EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION
DELEUZE / FOUCAULT: A NEOLIBERAL DIAGRAM

NEOLIBERAL DIAGRAMMATICS AND DIGITAL CONTROL

MATTHEW TIESEN & GREG ELMER (eds.)

The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 142)

The diagram is … a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field…. And from one diagram to the next, new maps are drawn. (Deleuze, 2006, pp. 30, 37)

Diagrammatic concepts and ways of understanding are central to the arguments on the interdependent and ever shifting relations of power, control, and capitalism presented by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. These relations feature as a central motif in Deleuze’s book, Foucault, wherein the figure of the diagram extends the spatialized Panopticism proffered by Foucault (Elmer, 2004, p. 41). “Diagrammatics” refers to the pre-conditions of conditions. It references the “map of relations between forces” that constitute particular states of affairs: affective assemblages, environments or ecologies, and actualizations of the not yet (Deleuze, 1986, p. 36). The diagram, for Deleuze (and for Deleuze’s Foucault), “passes through every point” (1986, p. 36) and acts as a “non-unifying immanent cause … coextensive with the whole social field.” The diagram is that which is the cause of the “concrete assemblages that execute its relations” (1986, p. 37). These relations, Deleuze states, exist and operate
within “the very tissue of the assemblages they produce” (1986, p. 37). To articulate an adequate accounting of diagrammatics is to begin to map the “complete conditions”—at once human and nonhuman, actual and virtual, material and immaterial—that pre-empt and pre-define what we later come to identify as “the real” (1994, p. 159).

The objective of this special issue of MediaTropes—guest edited by Matthew Tiessen and Greg Elmer of the Infoscape Research Lab at Ryerson University—is to probe the edges and depths of what we call the “neoliberal diagram.” We define the neoliberal diagram as that panoply of factors that today constitute the relations of forces that pre-condition the range of potentials available to life in all its forms. This diagram is constituted by actors that include global governance institutions; national governments; international financial conglomerates (to whom, it is becoming clearer, governments are frequently obligated); globally surveilled Internet infrastructures; and corporations of worldwide reach, scope, and power. Through policy, projected military power, financial sleight-of-hand, and generalized public consent, power is consolidated in ways that are increasingly unavoidable and irrepresible. After the 2008 global credit crunch, this system of potential we are calling the neoliberal diagram has never actually been in crisis. Rather, the neoliberal diagram’s apparent “crises” have been seized upon as a sort of smooth space (in a Deleuzean sense), for experimenting with what governments, corporations, and globalist institutions of governance describe as “exceptional” situations that require “solutions.” Consider the name given by the Canadian government to its version of a post-credit crisis bank bailout program: the “Extraordinary Financing Framework.” Beginning in 2008, a year when the entirety of the Canadian government’s federal budget expenditures amounted to C$237.4 billion, the bailout-by-another-name provided C$200 billion of liquidity to the nation’s banking system (Stanford, 2011). Indeed, the vocabulary and euphemism-filled mediascape that has sprung up to bolster our post-credit crunch milieu is astonishing. Not only is it a demonstration of effective top-down public relations management but of how meaning-making and logic-generating apparatuses are capable of redefining whole swathes of “reality.” What think tanks, we ask, burn the midnight oil to churn out benign sounding (but devastating) turns of phrase such as: austerity measures, quantitative easing, tapering, debt ceilings, resilience and/or design thinking, bail-ins, “extraordinary,” enemy combatant, stability levies, and so on?

As the expanding neoliberal diagram of metadata-driven digital “dividuation” is ushered into place, it whispers “don’t be evil” (Google) and encourages us to “connect with friends” (Facebook) and be transparent to the
world. We obey by fulfilling our desires to connect, promote, project, proclaim. But behind the Twitter-saturated veneer the invisible workings of the neoliberal diagram seek to monetize what once had no price: friendship, curiosity, culture, communication. The neoliberal diagram is always in need of expansion and extension, always declaring this or that new commodity/analytic (friendship, self identity, air, water, space, time) capable of serving as collateral for its future investments, takeovers, collapses, invasions, bubbles. Moreover, this perpetual effort by the neoliberal diagram to collateralize an increasingly nebulous sphere of “commodities” also serves to distribute the risk inherent in the diagram’s fragility to an ever-widening swathe of witting and unwitting participants.

