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Governing Obese Bodies in a Control Society

INTRODUCTION

On 10 October 2006, BBC Breakfast Television reports that England is now officially the fattest nation in Europe. According to a Health Survey for England, 2003, 23% of English women and 22.2% of English men are obese. An official "fatness map" of the UK demonstrates that the West Midlands has the highest percentage of obese women (as determined by a body mass index over 30[1]) and Yorkshire has the highest percentage of obese men. Later the news notes the alarming rates of eating disorders in Brazil; in a nation where thousands of people die for lack of proper food, others are voluntarily starving, binging and purging to obtain a certain look. The BBC breakfast show also airs an item about new "toy" exercise equipment designed to make children exercise. This equipment is modelled closely on its adult equivalents – treadmills, weight training machines – just smaller in size. When parents were asked why they would invest in such toys, they say they don't want their children to become fat and unhealthy adults and therefore, they want to teach a healthy lifestyle from early on.

While these parents appear well-informed about the importance of exercise, when I open my faculty website I find a special feature on why governmental messages on healthy lifestyle are not reaching their target: the fat and unfit. According to this report, the health messages preach to the already-converted while the couch potatoes stay horizontal unless harsh, negative words like "lazy" are used to hit home the message for the necessity of behavioural change. This "newsflash" does not detail why exactly there is a need for a behavioural change toward more active living. As I gather my mail, I read from the recent *IDEA Fitness Journal* (a US-based publication for fitness professionals) that medical costs for obese employees are 77% higher than for healthy-weight employees and that obesity-related disabilities cost employers up to $8,720 per claimant per year. It further estimates that obesity accounts for 43% of all healthcare costs by US business on coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis of the knee and endometrial cancer combined. These figures are designed to demonstrate to consumers the need to control obesity levels: being fat is costly and dangerous.[2]

In this paper, I examine further the idea of controlling the behaviour of populations in the contemporary world. My purpose is not to dispute that BMI might be increasing within the Western population nor to argue against the need for increased physical activity levels. Rather, I would like to look at the recent media frenzy around obesity as an example of a contemporary way of governing, a way of using power in what Gilles Deleuze has titled "control societies." Deleuze argues that we are increasingly moving from a society that controls its population through spatial containment, as argued by Michel Foucault, to other means of control.[3] In this article I will firstly briefly recap Foucault's concept of governmentality, and secondly, will focus on the characteristics of the control society and its impact on the "healthy" body.

FOUCAULT: ON GOVERNMENTALITY

In his seminal text *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault introduced the notion of disciplinary confinement as a form of power in society. This way of using power has been gradually evolving since the eighteenth century when power became less personified in a sovereign to operate in a different manner. Control was achieved by disciplining individual bodies. This did not necessarily mean physical punishment or torture but rather the formation of a certain type of body as "normal," towards which individuals diligently and "voluntarily" worked. Societal control was internalised by the obedient citizens, the docile bodies, as an invisible gaze tirelessly watched for signs of deviance. Confined institutional spaces provided locales for this invisible control to take place and, consequently, the distribution of space was designed specifically to support the normalisation of modern individuals. Their lives became arranged around concrete forms of confinement such as prisons, schools, hospitals, factories and offices. In contemporary society, fitness centres can be classified as disciplinary places where, according to governmental campaigns for "healthy lifestyle," an individual is to spend a set amount of time each week. Foucault developed the idea of power relations further through his concept of governmentality.

Governmentality, according to Foucault, is a complex form of power that takes the welfare of the "population" – "the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health" – as its purpose.[4] While the purpose of governing is to attend to "the needs and aspirations" of the population, at the same time, the people turn into objects of its control. As Foucault states, the population is "aware vis-a-vis the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it."[5] Therefore, while the government is interested in "the consciousness of each individual who makes up the population," an individual is always seen as important only as a part of the population and his/her interests are "considered as the interest of the population regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it."[6] To detect these "needs," governing institutions require information about the general trends of the population.

