, and, where the two diverged, divided the annual figure into twenty-six equal fortnights to reconstruct a presumed income history (Pursuit, 2023). For anyone whose earnings were irregular — casual and seasonal workers above all — this averaging fabricated fortnights of income that had never been earned, and from those fictions it generated debts that had never been owed. The debt was not a record of an overpayment; it was an artefact of the method. This is imposed reality in its most literal form: a fact composed by an infrastructure and handed to the subject as though the world, not the system, had produced it.

3.2 Compulsory Recognition and Multi-Domain Composition

The first two conditions are satisfied almost by definition. To receive income support in Australia is to be legible to Centrelink; there is no non-infrastructure route to the benefit, so recognition is compulsory. And the scheme was constituted precisely by binding two previously separate data-domains — social-security payment records and taxation income data — into a single automated match. The debt existed only in the seam between two datasets that had never before been joined in this way; multi-domain composition is not incidental to Robodebt but its very condition of possibility.

3.3 Documented Feedback: Automation at Scale

The third condition — a self-reinforcing loop that runs without a human check able to break it — is documented in the Commission's own findings: at the compliance stage there was "no meaningful human intervention" in the calculation and issuing of debts, which were raised on averaged data without review (Pursuit, 2023). The scale follows from the automation: more than 400,000 debts were raised, some A\$1.7 billion in total, affecting 443,000 people (Money, 2023). That a programme could manufacture debts against nearly half a million citizens is a function of the loop's closure — output became demand became collection with no gate at which a person might have asked whether the debt was real. The measure of how unreal it was: actual fraud was found in fewer than 0.1% of cases (BBC, 2023).

3.4 Foreclosure and Weak Contestability: The Reversed Onus

Here the case is decisive, because the Royal Commission recorded the mechanism in the theory's own terms. The scheme, it found, "effectively reversed the onus of proof" from a powerful state agency onto individual

welfare recipients: once a debt was generated, the recipient had to disprove it, typically by "somehow obtaining bank statements and payslips going back several years" — records the department itself had the power to obtain but did not (Community Legal Centres Australia, 2023). Contestability was weak by design and weaker in execution: debt letters did not explain how the figure had been reached, and in some periods carried no contact telephone number at all (Community Legal Centres Australia, 2023). Exit, meanwhile, was foreclosed by the coercive apparatus: Deanna Amato learned of her alleged A\$2,754 debt only after Centrelink garnished her A\$1,709.87 tax refund, a further 10% penalty attached (Victoria Legal Aid, 2019). One cannot decline a debt one is not told the basis of, cannot appeal a calculation one is not shown, and cannot exit a system that reaches into one's tax refund to collect. This is foreclosure with weak contestability, documented.

3.5 The Responsibility-Writeback Circuit, Made Literal

The theory paper defines Homovictimus by a circuit: the infrastructure forecloses the options, the subject is held responsible for the outcome, and the institution renders its own hand invisible. Robodebt is that circuit made literal and official. The state's own error — an unlawful averaging method — was converted into the citizen's debt; the burden of exposing the error was placed on the citizen; and the citizen who could not produce years-old payslips was treated not as the victim of a defective system but as a debtor in default. The reversed onus is not a metaphor here but a finding of fact: structural effect laundered into personal fault, in the language of a Royal Commission.

3.6 The Verdicts: Correction Only After Mass Harm

That the scheme was corrected at all, and only after extraordinary intervention, is itself the evidence of weak contestability. In *Amato v Commonwealth* (2019) the Commonwealth conceded by consent judgment that a debt calculated solely by averaging ATO income, the 10% penalty and the garnishing of a tax refund were unlawful (Victoria Legal Aid, 2019). In *Prygodicz v Commonwealth (No 2)* (2021) Murphy J declared debts based only on income-averaging invalid and called the scheme "a shameful chapter" and "a massive failure of public administration" (Human Rights Law Centre, 2021). The Royal Commission's final report, delivered on 7 July 2023 under Commissioner Catherine Holmes, called Robodebt "a crude and cruel mechanism, neither fair nor legal", and included a sealed chapter referring individuals for prosecution (Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, 2023). A power that can be undone only by a Federal Court and a Royal Commission, years after it began, is by that very fact one whose ordinary contestability was foreclosed.

A caution the record requires: it is sometimes claimed that Robodebt caused a specific number of deaths. That claim is not established. Some 2,030 people who had received compliance letters died in one period, but their causes of death were not recorded and no causal link was found; the connections drawn in particular cases rest on family testimony to a Senate inquiry, and no court or commission has made a causal finding (RMIT FactLab, 2023). This study makes no death-causation claim and rests its argument on what the documents do establish.

4. Confirmatory Instances

4.1 SyRI: The Black-Box in the Poorest Postcodes

The Dutch risk-indication system SyRI combined some seventeen categories of personal data — employment, fines, tax, property, housing, education, pensions, debts, benefits, health insurance and more —

into risk scores, of which the court observed that it was hard to imagine a category of personal data *not* eligible for processing (JIPITEC, 2020). Its logic was a black box: the District Court of The Hague found that the risk model, its indicators, its thresholds and the persons flagged were unknown, and that this opacity was a deliberate choice (AlgorithmWatch, 2020). It was deployed only in the poorest neighbourhoods, predominantly among non-white residents, as the UN Special Rapporteur's intervention emphasised (Alston, 2019). On 5 February 2020 the court held the scheme in breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, citing the transparency deficit and a probable chilling effect (Rechtbank Den Haag, 2020). Compulsory recognition, opaque composition, and contestability so weak that the subject could not even learn why they had been flagged: the same conjunction, in a different state.

4.2 The Childcare-Benefits Affair: Nationality as Risk

In the Dutch childcare-benefits affair the responsibility-writeback circuit is again documented. A self-learning risk-classification system and a blacklist used nationality and dual nationality as risk indicators; some 1.4 million dual nationals were retained in the system, and targeted queries were run against all Ghanaian and Bulgarian applicants (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2021). Parents labelled with "opzet/grove schuld" — intent or gross negligence — were denied standard repayment arrangements and pursued for the full sum; roughly 8,000 faced clawback of entire benefits for minor administrative errors, an internal 2016 note having recommended auto-categorising debts above €3,000 in this way (Dutch childcare benefits scandal record, 2021). Around 26,000 families were wrongly accused of fraud between 2005 and 2019; the national statistics office later recorded that 1,675 children of affected parents were removed from their homes between 2015 and 2021, 555 still placed at the end of 2021 (CBS, 2022). The third Rutte cabinet resigned on 15 January 2021, and the data-protection authority fined the tax administration €2.75 million for discriminatory and unlawful processing (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2021). Minor error, met with total clawback and no route of appeal, laundered into the parent's fault: *Homovictimus*, again in the record.

5. What the Case Establishes — and What It Does Not

On the modality axis the finding is firm. In each instance the subject was not a free agent conducted within an arranged milieu but the recipient of an imposed reality — a fabricated debt, a secret risk score, a clawback demand — met as fact and refusable only at ruinous cost or not at all. This is the difference the theory paper draws between governing and imposing, and here it is not asserted but documented: the citizen did not misconduct and get corrected; a false reality was composed upstream and enforced downstream, with the burden of undoing it placed on the person least able to bear it.

Honesty requires the counterweight. Automated welfare under-tests the theory's *corporate-constitution* leg, because these systems were substantially *state*-built: Robodebt was a government scheme, SyRI a statute, the childcare system a tax-administration process. What welfare evidences powerfully is the *modality* of imposition and the reversed onus; the corporate-constitution leg — private infrastructure building the reality-field — is carried better by the migration-enforcement case, where the constitutive layer is Palantir's. The two cases are therefore complementary, not redundant: welfare documents that the power *imposes and forecloses*; enforcement documents that the constitutive act has *migrated to the firm*. Neither case alone proves the full conjunction; together they document its components, and the single-circuit conjunction remains the programme's next empirical target. A single deep case with two confirmatory instances establishes existence, not ubiquity: the claim earned here is that the *modality of Onoptic imposition* is documented, in the strict sense,

in these programmes — provisional Onopticon, not the full proper regime, and not that all administration is Onoptic.

6. Against the Falsification Protocol

The theory paper pre-registered the findings that would lower its status. The first was decisive: if, in the threshold cases, decision logics were routinely transparent and outcomes readily reversible on appeal, the foreclosure condition would fail and the concept would collapse toward ordinary bureaucracy. Robodebt is the test met in the negative that confirms the positive: the logic was opaque (letters without explanation), the onus reversed, and reversal came not through ordinary appeal but through a Federal Court and a Royal Commission. Had recipients enjoyed accessible, timely appeal that routinely overturned false debts, Robodebt would have been maladministration, not Onopticon; the documentary record is that they did not. The case thus survives the protocol not by being shielded from it but by passing through it — and it marks, in the same motion, what would refute the reading: evidence that affected subjects held robust, low-cost exit and effective redress. The record shows the opposite.

7. Conclusion: Imposition, Documented

The theory paper could pronounce the name and state the threshold; it could not, alone, show the world meeting it. This companion shows one corner of the world meeting it, in documents a court and a commission compiled. Automated welfare imposed a reality that was false, foreclosed the refusal of it, and wrote the state's own error back onto the citizen as personal debt — and it did so at the scale of hundreds of thousands, corrected only after years and only by extraordinary means. That is not the government of a free subject through an arranged milieu. It is the imposition of a fabricated field upon a subject stripped of the capacity to refuse it, and then held responsible for it. Onopticon named that object; Robodebt, SyRI and the childcare-benefits affair are that object, entered into the record.