Today, it is hard to keep track of the “exceptional” expressions of the neoliberal diagram. The President of the United States uses drones that kill American citizens (Savage & Baker, 2013); American whistle blower Bradley/Chelsea Manning reveals the illegal military acts of her own government (Hoyng, 2013). The Guardian reporter, Glenn Greenwald, reveals the documents leaked by Edward Snowden that describe the Orwellian digital surveillance and data-harvesting programs of the National Security Agency (NSA). NSA spooks hacked the servers of Google and Facebook (Gellman, et al., 2013). UK border police use illegal detention, intimidation, and anti-terrorism legislation in an attempt to prevent Greenwald’s partner, David Miranda, from delivering the information he carried (Bowcott, 2013). The brazen government-sponsored destruction of the Guardian newspaper’s computers that housed the data related to Edward Snowden’s NSA-damning documents (Borger, 2013). News that the Canadian government aided the NSA’s attempts to spy on world leaders at Toronto’s G20 summit and continues to data-mine the social media output of Canadian citizens (Weston, 2013). These are examples of diagrammatics or Prism-atics (The NSA Files: The Guardian, 2013).

Still other examples include taking the world to the edge of regional conflict in Syria, while the very next week no media coverage of Syria is to be found (Lizza, 2013). The rumblings from global governance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about the benefits of global “bail-ins” and “one-off capital levies” that debt-ridden governments could impose on citizens “before avoidance is possible” (IMF, 2013, p. 49). Stratospheric banker bonuses go hand-in-hand with record-breaking American stock markets (Mackenzie, 2013). Annual debacles over “raising the debt ceiling” threaten the United States’ and the global economy (Avlon, 2013). The banking oligarchy pays billions in “fines” for fraudulently “misrepresenting” assets and interest rates while benefiting from 0% interest rate loans from the Federal Reserve.
(New York Times Editorial Board, 2013; Eichelberger, 2013). These and many other examples show that the neoliberal diagram’s supposed exception-to-freedom has in fact become a carefully and consistently redrawn rule.

What is more, in our war-, surveillance-, and debt-saturated societies, the neoliberal diagram is an expression of power’s capacity to wring every drop from the customers, clients, and citizens who bestow it with legitimacy. Deleuze was a theorist of power in the spirit of Nietzsche. He declares that power “is diagrammatic” insofar as it has no particular shape but determines shape itself (1986, p. 73). Diagrammatic power is flexible in order to adapt and absorb the states of affairs it creates. As Deleuze explains, a diagram of power:

mobilizes non-stratified matter and functions, and unfolds with a very flexible segmentarity. In fact, it passes not so much through forms as through particular points which on each occasion mark the application of a force, the action or reaction of a force in relation to others, that is to say an affect like “a state of power that is always local and unstable.” (1986, p. 73)

