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Accelerating Academia

The Changing Structure of Academic Time

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ACCELERATING ACADEMIA: THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF ACADEMIC TIME

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To Luděk, Milena and Julie

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Academics today face a burgeoning list of charges: they must cultivate a metric mindset, adopt performance and productivity discipline, publish in the right journals with the right publishers, get cited and learn to exist and thrive in regimes of audit, surveillance, ‘excellence’, ‘accountability’ and business-driven administration structures, often justified by neoliberal assumptions. Turbulent changes with manifold, often ‘toxic’ implications, are everywhere in academia and the responsibilities which define intellectual and academic life (scholarly as well as administrative duties, meetings, conferences, deadlines) accumulate incessantly. Yet one thing *does not* change: the time they have at their disposal for pursuing such activities. Because of this, they compress their time frames and horizons, accelerate, push ahead, rush, skim, and, as a result, often become distracted, frustrated, burnt-out. The world of publishing is a litmus test for such shifts. As recently presented evidence indicates, scholars live in a world of steadily growing academic and scientific production.¹ Canons evolve quickly, paradigms shift rapidly, disciplinary fields expand excessively, journals, articles and books abound, and academic texts proliferate exponentially. The publications that academics produce might, after a brief shelf life, be cast into programmatic obsolescence.

Through the process of writing this book and developing an analytical awareness of contemporary academia I was not exempted from such pressures and was able to experience them in two different settings: the UK and the Czech Republic. The shifting conditions of academic life, self-observations and endless reflections were integral to a junior critical social scientific mind-in-the-making. This book as such, no apologies or warnings intended, may be symptomatic of the times and places in which it was produced and of the specific time-binding circumstances that, however resisted, will have inevitably shaped it and myself. It might simply bear witness to a historical conjuncture of dramatic shifts in academia, and perhaps there are good reasons to read this book as such.

I would like to express my gratitude to Gregor McLennan and Susan Robertson. Gregor’s combination of sharp and uncompromising criticism, continuous encouragement, and thoroughgoing engagement with my work made this book possible. I am very appreciative of his patience, advice and time. Among many other things, Gregor taught me the importance of pacing – ‘speeding-up’ and ‘slowing down’ – in

developing a scholarly argument. It has been an honour to work with him. Susan provided crucial and thoughtful input; her breathtakingly up-to-date knowledge of globalizing academia, mingled with her generosity and personal support, stand behind some of the directions my intellectual development has taken. I also want to thank Tom Osborne for his original and provocative ideas, which have significantly influenced my thinking and triggered the overall self-reflection of what it means to be an academic. I would like to acknowledge John Holmwood's advice and Dick Pels's insights and critique of various parts of the book. Special thanks goes to my dear friends Rosa Vasilaki and Lorenzo Silvaggi who have continuously inspired me and provided valuable suggestions in various stages of writing and thinking about acceleration and academia. Many thanks also go to the interview participants and Al Charitable Trust who supported some of the fieldwork conducted. Thanks also go to Maria Elisa Balen, Jan Balon, Pavel Baran, Douglas Dix, Tomáš Dvořák, Adolf Filáček, Ben Grove-White, Alena Grüter, Tom Hayes, Miluše Juříčková, Milan Kružík, Costas Mimis, Laura Morosanu, Thomas Muhr, Lukáš Paleček, Mark Anthony Pearce, Benoît Pelopidas, Mariagrazia Proietto, Horia Tarnovanu and Dan Whillis, for their help and inspiration, intellectual or otherwise. I thank Robert Kiene, Adale Robertson, Xing Su and Mitchell Young who proofread and edited the chapters. For editorial advice, I am grateful to Judith Allan and Philippa Grand from Palgrave, and to Richard Freeman and Katherine Smith, the series editors of Palgrave Studies in Science, Knowledge and Policy.

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An earlier and different version of Chapter 5 and parts of the conclusion first appeared as 'Speed Kills, Speed Thrills: Constraining and Enabling Acceleration in Academic Work-Life'. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 2014, 13(3): 295–314, DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2014.959895, reused with permission of Taylor & Francis.

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An earlier and different version of Chapter 7 first appeared as 'Sociology's Rhythms: Temporal Dimensions of Knowledge Production'. *Teorie vědy/Theory of Science* XXXV, 2013(4): 499–524, reused with permission.

Some portions of the book have previously been published in slightly different form as 'Academic Life in the Fast Lane: The Experience of Time and Speed in British Academia'. *Time & Society* 2015, 24(1): 71–95, DOI: 10.1177/0961463X13517537, reused with permission of Sage.

Introduction: The Pulse of Modern Academia

The Thomson Reuters Web of Science database (which is by no means exhaustive of the entire global academic output) lists more than 3,000 social science journals. The journals classified as economics alone contained approximately 20,000 articles last year. This implies that one new journal article on economics is published every 25 minutes – even on Christmas Day. This iceberg-like immensity of the modern social sciences means that it is going to be difficult to say anything coherent and truly general across them. Nobody walking the planet has read more than 1 per cent of their published output. Most of us have not read 0.1 per cent. (Goodall and Oswald 2014)

[Peter Higgs] ... had little enthusiasm for the changes that had transformed academia by the time he retired in 1996. 'Today, I wouldn't get an academic job. It's as simple as that. I don't think I would be regarded as productive enough.' His published papers can be counted on two hands, whereas academics now are expected to churn out several a year, and when I ask if he feels this has come at the cost of space for intellectual thought, he says: 'I was certainly uncomfortable with it. After I retired, it was quite a long time before I went back to my department. I thought I was well out of it. It wasn't my way of doing things any more. It's difficult to imagine how I would ever have enough peace and quiet in the present sort of climate to do what I did in 1964.' (Aitkenhead 2013)¹

As I am writing this article, I should be writing something else: an email to an editor, an email to an author, a letter of recommendation, notes for tomorrow's classes, comments on students' papers, comments on manuscripts, an abstract for an upcoming conference, notes for one of the books I'm working on. I cannot remember the last time I ended a day having crossed everything off my to-do list. (Nel 2014)

Critical literature inquiring into the transformation of academia increasingly features reflections and observations indicating how diverse academic operations, processes, experiences and activities intensify. Diagnosing the state of contemporary British academia,² which this book is largely preoccupied with, Thomas Docherty warns that 'structural impatience' and the 'need for speed [in academia] kills learning and crushes the reason' (2013).³ In his book *For the University*, Docherty further stresses that academics 'now live in a culture that has no time for professional experience or knowledge ... [they] live in a kind of foreshortening of time itself ... [and as a result] give no time for learning or teaching or thinking' (2011: 144). Similarly, reflecting on their book-length treatment of the changes of the Australian university, Simon Marginson and Mark Considine note: 'What was often surprising to us, during the course of the case studies underpinning this book, was the speed and the extent of the changes now taking place' (2000: 2). Or, reflecting on the 'hurried and harried' American academia, Robert Bullough Jr noted how academics now need to absorb and manage unprecedented information overload, abounding numbers of publications and fleeting attention spans of their students, which results in a loss of integrity and control over one's life (2014: 20–22). He adds that paradoxically 'speed and fast thinking actually undermine individual and institutional efficiency' (2014: 22). Some writers go even a step further – not only by assessing the frenetic pace of the contemporary world, but also by declaring that classical academic disciplines assume a specific temporal task associated with knowledge production. In this respect, the French philosopher Alain Badiou reclaims the need to slowdown and warns against the dangers that omnipresent acceleration possesses for philosophy:

The singular and irreducible role of philosophy is to establish a fixed point within discourse, a point of interruption, a point of discontinuity, an unconditional point. Our world is marked by its speed: the

speed of historical change; the speed of technical change; the speed of communications; of transmissions; and even the speed with which human beings establish connections with one another. This speed exposes us to the danger of a very great incoherency. It is because things, images and relations circulate so quickly that we do not even have the time to measure the extent of this incoherency. Speed is the mask of inconsistency. Philosophy must propose a retardation process. It must construct a time for thought, which, in the face of the injunction to speed, will constitute a time of its own. I consider this a singularity of philosophy; that is thinking leisurely, because today revolt requires leisureliness and not speed. This thinking, slow and consequently rebellious, is alone capable of establishing the fixed point, whatever it may be, whatever its name may be, which we need in order to sustain the desire of philosophy. (2005: 38)

These more or less cursory observations refer to an important temporal dimension of contemporary academia and its attendant practices. This book, rather than taking these observations at face value, seeks to explore questions around the increasing pace of human and social life, speed of institutional change and different forms of cultural speed in the contemporary world and the ways in which they relate to academia.

Though evidence exists to suggest the tempo of academic life is speeding up, which may have negative consequences for professional aspirations, self-management of time and well-being (Chandler et al. 2002; Menzies and Newson 2007; Gill 2009), the speed of change and apparently larger forces of speed that Marginson and Considine and Badiou respectively refer to remain relatively unexplored. I understand these observations as an invitation for further inquiry because they appear to grasp only *one* of the possible aspects of the problem. Apart from the issues of time-pressure, workload and stress associated with the changing nature of the academic profession, the temporal aspects – and structural and cultural dimensions of acceleration in particular – have appeared only sporadically in the abounding critical analyses of contemporary academia (for systematic treatments of acceleration in and of academia see mainly Pels 2003; Gibbs et al. 2015). On other rare occasions when acceleration in and of academia is discussed and investigated, it is often done in pre-emptively pessimistic terms.

In fact, the destabilizing and even dangerous social and human consequences of acceleration tend to – very often, however, justifiably and convincingly – preoccupy and monopolize the emerging academic literature on this topic (e.g. Hassan 2012; Taylor 2014). This ethical

dimension in most of the literature means that it consequently considers the ethos of slowness, implicitly or otherwise, as a desirable and often redemptive (Agger 2004; Carp 2012) or progressive (Harvey 2014: 294) antipode. The argument that this book will develop challenges such causal readings. It will revisit the temporal modes of the ordering of academia by investigating the culture and experience of time and speed in contemporary academic life. The analysis will employ accounts dealing with acceleration in critical (Rosa 2013), salutary (Duffy 2009) and ambiguous (Connolly 2002; Tomlinson 2007a) terms. However, equally importantly, it must be stressed that the argument advanced in this book recognizes and strongly acknowledges the existing scholarship on the topic that is predominantly critical – particularly as it is associated with a critique of the neoliberalization of academia – and thereby is *not* in any way an apologetic account of acceleration. Nor is it justifying the current condition of academia – far from it. This book should not, however, be read as an account promoting slowness as a crucial and organizing principle underpinning existing critiques of contemporary academia (for such accounts see e.g. Hartman and Darab 2012; Hunsinger 2013; Berg and Seeber 2013; Martell 2014; Müller 2014; Mountz et al. 2015). Even though the book is largely sympathetic to and in many ways supportive of such arguments, it also seeks to identify and analyse specific forms, manifestations and dimensions of various forms of accelerations in academia, before it considers the issue of slowness.

There is a very intimate connection between the ‘cultured’ diagnostically-oriented assessments of various forms of acceleration (as Badiou’s) and the need for slowness which follows from them. It has, for example, become intellectually fashionable to criticize acceleration and embrace slowdown as if these deeply relational temporal modalities determine and assume a fixed ethical dimension. In November 2009, the *London Review of Books* (LRB) published a promotion of books which introduced and advanced the theme of slowdown (see Appendix 3). It was conceived as a micro book review that was intended to promote twelve works about slowdown that readers might want to buy in the magazine’s bookstore. The assumption of the editors of the LRB and of the authors of the books introduced is identical: the world we live in is too fast and there is a desperate need for slowdown. Personally and collectively, ad hoc and systematically, modern agents are advised to slow down and find refuge from a busy and frenetic tempo and hustle, in idleness and indolence, by taking their time, by taking it easy. The LRB is not alone in this agenda. The contemporary social mood of having no time, of ‘runaway world’, drive the burgeoning Slow Movement which

in its various forms reclaims convivial events, collaborative projects, sense of place, aesthetic appreciation, regard for health and the body, improvement in the quality of lived experience, ecological integrity and local economies (Carp 2012: 104). Attractive indeed.

A closer look at the time-span of the books' publication dates in the LRB's review reveals another important indication. The intellectual and literary compulsion to challenge and resist the mood of an accelerating world is not a unique characteristic of the rhythms of the 21st century's techno-savvy social life as the mushrooming slow initiatives try to evoke. Ryan A. Vieira examined historical accounts that express similar worries and dissatisfaction about an accelerating world in turn-of-the-century Britain. He found that 'numerous British historians have noted the prominent position of acceleration in the late-Victorian and Edwardian imagination' (2011: 373). Similarly, Walter Benjamin (1997) famously noted that mid-19th-century Parisian *flâneurs* protested against increasing 'industriousness' by taking turtles – that set a slow pace for them – for a walk in the arcades. In this vein, Hans-Georg Brose (2004: 8), mediates on a key problem that incidentally adds onto Vieira's observation and Benjamin's anecdotal comment: Is the perception of acceleration in our contemporary society a recurrent issue, raised preferably at the turns of centuries or has acceleration become an independent dimension of social evolution? The investigation of acceleration in and of contemporary academia embarked upon in the following pages maintains that perception of and discourse about acceleration, as well as acceleration being a unique modern phenomenon, are not necessarily polarized or reducible to either/or conundrums and attitudes. It might well be the case that these two realms – discursive and evolutionary – are deeply intertwined; and it also might well be the case that opposing temporal modalities of speed and slowness, stability and change, acceleration and rigidity are related and find their diverse yet unifying expression in the cultural experience of modernity.