THE ONOPTICON · III

The Uneven Reach of the Onopticon

Differential Exposure and the Distribution of Homovictimus

Abstract

This study extends the theory of the *Onopticon* — the regime of infrastructural sovereignty in which technical systems pre-process the conditions of recognition, access, mobility and risk before ordinary decision begins — by asking a question the general model deliberately held in reserve: upon whom does this power fall first, hardest, and with the least possibility of exit? Its answer is that the subject-position the theory calls *Homovictimus* — held responsible as an agent whilst stripped of the conditions of agency — is not distributed evenly across a population but is allocated along the historical fault lines of race, gender, class and migration status. The article makes this claim under a strict methodological discipline it names *differential exposure*: it locates the unevenness not in the identities of persons but in the positions they are made to occupy within an infrastructure, so that the analysis is of a distribution of exposure, not an essence of groups. It reconstructs a genealogy of the racialised gaze that long precedes the algorithm — Simone Browne's branding, slave ships and lantern laws; Ruha Benjamin's New Jim Code; Safiya Noble's technological redlining; Virginia Eubanks's digital poorhouse; Couldry and Mejias's data colonialism — and reads it as the analogue pre-history of infrastructural imposition, continuous with the corpus's own analogue genealogy of categorisation. It then re-reads three cases already established on the documentary record — the Dutch SyRI system, the childcare-benefits scandal (*toeslagenaffaire*), and the ICE data dragnet documented by Georgetown — not for whether they cross the Onopticon threshold, which they do, but for the geometry of who crosses it first: the low-income neighbourhood chosen as the testing ground, nationality installed as a risk indicator, the enforcement architecture whose reach is racially patterned. The framework's most demanding interlocutor is Achille Mbembe's necropolitics, which is treated, as the late Foucault was in the parent theory, as both an enrichment and a rival: it names the ultimate stake of differential exposure — the power to decide who is exposed to death — but it does not name the graded, administrative, exit-priced exposure that is this regime's ordinary form. Homovictimus is therefore re-described as a differential subject-position, and the conditions that would falsify the claim of differential distribution are stated in advance. Analytically the work draws on Patricia Hill Collins's matrix of domination and Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein's data feminism, including the *privilege hazard* that explains why the designers of these infrastructures are the least able to see the exposure they distribute.

Keywords: Onopticon, Homovictimus, differential exposure, infrastructural imposition, racializing surveillance, intersectionality, matrix of domination, data feminism, technological redlining, New Jim Code, data colonialism, digital poorhouse, necropolitics, SyRI, toeslagenaffaire, migration enforcement, exit cost, privilege hazard

PART I — THE UNEVEN SURFACE

1. Introduction: Homovictimus Is Not Distributed Evenly

The parent theory of this corpus advanced a claim about a kind of power and the subject it produces. It named a regime of *infrastructural sovereignty* — the *Onopticon* — in which private and public systems pre-process the field of reality itself: which gateways a person may pass, within which systems they are recognised, at which thresholds they are slowed, ranked, blocked or activated, and it named the subject so produced *Homovictimus*, the figure held responsible as an agent whilst the conditions of agency are withdrawn. That argument was pitched, of necessity, at the level of the population. It asked what this power *is*, how it differs in its object from

discipline and from governmentality, and it tested the claim against rival theories and documented cases. It said, in effect, that the doorstep of imposed reality now stands before everyone.

This is true, and it is not the whole truth. A doorstep that stands before everyone does not stand at the same height for each person who approaches it. The abstraction of the general theory — deliberate, and necessary to establish the object at all — carried a silence within it, and the silence has a shape. To say that the Onopticon pre-processes reality for the human being as such is to describe the mechanism correctly whilst suppressing its most consistent empirical feature: it does not arrive everywhere simultaneously, it does not press with equal force, and it does not leave equal room for refusal. It has an order of arrival. It is tested on some neighbourhoods before others. It installs some attributes, and not others, as its risk indicators. It reserves its heaviest, least contestable, least exitable forms for populations that were already, long before any algorithm, the historical objects of classification and control. The wager of this study is that this order of arrival is not noise around the model but a law of its operation, and that a theory of imposed reality which cannot say who meets the imposition first has not yet finished describing its object.

The claim can be stated without hedging. Homovictimus is a subject-position, and subject-positions are allocated. The doubled cruelty that defines the figure — full responsibility joined to withdrawn agency — is not sprinkled at random across a population; it falls along the oldest fault lines a society keeps, the lines of race, gender, class and the status of the migrant and the poor. The person whose neighbourhood was chosen as the proving ground for a fraud-detection engine, the family whose second nationality was quietly weighted as a marker of risk, the community whose faces were enrolled into a recognition system without their passage through any door of consent: these are not unlucky individuals scattered through the general population of the exposed. They are the leading edge of the exposure, and their precedence is structured. The general theory named the machine. This study asks where its shadow falls first.

2. From Identity to Exposure: The Central Methodological Commitment

Everything in this study depends on a distinction that must be drawn before any evidence is admitted, because without it the argument collapses into precisely the error it exists to refute. The claim is *not* that certain groups are, by some property of their members, more exposed to infrastructural power. The claim is that certain *positions* within an infrastructure carry more exposure, and that a society's history sorts its people into those positions non-randomly. The unit of analysis is the position, not the person; the object described is a *distribution of exposure*, not an essence of a group. I name this commitment *differential exposure*, and I hold to it throughout.

The distinction is not pedantry; it is the whole difference between a critical analysis and a reactionary one. An essentialist reading says: this population is risky, or fragile, or criminal, and the system merely registers what is already there. A differential-exposure reading says: this population was placed, by prior and continuing arrangements it did not author, at the coordinates where the infrastructure bears down first and hardest, and the system does not register a pre-existing property but *manufactures and then re-inscribes* a position. The credit-scoring engine does not find the poor to be poor; it converts an inherited position of thin financial history into a machine-legible verdict that deepens it. The fraud model does not discover that a neighbourhood commits fraud; it selects that neighbourhood as the site of its most intensive suspicion and thereby produces the data that appear to confirm the choice. Exposure, in this account, is not a mirror held up to groups. It is a gradient built into infrastructures, and the gradient runs downhill toward positions that history has already carved.

This is why the analytic language of this study is drawn from the tradition of intersectionality rather than from any catalogue of identities. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term to name a failure of a single-axis analysis: a Black woman turned away from a claim of discrimination because the harm she suffered fit neither the court's template for racial discrimination nor its template for sex discrimination, falling instead into the intersection the law could not see (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). The lesson for a theory of infrastructural power is exact. Exposure to the Onopticon is not the sum of an exposure-to-race and an exposure-to-class and an exposure-to-gender, each measured on its own axis; it is what happens at the intersection, where a low-income migrant woman meets a system built by people who occupy none of those positions and who therefore designed for none of them. Intersectionality here is not a politics of identity but a method for locating the coordinates at which infrastructural pressure concentrates. It tells us where to look, not whom to blame or to essentialise.

3. The Analytic: The Matrix of Domination and the Onopticon

The general theory placed the Onopticon against two canons: the legibility-and-classification tradition and the corporate-power tradition. To read the Onopticon for its uneven reach, a third body of thought is required, and it is already waiting: the account of intersecting systems of power that Patricia Hill Collins named the *matrix of domination* (Collins, 2000). Collins's argument was that oppression is never experienced along a single axis and never delivered through a single mechanism; it is organised through interlocking domains — the structural, the disciplinary, the hegemonic and the interpersonal — that distribute advantage and exposure simultaneously and reinforce one another. The value of the concept for the present study is that it supplies exactly what the general model of the Onopticon abstracts away: a theory of how a field of power is *patterned* rather than uniform.

Placed side by side, the two frameworks complete one another. The Onopticon supplies the mechanism — pre-processing, compulsory recognition, foreclosure of exit — that the matrix of domination, formulated before the age of algorithmic infrastructure, could not have specified. The matrix of domination supplies the distribution — the patterning across interlocking positions — that the Onopticon, formulated at the level of the population, left as a silence. The infrastructural turn does not dissolve the matrix; it becomes its newest domain. Where Collins's structural domain once meant the law, the labour market and the school, it now means also the credit-scoring model, the welfare risk-classifier and the enforcement database, which do the same distributive work with a new and formidable property: they present the outcome of a historical sorting as the neutral verdict of a technical system, and they return it to the sorted individual as a fact about themselves.

Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein carried this tradition directly into the analysis of data and its systems, and their *Data Feminism* furnishes the operating principles of this study's method: examine power and challenge it; rethink the binaries and hierarchies that data systems encode; and make visible the labour and the standpoint that produce every dataset (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020). One of their concepts is indispensable here and will return in Part V. They name the *privilege hazard*: the phenomenon by which those who occupy the most protected positions — who are least exposed to a harm — are for that very reason the least able to perceive it, and are precisely the people most often placed in charge of designing the systems that distribute it. The privilege hazard is not an accusation of malice. It is a structural account of why an infrastructure of differential exposure can be built, in good faith, by people who will never stand on its doorstep, and why its unevenness is so reliably invisible to those best placed to correct it.

PART II — THE GENEALOGY OF THE RACIALISED GAZE

4. Racializing Surveillance: The Analogue Pre-History of the Onopticon

The parent theory insisted that the Onopticon has an analogue genealogy — that education, culture, art, law, economy and media were the pre-algorithmic infrastructures of categorisation, and that the rupture lies in the passage from analogue pre-processing to algorithmic pre-imposition. A study of differential exposure must extend that genealogy along its most consequential seam, because the sorting of human beings by infrastructure was, from the beginning, a racial project, and the historian who has shown this most precisely is Simone Browne.

Browne's *Dark Matters* demonstrates that surveillance as a technology of sorting did not begin with the camera or the database but with the apparatus assembled to track, mark and manage Black life under slavery (Browne, 2015). The branding of enslaved people inscribed identity onto the body as a permanent, machine-independent record. The stowage diagram of the slave ship *Brooks* rendered human beings as a calculable cargo, a spreadsheet in wood and iron. The eighteenth-century *lantern laws* of New York required Black, mixed-race and Indigenous people to carry a lit candle after dark if they moved through the city unaccompanied, making the body compulsorily visible to any white observer — an analogue system of forced, asymmetric recognition. Browne's term for this long formation is *racializing surveillance*: surveillance practices through which racial boundaries are drawn and enforced, and through which certain bodies are marked in advance as objects to be watched.