Recent IMF policy initiatives, rhetoric, and working papers shed light on facets of the neoliberal diagram we are describing here. These documents make explicit IMF designs to tighten the global financial industry’s grip on power by extending its reach through data-mining and dot-connecting. The aim is to increase financial industry access to quasi-legitimate sources of funding, contingent capital, and collateral. In a working paper titled “Why are the G-20 Data Gaps Initiative and the SDDS Plus Relevant for Financial Stability Analysis?” author Robert Heath (2013) describes how the IMF’s Financial Stability Board is determined to plug all monetary “Data Gaps.” This attempt to close off the diagram’s “relatively free points, points of creativity, change, and resistance” is undertaken in order to contribute to “stability” (or perpetuity) in the current post-crisis financial system by providing access to all financial transactions from the micro to the macro level (Heath, 2013, p. 3). According to the IMF, “a lack of data inhibited early warning and the timely response by policy makers once the [2008] crisis emerged.” For this reason, Data Gaps must be filled because “nothing frightens financial markets more than uncertainty arising from a lack of information” (2013, p. 4). The nimble and evolving logic of the neoliberal diagram is also on display in a just-released IMF document titled “Taxing Times.” To maintain the current world financial order when there are national debt emergencies, the paper suggests that countries may need to seize the financial assets of citizens. Under the heading, “A One-Off Capital Levy?” the IMF document explains that the “sharp deterioration of the public finances in many countries” has led to a “revived interest” in a “capital levy”
(that is, a one-off tax on private wealth) “as an exceptional measure to restore debt sustainability” (IMF, 2013, p. 49). What is the appeal of this exceptional “tax”? We are told that “if it is implemented before avoidance is possible” the “one-time tax” (i.e., this theft in service of the diagram) will “not distort behaviour.” Indeed, the exceptional tax “may be seen by some as fair” (2013, p. 49). Of course, speed is of the essence if such a path were to be pursued. Any “delay in introduction” would create room for “extensive avoidance and capital flight” (2013, p. 49). To what extent would citizens be levied? The IMF suggests “10 percent on households with positive net wealth” (2013, p. 49).

These IMF initiatives provide a glimpse into the flexibility and reach of the neoliberal diagram relative to that of the citizens (i.e., taxpayers) in whose so-called interest these initiatives are implemented. When coupled with the NSA revelations brought to light by Snowden, the diagram’s need for data (not to mention dollars and debtors) in order to maintain “business as usual” is readily apparent. From the perspective of the inflating neoliberal diagram and as defined by the monetary pragmatics of contemporary global power and (digitized) control, the question can be understood as follows: Where is the money (the diagram’s lifeblood) and how can we compel the public to desire that technocratic controllers commandeer it?

As Deleuze explains in Foucault, one of the most significant features of the diagram as a field of determining forces is that it modulates actualities and the social field it produces. Through its adaptability and its instability it is always determining from a distance. It does this to remain behind the scenes, to give its progeny the impression that their realities are theirs alone, and that their apparent agencies belong to them.

These power-relations, which are simultaneously local, unstable and diffuse, do not emanate from a central point or unique locus of sovereignty, but at each moment move “from one point to another” in a field of forces, marking inflections, resistances, twists and turns, when one changes direction, or retraces one’s steps. This is why they are not “localized” at any given moment. They constitute a strategy, an exercise of the non-stratified, and these “anonymous strategies” are almost mute and blind, since they evade all stable forms of the visible and the articulable. (Deleuze, 2006, pp. 73–74)

Today, the diagram has added to its adaptability and instability the power of perceived and real fragility. This diagrammatic fragility courses through the entire neoliberal system, functioning as an omnipresent threat that further inflicts and infects what we have come to sense as our (inevitable) reality.
Consider the perpetually under-funded military industrial complex. Consider as well the budget woes of local and national governments. And let us not overlook the kid-glove treatment required of the “economy” that always requires tending and nourishment. Indeed, the neoliberal diagram’s need for perpetual monetary sustenance traps both creditors and debtors in a system that risks implosion at any moment. As Philip Goodchild explained at a conference on “Rethinking Capitalism” at the University of California at Santa Cruz, the contemporary economy/neoliberal diagram is a “system of interlocking liabilities” built on financial and governmental institutions that are at once players within the system as well as the “conditions for the survival of the system.” This monetary prison (or is it “Prism,” the name of the NSA’s surveillance programs?) is one of interconnected fragility. It derives its coercive powers by way of its very “weakness” (Goodchild, 2010).