That we inhabit a dynamic, volatile, restless world cannot be reduced to a mere impression, mood-driven mindset and assumptions of folk wisdom. Change, motion, energy are integral to what Marshall Berman called the 'maelstrom of modern life':

[fed by] great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class

struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly, powerful nation states, bureaucracy structured and operated, constantly striving to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist market. (1982: 16)

Modernity is indeed a multifaceted, deeply contested and ambiguous process; it is not a monolith, but a subtle and dialectical experience; it is a qualitative, not a chronological category (Osborne 1992). In Berman's apt diagnosis, we can note that motion, dynamics and acceleration are defining features of the modern experience. There are also indications in Berman's quote that point to the question of what sort of role science, research and education, and by extension their institutional habitat, modern academia, have played in these dynamic processes. Many important scholars have recognized that academia is a bastion of modernity (Readings 1996; Delanty 2001), a site of reason, enlightenment and progress. Next to knowledge, creation and higher learning, academia has been central to social reproduction and cultural and scientific inventiveness. At the same time, through the generation of political elites and the economic workforce, academia has also been a key social institution for the reproduction of liberal democracies and capital accumulation, respectively.

In temporal terms, modern academia itself appears to be both subject and object of modernity, entangled in the processes Berman unfolds. Historically, it has been subjected to various external societal currents and has had to react and reinvent itself in relation to larger societal developments. In the latter sense, as an object, modern academia has also played an active and indispensable role in social evolution. Gradually, it has become an institutionalized social space accommodating men and women with capacities, visions, intentions and utopias. These men and women seek to initiate new ways of looking at the world, experiment, intervene, advance knowledge and generate ideas which aim to change social and natural environments, make discoveries that generate wealth, promote principles of human betterment. In other words, individuals (academics, scholars) and institutions (academies)

have not merely been 'plugged in' to modernity; they are also capable of responding to, judging on and acting in the modern and changing world they inhabit.

Modern academia thus is a force in its own right. Notwithstanding the socio-cultural and political-economic turbulence of the 20th century and the associated changes of academia, some generalizations can be made about temporality and its modern status. Modern academia is connected to, but also separate from, the wide social formations in which it is located. Different types of modern academies are oriented to different kinds of socio-cultural and political circuits and economies, some of them local, other regional or more global. Simultaneously, they are also indeed characterized by a commitment to (re)production, circulation and transmission of knowledge. Prevailing assumptions – those which Docherty and Badiou allude to – tell us that modern academia has its own temporal orderings, its own time, which affects how the institutional life of the university is organized and experienced (Pels 2003). In this sense, it might be said that modern academia has historically assumed two temporal modalities. It has been an institutionalized space struggling to secure time for thought, consideration and the slower, time-consuming and lengthy scholarly and scientific conduct deliberately detached from the faster pace of capitalist production, media, politics and their ideological apparatuses; at the same time, it has also been a symbol and an instrument of modern progress, where individual academics and scientists have formed disciplinary associations and alliances, and advocated (to various degrees, and in diverse incarnations) socio-political, economic, scientific and cultural change.

Analytical Strategy

In a general sense, Berman's unrivalled account might be instructive for the overall framing of this account's investigation of acceleration in modern academia in another cognate sense. Berman identifies an enigmatic vital force intrinsic to modernity that differentiates it from its ancestors, a force that generates a richness and dynamism, an impulse and desire for development, for a better future and progress. It is difficult to detach modern academia from these forces as it has been a vanguard in pursuing this ethos. At the same time, social and human developments achieved and initiated by these energies, such as the enormous scientific and human progress of the last one hundred and fifty years, often turn out to extract unwanted human costs (Berman 1982: 39–40). The ambivalence Berman ascribes to

the problem of development might also be attributed to modernity's experiential characteristic and defining features – including, as we shall see in Chapter 1, the phenomenon of acceleration (Eriksen 2001; Rosa 2003). In Berman's spirit, we will also see that next to the consequential human and social costs of acceleration (such as the time-pressure that generates pleading for slowdown) there are many temptations and promises related to the modern idea of the liberating and rational forces of acceleration. On the one hand acceleration may assist us, please and ease us, and bear much of human betterment (in Berman's sense – through science, knowledge, education, progress); yet on the other hand, it can and does return as a disenchanting offshoot, an unwanted or unintended social experience, as a 'tragedy', as a modern predicament. As Peter Wagner also notes, many critics of modernity often tend to foreground its pathologies and ills, and decry the loss of moral orientations that accompanies modernization (1994: xii). In terms of acceleration, such one-dimensional perspectives, however, underestimate the subtle difference between the liberating/convenient features of acceleration and oppressive/involuntary speed-up.

This book will work through several themes associated with the temporal structure of academia and will examine diverse sites of analysis and forms of data.⁴ It aims to unfold how the temporal features and tensions attributable to the 'pulse of modernity' identified above are experienced and manifest themselves in the contemporary university. To this end, the book will show how acceleration is not only a modern predicament, but also the intrinsic feature of modern cultural imagination, and that it can be seen as enhancing and energizing experience. It focuses on acceleration as a culturally significant phenomenon – especially in its discursive embodiments and lived expressions. It does so by analytically and empirically interrogating diverse forms of acceleration; by critically surveying existing sociological theories of acceleration and by engaging with provocations, à la Badiou's quotation above, that deserve to be acknowledged and seriously addressed rather than reproduced and fetishized. Specifically the book explores four terrains:

1. the temporal underpinnings of contemporary higher education policy discourse;
2. the subjective experience of time and acceleration in the academic life-world;
3. a university site (business accelerator) that defines itself as 'fast'; and
4. the rhythms of a 'slow' academic discipline (sociology).

Chapter 1 will thematize the topic of acceleration. Only recently have prominent contemporary social theorists and philosophers demonstrated a preoccupation with these ideas, despite the fact that both imaginary and material acceleration – and related dissatisfactions – are relatively stable and important aspects of modern experience. The core perspectives and developments in this emerging debate will be discussed. As we will see, negative preoccupation *and* positive fascination with specific forms of acceleration are intrinsic to modernity and this book takes this nuanced view as a departure point. This approach, however, appears to be in contention with dominant existing theoretical formulations. The opening chapter thus aims to problematize the debate concerned with the social experience of acceleration by emphasizing the contradictory valence of modern temporal experience.

Many authors recognize that speed and acceleration are tied to the political economy of capitalism (e.g. Marx 1973; Postone 1993; Harvey 2006). Chapter 2 addresses select axiomatic and reproductive principles of the capitalist economy and develops a conceptual apparatus by highlighting aspects associated with structural changes in 20th-century capitalism. The second part of the chapter will examine the issue of temporal asymmetry, which has been gaining prominence in social scientific accounts that explore temporal tensions between different societal fields and systems, and also within capitalist logic itself. This problem is relevant for subsequent chapters in which the issue of temporal asymmetry will be further elucidated in relation to academia. Chapter 3 situates higher education in the trajectory of particular shifts and dynamics in the nature of the political economy of capitalism. It looks at the post-WWII intellectual preoccupation with the idea of the knowledge economy by deploying recent concepts from the sociology of knowledge and intellectuals. This analysis provides context for Chapter 4, which seeks to examine specific ‘talks’ that aim to accelerate the desirable development of academia towards a more business-oriented model. In particular, it analyses performativity of rhetorical clusters by looking at temporal imperatives and assumptions that aim to reinvent contemporary academia according to business-oriented rationality. At the same time it discusses the conflictive nature of these discourses as expressed by members of the academic body.

Chapter 5 moves on to the experiential dimension of acceleration. It presents and analyses evidence about the actual temporal experience in academic life and offers an account of acceleration typologies where each represents a distinct experiential modality. It argues that alongside the anticipated resentment expressed by academics, there

is, under specific circumstances, a scope – however thin – for positive appreciations of acceleration too. Subsequently, Chapter 6 looks at very specific actors within academia – ‘fast sites’ – whose task is to accelerate knowledge production and its trajectories into scalable and mostly commercially viable products or services. Again, it focuses on the temporality of the cultural dimension of the business ideology and the tensions it generates. It also argues that some explicit speed metaphors appear to be intrinsic to the ‘re-missioning agenda’ of contemporary academia. In contrast, Chapter 7 offers an account examining the temporal rhythms of sociology, i.e. a ‘slow(er)’ academic site. It argues that new developments associated with ‘sociology 2.0’ represent important and promising re-invigorations for contemporary sociology. Yet, it also maintains that specific ‘slower’ modes of sociological tasks need to be maintained. Nonetheless, this reproductive spectrum of speed may be in jeopardy due to a different type of involuntary need for speed associated with new institutional rituals and audit culture. Finally, the conclusion addresses the question of whether heralding slowdown would be a viable political and resistance strategy against negative acceleration.

1

Thematizing Acceleration

Is acceleration an unprecedented and defining feature of modernity? Or only of late modernity? Is it a sole effect of modern capitalism? Do we live in an ever-accelerating world? If so, what are the social, cultural, psychological, political and ethical implications? In the last two decades a lively debate has emerged around social acceleration as an object of systematic social scientific enquiry and these questions have preoccupied a number of contemporary commentators. Particular attention has been devoted to the investigation in three major and intertwined areas associated with this theme: (1) the implications of the individual and social experience of 'living in a fast-changing world'; (2) the temporal structures of modernity and associated temporal politics; and (3) the cultural significance of acceleration. This chapter surveys the existing acceleration scholarship and sets the general framework for subsequent analysis.

Against the background of the overview provided, the chapter argues two things. First, classical and modern sociological canons and appraisals of the problem in pop-science and 'avant-garde' literature have predetermined the discursive trajectory of the majority of contemporary social scientific treatises on acceleration. Dominant accounts assess acceleration as an *a priori* negative phenomenon; acceleration, in most existing inquiries, is often rightfully understood as a modern predicament. Hartmut Rosa's (2013) theory of social acceleration and his re-energized version of the Frankfurt School's grounded critical theory can be considered the climax of this trajectory. His understanding and epistemological anchoring, however, neglects the gains, conveniences and opportunities associated with acceleration. Thus, and second, to understand acceleration as a multifaceted social phenomenon, more culturally oriented analyses that problematize the dominant discourse

are discussed. In sum, the aim of the chapter is both to introduce the relevant literature that frames and animates subsequent analytical tropes of the book, and to highlight that acceleration is by default an ambivalent social occurrence and experience.

Acceleration as a sociological theme

Canonical theorists of modernity and those of late modernity have already touched on the problem of acceleration. In classical sociological thought, acceleration occurred as an incidental appendix to other concepts: Karl Marx fostered the issue of turnover time when illuminating the social relations of production, but his primary concerns were the development of the capitalist economy and class antagonisms; Georg Simmel dealt with the phenomenology of acceleration against the backdrop of the emergence of metropolitan life as well as in relation to philosophy of money¹; Max Weber, when unfolding the dynamics of the bureaucratic organization, made an explicit reference to the problem of acceleration (see Tomlinson 2007a: 5–7). Contemporary social theorists and globalization analysts treat the problem similarly to their classical predecessors: it is an adjunct to other important debates and reflections on digital technologies, connectivity, mobilities and the general transformation of time and space in late modernity. It remains integral yet largely implicit in Zygmunt Bauman's thesis of 'liquid modernity' in which individuals and social formations keep moving on 'thin ice' that prevents them from stopping, pausing or reflecting as the risk of 'drowning' and stagnation is too high. Manuel Castells' 'timeless time' takes the speed of systems and 'global flows' as an implicit context for his influential conceptual apparatuses. There are also important references to acceleration in the work of Helga Nowotny, Barbara Adam's pivotal contributions to the sociology of time, George Ritzer's 'McDonaldization thesis', John Urry's 'mobility studies' and even from geographers such as Nigel Thrift, Jon May, Jamie Peck, Nik Theodore and David Harvey.²

These scattered treatments of acceleration are often made in substantial debates that aim to thematically and methodologically redress a unilateral concern with space in the social sciences by establishing a 'temporal turn' (Jessop 2009; Hassan 2010). Despite that, sociological analyses of time and temporality, as well as the relationship between space and time, are cardinal for understanding acceleration. In this book, acceleration *as such* will be foregrounded – indeed against the background of the problem of time and temporality, but also as, at

least analytically, a distinct social phenomenon. However, rather than conceiving of time and temporality as philosophical and ineffable categories, subsequent chapters will be concerned with the question of temporal ordering (cf. Moore 1963). One of the most important social analysts of time JT Fraser noted:

Individuals and societies no less than commercial, industrial, political and ideological interest groups have their own proper times [Eigenzeiten]. That is, they have differing judgments about the role and importance of their own and of other people's and groups' times. Whether as abstract ideas or guidelines for action, all these proper times are in ceaseless conflict or, more precisely, the persons and groups maintaining those proper times are. (Fraser 1994: 4)

Therefore different temporal patterns, rates, rhythms, sequencing, timing – that is different speeds, their encounters, embodiments, implications and cultural meanings and discourses – are at the crux of the present analysis. More specifically, this analysis focuses precisely on the modes of temporal (re)ordering of contemporary academia, a more or less definable social terrain, in which acceleration as unique phenomena – not just as accompanying feature to other processes – has become significant, problematic, experienced and contested.