The continuity with the Onopticon is not metaphorical; it is structural, and it is precise. The lantern law is compulsory recognition — the theory's first threshold condition — three centuries before the facial-recognition match. It composes across domains: the same marked status governs movement, labour, testimony and the right to be in a place. It foreclosed exit: there was no opting out of the mark. What the general theory identified as the formal conditions of infrastructural imposition, Browne shows operating fully in an analogue racial order, which means that the algorithm did not invent differential exposure but inherited it, automated it, and stripped from it the last traces of a visible author. Browne also gives the resistance its oldest name, *dark sousveillance*: the evasive, oppositional and creative practices by which the surveilled watch back and carve out spaces of refusal. That name returns in Part V, because a theory of differential exposure that offered no account of differential refusal would have described only half of the relation.

5. The New Jim Code and Technological Redlining

If Browne supplies the analogue pre-history, Ruha Benjamin and Safiya Noble supply the account of how the racialised sort survives its migration into code, and why it emerges from that migration more powerful for appearing neutral. Benjamin names the pattern the *New Jim Code*: the deployment of new technologies that reproduce existing hierarchies whilst being promoted and perceived as more objective, more progressive and less biased than the discriminatory systems of a prior era (Benjamin, 2019). The name is chosen with care — it echoes the New Jim Crow — and its analytic point is exactly the one this study needs: the danger of the algorithm is not that it is a cruder instrument of sorting than the older ones but that it is a *more legitimate* one, laundering an inherited distribution of exposure through the prestige of the technical and returning it as a fact of

nature. Discriminatory design, in Benjamin's account, need not be intended; it is the default outcome when systems are built atop data produced by a history of unequal treatment, by designers protected from the exposure they encode.

Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression* documents the same mechanism in the infrastructure through which a culture now retrieves its knowledge of itself (Noble, 2018). Her demonstration — that a commercial search engine, driven by advertising logic and trained on a culture's traffic, systematically surfaced degrading results for Black women and girls — is a study in how a system presented as a neutral mirror of relevance instead concentrates and redistributes a society's existing contempt. Her term *technological redlining* names the wider phenomenon exactly: the reproduction, in code and data, of the discriminatory geography that redlining once drew on paper, when banks and insurers marked the neighbourhoods of the racialised poor as zones of denial. The word matters to this study because it insists on the continuity of the *map*. Redlining was infrastructural imposition in analogue form — a classification that pre-processed access to credit, housing and security along a racial boundary. Technological redlining is its algorithmic successor: the same boundary, drawn now by a model, defended now by its opacity (Pasquale, 2015), and all the harder to contest because the line no longer appears on any map a citizen can read.

6. Data Colonialism and the Digital Poorhouse

Two further concepts complete the genealogy by naming the two positions where differential exposure concentrates most reliably: the colonised and the poor. Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias name the first with *data colonialism*: the appropriation of human life so that data can be continuously extracted from it for profit, a new stage that fuses the extractive logic of historical colonialism with the abstraction of contemporary capitalism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). The concept matters to a theory of differential exposure because it identifies the deep asymmetry beneath the data order — that the flow of extraction runs, as the older colonial flows ran, from the many who are rendered into resource toward the few who own the means of rendering — and because it refuses the comfortable story in which datafication is a universal condition borne equally by all. The colonial frame is a claim about direction and about who is made into the raw material of whose system.

Virginia Eubanks names the second position with the *digital poorhouse*: the automated eligibility systems, fraud-detection engines and risk-scoring models that now administer public assistance, and that function, she argues, as the twenty-first-century successor to the nineteenth-century brick-and-mortar poorhouse — instruments to contain, surveil, moralise and punish the poor (Eubanks, 2018). Her cases show, with painful clarity, the ordinary operating truth of differential exposure: the most invasive, least contestable, most automated systems of the state are trained *first and most heavily upon the poor*, because the poor are the population compelled to transact with the state to survive, and compulsion is the precondition of exposure. One does not submit to the welfare risk-classifier unless one needs welfare. The wealthy meet no equivalent, not because they are unmonitored but because their monitoring is optional, courteous and reversible. Eubanks's poorhouse is the exact hinge between the general theory and this study: it is the Onopticon's compulsory recognition, its multi-domain composition and its foreclosed exit, delivered to the one population that cannot decline the transaction — and therefore the population upon whom the machine is always tested first.

PART III — THE CASES, READ FOR EXPOSURE

7. Re-Reading the Corpus for Differential Exposure

The parent theory and its empirical appendix established a set of cases that cross the Onopticon threshold on the documentary record. The task of this section is not to re-establish that they cross it — that work is done — but to read the same primary record for a second pattern the first reading held in reserve: the geometry of arrival. Each case, examined for who meets the imposition first, discloses the same structure the genealogy predicts. I hold throughout to the two disciplines of this corpus: the differential-exposure commitment, so that the analysis is of positions and not of essences; and the evidentiary commitment, so that every claim is tied to a primary source and every limit of that source is stated rather than smoothed over. Where a court declined to find discrimination, I say so; where a claim rests on investigative reporting rather than an adjudicated finding, I mark it.

7.1 SyRI: The Poor Neighbourhood as the Proving Ground

The Dutch *Systeem Risico Indicatie* (SyRI) linked government databases to generate risk scores flagging individuals for possible benefits, tax and labour fraud. On 5 February 2020 the District Court of The Hague halted it, holding that the SyRI legislation violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to respect for private and family life, because it failed the test of a fair balance between its aims and its intrusion and lacked the transparency and safeguards such a system demands (Rechtbank Den Haag, 2020). This much the general theory already recorded. Read for differential exposure, the decisive fact lies not in the legal ground of the ruling but in the geography of the deployment: SyRI was not applied to the population at large but was switched on in specific neighbourhoods, and the neighbourhoods selected were lower-income districts. The system did not scan the nation for fraud; it scanned the poor for it, and it did so in the places where the poor and the migrant were concentrated.

The differential-exposure reading must, however, observe a discipline the general theory also observed, and it is a discipline that cuts against overstatement. The court decided the case on the privacy ground of Article 8, and, having found a violation there, it *declined to rule* on the separate claim that SyRI discriminated. It is therefore not correct to say that a court found SyRI to be racially or socio-economically discriminatory; it did not reach the question. The discrimination claim belongs to the record in a different and still-authoritative form: the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, Philip Alston, intervened in the case to argue that SyRI disproportionately targeted the poorest and most marginalised, was deployed in low-income and minority neighbourhoods, and risked entrenching discrimination on socio-economic and migration-status grounds (Alston, 2019). The honest formulation is therefore the strongest one available and does not need to borrow authority it lacks: the binding judicial finding is that SyRI violated the privacy rights of those it touched; the documented pattern of the deployment, and the intervention of the international authority on poverty, establish that those it touched were selected by the coordinates of class and migration. The machine's proving ground had an address, and the address was poor.

7.2 The Toeslagenaffaire: Nationality Installed as a Risk Indicator

The Dutch childcare-benefits scandal (*toeslagenaffaire*) is, for a theory of differential exposure, the clearest documented case in the corpus, because in it the sorting attribute is not inferred from a pattern of deployment

but is written directly into the machine. The tax administration's fraud-detection apparatus used *nationality* — specifically the holding of a second, non-Dutch nationality — as a risk factor, retaining and weighting dual-nationality data in the classification of families applying for childcare benefit. Tens of thousands of families, on the order of twenty-six thousand, were wrongly labelled as fraudsters and forced to repay large sums, with consequences that ran through debt, unemployment, eviction and family breakdown. In December 2021 the Dutch Data Protection Authority (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens) fined the tax administration for unlawful and discriminatory processing, identifying the structural and unnecessary use of nationality data as the discriminatory core (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2021). The scandal brought down a government: the third Rutte cabinet resigned in January 2021.

Here the differential-exposure claim rests on an official finding rather than an inference, and precision about the nature of that finding is what gives it force. The authority found discrimination *on the basis of nationality* — a documented, adjudicated fact, not an advocate's characterisation. The precise limit must also be stated: the finding was nationality-based, and the authority noted that ethnicity as such was not a stored field, so that the stronger and looser claim sometimes made in public discussion — that the system engaged in ethnic profiling in the strict sense — is not what the regulator established. Independent human-rights analysis reached the wider structural conclusion the regulator's mandate did not require it to reach: Amnesty International's study of the affair, *Xenophobic Machines*, documented the disproportionate impact on families of migrant background and low income and argued that the system's design produced exactly the discriminatory outcome its risk indicators encoded (Amnesty International, 2021). The toeslagenaffaire is thus the corpus's decisive demonstration that differential exposure need not be an emergent bias hidden in training data. It can be a design decision: a protected-adjacent attribute, nationality, selected as a proxy, installed as a risk multiplier, and defended as neutral administration until a regulator and a fallen government named it otherwise.

7.3 American Dragnet: The Racial Geometry of Enforcement

The third case moves from the welfare state to the enforcement state, and from Europe to the United States, and it demonstrates differential exposure at the scale of an entire population category. The Georgetown Law Center on Privacy and Technology's report *American Dragnet* documented the infrastructure through which US Immigration and Customs Enforcement locates, identifies and tracks people: ICE can locate three in four adults through utility records, has scanned the driver's-licence photographs of one in three adults through facial-recognition searches, and holds access to the driver's-licence data of three in four adults, much of it acquired through commercial data brokers that route around state privacy limits (Wang, McDonald, Bateyko & Tucker, 2022). This is a documented architecture of compulsory recognition assembled without the passage of any subject through a door of consent, and the general theory recorded it as such. The report is a research and advocacy document, and its percentages are its own estimates from records analysis and contracts rather than adjudicated facts; that limit is stated and does not weaken the structural point.