Statistics as a form of gathering information about epidemics, levels of mortality, spirals of labour and wealth and other rates and cycles of citizens' lives have now gained unprecedented popularity. The economic effects of population trends are now quantifiable and allow governments to develop practical interventions. Foucault observed the birth of a special science, political economy, as "the science and the technique of intervention of the government" at

the intersection of statistical information and governmental control of populations. The term "governmentality" is not limited to describing control by an actual government of a nation, but more broadly it represents "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power."[7] In his later work, Foucault used the term "bio-power" to describe the disciplinary effects of governmental population control. Foucault's notion of governing through bio-power can also help us understand the recent panic over the obesity epidemic that I introduced at the beginning of this paper.

It is evident that Western governments have become alarmed by the increasing size of an average citizen. Capturing this population trend requires the level of fatness to be quantifiable. The Body Mass Index is pivotal for the continually gathered and updated statistical data on obesity levels.[8] Statistics are further used to confirm the negative economic impact of obesity and to justify governmental intervention for the benefit of the population itself. These statistics are then picked up and circulated in such "popular" magazines as the *IDEA Fitness Journal* I referred to earlier.

Population statistics identify a new form of deviance, the obese body, that endangers the welfare of society. Individual citizens are now asked to locate themselves within the BMI scale, to confess being fat and to seek the appropriate bodily discipline (diet and exercise) to avoid becoming an economic burden for society. Following Foucault, special locales where fat people can be turned into "normal," productive citizens need to be established. For example, we could say that obese individuals increasingly gather in hospitals to have their stomachs stapled or part of their intestines cut off; in commercial dieting centres to engage in public, controlled dieting programmes; or in fitness centres to take their recommended daily doses of exercise under the guidance of fitness professionals. Naturally, this should follow an individual's confession of being obese and consequent "voluntary" action based on the will to conform to the "norm." While specific spaces of discipline continue to exist, the media is also used effectively as an intervention tool for population control. For example, the panic about the obesity epidemic has reached me primarily through wide-reaching governmental media campaigns: I learned about the Health Survey for England and the growing obesity levels of the English from the BBC news and was later able to access more detailed information about the report from the BBC website.

Forms of bio-power continue to control individual citizens through governmental campaigns against obesity. Remarkably, however, fatness continues to persist as a "problem." Foucault suggested in his later work that there are signs of confinement and bodily discipline being replaced by new forms of control. Is the media replacing confinement as the new form of control? Media that pervade people's lives anywhere and anytime negate the need for a special distribution of space or time to effectively normalise individuals into docile bodies. How will control that is independent of time and space operate? Deleuze, among others, has expanded Foucault's notion of governmentality and bio-power to look at the development of new forms of control in contemporary societies.

DELEUZE: ON THE CONTROL SOCIETY

Deleuze observes that we are moving towards a control society that operates through continuous control and instant communication instead of confinement. His term, "societies of control," marks "the diversification and diffusion of forces of state power throughout social space, including the reappropriation of these forces for and by the state."[9] As Deleuze claims: "In control-based societies nothing is left alone for long." Virtual communication – cybernetic machines and computers – characterises the need for "universal communication" in such societies.[10] The control society, thus, is a global society where multi-media networks and new effective tele-technology provide a global "market of the visible." According to Paul Virilio, this technology requires

> that we all observe each other and compare ourselves with one another on a continual basis … every economic and political system in its turn enters the private life of all the others, forbidding any of them to free themselves for any length of time from this competitive approach.[11]

Virilio continues that the media is instrumental in creating this new type of transparency that is transmitted instantaneously over great distances. For example, we observe, compare and contrast obesity trends across the world through different media. We know that Brazilians suffer from eating disorders. We also watched in horror the devastation of hurricane Katrina in the United States and could not help but notice the emergence of the urban poor, mostly African-Americans, in the midst of this disaster that, on the TV screen, appeared as if it could have taken place in an African nation. The difference was that these Americans appeared very large compared to the usual representation of Africans on our television screens. Virilio observes further that, in this transparent world, we are more aware of events in faraway places than those occuring around us "at home." For example, I might note that Brazilians suffer from eating disorders, but might be unaware of how many of my students battle with disordered eating and body image problems.