Pop-science literature is a rich and detailed resource for diagnosing acceleration as a stand-alone phenomenon, yet it also treats the issue descriptively and non-analytically. Nevertheless, it can serve as a valuable backdrop to more sociologically developed arguments. Not only has it animated the substantial analyses discussed in this book, it has also helped to establish a discourse of acceleration and the value-base that is commonly attached to it. These books account for a genre that expresses negative, if not downright apocalyptic, aspects of our relationship to the current age where 'just about everything is accelerating' (Gleick 1999); where anxiety-ridden restlessness is the defining experience accompanying the 'cult of speed' (Honoré 2004); which in turn results in the frustrations and stresses of having 'no time' (Menziés 2005); and consequently, we are advised to nourish 'thoughtful idleness' (Schnabel 2014). One problem of the genre is in its covering too many dimensions of social life and doing so far too superficially, scanning over complex terrains ranging from technology, the transformation of work, consumption, celebrity culture, mass media, travel, family, education and many more. In a sense, these treatments are *symptomatic* of acceleration: they are fast, without dwelling on thorough

and detailed analyses, unexpected of this genre of speed(y) literature. They often employ examples from their authors' experience, recasting them schematically (but also provocatively) into societal problematics.

A similar type of projection and intellectualization of the subjective experience of acceleration is also present in, and may be deployed as the defining characteristic of, the controversial work of Paul Virilio. Virilio's reception remains ambivalent, though rarely neutral; for some he is the pioneer of 'dromocratic theory' and one of the most 'creative theorists of modern life' (Armitage 2000; Redhead 2004; Hanke 2010); for others he is a 'fast-thinking' nihilist (Breuer 2009). Steve Redhead writes of Virilio: 'Speed in/of modernity in general, not just in relation to technology and war, has become associated with his name, almost anywhere in the world' (2004: 3).³ Virilio is concerned with examining the nature of speed, its conditions of emergence, consequences, effects and manifestations. Some credit him as the first to attempt to 'understand the historical conditions of individual existence under tyranny of an unrelenting acceleration of every coordinate – economic, social, political, cultural' (Armitage 2000: 145). Virilio's conclusions are notoriously bleak: speed is the 'defeat of the world as field, as distance, as matter' (1986: 133); 'speed is the essence of war' and 'war is the source of all technology' (2009; Virilio and Lotringer 1983; also Virilio 2000a; 2000b); speed brings about a 'derangement of senses' (1991); acceleration leads to 'liquidation and end of the world' (2008). In spite of his notoriously inflated and problematic rhetoric, Virilio's insights and provocations can be considered a foundational benchmark in 'speed debates'. As will be shown, analytical fields discussed below and contemporary debates around acceleration have been in one way or another provoked by Virilio's controversial observations. Despite the difficulty and obscurity of his texts, his legacy continues to be – albeit cautiously and critically – acknowledged in the sociological literature.

Critique of the fast world

There are several book-length accounts (Agger 1989; 2004; Eriksen 2001; Brennan 2003; Hassan 2003; 2008; 2009a; 2012; Taylor 2014) which bypass the previously mentioned genres by attempting to outline a social critique of acceleration. This body of literature synthesizes and, taken together, systematizes acceleration as a quintessentially modern and thoroughly (late) capitalist imperative with manifold negative consequences for the social and natural environments, self-determination and autonomy, social (and even biological) reproduction, well-being

and mental health. This line of argument develops a sustained criticism for its claims that the acceleration of life under late (global) capitalist modernity and the time-pressures it generates account for a distinctive moment in history due to its largely negative and inhuman effects. The authors often see (the logic of) capitalism as the main determinant and explanatory vehicle of acceleration, a relationship which will be revisited at length in the next chapter.

For his part in the general critique of acceleration, Eriksen comments on the phenomenological implications of time-compression brought about mostly by ever-faster information and communication technologies (ICT). The implications are irreversible and overwhelming. He notes: 'fast time' dominates 'slow time' and the 'tyranny of the moment' is the pressing condition in all walks and registers of life. Taylor, capturing the zeitgeist of late modernity, reflects on the 'trap of speed' and 'speed addictions' in the following way:

Moore's law, according to which the speed of computer chips doubles every eighteen months, now seems to apply to life itself. My life is faster than my father's life, my children's life is faster than my life, and the lives of their children, already hooked on iPhones and iPads, will be faster than theirs. This is not an idle speculation but a fact The speed revolution, it is important to stress, affects different people in different ways; indeed speed has become a, if not the primary, socio-economic differentiator. As some people speed up, others slow down; as some people work more than they want, others work less than they want or even not at all; as some people get 'ahead', others fall 'behind'. What 'winners' and 'losers' in this new fast-paced economy share are the insecurity, anxiety, and discontent that speed creates. (2014: 1–2)

Where Eriksen's explanatory resource is the epochal concept of 'information society' (for an overview see Webster 2006; for criticism see May 2002), Agger, Hassan, Brennan and Taylor develop their analyses more sociologically and normatively vis-à-vis the forces of neoliberalism, globalization, Protestantism and the (financial) capitalist culture broadly conceived. For Brennan, the speeding-up of contemporary capitalism is causing pollution-induced, immunodeficient and stress-related diseases (Brennan 2003). Agger's 'fast capitalism' thesis purports that capitalism 'is compressed as the pace of everyday life quickens in order to meet certain economic imperatives and to achieve social control; idle hands are the devil's workshop' (2004: 4). Similar to Eriksen, although with more pronounced Marxist leanings, Agger assesses the

impact of ever-accelerating ICT on work, family, childhood and the body. Hassan's theses, 'chronoscopic society' and 'empires of speed', develop a rich tapestry of claims maintaining that the 'networked informational ecology', with its digitally compressed and accelerating time, dramatically affects the individual experience and the nature of the social dynamic. All these treatments conclude with several recommendations that aim to help in breaking free from the frenetic tempo of the late modern condition as a necessary precondition for the 'good life' and social emancipation (see also Rosa 2013: 32, 124). Agger, for instance, says that:

capitalism has quickened since WWII, especially with the advent of the Internet. People work harder and more, their private space has been eroded; kids are doing adultlike amounts of homework and activities; people eat badly, on the run, and then embark on crash diets and exercise programs. The world is ever-present and omnipresent, saturating us with stimuli, discourses, directives. It is difficult to gain distance from the everyday in order to appraise it. Our very identities as stable selves are at risk. We need to slow it all down. (Agger 2004: 131)

The main problem with those otherwise illuminating analyses is that they dwell on a quasi-deterministic logic of ICT, globalization, and capitalism and/or neoliberalism being the hegemonic forces that satisfactorily explain and explicate causes of acceleration and its social and individual implications. The effects and social impact of ICT-driven capitalist acceleration are considerable and unprecedented: an environmental and social catastrophe is looming; the self is fragmented (see also Hsu and Elliot 2014); democracy needs to be re-temporalized (see also Chesneaux 2000); biological needs such as sleep are under siege (see Crary 2013; Hsu 2014); our thinking is 'abbreviated'; concentration is no longer possible; we all are on a verge of a collective burn-out.

Even though such modes of reasoning are valid and no doubt arrestingly relevant, there is at the same time far too much emphasis on individuals as mere victims of fast temporality where the acceleration-oriented dynamic of the 'neoliberalization-globalization nexus' and 'logics of computerization' dominates. Due to a range of psycho-social acceleration pathologies that should squarely paralyse our individual and collective capacities for emancipation and autonomous existence, most of the critical accounts of an ever-faster life-world maintain that we need to slow down – and fast. However, the question of agency

and the ways in which individuals process acceleration and build their own temporal experience is unexamined (on temporal agency and intentionality see especially Flaherty 2011). Not to mention the distinct possibility of there being individuals who might enjoy the liberating powers of acceleration-loaded experience and dynamism *without* embracing the forces of neoliberal capitalism.

These accounts exhibit another important feature: they amount to theoretically-informed and normatively driven commentaries, not necessarily to systematic theories. Even if we accept the main message postulating that acceleration is a sociologically relevant problem with different causes and manifold consequences, a number of subsequent questions immediately arise: how evenly distributed are such developments? Are different individuals differently positioned in society, and different social arenas affected equally? Can slowdown be an undesirable experience and outcome? Why were non-capitalist regimes of the 20th century also obsessed with acceleration?⁴ Is the social experience of acceleration qualitatively and quantitatively actually new and distinctive of late modernity? Why is there very little reference to acceleration as a positive, convenient and even energizing experience in this literature? Is acceleration reducible to a modern predicament only? We can start to develop answers to these questions by discussing the work of Hartmut Rosa.

Hartmut Rosa: acceleration thesis

Rosa's project is far more ambitious than those outlined above – he outlines *a theory* of acceleration that is, moreover, presented as 'a new theory of modernity' (Rosa 2013). In comparison with the aforementioned accounts, Rosa's theory⁵ is not entirely different in its approach or intellectual undertone, but rather in its complexity and coherence. By highlighting acceleration as an inherently modern feature, Rosa aims to go beyond the sociological investigations of time. He posits that sociology of time as a subfield suffers from several shortcomings: disconnectedness of perspectives, methodological eclecticism and extensive reliance on philosophical approaches to time (Rosa 2013: 2–3). Against this background, Rosa's account offers a reinvigorated conceptualization of the issue of temporality, particularly as it relates to contemporary social development and the modernization process, but also to modern capitalism (particularly the maxims of growth and capitalist competition) and to the teleology and directionality of modernity. His other objective is 'to contribute to an adequate social-theoretical

grasp of current social development and problems in the context of the process of modernization and also the debate concerning a fracture in this process between a “classical” age of modernity and a “second” age of *late* or *postmodernity* ... [and] ... work out their ethical and political implications’ (2013: 4 *emphases original*). Social actions, processes and experiences transpire with increasing speed, which is the fundamental attribute defining contemporary modernity and which in fact *differentiates* it from its precursors. Rosa notes: ‘the acceleration that is a constitutive part of modernity crosses a critical threshold in “late modernity” beyond which the demand for societal synchronization and social integration can no longer be met’ (2013: 20). This rift and the resulting pathologies of social, political and personal character comprise the backdrop upon which Rosa advances his theoretical apparatus.

Social acceleration stands for – especially in its late modern iteration – an overarching, inescapable and, to an extent, independent force (see Rosa 2013: 151–159) enveloping the modern individual as well as institutions. Rosa defines it more concretely as follows:

A central, defining fact of modern societies is the fact that a modern society can only stabilize and reproduce itself dynamically. This means that it needs growth, acceleration, and (increasing rates of) innovation in order to maintain its structure, to keep the status quo. Most obviously, this is true for the economic sphere, where the absence of growth and innovation immediately results in decay and crisis, but it is also true for the realms of politics and the welfare state, and even for the production of science and the arts, etc ... this results in an all-encompassing process of speedup that transforms the material, the social, and the mental worlds at ever higher rates ... [We can increase] the number of options for action, and the number of contacts almost indefinitely, whereas the time we can apply to all these goods, options, and contacts virtually remains the same (namely, 24 h a day or 365 days a year) ... Time cannot be increased, it can only be condensed or compressed. (Rosa 2014: 43)

Subsequently, Rosa substantiates his argument by foregrounding an important paradox of social acceleration. In the history of modernity many technical inventions and solutions had been used to *save time*. One pervasive example is e-mail, which reduces the days-long process of writing, going to the post office and dispatching a letter into a matter of minutes. Numerous technologies enable us to complete tasks faster, and

consequently, the time resources available for activities of our choice and/or desire – or for this matter, the time need to pursue our work duties – should abound. Nevertheless, this is not the reality. According to many time-use surveys (see Rosa 2013: 122–131) modern individuals increasingly report diminishing time resources, hurriedness, rush and chronic lack of time. How can we explain such a puzzle? The sociological explanation provided by Rosa is as accurate as it is instructive: the fact that we can pursue specific activities, processes, actions, experiences and exchanges *faster* due to technological development does not necessarily or logically mean that *rate* of those pursuits will remain *constant*.⁶

Rosa supports this point with three analytically distinct yet mutually dependent categories or spheres characterizing the acceleration dynamic: technological acceleration, acceleration of social change and acceleration of the pace of life, each of which is propelled by a distinct ‘motor’.⁷ Technological acceleration appears to be both an obvious and measurable form of acceleration. Building on Virilio’s remark that *technological (or technical) acceleration* proceeds from the revolution in transportation to that of transmission of information and finally to the ‘transplantation revolution’ that opens up new possibilities and threats in biotechnology (2009: 82), such acceleration can be couched as ‘the intentional speeding up of goal-directed processes of transport, communication, and production’ (Rosa 2010a: 16). Importantly, technological acceleration also includes new accelerative forms of organization and administration. The speeding-up of processes of transport, communication and economic production, organization and administration is, or can be, substantiated by empirical estimates: over the 20th century ‘the speed of communication is said to have increased by 10^7 , the speed of personal transport by 10^2 , and the speed of data processing by 10^6 (Geißler cited in Rosa 2013: 73).

These processes are driven, above all, by the *economic logic of capitalism* (2005: 448; 2013: 161ff). The modern capitalist economy impels technological acceleration in numerous ways. First, labour time is the crucial factor of production and ‘saving time is equivalent to making (relative) profit’ (2005: 449). Therefore the more advanced the production technology (including purpose-trained and efficient man-power), the more time the owner of the means of production saves. Second, he or she who first introduces a novel product or technology has a temporal advantage over his or her competitors, creating ‘extra-profits’ ahead of the market. Third, ‘the accelerated reproduction of invested capital is crucial with respect to what Marx called the “moral consumption” of technology and to the credit system. As a consequence, the circle of production,

distribution and consumption constantly accelerates' (2005: 449). In short, there is no doubt that capitalism depends upon the accelerating circulation of goods and capital. Due to the importance of the relationship between capitalism and acceleration – both in its own right and for the analytical purposes of this book – it will be discussed further in Chapter 2, particularly by focusing on the logic of competition and accumulation as axiomatic principles of capitalism.

