

# A Suspended Individual: The Close-up as Deterritorialisation and Political Device of Control\*

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This paper examines the interplay between affectivity, individuality and territory through the lens of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of the image. To such end, this article employs a philosophical and conceptual analysis grounded in Gilles Deleuze's cinema theory. The method is qualitative and interpretive, focusing on conceptual elaboration, theoretical synthesis and philosophical critique, rather than empirical research. The article finds that the close-up suspends individuation and expresses the pure affect by deterritorialising the subject. However, in contemporary media, this potential is reterritorialised through political messaging that uses close-up imagery to fix affect within ideological frameworks. Instead of expressing affect, political figures represent and capture it, neutralising its disruptive force.

**Keywords:** Deleuze, Guattari, image, politics, affects

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## INTRODUCTION

In this work, I aim to analyse the relationship between affectivity, individuality and territory. To do so, I will focus on Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of the image, particularly his first book on cinema, *Movement-Image*, as well as several of his seminars held between 1981 and 1982 at Vincennes. Therefore, this article operates within the field of continental philosophy, with a particular focus on Deleuzian aesthetics, political theory and media philosophy. The philosophical concerns addressed lie at the intersection of ontology, affect theory, semiotics, and the critique of contemporary political representation. The methodology is conceptual and interpretive, rather than offering empirical data, the article conducts a theoretical investigation into how images operate affectively and politically.

I will therefore explore the process of deterritorialisation and examine the basis on which Deleuze asserts that all close-ups are deterritorialised, that the affection-image suspends individuation. I claim that the individual must undergo deterritorialisation to express the pure affect and that this deterritorialisation is facilitated by the configuration of the close-up. When 'closed up', the captured subject loses its signification and becomes a vessel of the pure intensity

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and affectivity. Thus, the close-up demands an emptying of individuation while simultaneously allowing virtual potentiality to emerge and be expressed. Furthermore, as the individual is detached from their functional identity, they transform into a de-organised, deterritorialised presence expressive of affect – potentially aligning with what Deleuze and Guattari term a *Body without Organs*.

I also wish to highlight how this phenomenon is particularly relevant in today's post-media context. In fact, because the political milieu has recognised how the close-up dissolves individuality in favour of emotional expression, it has become a common strategy to axiomatise affect through close-up images, or rather, affection-images. Consequently, political messaging has shifted from ideological allegiance to affective resonance – an evolution that has yet to be fully acknowledged.

By generating either enthusiasm or discontent regarding the current political landscape, post-media political campaigns effectively neutralise any emergent revolutionary minorities. In this way, the close-up reconfigures political engagement, privileging affect over individuality and transforming traditional political representation into a vehicle for shared emotional experience.

Although Deleuze's body of work on cinema has been extensively covered, his argument for the innate deterritorialised condition of the affection-image has not. Nonetheless, the key texts on the subject must be mentioned as mandatory bibliography and frame of reference for this kind of work. On Deleuze and his image philosophy, there is Paola Marrati's *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy* (2008). Here, Marrati does work on the affection-image as an aspect subjectivity (Marrati 2008: 35); however, it remains linked primarily to perception and movement, which does hold with Deleuze's work and theory of the image, but does not respond our main question: why are images, in particular affection-images, deterritorialised?

On this note, there is Martin Schwab's key article *Escape from the Image: Deleuze's Image-ontology* (2000), where Deleuze's theory of the image is opposed to the more structuralist, narrative-driven view of images as signs; 'or, more precisely, signs that present their meanings in an iconic mode, traditionally understood as representation via similarity or resemblance' (Schwab 2000: 110). However, the link between affection-image and deterritorialisation is not touched upon. This also seems to be commonplace in Felicity Colman's extensive work on Deleuze and cinema, for example, in *Deleuze and Cinema: The Film Concepts* (2011). Although affect has its own entry and it precedes the entry on action withal, Deleuze's claim that affection-images hold a particular relationship with deterritorialisation seems to be ignored. Adding to this is Pierre Montobello's *Deleuze, philosophie et cinema* (2008), where affection is rarely even taken under consideration, and deterritorialisation is never referred to.

