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[M13-EXPOSE] GENERATIVE AI AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF CONTROL: AN ANALYSIS OF ALGORITHMIC MEANING-MAKING AND SUBJECTIVATION

0.1 Introduction

Foucault's foundational work on discipline and governance maps the biopolitical mechanisms through which institutions historically shaped subjects: individuals are moulded through enclosure and surveillance, confined within well-defined spaces such as schools, factories, and prisons (**foucault2008a**; Foucault 1995). These institutions act as regulatory spaces, or "moulds," producing what Foucault termed "docile bodies", subjects conditioned to conformity through systematic observation and normalisation. In contrast, Deleuze contends in his seminal essay *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (Deleuze 1995) that contemporary power operates through a different modality altogether, shifting from fixed, enclosed spaces to fluid, networked systems. Within these "societies of control," power becomes a continuous, adaptive force immanent to the flows of information that constitute modern digital environments. Control, in this sense, no longer functions by confining individuals within specific spaces but by continuously modulating behaviour, subjectivities through real-time data analytics. Deleuze's concept of *control* thus provides a compelling framework for analysing the operation of power in what has been termed the *computational turn* [1].

With the emergence of digital surveillance and the participatory web [2], the visibility of bodies and subjectivities has transformed dramatically (Krasmann 2017). Machine learning (ML) and AI algorithms, particularly generative AI, represent an advanced stage of this computational evolution, warranting a renewed investigation into how these systems embody Deleuze's notion of *control*. Early algorithmic models categorised and filtered information based on simple parameters, but today's ML algorithms deploy *dividualising* processes, breaking down identities into atomised data points, or "dividuals," which are then reassembled into probabilistic associations and behavioural predictions. As ML algorithms govern content visibility, assess relevance, and curate personalised feeds on social media, they do so by continuously analysing individualised behavioural patterns, possibly binding users within feedback loops of past behaviour and group associations (Cheney-Lippold 2011; Van Otterlo 2013). The *dividualisation* process represents a shift from explicit control over information access to a more pervasive modulation of subjectivities, where the boundaries of agency are constantly reshaped by algorithmic processes. As Rouvroy, Berns, and Libbrecht 2013 argues, these feedback loops generate a subtle yet pervasive normalisation process that lacks a specific endpoint or directive. Thus, it is a matter of research whether the aspect of control is as emergent as the concept of modulation, given that these feedback loops lack a fixed direction.

While this first stage of sophisticated AI models used to regulate information flow is highly relevant to Deleuze's analysis of the *control society*, recent breakthroughs in generative AI mark a significant leap. The development of generative models, particularly Large Language Models (LLMs), shifts AI beyond mere categorisation and

[1] A term popularised by Hildebrandt 2013 to mark the emergence of big data and advanced data analytics.

[2] Also known as Web 2.0 (O'reilly 2009)

filtering, embedding these technologies within the act of content creation. These models, drawing from vast linguistic, statistical, and computational datasets, extend computational power into the realm of creation and knowledge generation. LLMs, by autonomously producing text, images, and other digital artefacts, transcend traditional epistemological boundaries, thereby introducing a novel logic for mapping and representing human knowledge (Amoore et al. 2024). Generative AI systems, therefore, are not merely tools for steering subjectivity; they actively participate in the production of digital reality. By perceiving, categorising, and modelling the world probabilistically, these models shape the socio-political landscape in distinct ways. ibid. describe generative AI's political logic as "distributional," where the politics of generative AI emerges from probabilistic estimation, allowing it to shape decision-making and action without an explicit foundation (ibid.). Engaging with human desires, cultural narratives, and social structures, these models position themselves as influential agents within the socio-political domain, shaping knowledge, identity, and values based on probabilistic "world modelling" (ibid.).

Thus, this study investigates how generative AI extends Deleuze's logic of control societies, examining its implications for digital subjectivity, social norms, and the constitution of power within computational networks. It interrogates whether generative AI functions as an instrument of a specific governmentality or whether its further development is capable of deviation, producing lines of flight and deploying nomadic subjectivities. Along those lines, the exploration also begins with the assumption that Deleuze's other works [3] may offer more comprehensive and accurate tools to analyse the current operation of power compared to the concept of *Control Societies*.

[3] For example, *Anti-Oedipus* 1983 and *A Thousand Plateaus* 1987

0.2 *Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

This study focuses primarily on Gilles Deleuze's short essay on control societies (Deleuze 1992), as well as his earlier works (see Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 1987), with selected relevant sections from Foucault's concept of biopolitics (see **foucault2008a**; Foucault et al. 1988).

After analysing the concept of *control societies* and further concepts from Deleuze's work with Félix Guattari, the analysis will continue with a temporal exploration of the development of AI models in general, including a comprehensive examination of current and potential capabilities of genAI models. After incorporating insights from selected works related to current debates, the hypotheses will be examined to analyse how Deleuze and Guattari's theory of control should be interpreted in the context of the current AI landscape and what forms of resistance mentioned in their work might find some realisation within these algorithmic structures.

0.3 Expected Results and Contributions to Current Debates

- While the current power the digital constellation deploy does not fully reflect Deleuze's control society, modulation seems to be going much further than this concept. Modulation, however, both in terms of how the subjectivity is produced and what kind of modulative capacities genAI models prevail are to be better analysed with other sources from Deleuze & Guattari. While modulation seems to be directionless, it is structurally preserves a power structure.
- Through analysing the operational structures of genAI models, such as LLMs, I expect to uncover the latent probabilistic distributions operating within a specific governmentality and deploying feedback loops steering human subjectivity in a specific way. While these models are completely dependant on the new human generated data, they also carry the risk to reduce the politically imaginary capabilities of the individuals.
- I also aim to identify potential for these approaches to foster creativity through different methods of application and training, potentially aligning with the forms of resistance that Deleuze and Guattari describe.

0.4 Preliminary Schedule

nuary - February	Literature research
February - April	Writing process, draft
April	Literature research in response to feedback
May - July	Writing process
August	Final delivery

Preliminary Bibliography

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