Acceleration of social change, the second pillar of Rosa's theory, is not so much concerned with technological advancements in their own right, but with processes of social change associated with technological dynamics that 'render social constellations and structures as well as patterns of actions and orientation unstable and ephemeral' (Rosa 2010a: 17). Modernity means the ever-changing and speeding-up of the rates of social change (see Koselleck 2004); modernity's crucial trait is the ever increasing pace of social change. The main driver Rosa identifies is functional differentiation (2013: 185–194). Drawing on Niklas Luhmann's theory of temporization, Rosa notes: 'In a society that is not primarily segregated in hierarchical classes but rather structured along the lines of functional "systems", like politics, science, art, the economy, law etc., complexity increases immensely. As a result, the future opens up to almost unlimited contingency, and society experiences time in the form of perpetual change and acceleration' (2003: 14). Selecting the relevant indicators and constituents of social change, however, remains an ever-occurring issue in sociological thinking. Rosa, taking the initiative, identifies empirical and philosophical devices evidencing social change. First, by pointing to an ever-increasing rate of change in family and occupational systems (productive and reproductive domains of any social formation, respectively) and second by using Hermann Lübbe's notion of 'the contraction of the present' (Lübbe 2009: 159ff), Rosa claims that 'the *past* is defined as that which *no longer holds/is no longer valid* while the future denotes *that which does not yet hold/is not yet valid*. The present then is the time-span for which the horizons of experience and expectations coincide' (2010a: 18, *emphases original*). Rosa claims that only within the relative stability of the present moment can one reflect on and process past experiences and orient his or her behaviour with regard to the future. In an accelerating society such relative stability is under jeopardy. The acceleration thus manifests itself through the contraction of the present moment and '*is defined by an increase in the decay-rates of the reliability of experiences and expectations*' (*ibid.*, *emphasis original*).

Acceleration of the pace of life in general is the third aspect of Rosa's scheme and in some ways the most symptomatic and endemic, indicating

a spectacular 'time-starved' life-world in modern (post)industrial societies. This experience – no longer arguably reducible to a 'western perspective' – appears uncanny, given the promises invested in technologization, industrialization and digitalization of diverse socioeconomic processes and instances. Strikingly, despite modernity's promise that we could do more things in less time by increasing the number of episodes of action or experience per unit of time (Rosa 2010a: 21), virtually all available evidence exploring the acceleration of life suggests the exact opposite. Rosa notes that in secular modernity the quest for the 'good life' is closely related to acceleration: 'whether or not people still hold religious beliefs, their aspirations, desires and yearnings generally are directed towards offers, options and riches of this world' (Rosa 2010a: 29). To live a 'good life' therefore means to live a life that is 'rich in experience and developed capacities' (ibid.). Moreover, a 'good' or 'fulfilled life' appears to be measured by the sum, breadth and depth of these experiences and capacities; hence 'if we live "twice as fast", if we take only half the time to realize an action, goal, or experience, we can double "the sum" of experience, and hence "of life", within our lifetime' (Rosa 2010a: 30).

Furthermore, Rosa argues that social acceleration consisting of the three aforementioned realms is a self-propelling process and talks about the 'acceleration-cycle'. Technological inventions and acceleration (steam engine, railway, telegraph, telephone, automobile, computer, Internet) are routinely identified as causes of social change. These in turn prompt people to compress more activities into less time 'in order to keep track with a changing environment and consequently to ask for *more* technological acceleration' (2005: 448, emphasis original). The Internet is a good example: '[It] has not only increased the speed of communicative exchange and the "virtualisation" of economic and productive processes; it also establishes new occupational, economic, and communicative structures, opening up new patterns of social interaction and even new forms of social identity' (Rosa 2003: 10). These novelties demand an acceleration of the pace of life, subsequently requiring new technological inventions and solutions, which in turn trigger processes of technological acceleration.

Critical theory of acceleration

Rosa's project culminates in the outline of a critical theory of acceleration. It is built both on his theoretical scaffolding and on the assumption that social acceleration – even in a differentiated way – is exceeding its temporal imperatives and expanding onto the entire modern social fabric: 'social acceleration is the core-process of modernization, and therefore, a critique

of modern society is well advised to take it as its starting point' (2010a: 67). Against this background, Rosa introduces a threefold categorization to identify the variants of critique: functionalist, normative and ethical.

The first critical angle points to how the unevenness of acceleration results in tensions and frictions on the borders of differently paced institutions, processes, systems, practices and constituencies: 'whenever two processes interlock, i.e., whenever they are synchronized, the speeding up of one of them puts the other under time-pressure – and unless it speeds up too, it is perceived as an annoying break or hindrance' (Rosa 2010a: 69). This statement can be demonstrated through the example of the de-synchronization between social and extra-social worlds.⁸ Temporal asymmetry is most dramatically evident between the pace of exploitation of natural resources such as oil and nature's innate pace of reproduction. The same goes for the conflict between the tempo of toxic waste generation and dumping, and the natural rhythm and capacity to process and dispose of it. Human beings are, according to Rosa, susceptible to similar dynamics. The tempo of the human body and psyche are overwhelmed and cannot keep up with the accelerating pace of modern society. The well-documented increases in depression and burn-out in western societies seem to be direct consequences of the temporal demands and stress-levels of a fast social rhythm. The problem which emerges as a result of this temporal conflict is that of the limits of (nature's/human) adaptability and the politics that sustain it. This becomes even more sociologically relevant if we move to other societal domains. Temporal incompatibility and tensions (i.e. different degrees of accelerations) between differently paced systems (Luhmann) and fields (Bourdieu) are, according to Rosa, particularly problematic when presented as a binary conflict between the temporality of (techno-)capitalism and the temporality of democracy. Rosa's main claim is that 'today, politics is no longer perceived to be the pace-maker of social change and evolution' (Rosa 2010a: 72). This has been an emerging concern amongst a number of contemporary social and political theorists and will be investigated separately in the following chapter.

The second angle aims to recharge the normative critique of ideology. There is one extraordinary paradox that defines modern society. On the one hand modern societies are characterized by excessive coordination, interdependency, regulation and synchronization between and among their different components: 'the processes of production and distribution, but also of education and entertainment, or of politics and law, involve innumerable individuals and actions and result from myriad of socially and locally separated decisions' (Rosa 2010a: 74). On the

other hand, individuals in modern societies assumedly feel 'free' to an unprecedented degree: 'from the perspective of the modern liberal ideology as well as from individuals' self-perception, there virtually appear no binding social, religious or cultural norms; there is an enormous plurality of conceptions of the good life and a most far-reaching freedom of choice among myriads of options in all spheres of life' (Rosa 2010a: 75). The liberal ideology of freedom, however, conceals an excessive catalogue of social and economic expectations, demands and pressures that individuals cannot control and influence, says Rosa. The abundant rhetoric of 'must' that is mushrooming in western societies is a natural consequence of a 'competitively driven acceleration-game that keeps us in a relentless hamster-wheel which speeds-up incessantly' (ibid.). The need for coordination, regulation and synchronization is sustained by implementing temporal norms: the rule of schedules, deadlines, the power of short notice and the immediate logic of instant gratification. These 'hidden temporal norms' have the overwhelming effect of producing subjects of guilt. Despite being socially constructed, they come in an 'ethical guise' as 'brute facts'. The hidden temporal norms exert pressure on our will-formation and action; they are inescapable, meaning that all individuals are subjected to them; their spread is not limited to one or another area of social life but to social life in its entirety; it is hard, almost impossible, to criticize and to fight them without (severe) consequences.

The third position highlights two variants of the ethical critique. Following Jürgen Habermas, Johan P. Arnason and Charles Taylor, modernity is conceived as a 'political project' in Rosa's re-interpretation. At the centre of this 'project' lies the possibility of autonomy and self-determination, an individual and collective ability and capacity to 'define the goals, values, paradigms and practices of a good life as much as possible independently from external pressures and limitations' (Rosa 2010a: 80). This type of politically promoted emancipation is an integral and in a sense a dialectical component of the modernization process. It only makes sense once 'the world moved beyond a supposed ontologically fixed social order in which social classes and estates (the political and religious authorities) are defined once and for all and simply reproduced from one generation to the next' (Rosa 2010a: 79). Self-determination/autonomy becomes plausible and relevant only when it is positioned vis-à-vis the competitive social acceleration that defines modernity: 'The project of modernity (i.e. "the political project of autonomy") gains its plausibility and attractiveness with the rise of society's "kinetic energy"

and the advent of an accelerated social change' (Rosa 2010a: 79). The continuous process of acceleration-cum-modernization has historically been accompanied, if not sustained, by the promise, or perhaps the possibility, of self-determination, emancipation and autonomy. Interestingly, Rosa notes that 'acceleration and competition *could be* understood as a means towards the end of self-determination' (2010a: 80, emphasis added). In early modernity, social acceleration was intrinsically connected to the liberating modernist promise of autonomy; the possibility to 'accelerate' could liberate individuals and collectives from pre-modern bonds and pressures. We will return to this point later. However, in the same breath Rosa adds that the 'conditions of possibility' for self-determination are no longer credible in a society in which acceleration logics have turned against the promise of modernity. Why is that?

Acceleration, according to Rosa, no longer 'secures the resources for the pursuit of individual dreams, goals and life-plans, and for a political shaping of society according to ideas of justice, progress, sustainability, etc.; rather, it is the other way around: individual dreams, goals, desires and life-plans are utilized to feed the acceleration-machine' (2010a: 81). It has become crucial to lead and shape individual lives by 'staying in the race' to keep up competitiveness. Nearly all registers of our lives are determined by competitive logics, including those of family, life-partner, hobbies and health. Autonomy, in terms of holding personal aspirations and convictions, has become 'anachronistic' and turned into an endless striving 'to stay in the race'. '[C]reativity, subjectivity and passion no longer serve the end of autonomy in the old "modern" sense, but are now utilized to improve our competitiveness' (ibid.). The logics of acceleration and competition mobilize immense social and individual capacities and energies, yet they 'suck up every bit of it' (2010a: 82). Not only has acceleration become an imperative, it has lost, due to its 'marriage' with the hegemonic logic of competitiveness, the modern promise of autonomy. To substantiate this claim, Rosa proposes that the condition of 'acceleration totality' necessarily leads to the state of alienation.

Another component of the ethical critique aims to develop a variant of the critical phenomenology of acceleration. Adding a temporal perspective to Marx's concept of alienation, Rosa develops an argument maintaining that social acceleration 'is about certain thresholds beyond which human beings necessarily become alienated not just from their actions, the objects they work and live, nature, the social world and their selves, but also from time and space themselves' (Rosa 2010a: 83). The self-world relationship and our spatial 'localization' are distorted due to

the annihilation of time by space. Time-space distanciation/compression/diesembeddedness (Giddens, Harvey), and the widening gap between social and physical proximity, means a loss of intimacy and acquaintance. Social acceleration enables greater (and faster) mobility and disengagement from spatial determination; however, it simultaneously encourages alienation from our material, geographical and physical surroundings. The speed of exchange rates alters our relationship to 'things', both those which we produce and those we consume. Rosa says that the longer one possesses an object, the more likely that it becomes appropriated, individualized and internalized. Thus it is 'constitutive of our identity', part of lived experience. In an acceleration society, he puts forth, things are no longer repaired but disposed of. Whilst production might be sped up, maintenance and service are slow and time-demanding activities.

At the same time as commodities (especially consumer electronics) become increasingly complex, we lose the ability to care for them ourselves. Due to fast exchange, the distance between objects and the self grows. Ever smarter and faster gadgets divest people of cultural and practical knowledge, and what we see is the 'incessant devaluation of experience through innovation' (Rosa 2010a: 87). Relatedly, the modern individual subjected to the forces of social acceleration is alienated from his or her actions too. First, the abundance of tasks, decisions and actions accomplished via various technologies means that we are deprived of the time needed to inform ourselves of the procedures that enable them. Second, since Rosa defines alienation as a feeling of 'not really wanting what you do' (even though it stems from free decision and will), many distractive activities associated with a technologically-savvy and connected workplace, for instance, prevent us from 'doing what we really want'. We purchase superfluous items that, due to imperatives of speed, we are unable to digest and become familiar with. These 'false needs' sustaining modern capitalism prevent us from developing and 'leading a good, autonomous life'; in Marx's words, 'actualization' and 'self-activity'. In a socially accelerated world, the inner experience of time and duration are also transformed. We are unable to 'appropriate time'. We engage, according to Rosa, in short-term activities and experiences that are rigorously isolated from each other. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Rosa says that 'episodes of experience' are replacing 'experiences which leave a mark, which connect to, or are relevant for, our identity and history; experiences which touch or change who we are' (Rosa 2010a: 94–95). All this leads to a severe form of self-alienation where acceleration leads to the disintegration and erosion of commitment: 'We fail to integrate our episodes of action and experience (and

the commodities we acquire) to the whole of life, and consequently, we are increasingly detached, or disengaged, from the times and spaces of our life, from our actions and experiences, and from the things we live and work with' (Rosa 2010a: 96).

Rosa's revamped critical theory is complemented by a number of disclaimers. First, it is not falling into essentialist disputes about human nature/essence because 'what we are alienated from through the dictates of speed is not our unchangeable or unalienable inner being, but our capacity for the appropriation of the world' (2010a: 98). Second, a critique of 'temporally caused alienation' does not advance an ideal of subjectivity that would be free from any tensions, conflicts and divisions. '[A]ny attempt for a political and cultural elimination of alienation leads to totalitarian forms of philosophy, culture and politics, and to authoritarian forms of personality' (2010a: 99). However, speed imperatives – particularly competition and deadlines, according to Rosa – justify the grounds for a reinvigorated concept of alienation and thus new forms of social criticism. These imperatives result in behavioural patterns and lived experiences that are not determined by any set of desires and values, but remain profoundly alien to subjects. At the same time, in contrast to other early modern or pre-modern socio-cultural regimes (such as the reign of the Catholic Church), the late-modern context does not provide for or allow ideas or institutions of potential 'reconciliation'. All failures, shortcomings and 'sins' fall back directly to the subject: 'it is exclusively our own fault if we are unhappy or fail to stay in the race' (2010a: 99).