Read for differential exposure, the dragnet's significance is that the population it is built to act upon — the undocumented, the recently arrived, the migrant community and the mixed-status family — is a population defined at the intersection of nationality, race and class, and that the architecture's reach falls upon that community as a whole and upon the citizens and lawful residents who share its neighbourhoods, its languages and its utility grids. The system does not need to name race in its code to distribute exposure racially; it needs only to be pointed at migration, which a history of racial formation has already made a racial category. This is the New Jim Code operating at national scale: an infrastructure that encodes no explicit racial classification and

yet delivers a racially patterned distribution of the most consequential exposure a person can face — the loss of the right to remain. The three cases, read together, give differential exposure in its three documented forms: selected by the geography of poverty (SyRI), installed as an explicit risk attribute (the toeslagenaffaire), and delivered through the racial geometry of an enforcement category (American Dragnet). One mechanism, three coordinates, a single pattern of arrival.

PART IV — NECROPOLITICS AS RIVAL AND SUPPLEMENT

8. Necropolitics: The Genealogy That Most Nearly Absorbs This Claim

Every serious framework owes its readers an honest confrontation with the rival that could dissolve it, and the parent theory met that obligation by measuring the Onopticon against the late Foucault of environmental governmentality (Foucault, 2008) — the genealogy that most nearly absorbed it — rather than against the easy target of the disciplinary Panopticon. A theory of differential exposure owes the same confrontation, and its most demanding interlocutor is not Foucault but Achille Mbembe. Where the general theory's nearest rival was a theory of how power *conducts*, this study's nearest rival is a theory of how power *distributes death*.

Mbembe's *necropolitics* reworks Foucault's biopower toward its extremity. If biopolitics is the power to "make live and let die," necropolitics is the power, exercised in the colony, the plantation, the occupied territory and the camp, to dictate who may live and who must die — to consign whole populations to what Mbembe calls *death-worlds*, forms of social existence in which people are kept in a condition of living death, neither fully alive to rights nor granted the finality of death (Mbembe, 2003, 2019). The concept is indispensable to this study for a reason that must be granted fully before it is qualified: it names, more unflinchingly than any framework in the data-justice canon, the ultimate stake of differential exposure. The gradient of exposure this study traces does not run downhill toward mere inconvenience. At its steepest it runs toward the border where people die, toward the enforcement architecture whose end is removal, toward the withdrawal of the means of life from populations rendered surplus. Mbembe supplies the vocabulary for the bottom of the gradient, and any theory of uneven exposure that flinched from that bottom would be dishonest about where its subject leads.

9. Why Differential Exposure Is Not Simply Necropolitics

The reason necropolitics cannot simply *be* the theory of differential exposure is the same kind of reason that prevented environmental governmentality from being the theory of the Onopticon, and drawing the line precisely is what keeps this study from collapsing into a more established name. Necropolitics is a theory of the *binary at the limit*: it turns on the ultimate distinction between those who may live and those who must die, and its home terrain is the exceptional space — the camp, the occupation, the frontier — where sovereignty shows its lethal face without disguise. Differential exposure names something that includes that limit but is not exhausted by it: a *graded, administrative, ordinary* distribution of infrastructural pressure that operates, most of the time, far from the point of death, in the everyday registers of the credit score, the benefit clawback, the risk flag and the recognition match.

The distinction can be stated as one of axis. Necropolitics measures a population against the line between life and death. Differential exposure measures positions along a continuous gradient of *how early, how hard*,

and at what cost of exit the infrastructure of imposed reality bears upon them — and the exit cost is the variable the parent corpus has already made quantitative through its Exit-Cost Index. The person wrongly flagged by the *toeslagenaffaire* was not consigned to a death-world; they were consigned to years of ruinous repayment, administrative disbelief and foreclosed appeal — an existence the necropolitical vocabulary is too absolute to describe, and which the language of graded exposure and exit cost describes exactly. Most Homovictimus is made not at the border of death but at the counter of the office, in the ordinary administrative violence of being pre-judged by a system one cannot read, address or leave. Necropolitics illuminates the darkest end of the gradient and misses the length of it; differential exposure measures the whole length and, at its darkest end, hands the description back to Mbembe. The relation is therefore the same doubled relation the parent theory struck with the late Foucault: necropolitics is both a supplement, naming a stake this study must not soften, and a rival that must be held at its distance, because to reduce differential exposure to necropolitics would be to lose everything that happens between the office counter and the grave — which is where almost all of it happens.

PART V — CONSEQUENCES

10. The Privilege Hazard and the Design of the Onopticon

If exposure is distributed unevenly, a question presses that the general theory could defer but this study cannot: how is an infrastructure of uneven exposure built, maintained and defended without its unevenness being seen and stopped? The answer is not, in the main, conspiracy. It is the structural fact that D'Ignazio and Klein named the *privilege hazard*: those who occupy the most protected positions are, by virtue of that protection, the least able to perceive the harms from which they are protected, and they are disproportionately the people who design the systems that distribute those harms (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020). The engineer who will never apply for childcare benefit does not experience the benefit risk-classifier as a threat; the executive whose immigration status is secure does not feel the enforcement dragnet close around a language or a neighbourhood; the designer whose financial history is thick and clean does not meet the credit model as a verdict. Each builds, in good conscience, for the position they occupy, and the position they occupy is the one the system was always going to spare.

The privilege hazard explains a feature of infrastructural imposition that would otherwise seem paradoxical — that its unevenness is at once systematic and sincerely unintended — and it converts a moral complaint into a design problem with a design answer. If the differential distribution of exposure is invisible to those least exposed, then it can be made visible only by centring the standpoint of those most exposed: by treating the person on the doorstep of the machine, and not the person who built it, as the authoritative witness to what it does. This is the point at which the analytic tradition of this study issues a concrete methodological demand rather than a lament. An infrastructure cannot be certified as fair by the people it spares. The test of a system of imposed reality is the account given by those it reaches first — which is why the cases in Part III were read from the position of the flagged family and the scanned neighbourhood, and not from the position of the ministry or the vendor.

11. Homovictimus Revisited: The Uneven Distribution of Responsibility

The parent theory defined Homovictimus by a doubled operation: the subject is held fully responsible as an agent whilst the infrastructural conditions of agency are withdrawn beneath them. This study can now add the sentence the general definition held in reserve. The doubling is not applied evenly. The gap between the responsibility one is assigned and the agency one is granted is itself a distributed quantity, and it opens widest exactly at the positions where exposure concentrates. The wealthy defaulter and the poor one are both told that their score is their own doing; only one of them was scored by a system trained on the thin data of a life lived at the margin of the formal economy, and only one of them can absorb the verdict without it foreclosing the next decade. The secure citizen and the mixed-status family both live within the reach of the enforcement database; only one of them experiences that reach as the ambient condition of every ordinary act. Homovictimus, fully described, is not a uniform mask laid over a population. It is a mask that grips tightest where the face beneath it was already, by the older infrastructures of race, gender and class, made most legible to power and least able to answer back.

This is why the figure is the right name for what differential exposure produces, and why the moral charge of the parent theory is sharpened rather than diluted by the addition. The specific cruelty of the Onopticon is not merely that it imposes; it is that it imposes and then *returns the imposition to the subject as their own responsibility*. Differential exposure means that this return — the transfer of a structural outcome into a personal verdict — is levied most heavily upon those with the least structural power to have altered the outcome. The single mother flagged by a fraud model did not design the proxy that flagged her; she receives its judgement as an accusation about her character. The community enrolled into a recognition system did not consent to enrolment; it bears the consequence as if it had chosen the exposure. The doubled cruelty of Homovictimus, distributed, becomes a machine for converting inherited disadvantage into apparent personal fault — and for doing so with the full authority of a system that presents its distribution as neutrality.

12. Falsification: What Would Show Exposure Is Not Differential

The parent theory earned the right to its manifesto by binding it to a falsification protocol, and this study accepts the same constraint, because a claim of differential distribution that could survive any pattern of evidence would be an ideology and not an argument. I therefore state in advance the conditions under which the central claim of this study should be judged false, or reduced to a weaker status.

The claim of differential exposure would be *falsified* if the documented deployment of infrastructural systems showed no systematic relationship to the historical coordinates of race, class, gender and migration status — if fraud-detection engines were switched on in wealthy and poor neighbourhoods at equal rates, if risk indicators drawn from protected-adjacent attributes such as nationality were as likely to raise the scrutiny of the secure majority as of the migrant minority, if enforcement architectures reached across the population without regard to the racial coding of their target categories. It would be *weakened to a claim of transitional bias* — a defect to be engineered away rather than a structural law — if the unevenness were shown to be an artefact of early or poorly designed systems that later, better-designed systems reliably eliminated, so that the gradient flattened as the technology matured. And it would be *specified rather than refuted* if the distribution were shown to track class alone, or migration status alone, rather than the intersection the study claims: that finding would not defeat the differential-exposure thesis but would correct its geometry, replacing the intersectional account with a single-axis one, and the study would owe its readers that correction.

Against these conditions the present evidence holds, but it holds provisionally and within stated limits. The cases show deployment selected by the geography of poverty, an attribute installed as an explicit risk multiplier, and an enforcement reach patterned by a racialised category — three coordinates, not one, consistent with the intersectional claim rather than a single-axis one. But three cases are three cases; the honest status of the thesis is that it is corroborated on the documentary record and open to defeat by a broader and contrary one, and its author would rather it were tested than believed.

13. Resistance: Dark Sousveillance and the Differential Right to Refuse

A theory that located exposure precisely and then fell silent about refusal would have described a fate rather than a field of struggle, and would have committed, in the register of theory, the very foreclosure it set out to name. The genealogy of this study already contains the name of its resistance, because Simone Browne drew it from the same history that produced racialising surveillance. *Dark sousveillance* names the practices by which the surveilled watch back — the evasions, the counter-recognitions, the deliberate opacities, the collective knowledge of how the system sees and how to move unseen within it (Browne, 2015). Its lesson for the present is that the populations most exposed to infrastructural imposition are also the oldest experts in its refusal, having been the objects of sorting infrastructures for longer than any others, and that a politics of resistance which ignored their accumulated knowledge in favour of a universal and abstract right would repeat the privilege hazard in the language of liberation.