Finally, on the topic of deterritorialisation and affectivity, although not many texts focus on this relationship, there are Dipaola's *Interstices of the Thought and the Aesthetics: The Expression and Immanence of Cinema in Gilles Deleuze* (2016) and Mc Namara's *Philosophy of Space and Theory of Action in Gilles Deleuze* (2018). Additionally, Claire Colebrook's *Extinction, Deterritorialisation and End Times: Peak Deleuze* (2020) and Chloe Kolyri's *The Body Without Organs in Schizoanalysis* (2020).

## THE OPERATION OF THE CLOSE-UP: THE AFFECTION-IMAGE IS THE CLOSE-UP, AND THE CLOSE-UP IS THE FACE

I wish to start by revising Deleuze's maxim that *the close-up is nothing but the face*. To being with, the close-up is not the image of a face, nor that it is a specific moment within the montage of

movement-images where we have a closer look to one of them. It is rather the configuration of a stand-alone image that identifies with what *any* face is. And what does compose *any* face? According to Deleuze, any face is composed by two poles: on the one hand, there are the micro-movements taken in an intensive series; on the other, the reflecting and reflected qualitative unity. Deleuze calls the reflecting and reflected qualitative unity 'surface of faceification [*visagéification*]'; and the micro-movements that enter intensive series, 'traits of faciality [*visagéité*]'. What is a face, then? A face is the state of coalescence between a reflecting and reflected unity and an intensive series of [virtual] micro-movements. *The* face is the product of an operation of *faceification*, through which the reflecting and reflected unity grasps the traits of faciality. Thus, the identification between the close-up and the face is in terms of what composes both: a trait of faciality (the affection), and the contour under which the face becomes the reflecting and reflected unity (the affect or absolute change in intensity). Thenceforth, every time a thing is reduced to these two poles in such a way that they co-exist and refer to each other, you can say that there has been faceification of the thing, meaning that the close-up is the face, and therefore whenever the close-up focuses on anything, it is to *faceify* it.

Deleuze also defines the face as what feels and what wonders about/of [*pense à*]. Indeed, a face feels, desires, loves and hates; it passes through a series of affects that decreases and increases intensively. In contrast, a face thinks of something, it *wonders* about something, it admires something. To wonder is to jump from one affect onto another, to stroll around the various degrees of intensity my face can express. Hence, a face can be 'asked' mainly two things 'what are you thinking of?' and 'what is happening to you, what do you feel, what are you experiencing?' Needless to say that this is precisely what the spectator does to the framed *picture* that has been *faceified*. Whenever we encounter a closed-up image of anything, we are beckoned to ask what is being expressed, which affections are there transmitted.

So, when the face is subdued to what it experiences, its traits 'break free from the outline' and 'begin to work on their own account' (Deleuze 2013: 100), forming a series of successive (or even simultaneous) faces. This series tends toward a limit as it crosses a threshold, which is *the* face presented (or operated) by the close-up. This serialisation is what forces the face to pass from one quality onto another, after which a new quality emerges. In contrast, when the face wonders about, its features or traits remain grouped under the subjugation of thought. Hence, whilst the intensive face expresses a pure Potency, that is, the series that forces anything to pass from one quality onto another, the reflexive face expresses a pure Quality, or the 'something' common to various objects of different nature. In short, the close-up is the *facialisation* of an individual, as well as its immediate effacement.

## THE ABSOLUTE DETERRITORIALISATION AND THE EXPRESSION OF PURE AFFECT

To sum up, the close-up tears the image away from the spatio-temporal coordinates and calls forth the pure affect as the expressed. This absolute abstraction of the thing raises it to the state of *Entity*:

'The affect is the entity, that is Power or Quality. It is something expressed: the affect does not exist independently of something which expresses it, although it is completely distinct from it. What expresses it is a face, or a facial equivalent (a faceified object)' (Deleuze 2013: 108).