Deleuze and Guattari anticipate these characteristics when they suggest that the diagrammatic “does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality.” Moreover, in constructing new types of realities the diagram “does not stand outside history but is instead always ‘prior to’ history,” creating the history-to-come according to its own specifications and systemic requirements (1987, p. 141). In the case of the neoliberal diagram, systemic requirements are often the handmaidens of finance. War, territory, resource extraction, taxation, debts, loans, the biosphere, and even our genes are today viable fodder for monetization and therefore instrumentalization. Deleuze and Guattari recognize the need to monetize everything as one of the ways contemporary modes of (capitalist) power are expressed. They explain:

In a certain sense capitalist economists are not mistaken when they present the economy as being perpetually “in need of monetarization,” as if it were always necessary to inject money into the economy from the outside according to a supply and a demand. In this manner the system indeed holds together and functions, and perpetually fulfills its own immanence. In this manner it is indeed the global object of an investment of desire. The wage earner’s desire, the capitalist’s desire, everything moves to the rhythm of one and the same desire, founded on the differential relation of flows having no assignable exterior limit, and where capitalism reproduces its immanent limits on an ever widening and more comprehensive scale. (1983, p. 239)

The current neoliberal diagram’s manufacturing of an apparent prosperity hologram, with American stockmarkets at an all-time high and interest rates
remaining at an all-time low, raises questions. We wonder: [1] What is the endgame? [2] Where are we going? [3] How can we resist? [4] How might we escape (or even mobilize a desire to escape)? Indeed, eighty-five years after propagandist Edward Bernays advised those in power on how the opinions of the masses could be “moved, directed, and formed,” we wonder with Deleuze how the illusions or “diagramoptics” on view today could possibly be identified by those with the most to lose in the event that this globe-spanning diagram begins to self-destruct (1928, p. 971). Or conversely, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, “how does one come to desire strength while also desiring one’s own impotence? How was such a social field able to be invested by desire? And how far does desire go beyond so-called objective interests, when it is a question of flows to set in motion and to break?” (1983, p. 239).

It is not enough to theorize. The nodes of the neoliberal diagram are there for all to see. Indeed, neoliberal institutions—governments, central banks, global corporations—are recasting themselves as “transparent,” open, and friendly (Tiessen, 2013). Conjuring up concepts and entertaining abstractions merely contributes to the field of entertainment and distraction so powerfully mobilized by the diagrammatics that is their apparent target. Deleuze agrees with this assessment, declaring: “On all counts, abstract ideas are thoroughly inadequate: they are images that are not explained by our power of thinking, but that involve, rather, our impotence; images that do not express the nature of things, but indicate, rather, the variability of our human constitution” (1990, pp. 277–278). Or, as he wrote elsewhere: “There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons” (1992, p. 4). One of the “new” weapons Deleuze promoted was “hijacking.” According to Deleuze, when facing a field of communication that has been “corrupted” and “permeated” by “money,” we must “hijack speech” (or what passes for “speech”) and, we might surmise, commandeer meaning (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175). We do this not by capitulating to the diagram’s need for counter-perspectives or “fair and balanced” confrontations and debates, but by exiting the conversation altogether. Unplug … go underground … move your money … refuse to vote for oligarchy-supporting political parties … support community initiatives and local businesses … develop more sustainable and independent social, cultural, economic, and ecological systems … construct alternative zones for living that are as incompatible with the neoliberal diagram. As Deleuze understood, to create is not necessarily to combat. Nor is it to communicate (especially in a world where communication has been corrupted). “Creating has always been something different from communicating.” Instead, the objective in his view is to engage actively in “noncommunication,” to create “vacuoles” and “circuit breakers” so that we can “elude control” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175).
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 space-times, however small their surface or volume…. Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175)

What are the circuit breakers Deleuze describes? They remain to be invented. But in a world where the NSA is determined to target and surveil “any device, anywhere, all the time,” we can assume that future resistance will likely be anything but digital (Risen & Poitras, 2013). For now, when these vacuoles have not yet taken shape, this special issue of MediaTropes aims to offer different points of entry to neoliberal diagrammatics and new perspectives on their determining effects.

