

# Microtimes

## Towards a politics of indeterminacy

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### THE PRODUCTION OF TIME

The temptation of giving a special ontological status to Time has been in the air in poststructuralist headquarters for decades.<sup>1</sup> A study of the production of Time – one perhaps analogous to Lefevre's (1974) study *La Production de l'espace (The Production of space)* – is still to be done. The production of Time as technology of control and production of the 'human' is indeed inseparable from other modes of production of space and perception. Critically and creatively intervening in this production appears to be an urgent need for a new ethics of technology in global surveillance culture.

The production of Time is the way in which different experiences, perceptions and accounts of time come about in particular situations. It speaks about the ways that milieux and bodies emerge together with peculiar and changing modalities of time experience and duration.

A History of Time, rather than pointing to a cosmic timeline dating back to a Big Bang, has to do with the changing perceptions and organizations of bodies and movements in any scale, from the molecular to the cosmic, which bring about radically changing experiences of non-linear time. It points also to the history of the very notion of Time as contingent. The question is not what time is, but when, how and what for does the notion of time emerge, what have been its radical transformations, what is its current status and how does the thinking about time change the experience of time or even generate it altogether.

I will briefly explore the technogenesis of a dominant notion and formation of time: linear, dualistic, hyperreal time, and how

it is entangled with a colonial genealogy, an absolute, abstract and global time that constitutes a condition of possibility of control society today. At the same time I will look into ways of opening that formation up to a micropolitics of time, an indeterminate time of emergent microtemporal perceptions and movements, of disalignments from the time machines that choreograph the social in the era of global control.

### TECHNOGENESIS OF TIME

Arguably, power has always been an issue of time-control, of kinetic control. From the rise of agriculture and the city to ubiquitous interfaces, rhythmic repetition and smoothing of the ever-changing movements of bodies at all scales has been the ontology of power relations: a long non-linear history of time (indeed of historical time) where one can trace the emergence of absolute, abstract, hyperreal and global time – where the merciless, deathly counter of the clock appears to be more real than any other way of experiencing duration and movement we may have. The clock has killed time, its liveliness and emergence, yet it never managed to kill it completely: life – vibrant, creative – always escapes while sustaining, the very corpses of the totalitarian structures we inhabit.

Linear time is perhaps the most pervasive technology and fiction of control. Linear time is an organization of perception that seeks to capture reality within a Cartesian grid of control coordinates. As long as vision is fixed to the perspectival window, the Cartesian axes and the circularity of the clock, the fiction of linear time pervades the social body as immersive time-

<sup>1</sup> The readings of Deleuze's (1986) reading of Bergson's (2012) notion of duration, and a problematic understanding of space as extension, partly accounts for this.

panopticon, a collective illusion that erases the much more real experience of unmeasurable microtemporalities that emerge in our changing perceptions and movements.

Does time precede space? Does space precede time? They are the wrong questions for philosophy and physics, for neither time nor space has an ontological status: it is *movement* that has an ontological status, not the movement of the world, but movement that *generates* world. Different kinds of movement-perception may afford different kinds of emergent space-time experiences, and affective experiences that exceed the dimensionality altogether. Not the movement of things *in* space, but movement from which all emerges, never fully becoming fixed into things, – movement from which the perception of thingness and spatiality also emerge.

Rather than asking ourselves about the riddle of time, 'what it is', let's start to question how certain perceptions of time come about, what intrinsic problems they bring about, what they stand for and how we may open them up to other microtemporal modes of experience.

## THE EMPIRE OF TIME

The macroformation of linear time is part of a long colonial history of global formations of power. The linear and circular perceptions of agriculture and the city, geometry, spectacular Greek theatre architecture, Renaissance perspective, Copernicanism, Newtonianism, Cartesianism and mechanism, have produced over millennia a multi-layered kinetic and perceptual alignment of bodies without which the fiction of linear time would be unthinkable (fig. 1).

Linear time is the hyperreal fiction generated by immersive machines of perceptual production that have articulated hegemonic (post)human naturecultures, whereby the artificial distinction between nature and culture is part of the perceptual history. Linear time is an imperialist technology of colonization, which homogenizes and standardizes emergent, microtemporal, qualitative experiences into a measurable, quantitative, objectified entity, divorced from experience and movement and from space and perception, a platonic idea, which, however, *generates* particular movements and experiences.

*The Matter of time is always kinetic:* aligning our movements on the visual lines and planes of the Cartesian-perspectival-Euclidean machine accounts for the fiction of linear time, as it emerges from linear movement.