Indeed, given that the affect is an entity (potency and quality), an expressed that does not exist independently of what expresses it, so the affection-image is the potency or quality

considered in themselves. In other words, the affect is the Power or Quality inasmuch expressed and abstracted from the spatio-temporal coordinates that refer to a specific state of affairs, it is impersonal, 'indivisible and without parts' (Deleuze 2013: 146). Moreover, when actualised, quality becomes the 'quale' of an object, power becomes action or passion, affect becomes sensation, sentiment, emotion or even impulse [*pulsion*] in a person, and the face becomes the point where it all converges. In brief, all affectations are reterritorialised, at which point 'we are no longer in the domain of the affection-image, we have entered the domain of the action-image' (Deleuze 2013: 108). One must keep in mind that the affection-image leads Deleuze onto the discussion of the *any-space-whatever* and the *breath-space*, where the affects become actual and the actions individualise, given that the individuals disintegrate in them, losing their individuality after a process of absorption and interaction with its atmosphere. There is a path from affect to action, or rather from a forceful suspension of movement towards the reinstituting action-image, in which individuality and subjective agency are restored. So, purporting that the close-up operates an absolute abstraction of the thing from its environment – which could be considered as the image – allows Deleuze to reintroduce the necessary voiding or flight from the actual that allows the actualisation of the virtual, or simply becoming.

Therefore, for the thing to become a face, it must first be abstracted. By doing so, the captured thing expresses a different degree of intensity, which lies outside the spatio-temporal coordinates, or the sensorimotor schema, that appertained it. This is because the affect is independent of any determined space-time; but it is still created in a history that produces it as expressed and the expression of a space or a time. Furthermore, 'if it is true that the cinematic image is always deterritorialized, there is therefore a very special deterritorialization which is specific to the affection-image' (Deleuze 2013: 100). Essentially, faceification is the subtraction of the object from all spatio-temporal coordinates, which forces an absolute change in, and of, the thing.

But wait a second, where was it ever stated that the cinematic image is always deterritorialized? After discussing the three Bergsonian theses on movement in *Movement-Image*, Deleuze claims that the world is an all-encompassing, closed set of moving images that relates to, but does not identify with, the 'whole', or open system of images and its durations. This means that, on the one hand, there are closed systems, or determinate sets of parts, which are made possible by the deployment of a space that strictly organises and subdivides matter. On the other hand, there is the whole, which endures in an open, *smooth* space, for it is the amalgamation of things in duration, as it does not stop changing. This makes up for the two aspects of movement: what happens between objects and its parts, and what expresses the duration or the whole.

Now, the first level of this closed set of images analysed by Deleuze is the spatiality of the movement-image; or rather how its objects behave in a *striated* space. In cinema, this is called framing: the constitution of an artificially closed system of images. To frame something is to choose the shot that amalgamates a series of objects. Then, there is a whole, which is the cinematic continuation, or the constant duration of the various succeeding shots. Finally, there is the framed, closed system of moving images. Consequently, the movement-image is the image where movement expresses duration, or change within the whole; and the shot is a moving cut of duration that relates a series of objects. In essence, the movement-image is the image of translation, where determined objects relate to the whole, and the whole to the objects by which it is divided. Hence, translation is a change, or affectation, of the whole

within a fixed spatio-temporal frame. It is in accordance with this that 'the frame ensures a deterritorialisation of the image' (Deleuze 2013: 18).

The reason for such claim is that the frame, which essentially structures and actualises any virtual film-image, constitutes the inside and the outside of the set. If the image, or described object is within frame, it forms part of the set, its duration becomes fixed, since the images are assembled within the framed duration, their significance is constrained by the shot. This is to translate. What happens if the image is outside the frame? It becomes expressive, it leaves the category of the Real, of the actual, the existent: the individuated. Once 'closed-up', the thing is simply felt, it is evocative of a new experience, only attainable once the qualities and potencies are considered in themselves, disregarding their actuality. In essence, the abstract quality of a faceified image pertains the realm of the Possible. The affection-image, constituted once a thing is facialised, or deterritorialised, gives a proper consistency to the possible, because it expresses the possible without actualising it:

'The close-up has merely pushed the face to those regions where the principle of individuation ceases to hold sway. They are not identical because they resemble each other, but because they have lost individuation no less than socialisation and communication. This is the operation of the close-up. The close-up does not divide one individual, any more than it reunites two: it suspends individuation' (Deleuze 2013: 111).