The concrete demand that follows is that the right to refuse must itself be understood as differentially distributed, and defended accordingly. The parent corpus proposed a right to opacity and an accounting of exit costs; this study specifies that both must be measured from the position of the most exposed, because a right to opacity that only the already-protected can exercise, and an exit whose cost only the already-secure can pay, would deepen the very gradient they were meant to level. The credit system one can decline because one does not need credit, the recognition one can evade because one's status is secure, the benefit whose risk-classifier one never meets because one never needs the benefit — these are exits priced for the people who least need them. A resistance adequate to differential exposure is therefore not the assertion of a uniform right held equally by an abstract subject but the redistribution of the capacity to refuse toward the positions where exposure lands first: the neighbourhood chosen as the proving ground, the family whose nationality was weighted, the community enrolled without consent. To name the gaze, in the words of the corpus's opening, is the first act; to redistribute the power to step out of its light is the next.

14. Conclusion: The Address of the Doorstep

The general theory of this corpus named a machine and the subject it produces. This study has argued that the machine has an order of arrival, that the order is not random, and that it can be read directly from the same primary record on which the machine was first documented. Homovictimus is a distributed subject-position, and its distribution follows the oldest fault lines a society keeps: the low-income district selected as a system's proving ground, the second nationality installed as a marker of risk, the migrant community whose faces are enrolled into recognition without any passage through consent. The unevenness is not a flaw in an otherwise neutral infrastructure; it is the infrastructure inheriting, automating and laundering a distribution of exposure that the analogue orders of race, gender and class had already built.

Held to its own disciplines, the argument claims no more than its evidence allows. It reads positions and not essences, so that it describes a distribution of exposure rather than a property of groups. It ties every claim to a primary source and states each source's limit: the SyRI court decided on privacy and declined the question of discrimination; the *toeslagenaffaire* finding was nationality-based and not, in the strict sense, a finding of ethnic profiling; the American Dragnet figures are a research body's estimates and not adjudicated facts. It grants its most demanding rival, Mbembe's necropolitics, the stake it names — the power to distribute death — and holds it at its distance, because the ordinary form of differential exposure is not the death-world but the office counter, the graded and exit-priced administration of imposed reality that runs the whole length of the gradient from inconvenience to the grave. And it states in advance what would show it wrong. What it will not do is describe the doorstep of the Onopticon as though it stood at the same height for everyone. It has an address. The first task of a theory that would resist it is to read that address aloud.

THE ONOPTICON · IV

The Evidentiary Audit

Central Claims, Primary Sources and the Discipline of Status

Abstract

This companion hardens the evidentiary base of the Onopticon corpus by subjecting each of its central factual claims to a single discipline: every claim is bound to a primary source and assigned an explicit epistemic status, so that the reader can see at once what is adjudicated, what is a regulatory or official-inquiry finding, what rests on freedom-of-information and procurement records, what is investigative reporting, and what is contested. It replaces the theory's binary threshold table — in which a case either bore a tick or did not — with a four-condition table in which every cell carries a document and a status, uncertainty is marked rather than smoothed, and, decisively, a negative case and a borderline case are included to demonstrate that the threshold discriminates: that it can refuse admission, which is the only property that makes an inclusion meaningful. The audit reaches an honest and specific conclusion. Four of the five documented cases — SCHUFA, SyRI, the childcare-benefits affair and Robodebt — rest on adjudicated judgments, regulatory findings or official inquiries, the firmest tiers of evidence. The fifth, the migration-enforcement case built on ICE and Palantir, is the corpus's softest leg: its central figures are advocacy-research estimates grounded in procurement records, not adjudicated facts, though a July 2026 court record now supplies its firmest adverse strand. The biological claim is deliberately excluded from the case audit and deferred to a separate future programme, so that the well-documented administrative cases are not evidentially entangled with a claim that rests, for now, on scientific plausibility rather than on the documentary record. The audit adds no new concept. It fixes the concepts the corpus already has to the ground beneath them.

Keywords: Onopticon, evidentiary status, primary sources, falsification, threshold, discriminant validity, negative case, credit scoring, SCHUFA, SyRI, childcare-benefits affair, Robodebt, migration enforcement, Palantir, adjudicated fact, investigative reporting

1. Purpose: From Assertion to Auditable Status

A theoretical architecture is not defended by the strength of its strongest claim but by the defensibility of its weakest, because a single overstated or unsourced assertion is the seam along which a hostile reader will tear the whole. The Onopticon corpus has, by the measure of its own ambition, an architecture that currently outruns its evidence store: the concepts interlock into a system, but the system's authority in front of a sceptical audience depends on whether each of its load-bearing factual claims can be traced to a primary document and given an honest status. This companion performs that tracing. It changes nothing in the theory and adds nothing to its vocabulary. Its whole function is to convert a set of claims that a friendly reader would grant into a set of claims that an adversarial reader cannot easily refuse, because each is fixed to its source and labelled with the exact weight that source can bear.

The discipline is applied in two instruments. The first is a source-and-status audit that takes every central claim in the documented core — the credit-scoring, welfare and enforcement cases — and states, for each, the primary document, the precise proposition that document establishes, the counter-evidence or explicit limit, and an epistemic status drawn from a fixed set. The second is a re-tabulation of the theory's threshold: where the original table marked each case as meeting or not meeting the four conditions with a bare tick, the audited table requires each cell to carry a document and a status, permits the honest mark of uncertainty, and includes cases that fail the threshold so that its power to exclude is demonstrated rather than asserted.

2. The Discipline: Three Tiers of Evidence and the Right to Exclude

Not all evidence is of one kind, and a theory that treats a court judgment, a regulator's fine, a royal commission's finding, a freedom-of-information disclosure and a piece of investigative journalism as interchangeable supports has already conceded the argument to whoever reads it carefully. This audit therefore separates evidence into tiers and labels every claim by the tier its source occupies. *Adjudicated* facts are those established by a court judgment. *Regulatory findings* are those established by a data-protection authority or comparable body, and *official inquiries* those established by a royal commission or parliamentary investigation; these carry great weight but are not, formally, judicial verdicts. *Freedom-of-information and procurement records* document what an institution has contracted for or disclosed, without adjudicating its legality. *Investigative reporting* is the work of journalists and advocacy researchers, indispensable for surfacing what the record conceals but not itself a finding. And *contested* marks a claim that is disputed or not established, which the corpus must name as such and must not deploy as fact.

One tier of this hierarchy needs a note that the enforcement case will make unavoidable, because the hierarchy is built around the court and the corporate-infrastructure actor is built to evade it. Where the object of proof is a firm's constitutive infrastructure — held behind commercial confidentiality and national-security exemption, contracted rather than legislated — the native evidentiary genre is not adjudication but the *operational–procurement–litigation fact*: the firm's own disclosures, the public record of its state contracts, and the material filed in the litigation its operations provoke. This genre is exacting on its own terms — a signed federal contract is not an allegation, and a firm's statement of what its software does is admissible against it — and it must be read with one distinction enforced: the *constitutive-apparatus* layer (that the firm builds and operates the composing systems) is documented operational fact, whereas the *reach-quantification* layer (how many people those systems touch) is, where it rests on modelling, a genuine estimate. To demand a court's stamp for the first layer is to apply to the corporate actor a standard the theory predicts it will escape; Volume V takes up that argument and the record that bears it.

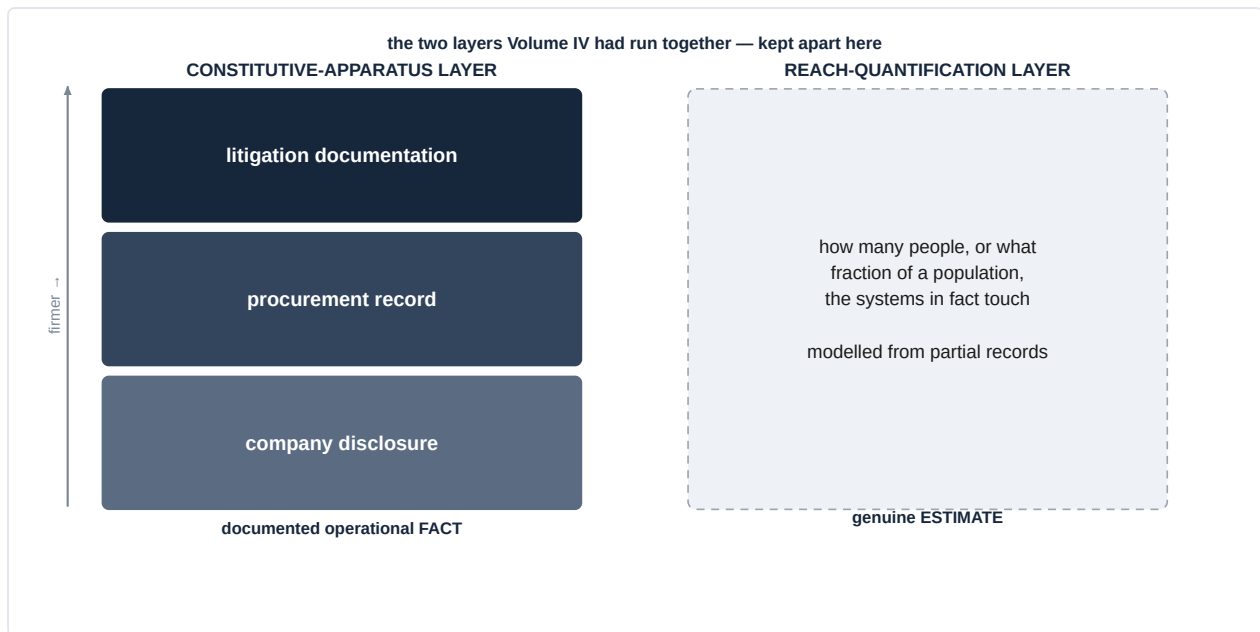


Figure IV.1. Two evidentiary rulers. The *constitutive-apparatus* layer — that a firm builds and operates the systems that compose a field — is documented operational fact, firm across company disclosure, procurement record and litigation documentation. The *reach-quantification* layer — how many people those systems in fact touch — is, where it rests on modelling from partial records, a genuine estimate. Volume IV had run the two together; keeping them apart is what lets the corporate-constitution claim stand on the firm register while only the reach figure remains estimate.