Disaligning movement-perception from the Cartesian grid, the perspectival window and the circular clock are among the most urgent political endeavours in the era of global surveillance, an era that is only starting to fathom the potentials of control in the nano, neuro, geno and info spheres, but, most importantly, in the sphere of affective, desiring, perceptual and cognitive production, of kinetic control at molecular and macro scales.

Linear time is an implicit machine of social, affective and desire production. Bodies aligned with linear time project their desires towards an already formed future of pre-emption, while memory solidifies in an atomized identity. Affects, rather than being the co-constitutive

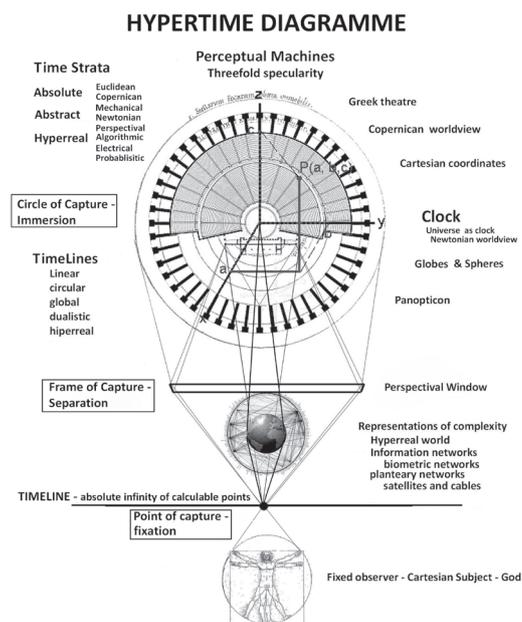


Figure 1. Hypertime diagram. Creator Jaime del Val.

<sup>2</sup> Intra-action, according to Karen Barad (2007), is a mode of relationality in which the parts entering the relation co-constitute one another in the relational process.

<sup>3</sup> This is one of the key elements of Deleuze and Guattari's attack on psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus* (1985).

intra-active emergence of agencies are reduced to the interaction of already formed entities.<sup>2</sup> Desires, rather than being creative forces of becoming, are choreographed into trajectories of lack and repetition.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE RISE OF HYPERTIME AND THE NEW ARCHITECTURES OF TIME CONTROL

Linear time has become complicated and extended in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with the rise of complexity theories and information, with the new sphere of globalization of the information age, where the linear alignments of the perspectival-Cartesian-Euclidean machine, and the circular alignments of the Copernican world view, the clock and the panopticon, became recodified and materialized in a new kind of movement: the speed of light connecting bodies, enacting the God-like fiction of universal disembodied minds looking on to the Cartesian *res-extensa*. The current Internet, and the disembodied and decontextualized account of information, takes the previous universalist perceptions much further, a high leap of transcendence materializing the Cartesian God.

The mechanical choreography of the clock counter, discretizing seconds, is analogous to the shooting of a picture and a gun. Cameras and guns, aligned with the perspectival window, perform the actual killing of time, its discretization and fixing. The electric choreography of global digital clocks actualizes a global pulsation of the shooting, a smooth modulated killing.

The fiction of 'real time' on the Internet is a fatal consequence of the previous time perceptions: on the one hand the instant as snapshot between past and future (the shooting as the 'real') and on the other the vision of the Cosmos as a globe, an all-encompassing, three-dimensional sphere corresponding to the clock. The clock is now expanded to the planet with the speed of light, a metabody of satellites, submarine cables, ubiquitous interfaces and computers assuming a standardized world of

experience in which time can be quantified: erasing the differentials of time experience of each body, embodiment, situation and context: killing microtime.

Linear, circular, global, immersive time control has become complicated and extended with another pervasive fiction: that of (hyper) real time at a global planetary scale. 'Real' time assumes the dangerous fiction that embodied experiences, with their specific and emergent time-space modalities, do not exist: we are abstract, disembodied minds connected to a calculable point of the Cartesian *res extensa* – a target in a military field of perception; a strange, intoxicating cultural belief in abstract time; a new religion, and one that is all the more pervasive since it comes to us through the seemingly neutral lens of rationalism.

I will argue indeed that time-standardization is perhaps the most crucial and the least criticized of imperialist technologies, of implicit acts of violence exercised on bodies and environments worldwide. Killing qualitative time is needed for the rise of quantitative hypertime, the fiction of standard universal time that superimposes itself on other time experiences, erasing them, aligning our movements in the planetary cyber-organism.

Linear real time assumes a deterministic view of the world as fully actualized, as utterly lacking the indeterminacy of the yet unknown, yet unthinkable, unpredictable. By capturing perception and movement along predefined trajectories of a Cartesian grid (points, lines and planes of calculation), the space-time fiction *produces* a reality that moves along those lines, planes and points, foreclosing the emergence of other potentialities.