Therefore, something is individuated when its power to affect and be affected are determined, and so every individuated body is definable based on the set of material elements it captures under relations of movement and the set of affectations is capable of. What would it mean that individuation is suspended? Briefly, for Deleuze the individual is the result of a process that presupposes a zone of indiscernibility, an immanent plane where all the involved intensities are exchanged. Thus, for the individual to express an affect, it must refer to this immanent plane and be able to capture other intensities. Hence, any individual, in order to become expressive of affectation, must halt becoming, it must stop being framed. Essentially, because individuation is the communication of disparate elements that are in an intense disequilibrium; differences are articulated in an intensive spatium that transposes the double articulation of stratification and destratification movements. In shorthand, the first articulation of the individual concerns content, namely, the stratified form of territorialised matter, and the second articulation refers to expression, which overflows the significant contents, 'either to prefigure the rigid forms where they will be forged, or to make them flee through a line of flight or transformation' (Deleuze, Guattari 2002: 123).

In other words, an individual is expressive only insofar as it is outside the territory that subjects it to a strict signification – to represent a content. Deterritorialised, the individual 'penetrates an unlimited field of immanence that causes the segments to merge' (Deleuze, Guattari 2002: 124) in a new expressive combination of affects. For Deleuze and Guattari, this field has a name: the Body without Organs, where affects circulate as pure, explosive Desire as it is the intensive matrix of all individuality. The Body without Organs is, in fact, the unformed, unorganised, non-stratified body where pure intensities, free pre-physical and pre-vital singularities circulate. Such intensities are, for example, the pure affects, which are expressed by the affection-image, which establishes intensive connections, not only deterritorialising the presented individual, but also the individual it encounters. So, what does it mean then that the frame ensures the deterritorialisation of the image? Well, that it encloses, or striates, the space within which images are signifying and subjective. The affection-image

is the displacement of the individual's territory, or rhythm, it is the moment where the thing becomes expressive and no longer translates. Through the affection-image, pure Entities are expressed, pure Powers and pure Qualities, which, together, are the affect.

Precisely, the close-up is the image of a face that has undone its triple aspect, meaning it has deterritorialised: its appearance of individuation that distinguishes or characterises it from other individuals; its appearance of socialisation that manifests its social role; and its appearance of communication has all been erased. An individual manifests as an individuated thing, as part of a social machine or *socius*, and finally, as a communicator of meanings through its reterritorialised face. In contrast, a deterritorialised face is the *facialised thing*, where a pure affect is being expressed. The pure affect is a cry that escapes signification, and it is for this reason that the individual must deterritorialise, no longer signifying but expressing the pure affect.

### THE AFFECTION-IMAGE IN POLITICS: THE RETERRITORIALISED AFFECT AS REPRESENTED BY AN INDIVIDUAL

As of late, social media has played a key role in being the main outlet used by political subjectivities to carry their message and interests across and reach their potential electorate. However, when a political subjectivity declares to be representative of a certain affect through a 'closed-up' image (for example, a representative of a political party appears speaking straight to the camera in the form of a *selfie*), instead of being themselves deterritorialised, they are reterritorialising the proclaimed affect. Moreover, this type of messages tends to sit on a negative affect or affectation – e.g. disgruntlement, dissatisfaction, or even terror. The affect, instead of being expressed, is used for the contraption of a false image, namely the representation of an affectation, and not its expression. This way, the Entity is territorialised through a specific political message: 'I know you feel x, I feel that too; hence, within this political milieu, I am who represents that affection, I am the fixating contour of your affectation: elect me, so I can represent your value.' In a way, what it may firstly seem as a deterritorialising act is indeed quite the opposite. It is not that the politician is becoming deterritorialised, it is not that they are expressing any form of pure Entity, on the contrary, they are reclaiming the affect, they are axiomatising it, and, by proxy, territorialising all collective subjectivities that are linked to that affectation. If it really were a deterritorialisation, then the politicians themselves would not matter at all, there would be no use in reclaiming the affect, or stating who they are, and which political values they represent. Affects are impersonal, intensive becomings that pass through the Body without Organs.