The second half of the discipline is the right, indeed the obligation, to exclude. A threshold that admits every case it is shown is not a threshold but a mood; its inclusions mean nothing because it has never been seen to refuse. The concept of the Onopticon gains its force precisely from what it keeps out — from the fact that a system may be data-driven, personalised and pervasive and still fall short of infrastructural imposition because it does not compel recognition and does not foreclose exit. For this reason the audited threshold table below carries not only the cases that meet all four conditions but a negative case that fails them and a borderline case that meets some and not others. The negative case is the load-bearing one. Without it, the theory's willingness to say *this is not Onopticon* would be a claim on paper; with it, the threshold is shown to have an edge, and a concept with an edge is a concept that can be wrong, which is the only kind worth defending.

3. The Source-and-Status Audit

The table below fixes each central claim of the documented core to its primary source and its status. Where a single case carries claims of different evidentiary weight, they are audited separately, because the honesty of the whole depends on not letting a firm claim lend its authority to a soft one.

Case	Central claim	Primary source	Status
SCHUFA (credit scoring)	An automated credit "probability value" is itself an <i>automated individual decision</i> under Article 22 GDPR where a third party draws strongly upon it; refusal follows in almost all cases of an insufficient score	CJEU, <i>OQ v Land Hessen (SCHUFA)</i> , C-634/21, ECLI:EU:C:2023:957 (7 Dec 2023)	Adjudicated — limit: conditional on the score playing a determining role; the Court did <i>not</i> hold scoring unlawful, and left §31 BDSG to the national court
SyRI (welfare risk-scoring)	The risk-scoring legislation violated Article 8 ECHR for opacity and want of a fair balance; deployment concentrated in low-income districts	Rechtbank Den Haag, <i>NJCM c.s. v. the Netherlands</i> , ECLI:NL:RBDHA:2020:865 (5 Feb 2020)	Adjudicated — limit: the court did <i>not</i> separately rule on discrimination (Art 14); it noted only a <i>risk</i> of it within the Art 8 analysis. Alston intervened as UN Special Rapporteur
Toeslagenaffaire	Nationality was used as a risk indicator in an automated fraud-classification system; the processing was discriminatory and unlawful	Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, €2.75m decision (18 Nov 2021); <i>Ongekend onrecht</i> , parliamentary report (17 Dec 2020)	Regulatory finding + official inquiry — nationality-based, <i>not</i> strict ethnic profiling; ≈26,000 families (variable estimate); Rutte cabinet resigned 15 Jan 2021
Robodebt — unlawfulness	Raising debts by annual income-averaging was unlawful; the scheme was "crude and cruel" and neither fair nor legal	Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, <i>Final Report</i> (7 Jul 2023); <i>Prygodicz v Commonwealth (No 2)</i> [2021] FCA 634	Official inquiry + adjudicated settlement — the ~A\$1.8bn is total value (~A\$112m compensation); unlawfulness was conceded, so the authoritative finding is the Commission's
Robodebt — deaths	No causal death toll is established	RMIT FactLab (7 Aug 2023); Royal Commission (no data linking deaths to the scheme)	Contested — excluded. The corpus documents severe harm but asserts no death causation
ICE — dragnet reach	ICE can locate ~3 in 4 adults via utility records, has face-scanned ~1 in 3, and holds ~3 in 4 adults' driver-licence data	Center on Privacy & Technology, <i>American Dragnet</i> (Wang, McDonald, Bateyko & Tucker, 2022), from FOIA + procurement analysis	Investigative research grounded in FOIA/procurement — not adjudicated. Figures are the Center's estimates
ICE — ImmigrationOS	A ~\$30m build to identify, apprehend and track subjects across the "immigration lifecycle"	ICE–Palantir procurement modification to the ICM contract (Apr 2025); further ~\$30m order (Sep 2025)	FOIA/contract (procurement records); the "surveillance operating system" characterisation is investigative reporting
ICE — Medicaid transfer	Medicaid data on millions, including citizens, was shared with ICE and passed to Palantir, exceeding a court order	Court filings before Judge Chhabria; reporting 17 Jul 2026	Litigation-documented (admitted in filings) — not yet a final merits judgment
ICE — citizen tracking	Enforcement tooling sweeps in citizens and residents ("mission creep")	Investigative reports; agency denial	Contested — alleged and partly evidenced in incidents; denied by the agency; not adjudicated

Two consequences of the table should be stated plainly rather than left for the reader to infer. First, the credit, welfare and Robodebt cases stand on the firmest tiers — an EU court judgment, a national court judgment, a data-protection authority's fine reinforced by a parliamentary inquiry, and a royal commission — so the operations these cases exhibit — compulsory recognition, reversed onus, foreclosed exit — are documented to the firmest standard the social record offers. That a *different object of power* is present is then a theoretical inference drawn from those documents, not a fact the courts themselves adjudicated: the documents secure the operations, and the name is the argument built upon them. Second, the enforcement case is softest only in one of its two layers, and the audit must not let the softness of the one discredit the firmness of the other. Its *reach-quantification* — what fraction of the population the dragnet touches — is genuine estimate, and its gravest Gaza-specific allegations remain contested. But its *constitutive-apparatus* layer — that Palantir builds and

operates the composing systems: ImmigrationOS under a signed federal contract, ELITE in reporting, and the improper Medicaid transfer now admitted in court filings — stands on the firm registers of the operational genre, and is not soft at all. What the enforcement case has newly gained, the litigation-documented Medicaid transfer, is firmer than the estimates it accompanies though not yet a final judgment. The correct posture is therefore not to call the enforcement leg "weak" but to separate its layers: lead with the contract and litigation record, which document the corporate constitution of the field, and present the reach figures as the estimates they are. Volume V reads that record in full.

4. The Threshold, Re-Tabulated: Documents, Not Ticks

The original threshold marked each case as meeting or failing four conditions — compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition, documented feedback, and weak contestability issuing in foreclosure — with a bare tick. The audited table below requires each cell to name its basis and permits three marks: ✓ for a condition met on the documentary record, ~ for a condition whose satisfaction is plausible but not documented to the same standard, and ✗ for a condition not met. The verdict then follows a graded rule rather than a bare tick, because the four conditions are not of equal weight. Two form a *necessary core* — compulsory recognition and foreclosure — and two are *corroborating* — multi-domain composition and documented feedback. The grading names three statuses. Where only the core is documented, a case is *Onoptic imposition*; where the core is documented and a corroborating condition sits below the top tier, it is *provisional Onopticon*, marked ✓~; and only where all four co-occur at the top tier is a case *documented Onopticon proper*. A case that fails a core condition is not Onopticon at all. Decisively, no case in the table below reaches *documented Onopticon proper*: all five documented cases are *provisional*, and the *proper* category is left empty on purpose — the single-circuit programme that would occupy it (all four conditions, together, at the top tier) is the corpus's stated empirical target, not an omission. This grading is exactly what separates the negative case, which fails the core, from the five, which meet it — and it corrects the earlier table's habit of collapsing a corroborating ~ into a uniform ✓. The final two rows are the point of the exercise: a negative case that resembles the Onopticon and fails, and a borderline case that sits astride the threshold.

Instrument	Compulsory recognition	Multi-domain composition	Documented feedback	Weak contestability → foreclosure	Verdict
SCHUFA credit scoring	✓ no opt-out of being scored	✓ credit, housing, telecoms, work	~ loop general, not in the ruling	✓ the score is the decision	✓~
SyRI risk-scoring	✓ selected districts, no opt-out	✓ tax–benefit–labour data links	~ opacity blocked verification	✓ Art 8 violation; unverifiable	✓~
Toeslagenaffaire	✓ applicants compelled to be classified	~ benefits-centred, effects cascade	✓ flag → debt → precarity (inquiry)	✓ ruinous, effectively uncontestable	✓~
Robodebt	✓ debts raised automatically	~ debt-centred, effects cascade	✓ averaging → reversed onus (RC)	✓ unlawful; onus reversed	✓~
ICE / Palantir	✓ enrolled without consent	✓ utility–DMV–face–health data	~ partly documented, else estimated	✓ removal; reach estimate-based	✓~ *
— NEGATIVE — supermarket loyalty & personalised pricing	✗ the card is optional	✗ single domain (retail)	✓ purchase history → tailored offers	✗ exit is cheap and reversible	✗
— BORDERLINE — gig-platform driver rating	~ compulsory only if income-dependent	~ work-centred, limited spillover	✓ rating → dispatch → rating	~ deactivation vs multi-homing	~

The ICE/Palantir verdict is marked ✓~ — its necessary core (compulsory recognition, foreclosure) is met and one corroborating condition sits below the top tier — but it also carries the softest evidentiary status of the five, per the audit in §3; its reach figures are estimates and its gravest allegations contested. All five documented cases score ✓~ (provisional Onopticon) rather than a uniform ✓: each meets the necessary core on the record whilst one corroborating condition — multi-domain composition or documented feedback — is evidenced below the top tier, and none reaches documented Onopticon proper*.

The negative case earns its place. A supermarket loyalty scheme with personalised pricing is genuinely data-driven and carries a real feedback loop — purchase history is turned into tailored offers that shape future purchases — which is exactly why a lazy critique would call it surveillance and be done. The threshold refuses it, and refuses it for reasons that can be stated: participation is optional, so there is no compulsory recognition; it operates in a single domain; and exit is cheap and reversible, so nothing is foreclosed. It fails on both necessary core conditions, which is why the threshold refuses it outright rather than grading it ✓~; a system may score, personalise and persist and still not be an instance of infrastructural imposition. The borderline case sharpens the same point from the other side: a gig-platform rating compels recognition only for the worker who depends on the platform for income, spills into few domains, but does carry a documented rating-to-dispatch loop and a contestability that ranges from the near-total foreclosure of deactivation to the genuine exit of working several platforms at once. It scores ~, and it is meant to: the threshold has a graded edge, with clear cases on either side and real cases sitting on the line, which is what a threshold that discriminates looks like.

