

Bogard, William, Whitman College, United States

Message, Rhythm, Affect, Resistance: A Social Science Fiction of Control Societies

This paper theorizes the poorly understood relation between information control and collective affect. In one of its actualizations, this relation concerns flexible control of the timing or rhythm of messages. The accumulation of capital in the global economy demands the precise calibration of affects, most centrally fear and greed, in networked populations. How is this accomplished? One way to articulate this problem is in terms of resistance to the temporal organization of messages, i.e., to their pulse, tempo, synchronization, repetition, and so on. Resistance is integral to control, in both social and digital contexts. A focus on resistance draws attention to counter-rhythmic, and thus counter-affective, tendencies in message delivery assemblages. This paper draws on Spinoza's philosophy of affectus as viewed through Deleuze's postscript on control societies, and on knowledge of how resistance functions in electronic circuits. It provides illustrations of affect control and temporal messaging from the regulation of global financial information to motivational engineering.