The vectors of subjectification do not necessarily pass through the individual, which is rather the conclusion of a specific process that involves human groups, socio-economic ensembles, data-processing machines and so on. This interiority, or *sui-referentiality* of the subject is established at the crossroads of multiple components, as subjectivity plies the various planes of existence that relate to its machinic assemblage. In other words, affect sticks to subjectivity, it adjoins the enunciator as well as the recipient by dissolving the enunciative dichotomy of locutor-auditor. In a way, the affect bypasses all form of structured individuality namely, territorialised subjectivity and links itself to the free-form of collective assemblages, or universal subjectivities. These are specific assemblages of enunciation that make any subjectivity take up a body, both as a given and expressive process. A way in which this is done, in which this intensity becomes bodily, organic, is through discourse. Any form of discursive

chain annuls the opposition between content and expression, because it suppresses expression's overflowing nature by structuring it and making it an integral part of the linguistic territory politics feed from.

In brief, our affects are powerful because they flee from the political structures. This makes them dangerous, for they are disorganised and a threat to the crumbling of the various strata that politics, and political subjectivities have formed. In a way, this new type of messages that have lately risen are a structural effort to suppress and control affects. This is not an entirely negative, or plain wrong practice. The territorial forces will always attempt to minimise the power of affects by axiomatising, by capitalising them. We must respond to it, however, and do not let our power pine away to the control of disciplinary axiomatisation. It is not that the politicians are lying, it is rather that they are trying to seize the deterritorialising flight of our affections, which is the most viable threat to their majoritarian power. The identification between facialisation and deterritorialisation is really useful here, because it allows the pondering of what actions are there to take against this practice. How can we act in view of our affectations? Is there any way to reclaim these affects? I do not have the answer to it, but I believe this is a very interesting path to trailblaze. Because it allows to recognise that the political forces that structure our territory can also express themselves through affection-images without leaning into a specific discursive message, for example, via nefarious fascist/populists propagandistic outbursts.

The great reveal of acknowledging the deterritorialised condition of the film-image is that media becomes the crucible for affections to be expressed and collective forms of enunciation to take place. This is the reason why there has been such a desperate action upon social media, forcing algorithmic behaviour on its users; because reterritorialising or axiomatising forms of enunciation are to be avoided. As Guattari points out in *The Three Ecologies*, all forms of collective enunciations, e.g. machinic cartographies, imply a logic different from the ordinary political territorialised discourse, where everything is grided by a specific political force. So, in order to retain the power of our free-roaming affectivity, we should avoid the relative reterritorialisation of signification by delving into an intensive logic, or logic of intensities:

'While the logic of discursive sets endeavours to completely delimit its objects, the logic of intensities, or eco-logic, is concerned only with the movement and intensity of evolutive processes. Process, which I oppose here to system or to structure, strives to capture existence in the very act of its constitution, definition and deterritorialization' (Guattari 2008: 30).

There are always two terms that deterritorialise, and each of the terms reterritorialises on the other. One of the elements, or terms, itself deterritorialised, serves as a new territoriality for another, which has lost its territoriality as well. Consequently, the *least* deterritorialised reterritorialises on the *most* deterritorialised, meaning there is a systemic verticality that runs through territorialisation: the relative deterritorialisation (transcodification) reterritorialises the absolute deterritorialisation (overcodification). The deterritorialisation of the head in a face, for example, is both absolute and negative [or relative], as it passes from one political structure (or *stratum*) to another: from the stratum of the organism to those of significance and subjectification. As examined above, even a use-object may be facialised, not because it resembles a face, but rather because it connects to the abstract machine of facialisation. Lastly, the face is individualised and signifying, it is inscribed in an overall grid by the abstract machine; on the other hand, it flees this control, it becomes expressive.