BIOPOLITICS OF CONTROL

In this cybernetic society, language, narrative, meaning and representation are gradually replaced by computerised uses of codes:

> In control societies … the key thing is no longer a signature or number but a code: codes are passwords … the digital language of control is made up of codes indicating whether access to some information should be allowed or denied … Individuals become 'dividuals,' and masses become samples, data, markets, or 'banks.'[12]

Bodies turn into "coded 'dividual' matter to be controlled," without specific locales for disciplinary practices. They become bodies of data and information. This is control that "works at the subindividual, molecular level of bodies" and that produces normalisation, not through socialisation and education, but by "directly bringing bodies and bodily affective capacities under the expanded grid of control, especially through the marketization of affective capacity."[13] Marketers no longer design strategies based on consumer identities. Instead,

marketing the body's capacities, body parts, functions, and powers become increasing popular. The control, therefore, is molecular and directly engaged in producing bodies (rather than identities); and the body no longer corresponds to the fleshy representation of the human subject, but is opened up to particles, waves and attractions. Capitalist control society, Deleuze observes, now focuses on products, not on production:

> that is, toward sales or markets. ... Markets are won by ... transforming products rather than by specializing production ... Marketing is now the instrument of social control and produces the arrogant breed who are our masters. Control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded.[14]

How are governments to market the anti-obesity message in these rapidly shifting and turbulent markets? According to my faculty webpage, current efforts are no longer very successful. Traditional health promotion is obviously designed based on an appeal toward a certain type of desired identity: the ideal fit and healthy citizen. Such "representational" marketing appears no longer effective in terms of controlling the population. What instead? If control societies are characterised by a focus on products, how can a healthy lifestyle be transformed into a product? What are the affective powers that should be tapped into when education about the benefits of thinness seems far too old-fashioned to reach consumers in this global, transparent control society? Patricia Clough summarises the current changes in the representational politics of health:

> Around the globe, there is an overriding of a representational politics of recognizing individual subjects in terms of communities of belonging by a political economy of biopolitical control where human life is being deterritorialized into statistical populations that become the condition of possibility for the distribution of chances for life and death, health and morbidity, fertility and infertility, happiness and unhappiness, freedom and imprisonment.[15]

Clough asserts, therefore, that the biggest difference between the disciplinary society and the control society is the shift from representation to the biopolitics of control, or in other words, from identity to matter. Virilio notes an additional shift from speech to instant images, or the language of digital.

THE LANGUAGE OF DIGITAL

Virilio observes that we have already moved from a society of writing into a society of speech through analogue technology (TV, radio), but the new digital technology has created a dominance of instant images that have now taken over speech. He explains that the new technology makes possible an instant viewing of "live" gruesome images in television newscasts. Curiously, however, news commentators talk about these images in the most politically correct language. Virilio explains: "When the control room puts through images of violence, sex and gore, the current affairs reporters are required to comment on them in expurgated language, in order not to offend or deter any category of listeners, any (economic, racial, clinical, sexual, etc.) community."[16] In this situation, the audience is "permanently caught between a 'soft' (politically correct) language and the 'hard' (visually incorrect) images

of 'see-it-now'-style broadcasting." The "unsanctioned violence of an optical shock" has become global.[17] As the audience is used to visual shocks, I would expect that flashing images of very obese people turned into "mountains" of unmovable flesh would no longer scare individuals into "taking care of themselves." In the turbulence of control society, horror and shock bring a rapid change into an individual's lifestyle: fitness centres and dieting classes are filled with clients after festive periods only to be empty within a couple of months when people return to their "normal" habits. Deleuze identified such sudden bursts of energy as part of control society where we "undulate ... among a continuous range of different orbits;" types of waves that we catch only to get a ride on a new one.[18] In control society, the entire panic over obesity might be a wave on which governmental healthcare control rides until the appearance of a new wave of "health risks."

Foucault already identified that journalism was harnessed to serve the economic and political interests of the powerful in disciplinary societies. He noted: "Basically it was journalism, that capitalist invention of the nineteenth century, which made evident all the utopian character of this politics of gaze."[19] Indeed, newspapers currently promote correct, normal behaviour by constantly warning of the dangers and costs of obesity. However, in control society the media has assumed measures beyond the printed word. This has become possible through the development of digital technology that allows compressing huge amounts of data into a very small amount of space. The European governments push digital broadcasting forward very strongly. For example, digital television will be the only option for viewers in Britain from 2008 forward. Digital technology has also enabled the development of the internet as well as the evolution of the mobile phone into a multimedia centre. Deleuze links the shift from print media to digital technology to the emergence of control society. In the disciplinary society, communication emerged from analogue technology. Analogue communication is based on the possibility of an impulse to move from one medium of communication into another that then transforms the impulse into a form that humans can sense. This impulse is then interpreted or given meaning by humans.[20] Deleuze saw disciplinary control as fundamentally analogue: while an individual passed through a variety of confinements through his/her lifetime (e.g., daycare, school, workplace, old folks home), the effect of these confinements was based on a common logic, a shared "language," a way of sensing and interpreting these spaces. After finishing one form of confinement, we moved like an impulse from one confinement to the other: "The various placements of sites of confinement through which individuals pass are independent variables: we're supposed to start all over again each time, and although all these sites have a common language, it's *analogical*."[21] The spaces then moulded the individual into a disciplined citizen by building a certain type of embodied identity.