In this issue of MediaTropes

Greg Elmer opens this special issue of MediaTropes on Deleuze, Foucault, and the neoliberal diagram by examining the multiple meanings of “going public.” Going public conventionally refers to the moment when the stocks of private companies begin trading on publicly accessible exchanges. Recently, Facebook and Twitter (two of social media’s highest flyers), went public on the NASDAQ exchange. Elmer argues that the meanings of going public in our social media-saturated world go far beyond initial public offerings (IPOs). He maintains that going public is the founding ethos upon which the contemporary Internet and the businesses and governments that profit from it rest. We are all, then, summoned to go public, to become transparent to the metadata-mining algorithms and processes of techno-quantification upon which neoliberal diagrammatics increasingly depend. Elmer argues that today’s post-Edward Snowden debates about online privacy might be regarded as ridiculous distractions and even smokescreens. The business model of the Internet requires commodification of our data. The patterns, choices, desires, relations, and knowledge produced by each of us must be made available online if the Web is to become a space of endless profit. As Elmer observes: “there would be no Google search engine or Facebook social networking platform without the content, information, and demographic profiles uploaded, revised, updated, and shared by billions of users worldwide.” He states:

[I]f social media platforms are governed by ubiquitous surveillance and continuous uploading and sharing of personal
information, opinions, habits, and routines, then privacy would seem only to be a hindrance to these processes. To ignore such clear mission statements, coupled with repetitive attempts to undermine, display, and obfuscate so-called privacy settings, would seem disingenuous at best, and wilfully blind at worst. Can we really conclude that such businesses violate users’ privacy when their platforms are in the first and last instance wired for ubiquitous publicity?

Elmer’s suggestion that today’s best efforts to promote online privacy are “disingenuous” and even delusional recalls the work of the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) in the late 1990s. Members of the CAE explained that the Internet would become a breeding ground for capitalism and digitally modulated forms of imperceptibly powerful control. For the CAE, the “virtual bodies” we create when we “go public” online generate for each of us a “data body—a much more highly developed virtual form, and one that exists in complete service to the corporate and police state.” They observe that with its “immense storage capacity and its mechanisms for quickly ordering and retrieving information,” what they call the “technological apparatus,” will regard “no detail of social life” as “too insignificant to record and to scrutinize” (Critical Art Ensemble, 1997, p. 145).

From the moment we are born and our birth certificate goes online, until the day we die and our death certificate goes online, the trajectory of our individual lives is recorded in scrupulous detail. Education files, insurance files, tax files, communication files, consumption files, medical files, travel files, criminal files, investment files, files into infinity…. (1997, p. 145)

For Elmer, then, going public is the name of the neoliberal diagram’s game. Indeed, the fact that we willingly go public before being prompted to do so enables corporations that feed on our data to profit from it. Elmer wonders whether “privacy-based perspectives provide an adequate framework for understanding users’ relationships with social media platforms and their parent companies?” In so doing, he underscores the need to re-evaluate current thinking and envision new models for the ideal relationship between netizens and the Internet.

Petra Hroch extends the semantic critique begun by Elmer by interrogating the euphemistic ways concepts such as “resilience,” “sustainability,” and “social innovation” are mobilized in the service of today’s neoliberal imperatives. Hroch observes that popular terms such as “sustainability” and “social innovation” are in fact “schizoid modes of
representing what Deleuze calls ‘the cliché’ (the authority of the same) as ‘the new’ (difference).” For Hroch, the way these terms are used in popular discourse and within the larger context of the neoliberal diagram short-circuits “any real possibility of social transformation.” She notes that these concepts are only sustainable or innovative insofar as they capture and co-opt “creative energies in service to the status quo.”