The faciality machine is then the condition of possibility of the signifier and the subject, of the representative power of a face translatability of any kind requires a single substance of expression. The close-up performs the facialisation of the entire body and all its surroundings and objects, hence, there is no significance without a despotic assemblage of power that acts through signifiers upon souls and subjects. Additionally, every subjectivity contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialised, organised, signified, and so forth; at the same time, however, it is composed by lines of deterritorialisation through which it constantly flees as well as reterritorialises:

'You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reen-counter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject – anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions' (Guattari 2008: 9).

So, each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialisation of one term and the re-territorialisation of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialisation ever further. So, the response to these *agro* tactics is not at the ballot box, but rather before such instance even actualises. It is not to avoid being re-territorialised, but rather rhythmically deterritorialise this axiomatisation, flee from the control of the affections and force the majorities to stutter, to become frail in their convictions and codifications. In the end, it all comes to avoiding confusing knowledge with information, avoiding the new grid the major powers attempt to structure you with, and be conscious that no politician will ever properly address your affects, for any political discourse is mounted upon the axiomatised structure of power. There is a fine line to tread on here, which consists in non-systematically, but rhythmically and intensively revolt against these practices: never to leave affections in free roam so they can be captured by the molar structures. Instead, affections must be explored intensively enough so that heterogeneity prevails, in lieu of the homogeneous territory conformed by the political forces.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, political subjectivities have decided to seize the free roaming, deterritorialising and revolutionary affections that put the political majorities (and their power) at risk. To do so, they engage in a peculiar process of reterritorialisation. As it was established, affections are expressed through the disorganisation and complete effacement of the individual via the configuration of a close-up. Hence, instead of expressing pure, deterritorialised affects, politicians capture and structure these emotions into closed images – particularly through techniques like the close-up selfie – to fixate voters' affective states within a controlled political framework. The rhetoric involved does not liberate affect but capitalises on it, transforming collective emotions into structured political messages.

Therefore, affect is inherently disruptive to political structures, as it operates outside discursive codifications and structured subjectivities. Yet, political forces work to suppress and channel these disruptive energies through axiomatisation, incorporating them into their own territorialised structures. Social media, as a battleground of enunciation, has become the target of algorithmic control, designed to curb the expression of free-roaming affectivity. So, instead of fully submitting to the structured political grid or escaping into chaotic deterritorialisation, the response must be a rhythmic and intensive form of resistance – continuously unsettling dominant codifications without allowing affect to be entirely reabsorbed into



existing political frameworks. The challenge lies in maintaining a space for a heterogeneous affective expression while resisting both a systemic reterritorialisation and the dissolution into an unstructured chaos.

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## Suspenduotas individas: priartinimas kaip deteritorializacija ir politinis kontrolės prietaisas

### Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama afektyvumo, individualumo ir teritorijos sąveika per Gillesio Deleuzėo įvaidžio filosofiją. Taikoma filosofinė konceptuali analizė, pagrįsta G. Deleuzėo kino teorija. Metodas yra kokybinis ir interpretacinis, susitelkiama prie konceptualaus plėtojimo, teorinės sintezės ir filosofinės kritikos vietoj empirinio tyrimo. Teigiama, kad stambiu planu priartinant individualizuojama ir išreiškiamas grynas afektas, drauge deteritorializuojant subjektą. Tačiau šiuolaikinėje žiniasklaidoje šis potencialas yra reteritorializuojamas per politinius pranešimus, kuriuose naudojami stambių planų vaizdai, veikiantys ideologinėse sistemose. Užuoat išreiškę afektą, politiniai veikėjai jį reprezentuoja neutralizuodami jo žlugdančią galią.

**Raktažodžiai:** Gillesis Deleuzėas, Félixas Guattari, įvaidis, politika, afektai