Yet the *clinamen*, the infinitesimal microdeviations of movements described by Epicurus, which account for the emergence of novelty in the world, account for the permanent failure of these control technologies.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Clinamen, as suggested by Epicurus, is the infinitesimal deviation of atoms from their trajectories, which accounts for the emergence of novelty in the world.

HYPERTIME: AN IMMERSIVE,  
UBIQUITOUS ONTOLOGY OF CONTROL

Linear space–time allows the reduction of movements-perceptions to controllable points, lines and planes of capture. Yet linear space–time has no ontological status, other than as technology of perception. Linear space–time choreographs our movements-perceptions according to the points-lines-planes they superimpose on an indeterminate reality of movement.

Yet movement has always the potential of escaping linearity and control. There are infinite kinds of movements, many of them highly aligned. The question is how to develop new ecologies of perception that do not aim to subdue movement to points, lines and planes of control? How do we *disalign* current perceptions from the dominant perceptual regimes?

The circularity of the clock, the linearity of the Cartesian space and the dualism of the perspectival machine, generate the perception of space–time as quantifiable objective entity, an immersive, inescapable machine of control, *as long as we align ourselves with the choreographies of those circular, linear and dualistic frames of capture*. Yet outside these, endless microtimes and microspaces are emerging from our non-linear movement relations. Each microtime and microspace constitutes emergent microaffects and microsexes that exceed given formations of desire.

Now, nearly each body in a late capitalist urban environment is connected to a mobile terminal of capture (smartphone, biometric device, Google glass), anywhere at any time, where permanent alignment has become the utmost collective dream of connection, of belonging, of existing.

Hypertime is about predictability, about rendering predictable the unpredictability of microtimes. *To control and be controlled, is now the ontological question*.

PANCHOREOGRAPHIC

In *Vigilar y Castigar. El Nacimiento de la Prisión (Discipline & Punish: The birth of the prison)*

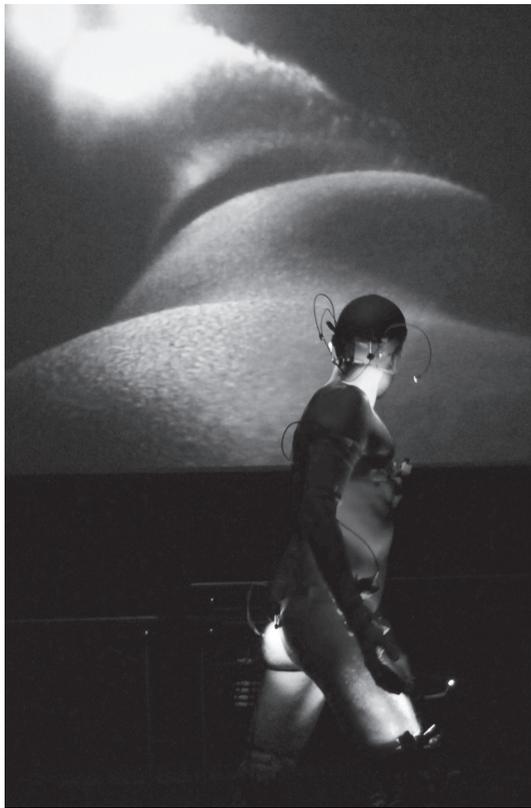
Foucault extensively analyses the relevance of time control in disciplinary society and the panopticon (2003: 150–62). However, significant changes have happened in the way that rhythms, temporal programmes, gestures, relations to objects, segmentation, order and hierarchies of bodies have been organized over the past decades. It is possible to see a shift from the visual disciplinary field of the panopticon to a more pervasive and invisible control field, which I call the *panchoreographic*, which aligns and choreographs bodies at the minutest scales of movement-matter.

Ubiquitous commercial music is one of the crucial time-control technologies, where rhythmic control, the repetitive sound architecture of pop songs and roboticized melodies, as it floods all spaces, dissolving all boundaries between private and public, becomes an *affective* technology operating at multiple levels: of repetitive musical affects, of the gestures and dance choreographies associated to a liberation culture of the ‘cool’, of the design technologies for ubiquitous music reproduction (that have made Apple into the largest corporation by market capitalization in the world (List of public corporations by market capitalization)).

When it comes to time, controlling music is a primary political endeavour, since music is the art of time *par excellence* (all arts being time-based), an art that allows us to create micro-reconfigurations of time experiences. Twentieth century ‘avant-garde’ music has been a *radical performance art of time*.