To illustrate her position, Hroch examines California Dreaming, a film by Bregtje van der Haak (2010). The movie deals with Californians in a post-credit crunch era who blame themselves for their troubles. In the face of crushing poverty and few job prospects, they fault themselves for failing to be sufficiently innovative. They do not see governments, corporations, or financial systems as responsible for the crunch. Instead, these tragic figures internalize the neoliberal logic and see their economic hardships as brought on by themselves. For Hroch, these stories of down-and-out Californians reveal the ways “different neoliberal diagrams structure and modulate subjectivity and its relation to the social.” The film shows us how the Californians are complicit with the forces that control them. Hroch asks, “how can analysis of these shifty subjective-social structures point us to points of resistance? And why is it crucial that resistance to neoliberal diagrams—new cartographies—be understood in intensive, matter-mediated-modulated, non-oppositional, and non-binary modes?”

Matthew Tiessen’s article zeroes in more specifically on the financial dimensions of the neoliberal diagram. The focus is on how the financial world is dependent on debt and credit. Tiessen shows that the design of today’s international monetary form tilts the relationship between debtor and creditor in favour of the creditor. He argues that today’s credit-money can be regarded as a “sophisticated technology of dispossession” that “affects the social landscape by pre-conditioning it.” Tiessen describes how the financial system has built credit crises into its functioning. When the inevitable reckoning comes, the debtor’s assets are made available to the creditors on the cheap. Drawing on the philosophy of Nietzsche, Deleuze, and Guattari, he helps articulate the social and affective dimension of debt and credit-money. Tiessen emphasizes that financial relations are social relations, and that money is a technology that works on behalf of those in a position to create and control it.

Erika Biddle examines the diagrammatics determining our changing relationship to our technosocial devices. She examines the ways that subjectivities and emerging forms of social control are increasingly modulated by communicative media and ever more sensual expressions of human-computer interaction (HCI). Her study takes us on a telejourney that begins
amidst the online worlds of Facebook and Twitter and ends in the hyper-
titillating virtual environments of extreme online pornography. Biddle reveals
the ways that immersive online forms of performativity and participation are
effective and efficient forms of “haptic,” “somatic,” affective, and sensorial
control. Her description recalls Paul Virilio’s warnings about the risks involved
when teletechnologies merge not only with our sexual appetites, but also with
our fleshy biological orifices and appendages.

What was till now still “vital,” copulation suddenly becomes
optional, turning into the practice of remote-control
masturbation. At a time when innovations are occurring in
artificial fertilization and genetic engineering, they have actually
managed also to interrupt coitus, to short-circuit conjugal
relations between opposite sexes, with the aid of biocybernetic
(teledildonic) accoutrements using sensor-effectors distributed
over the genital organs…. This is where the very latest
perspective comes in: the tactile perspective of so-called
“touching at a distance” (tactile telepresence), which now puts
the finishing touches on the classic perspective of sight and
hearing. And we cannot begin to understand the outrageousness
of cybersexuality without this paradoxical cutaneous

According to Biddle, the Internet is becoming the ideal vehicle for how the
neoliberal diagram controls at a distance. With “the hyperconnectivity these
communications technologies enable, capitalism’s modes of desire and anxiety
are inscribed in bodies as processes wherein devices and their users have
become increasingly adaptive to each other. We are learning to experience the
body as a medium, rewiring our brains for new affects and learning from how
machines learn.” Biddle emphasizes the affective nature of the neoliberal
diagram’s efficacy, highlighting the ease with which our own desires and
pleasure-centres can be used to control us. She reminds us that the forces that
have the best chance of controlling us now and in the future will be those that
appear the most friendly, sexy, benign, colourful, titillating, cuddly, or cute.
The campaigns of Google and Facebook that are premised on not being “evil”
and on networking with “friends” are in fact the most extensive surveillance
campaigns ever known. For Biddle, these campaigns exemplify how power can
be designed in ways that make us clamour for our own subjugation.