There is a very specific problem in the critical perspectives discussed, which ultimately instigates the present inquiry. Critical theories of acceleration, including the most advanced one offered by Rosa, contain a tendency to treat acceleration as an overarching phenomenon negatively affecting social structures, processes, institutions, human relations, experience and individual cognition almost without exception. Yet acceleration is a multi-layered and unevenly distributed phenomenon and process. This shortcoming does not necessarily disturb the coherence and innovative character of the acceleration scholarship and, more than anything else, becomes an ontological problem. As Judy Wajcman (2015) argues, it is necessary to understand technologies and the acceleration they embody as they are used in specific social contexts and/or in relation to other societal variables. Illuminating the issue of technology and social temporality from an STS perspective, Wajcman notes that the interpretation offered by theorists of acceleration such as Rosa does not adequately take into account the specific contexts, practices and larger

societal determinants that enter into the experience of time-pressure and acceleration. Such polemical considerations also directly and indirectly invite social researchers to explore claims made by acceleration theorists in specific social terrains (see Sharma 2014) and/or examine how they relate to specific social systems – how social acceleration is *both* a target of widespread complaints and qualms associated with a lack of temporal resources but also a strong modernist motive yielding progress and a better future. John Tomlinson's (2007a) account offers a complementary nuanced view tracing the shifting cultural significance of speed throughout modernity.

Socio-cultural immediacy

Tomlinson's penetrating cultural analyses of globalization (1991; 1999; 2007b) advance a distinctive approach to the notion of 'the cultural' (2012). In contrast to the 'cultural studies' and 'cultural turn' literatures that are the kernel of contemporary preoccupations with the cultural dimension, this tectonic movement in human and social sciences includes recent and current engagements with the questions of representation, identity, subjectivity, 'post'-discourses, sexuality, diversity and the various politics attached to it (Tomlinson 2012: 183), and the challenges they pose to social-scientific disciplines and their constituents and parameters (McLennan 2012; Vasilaki 2012). Tomlinson's aim is to advance 'an analytical grip' that would help us to grasp the shifting cultural contexts and entanglements of capitalist modernity. In his book *The Culture of Speed: The Coming of Immediacy* he develops exactly such a grip.

Focusing on the transformations of the cultural significance of speed, Tomlinson captures speed as a distinctively modern and western phenomenon. His monograph is one of the few systematic appraisals of the complexity of the social and cultural experience of speed currently available. Moreover, in contrast to Rosa, Tomlinson's approach considers cultural contradictions of speed in the record of modernity that are thoroughly documented through an anthropological-phenomenological analysis and by deploying a range of historical evidence. He proceeds by exposing three modern cultural narratives of speed, distinguishing between 'machine speed', 'unruly speed' and 'the condition of immediacy'. In Tomlinson's conception, social change associated with shifting speeds is not susceptible to strict historical periodization and the three categories amount to distinctive socio-cultural narratives and their associated shifts in the qualitative social experience of speed (cf. Berman 1982).

The first narrative and experience Tomlinson elaborates on is machine or *rational speed*. In contrast to Rosa's technological acceleration, Tomlinson's conception is tightly linked to the rational-progressive climate of industrialization in early modernity:

Speed is made to appear against the background of the most dominant institutionalized understanding of the meaning of modernity: as the conquest of nature by mechanism, the unproblematized belief in open-ended progress, the unstoppable advance and spread of the capitalist market economy and the fundamental shift in culture from an agrarian-rural to an industrial-urban context of experience. (Tomlinson 2007a: 9)

Machine speed is a disciplining and rational regulation of social processes and progress; it is directly related to the capacities of the machines that have become emblems of early modernity (train, telegraph, technologies related to industrial production). In this narrative, speed is perceived as a modern cultural value resulting from the ideological commitment of reason, progress and order: 'This sort of speed is the energetic dutiful offspring of a good marriage between liberal capitalism and progressive engineering' (2007a: 39). Yet machine speed is much more than the simple application of machine technologies to socioeconomic practices and processes. Echoing Georg Simmel's social phenomenology of the modern city, Tomlinson says speed is the experiential 'interface between the human life-world governed by the biological constitution and temporal frame of our existence, and the complex, ungovernable dynamics of the modern institutions into which we are inserted and which sweep us along even as we struggle to construct and enact our life projects' (Tomlinson 2007a: 39). One of the cardinal contributions here is that machine speed has considerably shaped the cultural meaning of speed that, moreover, continues to have an enduring influence on understanding speed as a prime marker of social and indeed economic progress.

Whereas machine speed is linked with rational processes of control, coordination, order, management, planning and so on, the second analytical category Tomlinson develops, unruly *dionysian speed*, escapes discipline and regulation, yet at the same time, is a sensual celebration of the experiences brought about by the machine speed. It is associated *both* with excitement and thrills as well as with 'risks, dangers and implicit violence and the – quintessentially modern – sensual-aesthetic experiences and pleasures it can afford' (Tomlinson 2007a: 9). Here speed is unruly in both orientation and expression. The coming of unruly speed

is emblematically identified with the controversial Futurist movement, in particular the writings of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (2009). However, in Tomlinson's analysis of the prophetic and the observational features in Marinetti about the modern experience of speed, we learn that Marinetti was, despite his Fascist leanings, an incredibly attentive commentator on the psychic aspects of speed and its consequences for human self-understanding. Here Tomlinson tries to tackle the important question: '... why [do] modern people find machine speed pleasurable in itself, not simply as a means to an end?' (2007a: 47).

Tomlinson develops several original answers to this question by covering important aspects of the culture of speed: the psychological, physiognomic and sensual in terms of human-machine relationship; the ergonomic and aesthetic pleasure of speed that encompass the merger of 'system of pleasure with system of necessity' (2007a: 52). Under this condition, speed-heroism, where 'pleasure-seeking and being careless of conventional law and morality ... [and] being intent on packing into life as much experience as possible' (2007a: 53), becomes transgressive. Another affinitive connection Tomlinson discusses is that between war, speed and violence. Here, drawing on the Futurists again and also on Virilio, he points out the relationship between some of the cultural values associated with machine speed and warfare: 'The deployment of fast machines is obviously rational in so far as they enable the rapid, efficient and cost-effective prosecution of war' (2007a: 57). So on the one hand, there is a notion of transgression and liberation associated with the comforts, energies and excitements of speed. On the other, there is a dark connection with the modern technological development of weaponry and war tactics and their deployment.

Essentially, in the two categories described above Tomlinson sees speed as an offspring of the modern era: first as a rationally-progressive promise, then as a sensual-aesthetic thrill and risk. However, for him, none of these contradictory tendencies became a prominent cultural condition. Although they overlap, an emergent *condition of immediacy* (a new augmentation in the historical trajectory of speed) is not smoothly continuous with the discourses of regulated and unruly speed. Immediacy changes 'the cultural terms of speed's impact, undermining some earlier presumptions and installing new commonplace realities' (Tomlinson 2007a: 10). Historically, new cultures of speed cannot be disentangled from the ubiquity of the 'telemediation of everyday experience' enabled by ICT and the commodification of culture, broadly speaking. Tomlinson notes that the contemporary embeddedness of 'teletechnologies' and 'telepresence' – working neatly in the service of

the changing patterns of late capitalism – conditions the ‘(apparent) closure of the gap between people that has been the historical telos of communication’ (2007a: 120). More specifically the process of telemediatization, which is defined as a ‘specific phenomenological mode’ (2007b: 156), includes e-mailing, typing, scrolling, internet surfing, Google-based research, watching television, social networking, tweeting, online shopping, downloading and so on (Gandelsonas 2008: 14). The increasing integration of this ‘telecommunication infrastructure’ into our life-worlds is unquestionable. Routine and taken-for-granted telemediatized practices account for a shift in ‘wider cultural sensibilities evident in developed, global-modern societies’ (2007b: 157).

However, Tomlinson is not simply revisiting another, more ‘cultured’, version of Rosa’s ‘technological acceleration’; his aim is to highlight the relationship between the telecommunication infrastructure and wider shifts of cultural sensibilities: ‘the increasing tacit assumption – structured into both the work process and wider social etiquette – that we have a social *obligation* both to be skilled users of technology and, more importantly, to be almost constantly available to and for communication – that it is a mark of neglect, of irresponsibility, to be off-line, off-message, incommunicado’ (2007b: 158, emphasis original). For Tomlinson, immediacy is intimately linked with a shift in late capitalism’s consumer demand. Contemporary capitalist culture promotes a speed of appropriation, instead of cumulative appropriation amassing possessions, and a speed injunction, which urges ‘closing the temporal gap’ between material desire and its fulfilment. This new condition is substantially reconfiguring modern culture and the social ecology we live in: it ‘grows out of the general acceleration of practices, processes and the experience associated with institutional and technological bases of modernity’ (Tomlinson 2007a: 10).

The main strengths of Tomlinson’s study are that, in comparison to critics of speed, he envisages *both* cultural attractions as well dangers and pathologies associated with speed. There is no doubt that ‘telemedia’, enabling real-time communication and ‘instant delivery’ are attractive and deliberately opted for. In a more complex way Tomlinson, for instance, notes that telemedia ‘have capacity to form trust relations and senses of moral obligations beyond the confines of physical locale’ (2007b: 158) or that mediated experience of intimacy with distant others (via Skype-like applications for instance) has become commonplace. Immediacy as a type of speed brings comforts and ease as well as anxieties and disturbances (associated with ‘time-famine’ and the feeling of an ‘accelerated pace of life’). In a sense, rational-progressive and unruly speeds are perfectly compatible with the ‘sublime’ of immediacy, maybe

more than Tomlinson acknowledges. In later chapters, it will be demonstrated that the rational-progressive nature of speed, as well as thrills and risks associated predominantly with early modern speeds, continue to account for strong cultural and ideological commitments.

The pleasures of pace

Enda Duffy's (2009) take on speed is complementary here, especially in regard to Tomlinson's first two categories, but more generally as regards the cultural roles of technology. Drawing on a range of materials across various media (novels, photography, motion picture, adverts) and on ground-breaking theories of space by Henri Lefebvre ('production of space'), Michel Foucault ('heterotopia'), David Harvey ('spatial fix') and Frederic Jameson ('cognitive mapping'), Duffy argues that in a postcolonial era, when the globe is 'known' and 'explored', it is the rate of movement through space that has become central. This echoes Tomlinson's 'machine speed', which was understood as a means for demolishing distance, establishing communication and connecting localities. The experience of speed, says Duffy (following Aldous Huxley) is the only new pleasure of modernity. This approach is in striking contrast to those of the analysts discussed in preceding sections. To think about speed in Duffy's manner 'forces us to think of speed sensationally, that is, how it feeds our sensations, our senses, working on our bodies to produce physical as well as psychic and psychological effects' (2009: 18). While this view may be slightly un-sociological, it captures an important dimension of speed and acceleration as modern social phenomena. Speed is not only about conquering time associated with 'the regime of clock time, timetables, clocking in, schedules, being on time, meeting deadlines, going faster' (*ibid.*), it is also about shifting our experience and relation to space.

Duffy argues that speed's pleasures – indispensable for its historical and cultural significance – are intimately related to the technological speed offered by the modern commitment to progress. He, however, notes that it is nearly impossible to discover a commentator focusing on the pleasure of speed in the record of modernity: 'texts that map a dance between technology and culture are often torn between a base note of techno-boosterism and a tendency to decry the horrors wrought by technology's advance' (2009: 264). Yet Duffy, like Tomlinson, does not advance 'technological acceleration' but rather focuses on the phenomenological and historical uniqueness of speed sensation. He says:

Speed ... is not just the friction and the inconvenience of going faster, or of 'killing time'; it is the idea that movement, instead of being a

plotted leap from pleasures of one identifiable place to the potential pleasures of another, would be a pleasure in itself, a pleasure that represents an escape from the horrific stasis of place and instead gets to be a physical sensation, a new kind of arousal experienced not as emotion but more viscerally, as an incitement imprinted on one's body. The old, emotional ties of place were lost to speed, to the thrill of a rush of adrenaline. (2009: 267)

Although this type of visceral experience might always have been taken for granted, it must be noted that it amounts to a genuinely modern attraction and cultural meaning of speed. It is debatable whether it is the only new modern experience, as Duffy notes, but it clearly comprises a rather sidelined dimension in the sociological thematization of speed. In fact, Duffy's subtle historical cultural analysis offers a unique account of speed. Although referring explicitly to automobile speed, the following claim plausibly captures the promise and liberating properties of speed in a general sense:

As speed shocks and horrifies, as it excites and thrills, it – and its representations – gives us, in a technologically mediated and mediatised world, a sensation in modernity of the possibilities of the material world and of the possibilities of the interaction of each of us with it. (Duffy 2009: 273)

Conclusion

After this brief consideration of Duffy, we can return to Rosa and Tomlinson. It is not only the conception of acceleration as a singular feature of capitalist modernity, but also a genuine and significant shift in the *type* of acceleration, that preoccupies them. Whereas Tomlinson's and Duffy's concern is speed as a culturally embodied feature of modernity, Rosa, building on and complementing the dominant canon of speed-criticism, advances that acceleration and its multiple *negative* implications and consequences are a defining feature of modernity. However, despite the rigour of Rosa's revamped version of critical social theory, it must be said that it is not built on the whole 'sociological story of speed'. This is not to promote any awestruck celebration of speed, but rather to emphasize an altogether different interpretative mode to that of the critical theory of speed. Although these two explanatory and interpretative modalities – Rosa's critical theory and Tomlinson's cultural-experimental analysis – are epistemologically incommensurable, taken together they

point out that socio-cultural motors, speed effects and experiences are deeply ambivalent and heterogeneous. On the one hand, normatively driven critical theory hardly accommodates positive connotations of speed; on the other, cultural analyses of speed (especially Duffy's) do not yield much scope for substantial critical evaluation of social and individual speed-pathologies. By diverting itself from the dominant critical academic discourse of speed, this book attempts to reconcile these contradictory and polarized views. Two significant aspects of acceleration are yet to be discussed in detail: its relationship to modern capitalism and its associations with the embodied temporalities of differently paced societal realms.