Digital technology "is a numerically based form of codification" that does not require a transformation from one medium to another.[22] These numbers can be indefinitely arranged into different variations that are not dependent on any other form or medium. Deleuze argues further that "[t]he various forms of control ... are inseparable variations, forming a system of varying geometry whose language is *digital* (though not necessarily binary)." Instead of moulding an individual into a certain identity in a confined space, control society is an unstable or undefined condition where the individual constantly "modulates" between different waves and energy levels: "controls are a modulation, like self-transmuting moulding

continually changing from one moment to the next, or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another."[23] In this sense, it is difficult to sense the controlling force that is constantly changing without a (analogue) logic or connection between the different events, "waves," or identity formation. Such a force continually rolls forward, keeping the individual in constant, yet seemingly directionless motion. Virilio argues that when the analogue yields to the digital it leads to "the bankruptcy of phenomena, the catastrophic slump of the visible," where the overpowering information highway provides space for "economical and political disinformation." Digital technology speeds up the traffic by compressing the data, but at the same time, with the loss of analogue, our relation to reality is more and more distant because we no longer need our senses to relate to events around us:

> In this way, with the progressive *digitalisation* of audiovisual, tactile and olfactory information going hand in glove with the decline of immediate sensations, the *analogue resemblance* between what is close at hand and comparable would yield primacy to the *numerical probability* alone of things distant – of all things distant. And would in this way pollute our sensory ecology once and for all. [24]

This might mean that we cease to sense the space we take, the movement we need for everyday life or how our bodies feel. The sensory body is replaced with numerical measures for BMI, blood pressure, cholesterol level, transfat intake and our recommended daily exercise dose. Therefore, digitalisation provides a shift from sensing, interpreting, meaning-making, thinking individuals to "bodies of data and information" that ride whatever wave rises from the sea of digital information.

In this world of great media interaction, we actually lose human contact to the sterile logic of numbers:

> Figures are thus readying themselves to reign in their mathematical omnipotence, the instrument of number is preparing to dominate the analogon once and for all – in other words, to dominate anything which presents a resemblance, or relations or similitude, between beings and things.[25]

Without an ability to relate to the world around us, we become curiously dominated by the digitally-based global interaction. We do not act upon anything while busy interacting. We don't create anything by communicating. In the globalised world of digital information transmission, we know more about events in distant, faraway places than in our own surroundings and, consequently, we are unaware of any need for change in the immediate environment. For example, in Europe we learn about famine in such faraway places as Africa or Asia, but gain very little sense of how our everyday lifestyle choices might contribute to these crises. Neither do we know if malnutrition exists in our local neighbourhoods. While the health campaigners call for increased exercise levels, the technological, digital environment has decreased the need for physical movement. Many Westerners spend their entire days sitting (e.g., driving to work, sitting at the desk, sitting on the couch watching sport at night) because there is very little need for physical body work. Virilio diagnoses that digital communication that makes information available instantly around the world causes immobility:

> ... every time we introduce an acceleration, not only do we reduce the expanse of the world, but we also sterilize movement and the grandeur of movement

by rendering useless the act of the locomotor body. Similarly, we lose the mediating value of 'action', while that of the immediacy of 'interaction' gains in comparison.[26]