5. What the Audit Changes

The audit changes the corpus in three specific ways, and it is worth naming them because each is a strengthening bought at the price of a concession. First, it downgrades the enforcement leg from an apparent equal among the documented cases to the acknowledged softest of them, and in doing so it makes the other four *harder*, because a reader who sees a theory police its own weakest evidence extends more trust to the claims it

presents as firm. Second, it converts the threshold from an instrument that only ever admitted into one that has been seen to refuse, which is the difference between a definition and a diagnosis. A concept that cannot fail to apply explains nothing; the negative case is the audit's proof that this one can.

Third, and most consequentially for the shape of the corpus, the audit removes the biological claim from the case-level threshold entirely and defers it to a separate future programme. This is not a retreat from the claim that the engineering of biological response is the Reality Paradigm's sharpest *hypothesised* break from biopolitics; that claim remains, as a theoretical proposition, at the centre of the corpus. It is a refusal to let that proposition — which rests, for now, on scientific plausibility and laboratory demonstration rather than on the adjudicated and administrative record that carries the other cases — stand in the same evidentiary column as a court judgment or a regulator's fine. To audit the biological face honestly would require the primary literature of its own field and a monograph to weigh it; to fold it into a table of adjudicated administrative cases would be to lend it a documentary authority it does not yet possess and to risk the credibility of the cases that do. The biological claim is therefore held where it belongs: as the corpus's most provocative theoretical wager and its next, separate, empirical undertaking.

The audit adds no concept. That is its discipline and its point. The corpus's contribution was never the coining of terms but the building of an architecture in which the terms bear on one another — in which the threshold draws the limit that the name would otherwise lack, the exit-cost measures the closure the threshold requires, and differential exposure distributes the subject-position the whole machine produces. An architecture is defended not by adding rooms but by underpinning the ones that stand. This companion is the underpinning: every load-bearing claim fixed to its document, weighed at its true weight, and, where the record does not reach, honestly marked as not reaching. Fixed this way, the work is not merely original. It is hard to knock down.

THE ONOPTICON · V

The Single Circuit

*Palantir, the Evidentiary Genre of Infrastructural Power, and the Candidate for
Documented Onopticon Proper*

Abstract

The three-status threshold of this corpus leaves one category deliberately empty: *documented Onopticon proper*, in which all four conditions — compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition, documented feedback, and weak contestability issuing in foreclosure — co-occur, at the top evidentiary tier, in a single constitutive circuit. This volume argues that the emptiness is partly an artefact of the wrong ruler. The evidentiary hierarchy of the audit (Volume IV) is court-centred: it ranks a judicial ruling above a procurement record above a piece of reporting. But the corpus's own thesis is that constitutive power has migrated into corporate infrastructures that operate, by design, below and around the courts — so to demand adjudication as the top tier of proof for exactly that actor is to apply a standard the theory predicts the object will escape. This volume names the missing tier: the *operational–procurement–litigation fact*, the genre in which a firm's own disclosures, its public contracts, and the documents filed in cases against it record what the infrastructure does. In that genre the record is not thin. It shows a single firm, Palantir, composing the operational reality-field across a war (battlefield targeting in Ukraine), a health system (the English National Health Service's Federated Data Platform), and a border (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's ImmigrationOS and the ELITE targeting application, fed in early 2026 by an improper transfer of federal health data now before a federal court). The volume separates two layers that Volume IV had run together — the *constitutive-apparatus* layer, which is documented operational fact, and the *reach-quantification* layer, which is genuine estimate — and argues that once separated, the corporate-constitution leg of the object-claim is not soft but firm in its native genre. It does not claim to have proven documented Onopticon proper. It argues that Palantir is the strongest *candidate* the record offers: not a single circuit, strictly, but a single constitutive interface across many circuits, which may be the more exact and more disquieting form of the claim. Its limits are stated in full: the operational genre is not adjudication; the firm's role in some theatres is company-disclosed whilst its conduct in others is alleged and denied; and the step from candidate to documented proper is named as the work that remains.

Keywords: Onopticon, Palantir, constitutive interface, evidentiary genre, operational fact, procurement record, litigation-documented, ImmigrationOS, ELITE, Federated Data Platform, Ukraine, functional sovereignty, single-circuit case, documented Onopticon proper

1. The Empty Category and the Wrong Ruler

The threshold of this corpus was, in its last revision, graded into three statuses, and one of them was left empty on purpose. A case is *Onoptic imposition* where the two necessary core conditions — compulsory recognition and foreclosure — are documented; it is *provisional Onopticon* where the core is documented and a corroborating condition is evidenced below the top tier; and it is *documented Onopticon proper* only where all four conditions co-occur, at the top evidentiary tier, in a single constitutive circuit. The five documented cases reached provisional status. Documented Onopticon proper was named as a deliberately empty cell — the programme's next empirical target, a claim not yet banked. This volume takes up that target.

It does so by first questioning the ruler with which the empty cell was measured. Volume IV built an evidentiary hierarchy — adjudicated judgment, regulatory finding, official inquiry, freedom-of-information and procurement record, investigative reporting, contested — and placed the court's ruling at its summit. For the credit, welfare and enforcement cases that hierarchy served the argument well, and nothing here retracts it. But it carries a silent premise, and the premise is in tension with the theory it serves. To rank a judicial ruling as the firmest proof is to assume that the object of proof is the kind of thing courts adjudicate: a statute, a public

programme, an administrative decision reviewable on appeal. The Reality Paradigm's central claim is that constitutive power has, in specifiable domains, migrated into corporate infrastructures that are held behind commercial confidentiality and national-security exemption, that contract rather than legislate, and that are therefore, by their very design, the things courts reach last and least. A theory that says constitutive power has left the courthouse cannot then demand the courthouse's stamp before it will credit its own object. The empty cell, in part, is not the absence of the phenomenon; it is the absence of the phenomenon *in the one evidentiary form the audit privileged*.

The correction is not to lower the standard but to name the standard proper to the object. Corporate-infrastructure power has a native evidentiary genre, and it is neither estimate nor rumour. It is the *operational–procurement–litigation fact*: what the firm states in its own disclosures and investor communications, what appears in the public record of the contracts it signs with states, and what is entered into evidence in the litigation those operations provoke. This genre is not the top of Volume IV's ladder because Volume IV's ladder was built to weigh administrative programmes against courts. Measured on its own terms, the operational genre is exacting: a signed federal contract is not an allegation, a company's own statement of what its software does is admissible against it, and a document filed before a federal judge is closer to adjudication than to journalism. The next section defines the genre; the one after it reads the record.

2. The Evidentiary Genre of Infrastructural Power

The operational–procurement–litigation fact has three registers, and keeping them distinct is what gives the genre its discipline.

The first is *company disclosure*: what the firm says, in its own name, about what its systems do. When a chief executive states on the record that his company's software is responsible for the targeting in a war, or when a firm announces a strategic partnership with a defence ministry in support of a war effort, that statement is not a critic's inference; it is an admission by the interested party, and its evidentiary weight runs against the firm's own interest in understatement. Disclosure has a characteristic limit — firms disclose capability and contract, and are silent or euphemistic about consequence — and the reading must respect it: a disclosure evidences that the apparatus exists and was engaged, not the precise use to which a given deployment was put.

The second is the *procurement record*: the public trace of the contracts a state signs with the firm — award notices, modifications, value ceilings, statements of work. This register is the hardest of the three, because a contract is a legal instrument, not a report about one: it records, in the state's own hand, what capacity was bought and for what stated purpose. Its limit is that a contract documents what was procured, not what was done with it, and that its stated purpose is the buyer's framing.

The third is *litigation documentation*: the material entered into the record of cases the operations provoke — filings, admissions, disclosures compelled in discovery, and the findings a court makes along the way. This register shades into Volume IV's top tier, because a fact admitted in a filing or established in an order is close to adjudicated; its limit is that an interim filing is not a final merits judgment, and an allegation in a complaint is not yet a finding.

Across all three registers a further distinction must be enforced, and it is the distinction Volume IV had allowed to blur. There is the *constitutive-apparatus* layer — that the firm builds and operates the systems that compose the operational field of a given domain — and there is the *reach-quantification* layer — the estimate of

how many people, or what fraction of a population, those systems in fact touch. The first is documented in the operational genre; the second, where it depends on modelling from partial records, is a genuine estimate and must be marked as such. Volume IV's verdict of a "soft" enforcement leg took its softness from the second layer — the Georgetown reach figures — and let that softness colour the first. Once the layers are separated, the corporate-constitution claim, which is the leg the object-claim most needs, stands on the firm register of the operational genre, whilst only the population-reach quantification remains estimate. That separation is this volume's central methodological move, and the record it now reads is read through it.

3. One Firm, Many Fields: The Operational Record

The claim is not that Palantir is uniquely powerful, nor that its systems perform as advertised — they fail, and are unevenly adopted, and the theory conceded this at the outset. The claim is narrower and better evidenced: that a single firm's constitutive interface now composes the operational reality-field across domains that share no border but the firm — war, health, and the frontier — and that this cross-domain constitution is documented in the operational genre, with each theatre's evidentiary status marked exactly.

War. Palantir's role in Ukrainian battlefield operations is company-disclosed at the highest level: its chief executive stated on the record, in early 2023, that the company's software is responsible for most of the targeting in Ukraine, and the firm's Artificial Intelligence Platform has been reported operating in the theatre (Reuters, 2023; Bergengruen, 2024). *Status:* company disclosure and reporting. *Limit:* "responsible for most of the targeting" is the chief executive's own characterisation, not an audited metric, and the more careful reporting describes the system as generating target *options* rather than pulling the trigger. The apparatus and its engagement are documented; the precise share of lethal decision it constitutes is not.