Andrew Iliadis’s contribution examines the many ways Deleuze’s
thought is indebted to the theories of his contemporary, Gilbert Simondon
(1924–1989). Iliadis’s study begins by showing how Simondon’s thinking built
on Aristotle’s theories of substance (hylomorphism). He then narrows the lens of the inquiry to focus on Deleuze’s explicit references to Simondon’s ontological arguments, especially his theories of individuation. These theories are significant today because philosophers and communication theorists such as Tiziana Terranova, Eugene Thacker, Bernard Stiegler, Isabelle Stengers, and Bruno Latour use them in their re-evaluations of how we think about materiality, identity, and technology. While Simondon’s theories have only recently gained attention in the English speaking academic world, Iliadis observes that they have long been in circulation through the work of Deleuze. While Deleuze rarely mentions Simondon by name in his published writings, he makes extensive use of the terms and concepts the latter developed, such as affect, complex system, disparation, virtual, actual, sensation, assemblage, and singularity. Iliadis sees Simondon’s theories of information as his most profound contribution to contemporary theories of technoculture. Simondon saw that information was more than communication transmitted from sender to receiver. Information is that which “structures reality” itself while not being itself a structure. Iliadis states that, “information is that which, depending on the way that it comes into contact with another abstraction of itself, unlocks or ‘clicks’ into another form of reality.” For Iliadis, then, Simondon offers not only a “new philosophy of causality” but also a “philosophy of information” that is apt for our time.

Gary Genosko’s contribution to this issue teases out an understudied discussion of semio-techniques from Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. He shows how representation is at the centre of a public communication strategy Foucault describes as a “gentle way of punishing” that involves a “highly diverse array of punishments.” Genosko asks: “what was lost when the prison became ‘one of the most general forms’” of punishment (Foucault, 1995, p. 120)? In response, he articulates the function of this “semiogram of power” by bringing a “Foucauldian meditation to bear upon the analysis of the neoliberal surveillance state.” This analysis has the potential to provide the conceptual tools for “critically apprehending our current situation within a burgeoning neoliberal condition” that seeks to discipline populations in ever more imperceptible, delicate, and entertaining ways. Genosko focuses on what Foucault called “obstacle-signs” that are framed as “technologies of representation” designed to communicate all the disadvantages of criminal and illegal behaviour. His study makes a valuable contribution by demonstrating how today’s technologies of communication can be used to discipline neoliberalism’s publics.

Stephen James May brings this special issue of *MediaTropes* to a close. His study offers a “from-the-trenches” reminder of how the neoliberal
diagrammatics of our contemporary world occasionally removes its “don’t be evil” front to reveal its material modes of control. May’s contribution is informed by his personal experience amidst the turmoil of the 2010 G20 Summit in Toronto. The 2010 Summit provides ample evidence of how the Toronto Police Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police surveilled Twitter and other social media platforms in support of their brutal crackdown on protesters and activists. May provides an on-the-ground perspective concerning an event that was recently re-animated by Edward Snowden’s leaks. Perhaps not surprisingly, Snowdon’s evidence showed that world leaders were being spied upon in Toronto right alongside the protestors (Weston, 2013). World leaders, after all, are as beholden as anyone to the diagrammatics of contemporary neoliberalism. May’s piece highlights how new modes of communication such as Twitter are Janus-faced. They are liberatory and revolutionary even as they are determining and the source of formidable new forms of disciplinary control.

The essays in this volume remind us that today’s neoliberal diagram operates in ways that are both visible and invisible, material and immaterial, implicit and explicit. A theme emerging from the studies in this special issue of MediaTropes is that our desires, relationships, and revolutionary impulses are being harvested, data-mined, dissected, and co-opted by power. Not only can they be used against us today, but they can be stored and used against us in the future. Indeed, insofar as the neoliberal diagram is a digital one, our own best efforts to escape only serve to reveal to those in a position to stop us where the exits—the lines of flight—are located.
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