The panacoustic is part of a larger *panchoreographic*: ubiquitous interfaces, transport and architecture technologies, image and music technologies, perceptual and affective technologies that disseminate contagious affects worldwide: a complex immersive network that choreographs bodies at molecular, social and planetary scales, while adapting itself to the minor emergent shifts

■ Figure 2. Microsexes, metaformance by Jaime del Val, Toulouse 2011. Photo Claude Fournié.



and deviations of the global choreographies, capturing emergence on the fly.

Microtime is not only the minoritarian experience of time, the one that doesn't match the dead experience of the clock counter, but also the emergent, the yet indeterminate, the open-ended and lively. Capturing indeterminacy into traceable, measurable patterns is now the primary scope of the *panchoreographic*.

#### PERFORMING HYPERTIME

We enact hypertime in our daily movements, as we reinstate our alignments with the given, smooth, accelerated rhythms and choreographies of the metabodies we are part of: city, information, transport, economy, the family, monogamy, intimacy, language, moving images and so forth. All of these produce an *infinity of differential strata of performative time production*. All of them are actually producing differential times, yet at the same time capturing our movements in global networks of alignment.

<sup>5</sup> As suggested and performed by Rimbaud and the May 68 movement.

#### REDUCTIONISMS OF HYPERTIME

Time as standardized measurable dimension rather than emergent perception.

Time as snapshot rather than elastic duration.

Time as line going from past to future rather than blurry indeterminate trail.

Time as a single line, rather than multiplicities.

Time as the fully actualized, rather than indeterminate potential.

Time as the fully measurable, rather than qualitative differentials.

#### CONTRADICTIONS OF HYPERTIME

Oddly enough, the technogenesis of linear time as divorced from space and experience points precisely to the opposite: its radical dependence on a linear perception-movement, on a linear space experience.

On the other hand, linear time, like geometry, is not describing a reality and in fact never exists in reality: reality is always microtemporal; just like there is no perfect straight line in nature, *there is no perfect timeline*. Times in natureculture are always blurry trails intermingling and emerging in indeterminate multiplicities. Likewise, the machines of time-control multiply temporal strata and differentials in their attempt to unify complexity.

#### TOWARDS AN ECOLOGY OF INDETERMINACY

How are microtimes always already present in hypertime? Reducing time to a measurable entity implies killing time. But destroying clocks<sup>5</sup> is not enough in order to avoid the time killing: we need to subtly disalign our movements from the perceptual machines of linear-circular-dualistic Time production.

Measurable time is an infinitesimal part of time experience, the dead part: in every time experience there is infinite potential, non-actualized times: lively times of emergence. *OccupyTime* as a political movement would be the permanent disalignment (and

disoccupation) from all the machines of Time production.

New movement ontologies should allow understanding of how *time emerges from movement*, thus accounting for the kinetics of time as never fully actualized, always opening up to new potentials, to moves into the indeterminate.

An ethics and ecology of (micro)Time should account for how machines of time production (media, architecture, industrial and digital technologies, contagious gestures of cultural normativity, and so on) are generating pervasive ecologies of control operating on a double logic of repetition (actuality) and pre-emption (acceleration, smoothing).

An ethics and politics of Time should facilitate new ecologies of indeterminate time.

#### MICROTIMES

“Microtimes/Microspaces/Microaffects/Microsexes”(Microsex) (fig. 2) is a metaformance project by Reverso.(Reverso) Through placing surveillance cameras on the skin, looking at the skin, while the voice is electronically processed live, the body enters a proprioceptive spiral that exceeds perspectival linearity and dualism.

The disalignment from the perspectival machine of vision induces an explosion of infinite emergent microtimes, microspaces, microaffects and microsexes that open up movement-perception to the blurry indeterminacy of becoming.

A *metaformance* is the ongoing process of transformation of perception itself (not of the perceived), its opening up to indeterminacy.

#### METABODY - MICROTIME MACHINE

METABODY is a five-year European project coordinated by Reverso that started in July 2013 (METABODY). METABODY will elaborate a critical study of cultural homogenization, social control and global surveillance in the information society. Time standardization will thus be a focus of the project.

METABODY will develop new technological paradigms that take into account the changing differentials of bodies, contexts and movements in their irreducibility, valuing and highlighting the importance of indeterminacy for a liveable life. The production of microtime-ecologies will be a main focus of the project.

METABODY will build the first fully intra-active architecture, which will physically transform through body movement in its spatial, sound, light and multisensorial aspects. The architecture will be a *machine for the production of microtimes*.

By disaligning perception from linearity, time experiences will be facilitated that open up movement-perception to microdeviations, to subtle disalignments, to the proliferation of indeterminate space-times and affects-desires for a social ecology to come.

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