Health. In November 2023 NHS England awarded a Palantir-led consortium the contract to build the Federated Data Platform, the data infrastructure intended to bind the operational information of the English health service into a single interface (NHS England, 2023). *Status:* public procurement record — the firmest register. *Limit:* the awarded value is £330 million; the £480 million figure often cited is the procurement's ceiling, not the sum contracted, and the two must not be conflated. What the record establishes is that the constitutive data-interface of a national health system was contracted to this firm; what it does not by itself establish is a foreclosed clinical decision.

The border. Under a roughly US\$30 million modification effective April 2025, Palantir was funded to build *ImmigrationOS*, oriented to the targeting and prioritisation of removals and the tracking of departures (Wired, 2025); and in early 2026 an associated application, *ELITE*, was reported to open a dossier on each potential target, assign a confidence score to a person's current address, and render neighbourhoods as a raid heat-map, drawing address data from sources that reportedly include federal health records (404 Media, 2026; Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2026). In July 2026 that health-data thread became litigation: court filings before a federal judge documented that Medicaid data on millions of people, including citizens and lawfully present residents, had been shared with the enforcement agency and passed to Palantir, exceeding a prior court order, and the sharing was paused pending a hearing (NPR, 2026). *Status:* procurement record (*ImmigrationOS*), investigative reporting (*ELITE*), and litigation documentation (the Medicaid transfer), in ascending firmness. *Limit:* *ELITE*'s operational particulars rest on reporting the firm disputes, and the litigation is not yet a final merits judgment.

A fourth theatre must be named and then set aside with care, because the discipline of the genre is tested at exactly the point where feeling is strongest. Palantir announced in January 2024 a strategic partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Defence in support of the war effort, and that announcement is company disclosure of the firmest kind (Palantir Technologies, 2024). What that disclosure establishes is the partnership and its stated purpose. It does *not* establish the specific operational use of the firm's systems in Gaza, still less any particular consequence; those further claims belong to advocacy and reporting, are contested, and are denied by the firm, and this volume marks them as allegation, not operational fact. The distinction is not a hedge. It is the genre doing its work: the same discipline that lets us treat the Ukraine disclosure and the NHS contract as fact requires us to treat the Gaza-specific conduct as unproven.

One further caution completes the record. The frequently paired datum of a sovereign turning its administration over to autonomous systems — the announced framework to move half of a Gulf state's government services to "agentic" artificial intelligence within two years — is a genuine state-side signal, but the official announcement names no vendor, and no Palantir involvement is established; it is cited, if at all, as evidence of the *state's* disposition, not of this firm's reach (UAE Cabinet, 2026).

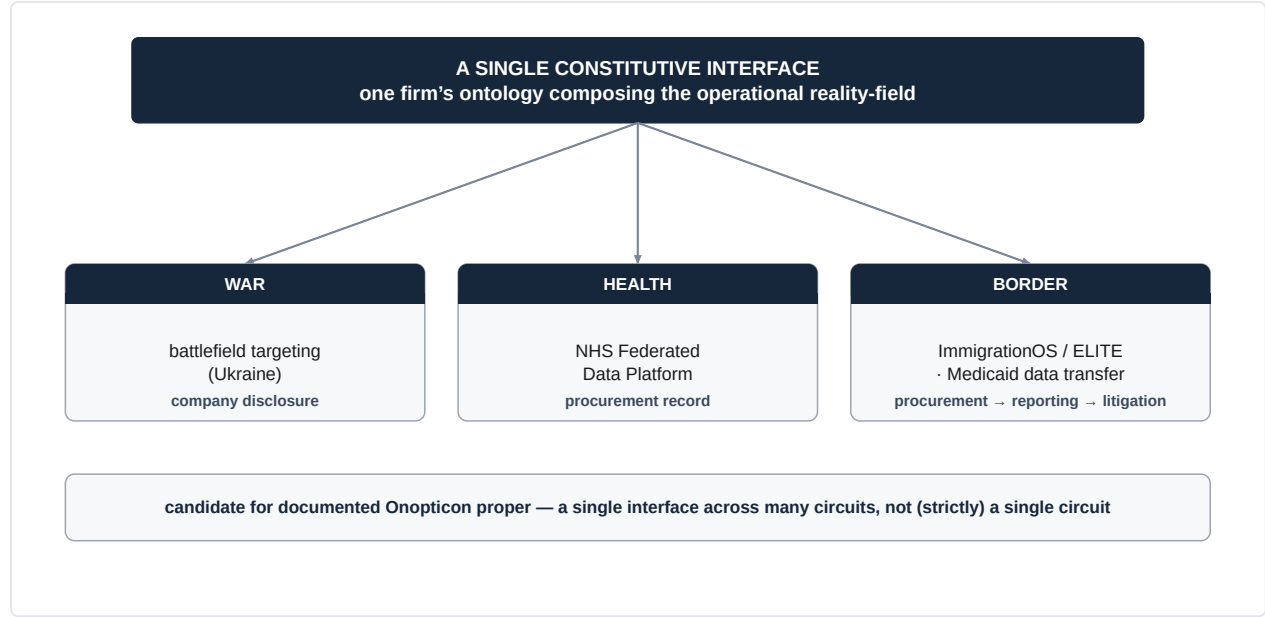


Figure V.1. One constitutive interface across many circuits. A single firm composes the operational reality-field of a war (Ukraine — company disclosure), a health service (the NHS Federated Data Platform — procurement record) and a border (ImmigrationOS / ELITE and the Medicaid data transfer — procurement, reporting and litigation). This is the candidate for *documented Onopticon proper*: not, strictly, a single circuit meeting all four conditions on one population, but a single constitutive interface recurring across distinct circuits.

4. Reading the Record Against the Threshold

Read against the four conditions, the Palantir record behaves differently from the five provisional cases, and the difference is the point. Take the conditions in turn, at the level of the constitutive interface rather than of any single deployment.

Compulsory recognition is documented across all three firm theatres: the soldier, the patient and the border-crossing subject do not opt into the interface that composes their field; the health record is federated whether the patient wills it or not, the enforcement dossier is assembled without consent, the targeting layer processes a battlefield its subjects never entered by choice. *Multi-domain composition* is met at a scale none of the single

cases reached — not several life-domains within one programme, but war, health and the border within one firm's ontology, which is composition raised from the programme to the interface. *Documented feedback* is evidenced most clearly at the border, where the ELITE loop turns outputs (a dossier, a confidence score) into inputs (the next raid's map), and is present in the platform logic the firm itself describes. *Weak contestability issuing in foreclosure* is documented at the border through the litigation and the warrantless data flow, and is structurally present wherever the interface composes the field a decision-maker then acts within.

But the honest reading must confront the phrase that names this volume. Is this a *single circuit* — all four conditions co-occurring in one closed loop, on one population, at the top tier? Strictly, no. What the record shows is a *single constitutive interface across many circuits*: the same firm's ontology composing distinct operational fields in distinct domains, each circuit documented to a different register of the operational genre. That is not the literal single-circuit case the empty cell was defined to require. It is something the empty-cell definition did not anticipate, and it may be the more exact and the more disquieting form of the claim — not that one programme meets all four conditions, but that one *actor* constitutes the reality-field across the domains in which those conditions are separately met. Whether that satisfies documented Onopticon proper, or requires a new category beside it, is a question this volume raises rather than closes.

5. Why This Is the Candidate, Not the Proof

The volume calls Palantir the *candidate* for documented Onopticon proper, and the word is exact. Three limits hold it short of proof, and stating them is what makes the candidacy credible.

First, the evidence is operational, not adjudicated. It is documented to the firm registers of its own genre — disclosure, contract, filing — and that genre is, for this object, the right and sufficient standard for existence and operation. But it is not the courtroom's cross-examined finding, and the volume does not dress it as one; where a court has begun to act, at the border, the matter is an interim filing and not a merits judgment. Second, the record is uneven across theatres, and the volume has marked the unevenness rather than smoothing it: the Ukraine role is company-disclosed at the level of capability, the NHS contract is procurement fact, the border apparatus runs from procurement fact to reporting to litigation, and the Gaza-specific conduct is allegation the firm denies. To average these into a single confident claim would be to commit, in the corporate register, the very error the audit corrected in the administrative one. Third, and most consequentially, the "single circuit" the empty cell demanded is not, strictly, what the record shows; what it shows is a single interface across circuits, and until the corpus decides whether that is documented Onopticon proper or a category beside it, the empty cell remains, by the corpus's own discipline, empty.

What would fill it is now nameable, which is the gain of having a candidate rather than a target in the abstract. Documented Onopticon proper, in its literal sense, would be a single programme — most plausibly one of Palantir's border deployments — in which compulsory recognition, multi-domain composition, documented feedback and foreclosure were each established, on the same population, to the litigation register or above: not the firm's word and the contract and the reporting severally, but a court's compelled disclosure showing the closed loop whole. The border litigation begun in 2026 is the first place that standard might, in time, be met. Until it is, the honest status is precise: Palantir is the strongest candidate the record offers, evaluated in the genre proper to it, and the empty cell is held open — not as a failure of the theory, but as the discipline that makes the theory worth defending.

6. Conclusion: The Interface Has a Name

The corpus began by insisting that Onopticon names a different object of power, corporately constituted and state-enforced, and that the temptation to soften the claim must be resisted. This volume has tested the claim at its hardest edge, on the actor that most fully embodies it, and has found that the difficulty is not the absence of evidence but the mismatch between the evidence's genre and the ruler the audit reached for. Corrected for that mismatch, the record is firm where the theory most needs it: one firm's constitutive interface composes the operational reality-field of a war, a health service and a border, and does so in documents the firm signed, filed against, or spoke aloud. That is not the literal single circuit the empty cell was drawn to hold, and the cell stays open. But the interface has a name, and naming it is the corpus's first act and its most stubborn one. Where Onopticon looks, the theory said, the human does not appear: the target appears, the risk appears, the score. This volume can now say where the looking is built, and by whom, and in what documents it is written down.

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