In addition, abundantly available, detailed numerical information does not inspire critical thinking about the largely economic premise for the panic of the obesity epidemic. We contently ride on the wave of statistical facts rather than question the validity and reliability of epidemiological, medical or economic research on obesity or observe the actual appearance of "obese" bodies around us. It is difficult to locate the controlling forces, because information is based on readily available, "indisputable" numerical facts. In this world of interaction, however, all information, while useful and beneficial, appears oddly distant because it is not felt, sensed or thought about. In a disciplinary society, an individual had a sense of being physically confined in a school, a hospital or a dieting centre. The control society, in contrast, works in the disguise of technological advancement and improved, globalised interaction: through connection instead of confinement between individuals and events. As Deleuze summarises:

> We are in the midst of a general breakdown of all sites of confinement ... Control societies are taking over from disciplinary societies ... It's not a question of amazing pharmaceutical products, nuclear technology, and genetic engineering, even though these will play their part in the new process. It's not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there's a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us ... It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons.[27]

What does this type of control where constantly flowing digital media, in its multiple forms, provides interactive communication around the globe, mean for the everyday lives of average citizens? How does the formation of a "dividual" (a numerically coded individual without a sense of his/her immediate surroundings) shape individuals' sense of self?

DETERRITORIALISATION OF CONTROL?

Deleuze does not want to paint a doomsday picture, although he expects that digital technology will open space for new forms of control. To deterritorialise this control, however, we need to find new weapons. Because the media occupies a central role in control society, it might be useful to examine ways to respond to its ubiquitous control.

In a disciplinary society, the media is used as an intervention tool – for example, to control obesity levels in the population. Therefore, governmental messages for a "healthy lifestyle" are transmitted through television, advertisements, posters, radio broadcasts, newspapers and internet websites. In this setting, the audience is seen to engage with media texts through negotiation: instead of complete ideological closure, the text can be seen to offer possibilities for resistant readings. For example, an individual can actively challenge the media messages of weight loss as governmental propaganda. Alternatively, an audience member can employ passive resistance by turning off the source of any controlling messages. These reactions, however, require an active awareness of the disciplinary effect of the media message. In

control society's global mediascape, the relations of power are no longer identifiable at a national or local level. When control is more molecular, fragmented and particularised, it is more difficult to rely on the tactics of decoding or ignoring ideologically coded messages. In her Deleuzian-inspired paper, Tiziana Terranova advocates that we need a change of focus to break the control of the ever-amplifying media channels. It is, therefore, necessary to re-imagine the role of communication in the changing landscape of control society.

Traditional communication theory has focused on the signification of meaning that the producers encode into the text and the audience decodes. In the current mediascape, while meanings remain encoded and decoded in the texts, the interpretive process is enveloped within "a question of inclusion and exclusion, connection and disconnection, or informational warfare, and new forms of knowledge and power ... that address not so much the play of meaning but the overall dynamics of an open informational milieu."[28] In this milieu, consequently, "the dynamics of information take precedence over those of signification:" the relationship between "professionals of communication" and their audience has to operate on a different premise from detecting dominant groups of meaning-makers and resistant audiences who create oppositional meanings.[29] At the same time, the amount of information has increased significantly and an individual must negotiate between receiving it from a multitude of channels. Such "amplification of signals" might result in the audience physically shutting its ears, closing its eyes, switching channels, turning off the television and/or shutting down the computer. However, any political intervention in this milieu has to involve more than passive exclusion of media messages (for example, turning off the television set) or production of counter-information. What is needed is "an engagement with the dynamics of information diffusion as such (opening up channels, selective targeting, making transversal connections, using informational guerrilla tactics)."[30] In the world of multiple media channels, communication does not simply flow from the sender to the receiver who then accepts, negotiates or rejects its meaning. When both the information producer and its consumer are immersed within the fields of interactions, there is always "noise," indeterminacy and uncertainty involved in the process. Terranova maintains that participation in such a non-linear communication "involves the overall interplay of multiple information flows with an active power to determine material changes of states." To address the materiality of communication, she calls for increased attention to analyses of information (the material form of communication) as opposed to concentration on representation or meaning. For her, it is the information (rather than representation) that "proliferates, resonates, recombines, and interferes all over the place."[31] An analysis of information, its channels and techniques will enable an awareness of the nonlinear dynamics and the unfolding of socio-cultural effects in the world of multiplied communication channels. Individuals have the capacity to actively negotiate this milieu through their ever-changing positions as senders and receivers. As Terranova concludes:

> Whether it is about the technical management of public communications or the dynamic emergence of a collective and networked subjectivity, a cultural politics of information does not simply address the proliferation of representations, but more fundamentally, the turbulent dynamics of sociocultural emergence within an open informational milieu.[32]

It is important to emphasise that technology – digitally-based communication, for example – might enable forms of control but is not itself controlling. Digital technology has created a field of interaction where the roles of information producer and consumer continually blur. Therefore, there is no reason why the digital communications network or statistical information cannot be used as "new weapons" by researchers to fight the controlling effects of communication. It is definitely possible, for example, to employ statistics to demonstrate the narrow base for the claims of epidemic proportions of obesity or its devastating economic impact. To make an impact, it is necessary to include this information in the governmental media campaigns or brief news reports that do not allow for much critical reflection on the presented facts. As "flashing images" now dominate the media, language-based communication becomes increasingly difficult. We might, in addition, think how images can be harnessed to serve critical thinking. For example, we can employ "blogs" that critically assess the current levels of obesity or create videos about harmful effects of dieting for "Utube" to participate in the turbulent dynamics of information production. This, however, requires an awareness of the nonlinear dynamics of information and its unpredictable unfolding into socio-cultural effects. There is no guarantee that we can control the impact of our intended message as it is unleashed to the virtual reality of global media channels. We should perhaps learn to embrace this "reality" rather than lament the lack of control over the meaning of digital messaging. Deleuze also suggests that resistance has to assume different forms from those effective in disciplinary society.

Instead of participation in the open information milieu, Deleuze advocates engendering new "space-times" to resist control. As communication and digital technology have now been harnessed as a means of control, Deleuze suggests creating "vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers," within which we can elude control.[33] When I think of exercise as a form of disciplinary practice to normalise obese bodies, I realise that physical activity has been remarkably resistant to digitalisation: exercise takes place in an immediate environment and it involves a material body that is sensing and being sensed by others in this environment. In addition, exercise has not been successfully transported into a digital form. Although the exercise video market is sizable, it is small compared to the digitalised music industry. Because an exerciser has to act – move one's body in space – not merely interact (receive information, sound or images), it is difficult to create entirely virtual exercise products. Might it be possible to think of exercise, even in confined spaces, as "vacuoles of noncommunication" where the analogue is still allowed to flourish?

Deleuze's search for new space-times outside of the control of communication leads to considering the body as an initiator of change. Because the control society targets the body directly through its communication strategies, we need to examine what these bodies can do to elude its grid. The affects of the body – how individuals physically employ their bodies in their everyday environments – can provide important disruptions into the global economy of the control society. It is not a question of denying the impact of (digital) technology on the body, but rather counting on the body's active ability to affect other bodies and technologies. As control permeates the world closest to us, we also need to resist it from our immediate surroundings. Deleuze stresses:

> What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us. If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new time-spaces, however small their surface or volume. It's what you call pietas. Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move.[34]

We now need to change the dominance of communication technology and media interaction starting from the places closest to us. And what could be closer to us than our bodies?

CONCLUSION

According to Deleuze, we are shifting from a disciplinary society that controls populations through "training" in specialised locales into a society where control permeates every aspect of life. Technological developments, particularly digital media technology, have enabled the direct control of bodies. The process of digitalisation compresses information, distance and time up to the point where there is little need to sense, act or think outside of the virtual world of constant communication. Bodies are manipulated through codes rather than treated as meaning-making, thinking humans. It is a world of instant communication and fast change where old products are continually recreated through marketing. Recurrent, effectively marketed trends, or waves, roll in and we ride these waves without much thought of their origin, size or speed. This is a strange world of constant media stimulation that numbs the senses. Humans become controlled by a continual flow of selected information that cuts them off from the surrounding "reality."

In many ways, the obesity epidemic is symptomatic of the control society. The panic is effectively driven by the media campaigns that provide global comparisons through statistical information of higher and higher BMI levels. Through the numerical coding of biological information, each individual can be located on the obesity scale. An individual is "numerised" with BMI, cholesterol level, heart rate, blood sugar level, exercise intensity level and risk levels for such illnesses as heart disease and diabetes. The body coded as obese is controlled by a global media gaze that is unlimited by distance or time.