2

Continuity and Change in the Temporal Dynamics of Capitalism

This chapter develops a political economy of acceleration (see also Glezos 2012) whilst highlighting both structural and cultural aspects of capitalism. It seeks to re-examine the ways in which acceleration is not only a key constituent of capitalism, but also cultural leverage that challenges 'slower', differently paced, societal fields. The analysis emphasizes that even if the experience of acceleration is now widespread and widely established as a powerful cultural reference, substantial recognition of the structural underpinnings of capitalism needs to be kept in focus. The chapter's argument examines in particular three issues: 1) the inner fabric of capitalism, i.e. acceleration as a materially inscribed imperative of capitalist logics of accumulation and competition; 2) the instabilities of capitalism and the associated intensification and extensification of capitalism; and 3) the temporal conflicts between the hegemony of 'impatient' fast-moving capital and 'sluggish' pace of specific processes underscoring democratic polity. In this connection, it also identifies a particular internal temporal contradiction within the capitalist system. Relatedly, even though outward manifestations of capitalism have gone through tremendous transformation in the last one hundred years or so – notably in accumulation strategies and the organization of the work(place) – the inner nature of capitalism, with the acceleration principle at the centre, has not undergone such a dramatic, cataclysmic and revolutionary change as some influential millennial sociological literature suggests (e.g. Castells 2000a; 2000b; 2004). Yet it is undeniable that contemporary capitalist practices such as high-frequency trading and their speeds have emerged without precedent (see Mackenzie 2014a; 2014b).

The analysis emphasizes the continuation, as well as the change, in the structural centrality of acceleration in capitalism. It revisits important

characteristics of capitalism by looking at the realms of production and labour through the lens of the Marxian critique of the political economy and by envisaging the relationship between the widely reported acceleration of the pace of life and the (re)organization of labour. The section immediately following discusses the limits of the Fordist model of capitalist organization, the emergence of the post-Fordist 'social time regime' (Dörre 2011) and the political framing by which it is sustained. Subsequently, it looks at cultural implications of the cultural 'logic of acceleration'. Building on these points, the last section critically surveys the recent debate in democratic political theory, which explores the problem of temporal asymmetry between differently paced fields of human activity: a conceptual scheme highly relevant for further investigation in the realm of academia. To this end, the present analysis also problematizes the kind of preoccupations with sociology of the 'now' and the 'new' that are sometimes present in today's sociological theory (for critique of epochalisms see Savage 2009) and which will be taken up in later chapters.

Capitalism's speed imperatives

[I]n spite of the birth and death of firms and industries, the transformations in technology, the development of ever more sophisticated financial instruments, the greatly increased capacity of states and repeated shifts in economic policy regimes, there is some central mechanism of capitalism that has remained essentially unchanged for a century and a half. (Sewell 2008: 520)

Ben Agger in 1989 declared a new, distinct mode of capitalism: 'fast capitalism'.¹ It could nonetheless be argued that capitalism has always been fast, that speed has been always been central to capitalism ever since what Tomlinson calls the age of 'machine speed'. What, then, does the adjective *fast* in fast capitalism stand for (cf. Tomlinson 2007a: 81–89)? This section looks at the ways in which fast – the speed imperative – remains as an unchanged assumption of capitalist logic, rather than its 'brand new' feature associated with digital technologies and late-modern social transformation.

One begins with a standard definition of capitalist society: it is a society of for-profit commodity production, which is the basic organizing principle of economic and social life, constituting the perpetual circulation and accumulation of capital, the principle of competition, and wage-earning (see e.g. Hobsbawm 1975: 13; Boltanski and

Chiapello 2005: 162). Nonetheless, capital is not a thing or value, nor is capitalism a series of discrete moments and situations. Rather, it is a process of reproduction of social life comprised of continuous and foundational movement (Marx 1973: 535; Harvey 1989: 343; Neary and Rikowski 2002; Glezos 2012: 86). Building on these remarks, the aim of this and the following sections is to highlight specific principles and structural inscriptions of the capitalist logic – or as Sewell puts it ‘central mechanisms’ – that come to bear on the acceleration imperative, which in turn co-shapes how academia transforms. Rosa’s (2009: 89–90; 2010: 26–29; 2013: 161–174), Tomlinson’s (2007a: 25–32) and Glezos’ (2012: 86–115) analyses on connections and mutual dependencies are instructive here. Whereas Rosa sees the economic logic of capitalism as one of the motors propelling social acceleration dynamics, for Tomlinson and Glezos it is capitalism as such that is the prime and determining context for understanding acceleration. Drawing on their observations, let us now look closely at the capitalist engine’s powers of propulsion: competition and accumulation (realm of production) and organization of work (realm of labour). Relating these two domains, the discussion then focuses capitalism’s imperatives on the transformation of labour, necessarily including the psychology of workers, an association that remains transhistorically relevant in capitalist modernity.

Referring to Marx, Mioshe Postone says that ‘capital ... is a self-moving social mediation that renders modern society increasingly dynamic and shapes the form of the process of production’ (1993: 263). One of the ‘propellers’ of the ‘self-movement’ and ‘dynamics’ Postone implicitly alludes to is the constitutive imperative of the capitalist system: competition. The notion of competition is often associated with social acceleration (Rosa 2010a: 27–28); however, its structurally inscribed capitalist characteristics and the question around political economy remain only gestural in existing accounts that discuss the relationship between capitalism and acceleration. The basic political-economic definition could be expressed as follows: capitalist competition is organized around the need to extract surplus value from labour and subsequently recast this value as profit. To be competitive simply requires being *faster* than capitalist rivals:

The capitalist firm ... is ... necessarily in competition with other capitalist firms. If it cannot out-compete them, eventually it will be forced out of business. To out-compete means keeping ahead in developing new, more productive techniques – only in that way can it ensure that

it is not going to be driven out of business by rivals producing and selling goods more cheaply than it can. (Herman 2009: 35)

Keeping ahead (i.e. being faster) in developing new and more productive techniques and innovations essentially embodies time-saving technologies – both in terms of means of production (i.e. machinery and human labour) as well as organizational, administrative and procedural improvements and settings of given firms and corporations (see Rosa 2013: 40, 114). Indeed the role of technologies is pivotal in the production procedure: ‘Machinery, like every other component of constant capital, creates no new value, but yields up its own value to the product it serves to beget’ (Marx 1976: 509). The time that the machine saves (which can be said to be a value of a machine) in the entire manufacturing and production process enters into the final value and exchange value of a product. The faster a machine can manufacture the less time is needed for a unit of production. The overall cost is lower and thus the more surplus is available. This yields more manoeuvring space for a capitalist and thus a competitive advantage (or a lead) in a market. Hence the value of time efficiency in the production process is highly valorized, and subsequently the time that is saved in production increases the possibility of surplus and profit. Boltanski and Chiapello, highlighting the relationship between competition and *accumulation*, state: ‘Each capitalist entity is constantly being threatened by the actions of competing entities. Such dynamics create a perpetual state of concern. Self-preservation is thus a very strong motivation for capitalists – it is a never-ending catalyst for the accumulation process’ (2005: 162). This restlessness, unpredictability and volatility require a distinct operational mode of agility and dynamics that continuously generates both innovations and further insecurities (Streeck 2012a: 6). Rosa captured this relationship precisely: ‘a capitalist cannot stop and rest, stop the race, and secure his position, since he either goes up or down, there is no point of equilibrium because standing still is equivalent to falling behind’ (Rosa 2009: 88; also 2013: 161–174). But in what sense is the ‘need for speed’ implied in this logic accounted for in the circulation of capital?

Marx pertinently observed how the ‘appropriate’ speed of abstract processes associated with capital formation, circulation and mutation turn out to be the life blood of capital accumulation and, thereupon, condition the reproduction and multiplication of value, as well as the self-preservation, of the capitalist. Continual circulation of capital and its different metamorphoses eventually means generation of surplus.

The renewal of production depends on the sale of completed products: the transformation of commodities into money and further transformation of money into the inputs of production – raw material, machinery, technology and wages. Marx says:

[I]n as much as the circuits which capital travels in order to go from one of these forms into other constitute sections of circulation, and these sections are travelled in specific *amounts of time* (even spatial distance reduces itself to time; the important thing e.g. is not the market's distance in space, but the speed – the amount of time – with which it can be reached), by that much the velocity of circulation, the *time* in which it is accomplished, is a determinant time; how often capital can be realized in a given period of time, how often it can *reproduce* and *multiply* its value. (Marx 1973: 538, emphases original)

In this sense, Marx also identified the necessity and inevitability of the 'accelerating circulation' of capital. Capital has to traverse various forms in order to produce surplus. The faster the process of capital metamorphosis, i.e. Money–Commodity–Money, the more competitive the owner of the means of production becomes, and the more surplus can be effectively realized as profit. Marx noted that as long as capital:

remains in the production process it is not capable of circulating; and it is virtually devalued. As long as it remains in circulation, it is not capable of positing surplus value, not capable of engaging in the process as capital. As long as it cannot be brought on the market, it is fixated as product. As long as it has to remain on the market, it is fixated as commodity. As long as it cannot be exchanged for conditions of production, it is fixated as money. Finally, if the conditions of production remain in their form as conditions and do not enter into the production process, it is again fixated and devalued. (Marx 1973: 621)

Therefore capital needs to be in constant accelerated motion because 'to do so is to increase both the sum of values produced and the rate of profit' (Harvey 2006: 86). In his magisterial extension of Marxian analysis, Harvey accurately described the core dynamic in play: 'The turnover time of capital is, in itself, a fundamental measure which also indicates certain barriers to accumulation. Since an accelerating rate of turnover of capital reduces the time during which opportunities pass by unseized, a reduction in turnover time releases resources for further accumulation'

(*ibid.*). He explicitly defines acceleration as a fundamental systemic imperative inherent to the accumulation and realization of surplus value and, therefore, the ultimate (temporal) horizon that animates the behaviour of capitalist actors.

Competition and accumulation, these twin notions, conceptualize the principal and defining features of capitalist society and, importantly, integrate the acceleration imperative as a conditional reproductive mechanism. The ability to shorten production cycles, thereby reducing turnover time, is a competitive advantage which determines the rate of profit and accumulation. Hence, acceleration is the necessary modality and 'rule of operation' of capitalist behaviour and mentality. The realm of labour is naturally no less imbued with the capitalist 'need for speed' – in fact, organization of labour and its transformations are terrains in which the social experience of acceleration tangibly manifests itself (see Neary and Rikowski 2002).

Any production process involves human labour (in practice usually in combination with machinery), and it can be said that labour is *the* organizational component of a given society and a decisive dimension of humans' life-world. Capital's social dominance – underpinned with imperatives of competition and accumulation – structures relations of production including the organization of labour and tempo of work, as emblematically shown in Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936). The disciplinary apparatus that the workforce is subjected to represents the fundamental leverage structuring and co-shaping of the relationship between capital and labour. The free market – an ideological doctrine of the capitalist system – simply postulates that profit is generated if a capitalist actor, the owner of the means of production, invests as little as possible in the labour process, competes in the market and generates surplus. Acceleration and time-saving through labour control are key objectives and *instruments* in such a dynamic.

The scale and scope of capitalist economies and markets today are, to a large extent, results of the transformation from agricultural and craft production to mass production and mass industrialization, mobilized by the largely unsuccessful revolutions of 1848 and the subsequent era of capitalist growth characterized by unprecedented and global economic expansion (Hobsbawm 1975). The principle of mass production began to proliferate incessantly at the dawn of 20th century and probably the most significant change lies in the temporal systematization of mass production and time keeping (see Wajcman 2015: 39–43), often associated with Fordism. However, Fordism is more than the establishment of the assembly line as the new organizing technology of production.

Apart from the mass production inherent to Fordism, there was also the deployment of rigid organization, planning, centralization and predictability aimed at stabilizing the mercurial business cycle. These techniques developed by Henry Ford gave rise to economies characterized by the spreading of fixed expenses, such as investments in factory plants and equipment and the organization of production cycles, over larger volumes of output, thereby reducing unit costs. These arrangements 'entailed mass production of standardized goods for societies in a secular transition from rural to urban and industrial ways of life, in which people spent their rising incomes on consumer durables like cars and refrigerators, which they were able to acquire for the first time in their families' lives' (Streeck 2012b: 29). The new possibilities of consumption, low prices, growing demand and near-full employment accounted for an 'idyllic' situation and therefore Fordism can be seen less as a mere system of mass production and consumption and more as a 'total way of life'. Mass production and consumption meant unprecedented standardization which in turn meant a 'new aesthetic and commodification of culture' (Harvey 1989: 135). Even though Fordism, as a paradigmatic mode of social organization, culminated in the 1950s and 1960s, its fundamental logic was in place much earlier.

In 1914 when Henry Ford introduced the 'five-dollar and eight-hour day', it was the logical heir to and climax of established technologies and practices in the organization of labour that had developed in the second half of the 19th century. Despite the fact that Ford extended and entrenched distinct labour processes, he also followed the corporate form of business organization and drew upon FW Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (originally published in 1911). Taylor advocated a set of principles which would radically increase labour productivity by breaking down each process 'into component motions and organizing fragmented work tasks according to rigorous standards of time and motion study' (Harvey 1989: 125). Hassan elaborates on the relationship between the Taylorist technique and speed principle. Taylorization was in essence a

systematic attempt to infuse the work process, in the factory, in the building site or the office, with a logic of information, based on numbers (i.e. the time it took to perform a particular job). The objective was to align the human worker more closely to the rhythms of the machine – machines that were themselves constantly being developed to run faster and more efficiently. (Hassan 2008: 40)

Efficiency, and effectively the speed of production processes, thus becomes an underlying organizing principle of labour. Scientific management as proposed by Taylor, gradually and systematically deployed, produced a non-human technology excessively controlling and disciplining the worker (Ritzer 2015). In a way Ford extended Taylor's time-based idea of efficiency to a hierarchical separation between management, conception, control and execution. The radical division of labour into specialized functional units – such as assembly line operations, accounting, quality, personnel, purchases, and distribution – was driven by the need to produce multiple identical units less expensively than a single unique unit. This system, relying on mass production, kept profit margins relatively low, yet helped to amass large profits through a high quantity of manufactured products (Braverman 1974; Aronowitz 1992; Agger 2007). Taylor developed a distinctive model whereby he advocated a full-scale managerial imperative for increased job surveillance, and Taylorism can be seen as 'nothing less than the explicit verbalization of the capitalist mode of production' (Braverman 1974: 59). Therefore, when referring to Fordism and Taylorism we are in fact capturing both the *accelerating tempo of labour process and the life-world experience of acceleration*.

Taylor's pamphlet is a proposal that should boost 'greater national efficiency' (1967: 5) and can be interpreted as a top-down paradigmatic socio-cultural project with utopian and hegemonic ingredients. He explicitly depicted what he called a road to maximum national prosperity via maximum efficiency and acceleration. This plan extended beyond the factory walls and organization of labour as Taylor suggested that the imperative of efficiency – which, according to him, was inherently progressive – could be applied to all human and social endeavours. For these purposes he sketched a model of a new competent man (1967: 5–8) who was efficient not only in his/her occupation but also in his/her family, domestic arrangements, religious affiliations, education and politics. Efficiency was embraced as an ethical and rational principle that would ease social antagonisms and bring great prosperity for all. The new individual should be trained and shaped 'so that he can do (at his fastest pace and with maximum of efficiency) the highest class of work for which his natural abilities fit him' (1967: 12). Great prosperity, according to Taylor, can exist for all, in so far as each man and each machine are producing the largest possible outputs. In this sense under-work or slow work was considered 'the greatest evil' (1967: 14). In this context, slowness and inefficiency have a moral undertone. This aspect also implicitly refers to the 'protestant ethic and the spirit

of capitalism', famously theorized by Max Weber that, according to the protestant logic, 'waste of time is ... the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation' (Weber 1992: 104). Acceleration acquired an inherently *positive* connotation in Taylor's social engineering and accompanied the *arch*-modern notions of progress and rationalization.

Thus, in this sense, 'best speed' is a virtuous condition not only for factory-line labour but it is articulated as a moral category. Taylor used this new work ethic as a postulate: '[a] "given job" can be done faster than it has been but [the employer] rarely cares to take the drastic measures necessary to force men to do it in the quickest time, unless he has an actual record proving conclusively how fast the work can be done' (1967: 23). The very instrument for recording, and therefore the tool for coercive and disciplinary measures, was the clock-time technologies: 'The enormous saving of time and therefore increase in the output which it is possible to effect through eliminating unnecessary motions and substituting fast for slow and inefficient motions ... through motion and time study' (1967: 24). The scientific organization of production containing not only general principles, but also a certain moralizing philosophy, should have replaced the 'rule of thumb' which renders ineffectiveness and slowness as disruptive sins on the way to – according to Taylor – achieving a prosperous, far happier world, free from discord and dissension.

Although there is no direct evidence of the impact of Marinetti's writings on Taylorist labour policies, scientific management bears a strong similarity to what the Futurists advocated in their infamous manifestos: 'Futurist morality will defend man from the decay caused by slowness, by memory, by analysis, by response and habit. Human energy centupled by speed will master Time and Space' (Marinetti 2009: 57). In another passage from the *Manifesto of Futurism* the almost religious morality of speed is even more striking and can be seen through the Durkheimian dichotomy between the sacred and the profane: 'Speed, having as its essence the intuitive synthesis of every force in movement, is naturally *pure*. Slowness, having as its essence the rational analysis of every exhaustion in repose, is naturally *unclean*. After the destruction of the antique good and the antique evil, we create a new good, speed, and a new evil, slowness' (Marinetti 2009: 58; emphases original). To this end, Taylor suggests that by eliminating all intermediate periods, shortages and deficits,

and by synthesizing every force in the production process into a unity, the principles of result-oriented scientific management would come into use practically 'throughout the civilized world ... and sooner they come the better for all the people' (Taylor 1967: 29). The utopian promise shared by Taylor and Marinetti in their moral and aesthetic praise of speed had a subtle resonance with the system introduced by Henry Ford.

Ford understood that mass production also – and essentially – means mass consumption, 'a new system of the reproduction of labour power, a new politics of labour control and management, a new aesthetic and psychology, in short, a new kind of rationalized, modernist, and populist democratic society' (Harvey 1989: 126). Harvey's claim shows how labour processes can have far-reaching consequences that leak into a great many spheres of social and individual lives. Here we can see how labour organization and process transcends the workplace and enters the collective consciousness, cultural milieu and individual psyche. Fordist social engineering established the imperative of acceleration of work and life in the name of accumulation. Ford and Taylor thus translated the industrial promises of acceleration and subsequently managed to deploy potential associated with mechanical speed onto the labour process. Their overarching task was 'developing in the worker to the highest degree of automatic and mechanical attitudes, breaking up the old psycho-physical nexus of qualified professional work, which demands a certain active participation of intelligence, fantasy and initiative on the part of the worker, and reducing productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, physical aspect' (Gramsci 1971: 302).

Gramsci also noted that Fordism and Taylorism were 'the biggest collective effort to date to create ... and with a consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and a new type of man' (Gramsci 1971: 302). New methods of rationalized work became 'inseparable from a specific mode of living and of thinking and feeling life' (*ibid.*). As a matter of fact, what Gramsci discerned were the elements of Ford's initial plan for the total management of workers' time. Ford, for example, established a 'sociological department' staffed by controllers who supervised and disciplined the workers' use of time and money. We may find similar and even stronger reincarnations of Ford's utopia elsewhere: in Czechoslovakia during the 1920s and 1930s, the Bat'a brothers (founders of the prominent global shoe company) adopted Fordist and Taylorist principles and intended to create a 'new man' for a 'new world'. The Bat'as successfully deployed acceleration as an organizing principle, and their example helps us to articulate the defining interface of speed and capitalism. Capitalist axioms of competition and

accumulation, and the associated organization of labour, are, in fact, directly related to the experience and impression of acceleration in the life-world. Acceleration, as a source of profit, is a capitalist necessity: the faster large quantities are produced, the more surplus is generated. In this sense, acceleration is intrinsic to the rationalization techniques of production that determine capitalist expectations. Subsequently job requirements (which are always intimately linked to accumulation) are shaped and imposed on the labour force and an increase of the speed of work tasks is enforced. Even though such an anatomy may seem outmoded in post- or late modernity, there is evidence aplenty that the industrial features of acceleration still hold and account for an important aspect of the working and personal life of the modern individual, even if they presently, in the knowledge economy, operate on different geographical, societal and sectoral scales. As we will see later on, the organizational principles established by Taylor and Ford have a strong resemblance in the contemporary audit cultures re-configuring academic work and subjectivity.

Intensive and extensive dimensions: post-Fordist accelerated growth

In spite of the eventful, indeed, hyper-eventful, character of the capitalist economy, there appears to be a recurrent logic at the centre of the flux that generates a continuous, monotonously repetitive pattern. This recurrent logic must, in some sense, be extremely abstract, since the concrete institutions and materials through which the repetitive pattern itself change radically over time. (Sewell 2008: 521)

If the analysis above is correct, then the principles promoting incessant speeding-up are integral to the fixed reproductive mechanisms of the capitalist mode of production. However, there is another, associated sense, in which acceleration of production and labour can be viewed: when the inner 'anatomical' dynamics of competition and accumulation 'instincts' described above encounter their limits. Here, more than in the inner dynamics of capitalism, we will concentrate on how it has developed and been transformed in recent decades, both internally and externally.

There are three intertwined domains in which we can localize the drivers of acceleration: transformation processes associated with a crisis of accumulation; the 'digital revolution'; and the associated cultural implications. All three sometimes fall under the banner of Post-Fordism

(Amin 1994). However, the Post-Fordist dynamic hardly accounts for the radical break with existing capitalist imperatives traced in the previous section. Rather, we are dealing with path-dependent modifications, reorganizations and refinements of the existing coordinates, and their deepening, extensifications and intensifications. Even though competition and accumulation as acceleration-inflicted principles underpinning the capitalist economy and workplace remain more or less unchanged, there are specific processes within the overarching framework of capitalism's acceleration imperatives that increase the velocities of particular processes. Harvey, in capturing some over-determining transformative processes associated with Post-Fordism, says:

Speed-up was achieved in production by organizational shifts towards vertical disintegration – sub-contracting, outsourcing, etc. – that reversed the Fordist tendency towards vertical integration and produced an increasing roundaboutness in production even in the face of increasing financial centralization. Other organizational shifts – such as the ‘just-in-time’ delivery system that reduces stock inventories – when coupled with the new technologies of electronic control, small-batch production, etc., all reduced turnover times in many sectors of production (electronics, machine tools, automobiles, construction, clothing, etc.). For the labourers this all implied an intensification (speed-up) in labour processes and an acceleration in the de-skilling and re-skilling required to meet new labour needs. (Harvey 1989: 284–285)

These shifts were driven by a ‘crisis of accumulation’ resulting from Fordism in the early 1970s (Arrighi 2009; Harvey 2010; Streeck 2012b). The ‘crisis’, in our context, can be read as a *slowdown* of accumulation inherent to the Fordist regime of accumulation. Streeck captures this pertinently: ‘As workers began to rebel, demanding an increasing share of profits after two decades of uninterrupted growth and full employment, customers were also becoming more difficult. Throughout the west, markets for mass-produced, standardized consumer durables were showing signs of saturation. Basic needs had by and large been covered ...’ (2012b: 30). Re-organization of labour, actively deploying methodical and technological innovations, ‘re-energized’ stable deep-seated acceleration imperatives of competition and accumulation. New developments and dynamics in labour processes, macroeconomy and regulation trends (Amin 1994; Jessop 1994) were a systemic reaction of the capitalist economies that faced a reproduction crisis. After post-war development, growth-potential suffered a burnout – the speed at

which capital circulated from one stage/form to another was 'too slow' and effectively destabilizing for the systemic workings of capitalism. A twin re-start/re-acceleration leverage could be identified in the realms of accumulation (for the realm of consumption see Streeck 2012b).

First, there is capitalism's own adaptive capacity by geographical/territorial and sectoral expansion: 'there is no need for capitalist expansion to be caused from the outside once a capitalist economy has been put in place, as the tendency to expand is a fundamental property of capitalism. Any capitalism that is worth its name, or money, is necessarily on the move, and always from within' (Streeck 2012a: 5). Hartmut Rosa's occasional collaborator Klaus Dörre advances a different yet complementary perspective. He proposes that capitalist development could be characterized by 'periodic de- and re-constructions of social time regimes' (2011: 70). In relation to this, Dörre re-introduces Rosa Luxemburg's concept of capitalist *Landnahme*. At its core, the concept states that capitalism, 'as far as it is based on a general commodification and therefore on equivalent exchange, is by no means able to reproduce itself exclusively from within itself. In all its metamorphoses, it remains structurally dependent on a non-capitalist other' (Dörre 2011: 74). Dörre suggests that even the non-capitalist other (for instance, knowledge, universities, the higher education sector) is folded into the dominant capitalist time regime. The principle of *Landnahme* (loosely translated as 'gaining ground' or 'land-grabbing'), which conceives a distinct capitalist rationality – particularly the principles of competition and accumulation – tends to be transferred increasingly to a number of social spheres (2011: 83). The current form of the capitalist time regime, according to Dörre, to which the process of social acceleration is integral, is characterized by structurally distributed *discontinuous time* that targets 'the very core of human individuality, the mind and individual time management' (2011: 86). In Dörre's conception, acceleration, despite being an overwhelming condition of late-modern capitalism, is therefore extremely uneven: 'The implementation of flexible ways of production is accompanied by a far-reaching invasion of the time sovereignty of majorities in society. This matter-of-fact expropriation of the control of disposal of work time and life time is taking place in a socially differentiated manner' (2011: 87). The differentiated social time regime of capitalism is therefore dialectically linked to its constitutive parameters and imperatives but is also determined by their limits.