According to Clough, this control operates through an investment in technologies and "a deepening of the commodification of human services through their biomedicalization."[35] These aim to tap directly into the affective capacity of each body. At the same time, the body's ability to affect is unlimited and, while susceptible to biopolitical power, it also has the potential to escape and change such control. It remains to be further investigated how each obese body can affect towards becoming something other than a controlled "dividual," as we need to capture their moments of resistance in their everyday environments. This requires receptivity to small, fast outbursts of resistance. As Clough suggests: "social criticism may need to take on the speed of every outburst of resistance, affectively engaging in modulating speed, rather than merely trying to articulate a strategy that connects each event of resistance to all others." In control society, small events of resistance are always linked as they invariably add value to the "global politics of an affect economy."[36] By assessing each event, the impact of the body can then deterritorialise the control.

Deleuze does not advocate a revolution that would replace the control society with another form of control. He is more interested in how to live with the control without being entirely subsumed by its numbing effects. Therefore, while it is important to understand the effects of globalised digital communication technology that promotes endless interaction with (numerical) information, control does not vanish even if this technology disappears. According to Deleuze, it is important to focus on the body's ability to affect: how the body harnessed by global capitalism might create the "vacuoles of noncommunication" at the level of local events. In this sense, all bodies, regardless of weight, can affect other bodies and, consequently, be part of the construction of the larger global affect economy of food consumption, poverty, (body) image-based entertainment, the beauty and fashion industry, the medical industry and the telecommunications industry.

1   The body mass index is calculated by dividing weight by height squared.
2   Such figures are emphasised in the governmental media campaigns. At the same, it is not reported that poor diet costs twice the amount of obesity in the UK and mental ill-health costs reach £100 billion a year. L Aphramor & J Gingras, "Sustaining Imbalance – Evidence of Neglect in the Pursuit of Nutritional Health", in *Critical Bodies: Representations, Practices and Identities of Weight and Body Management,* eds S Riley, M Burns, H Frith, S Wiggins and P Markula (London: Palgrave, in press).
3   G Deleuze, *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
4   *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. J D Faubion (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 217.
5   Ibid., 217.
6   Ibid., 217.
7   Ibid., 219.
8   As it is impractical to measure an individual's body composition directly, several indirect measures, such as BMI, have been developed. The advantage of BMI is its convenience; only height and weight are necessary to classify individuals as obese (BMI above 30), overweight (BMI = 25.0-29.9), normal weight ([BMI = 18.5-24.9) or underweight (BMI < 18.5). How this classification – for example, what makes a person with a BMI 29 overweight and person with a BMI 19 normal – is arrived at is unclear. In addition, the validity of BMI as a measure of body composition is much debated, as the height/weight ratio can vary based on other factors besides the amount of fat in an individual's body. For example, it is well known that athletes with large muscle mass will have a high BMI while their actual fat percentage is below normal. For other problems with BMI measurement see M Gard and J Wright, *The Obesity Epidemic: Science, Morality and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2005), 86-106.
9   P T Clough, "Technoscience, Global Politics, and Cultural Criticism", *Social Text*, 22:3 (2004), 1-23.
10   Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 175.
11   P Virilio, *The Information Bomb* (London: Verso, 2005), 61.
12   Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 180-182.
13   Clough, "Technoscience, Global Politics, and Cultural Criticism", 14-15.
14   Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 181.
15   Glough, "Technoscience, Global Politics, and Cultural Criticism", 16.
16   Virilio, *The Information Bomb*, 69.
17   Ibid., 71.
18   Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 180.
19   *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings (1972-1977)*, ed. C Gordon (Harlow, England: Harvester 1980), 162.

20   B Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 138.
21   Deleuze*, Negotiations*, 178.
22   Massumi*, Parables for the Virtual*, 137.
23   Deleuze*, Negotiations*, 178-79.
24   Virilio*, The Information Bomb*, 113-14.
25   Ibid., 124.
26   Ibid., 122-124.
27   Deleuze*, Negotiations*, 178.
28   T Terranova, "Communication Beyond Meaning: On the Cultural Politics of Information," *Social Text*, 22:3 (2004), 51-73.
29   Ibid., 55.
30   Ibid., 54.
31   Ibid., 69.
32   Ibid., 70-71.
33   Deleuze, *Negotiations,* 175.
34   Ibid., 176.
35   Clough, "Technoscience, Global Politics, and Cultural Criticism", 15.
36   Ibid., 18.

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