Secondly, the 'land-grabbing' of the non-capitalist other was underpinned by a particular political trend. The so-called neoliberal project considerably 'lubricated' the elimination of the spectre of a slowdown

and helped to establish a distinctive social time regime. Neoliberalism in various guises and under different auspices has

dismantled or relaxed many national regulations in favour of global rules encouraging or enforcing free trade and the global flow of capital in pursuit of the highest return; it has promoted the financialization of social relations, extending the logic of capital to new areas of life ... The effect has been to promote capital accumulation as a principle of societalization at the expenses of other principles and, although the public rationales for this (such are the virtues of free markets and competition) are false, they are nonetheless integrated into societal self-description and have real consequences. (Jessop 2012: 205)

It has been argued that Fordist long-term strategies of capital accumulation have been replaced, or at least complemented, by accelerating, short-term profit-making arrangements that are enabled by real-time financial operations and the associated deployment of ever-more efficient ICT (Hope 2006; 2009; 2011; Jessop 2012; MacKenzie 2014a; 2014b). Constantly revolutionizing technologies of accumulation strategies and the social dominance of the politically advanced logic of capital generates a distinct temporal order that is characterized by 'supraterritorial real-time oriented flows of money and information' (Hope 2009: 70). Harvey, in this respect, further notes that:

Accelerating turnover time in production entails parallel accelerations in exchange and consumption. Improved systems of communication and information flow, coupled with rationalizations in techniques of distribution (packaging, inventory control, containerization, market feed-back, etc.), made it possible to circulate commodities through the market system with greater speed. Electronic banking and plastic money were some of the innovations that improved the speed of the inverse flow of money. Financial services and markets (aided by computerized trading) likewise speeded up, so as to make, as the saying has it, 'twenty-four hours a very long time' in global stock markets. (Harvey 1989: 285)

Modern production and communication technologies in this context have become the 'nervous system of globalising capital ... computers, microchips, satellites and cable networks shape the reach, velocity and supervening power of global finance' (Hope 2009: 66) and arguably cannot be omitted from any serious analysis of the rhythms of contemporary capitalism.

These tendencies are important in a sense that they restructure the temporal dimension of contemporary capitalism in a way that has not been fully appreciated and understood – mostly due to the concern over a possible accusation of technological determinism. Only recently have some scholars attempted to analyse the ‘Internet’s unholy marriage to capitalism’ (Foster and McChesney 2011; see also Carr 2010; Morozov 2011; Manzerolle and Kjoson 2012; Lucas 2012); illuminate the ubiquitous presence of smartphones and ‘iCapitalism as a horizon of unprecedented conformity, control and compulsion and yet as fluid, open to new interventions and organizations’ (Agger 2011: 126; see also Turkle 2011); and ethnographically analyse high-frequency trading (MacKenzie 2014a). The nexus between technological acceleration and capitalism arguably plays a significant role in the ways in which, on the one hand, established temporal fixes – through which money capital is realized through production, productive capital is realized through commodities and commodities are realized as money (Hope 2009: 67; 2006) – erode and disintegrate. On the other hand, the real-time logic of fast capital and short-term profits compresses and challenges the temporal horizons of long-term accumulation strategies by fostering new hegemonic circuits of financial capital. Furthermore, Hope stresses the relationship between finance capital and ICT, which represents ‘a distinct historical conjuncture in the development of global capitalism’ (2006: 278). Here he refers to the extensiveness of the global reach of regional events, decisions and activities, and the magnitude of interconnectedness facilitated by numerous communication channels. Fast capital circulates and by extension fast profits are realized through these newly emerging channels. Thus, the key feature of contemporary capitalism’s social time regime is that it ‘involves the intensification of “discrete” events in real time and/or the increased velocity of material and immaterial flows over a given distance’ (Jessop 2009: 136–137).

A globally spread ‘multi-nodal financial system’ (Hope 2006: 278) is increasingly autonomous and independent from the ‘real’ economy (and even more so from regional and national economies) and yet it directly affects, if not determines, them – as the financial crisis of 2007–2009 has demonstrated (Hope 2011). This constitutes an interesting intra-temporal contradiction of capitalism whereby ‘digitally driven (near) instantaneity of finance capital colonizes the slower, sequential time frames of productive capital’ (Hope 2006: 280). In other words, the extensive and intensive financial system, based on ‘digitally driven finance capital [that] perpetuates self-contained M-M circuits which are parasitic upon productive investment and infrastructural development’

(Hope 2006: 282), became sources of dominant temporal imperatives. In this regard, Bob Jessop situates acceleration in the centre of late modern economic globalization:

The most recent wave of globalization (dating loosely from the 1980s, depending on one's reference point) is distinctive less for the growing planetary integration of events, processes, institutions, systems and the life-world than it is for the growing *speed* of these interconnections and their successive ramifications thanks to new material and social technologies that facilitate more rapid integration and faster spread of its repercussions. (Jessop 2012: 204, emphasis original)

This is a plausible and strong argument that underscores the centrality of temporality and rhythm – and specifically certain contradictory temporalities – in which contemporary capitalism operates. At the same time it is a viable line of criticism against the recent language developed by various social analysts, such as Castells, who proposed a new conceptual vocabulary (i.e. spaces of flows and timeless time) to capture time and space as elusive categories when analysing contemporary capitalist modernity. As Hope convincingly argues, ‘the prevalent, hyper-speed time of finance capital is at odds with the strategic outlook of large-scale production. It is therefore absurd to suggest that capital in general can escape from time’ (Hope 2006: 290). After this excursus into the political economy of contemporary capitalism's speed we will now turn to some of the cultural implications of these developments.

The cultural logic of acceleration: racing and competing

We are living in a fast-changing world. Only what is new is relevant to the consumer. Therefore, we have to relentlessly focus on ‘creating the new’ for our consumers. And we have to constantly re-invent ourselves as an organisation to lead the change in our industry. Going forward, speed will be a key competitive advantage for us as we transform the Adidas Group into the first true fast sports company. (Herbert Hainer, Adidas Group CEO, 26 March 2015)²

It is now possible to say that capitalism is endogenously dynamic and a dynamically unstable social system (Streeck 2012a: 4). Moreover we see how the temporal dynamic constitutes capitalism's structural character. Capitalist axioms underpinned by different modalities of the logic of acceleration discussed above conceive dominant ‘modes

of societalization', which may include specific cultural undercurrents mobilized by the logic of acceleration. Under these circumstances, racing (competing) and growing (accumulating) have become morally-charged justifications and drivers in public and institutional discourses, and also by extension in individual life-worlds. Furthermore, the organizing principle of competition – which is legitimized by neoliberal politics – essentially means depriving one's peers of their livelihood by outbidding them in the absence of a ceiling on legitimate economic gains (Streeck 2012a: 5). This in turn, according to Streeck, generates fear and greed – two sources for the characteristic restlessness and compulsiveness of a capitalist society. Similarly, Rosa notes that the principle of profit-oriented and market-mediated competition by far exceeds the growth-oriented capitalist economy (2010a: 27). Later chapters will address the relationship between competitiveness and acceleration in academia.

Other spheres of life outside of the economy are, according to Rosa, too determined by the logic of competitive acceleration, which in turn establishes allocative and distributive patterns for privileges, positions, social statuses and recognitions. In politics 'the privilege and position of power is given to the person or party who wins in an electoral competition'; in science 'the positions of a professor or senior researcher as well as the resources for carrying out scientific projects are earned in a competitive struggle'; in arts 'where one either has to beat competitors by selling more tickets books or records ... or by impressing the jury'; in religion where 'denominations and churches compete over the faithful' (Rosa 2010a: 27). Determining and discriminating components in competitive negotiation is a temporal achievement where 'speeding up and saving time are directly linked to gaining [or losing] competitive advantage' (Rosa 2010a: 28). As a result, competitors need to invest an increasing amount of energy into preserving their competitiveness and maintaining their momentary status and position. This logic gives rise to the experience of the 'rat race' and an ongoing sense of 'having not enough time' and 'never-ending busyness' in individual life-worlds. However, as Dörre reminds us, these experiences are extremely unequal: 'those who have been "forcibly de-accelerated", the precarized and excluded among the population, just as well as the privileged caught in their hamster wheel race, are affected by the "logic of the capitalist system" in different ways' (Dörre 2011: 88).

These developments, accompanying capitalism's acceleration imperatives and transmitting them to the domain of higher education, can be substantiated by looking into the world of business and managerial practices. In advancing his own version of post-Fordism, Nigel Thrift (2000)

develops an account that captures the ‘interpellation of fast subjects’ and complements Rosa’s conception of competition-cum-acceleration. Thrift notes that in a post-Fordist configuration of capitalism, management cultures in firms and corporations are reshuffled. Fast subjects are interpellated in several ways. Business practices assume specific ‘skills’ and ‘style’: high levels of stamina, endurance, quick and effective decision-making ability, flexibility, and agility.³ These are properties and cultural modalities of top management of big firms – of ‘speed winners’ – who ‘confront remorseless pressure toward the short-term ... face remorseless pressure to be creative, while also conforming to the assumptions of bureaucratic auditing. Against this background, what is striking are the efforts to produce new kinds of “fast” management subjects able to swim with the current. They must be calculating subjects, able to withstand the exigencies of increasingly faster return’ (Thrift 2000: 676). The emergence of such discourse is complementary to the centrality of speed in the ideological proposition backing contemporary capitalism – as seen in the quote from Adidas’s CEO in the heading of this section. However, being fast is a ‘style’ that individuals often want to attain (Thrift 2000: 678), and academics are not excluded from such dynamics. Thrift, referring to Walter Benjamin (2005), says that firms and their managers live in a permanent *state of emergency* and have to ‘generate just enough organizational stability to change in an orderly fashion while maintaining hair-trigger responsiveness to adapt to the expectedly unexpected’ (Thrift 2000: 674). Thrift attributes the emergence of the discourse of permanent emergency to a shift in the ‘style’ that governs a repertoire of managerial and business practices: ‘style is a means of making different things significant and worthy of notice’ (*ibid.*). We will return to this issue in subsequent chapters.

Turning to a ‘fast-changing world’ shibboleth hails and demands new skills, capacities and responses. Thrift sees two important moments as giving rise to this dogma: the proliferations of measurement techniques of financial short-term performance and, as discussed above, the general speeding-up of business conduct enabled predominantly by ICT (2000: 675–676). The ‘fast-changing world’ as a rhetorical device that accompanies these cultural implications conveys an important horizon of action and, as we will see, transgresses the managerial discourse integral to the business domain. Now it is commonplace in public and even academic discourse and mass media to proclaim that we live in a rapidly changing world and that readiness, responsiveness and ‘competitiveness’ are the ultimate organizing dicta. Slowdown is often conceived as an unattractive, regressive and undesirable principle that is synonymous

with crisis, decay and dysfunction (Honoré 2011).⁴ As Thrift notes, the ‘fast-changing world’ is a powerfully engineered managerial imaginary that itself contains mobilizing potential (2000: 680). Reversed reasoning, which maintains speed and its increasing rates as the spectre, is present in many critical commentaries on acceleration. Exploration of both the ethical and functional aspects of the ‘sluggishly’ paced tempo of democratic deliberation and collective will-formation in high-speed financial capitalism has preoccupied a number of important commentators and such discussion is highly relevant for the analysis of acceleration of and in academia.

The politics of de- and re-synchronization

Remarks on the temporal asymmetry between capitalism and democracy (if we can, at least analytically, make this grand distinction) are frequent (e.g. Agger 2004; Chesneaux 2000; Hassan 2009a; 2009b; Laux 2011) and increasingly significant for social and political analysis. Some commentators go beyond a mere reference to a ‘fast-changing world’ as a stable dictum and advance their own explanatory and nuanced apparatuses, which illuminate the reasons for the rapidly changing world and its potential problems. Occasionally referring to Rosa’s theory, increasing speed is, in these accounts, situated in the context of a ‘continuum’ of modernity and capitalism, and not as a *deus ex machina* challenging humanity. Furthermore, the debate takes place largely within normative democratic political theory (McIvor 2011) and, depending on its epistemological grounding, weighs the merits of speed *and* slowness. William E. Scheuerman (2004) offers the benchmark contribution in this respect. Augmenting Rosa’s theory of social acceleration, Scheuerman develops a temporal analysis of the pace and rhythms of democratic politics and makes a powerful claim around the slow temporality of political action, political philosophy and legislative procedure. He maintains that the western world (with his analysis grounded almost solely in the US context) now faces a radical temporal asymmetry in which social, cultural and economic life is too quick for the liberal democratic politics that were ‘designed’ for a differently paced and slower era of early modernity.

Another commentator influenced by Rosa’s theory proposes a state of ‘temporal paralysis of politics’ (Laux 2011). Acknowledging that acceleration has become a hegemonic and defining feature of modernity (Rosa 2005), Laux looks at Europe and the institutional landscape of some EU decision-making processes and policy implementation. The radical de-synchronization and ‘parallel temporal differentiation’ (Laux 2011: 230)

between various economic, social, political, institutional, cultural and individual subsystems seemingly reached a deadlock in their resources, requirements, horizons, rhythms and sequences: 'An increase in operational speed is not attainable in all subsystems ... and some areas of the world society have come to seem inflexible and "out of touch". Specifically, the process of democratic decision-making appears to have reached its natural speed limit some time ago' (Laux 2011: 231). Laux's position is based on two core assumptions: the erosion of political rationality (at the expense of expert, technological and scientific rationality) and the reduction of politics into ad hocery and experimentation. These propositions are rooted in some core theses of complexity theory (see also for example McLennan 2003). Laux claims: 'The constitutive promise of rationality in politics can only be honored when it is possible to manage the social and structural challenges of the present. But how can this goal be reached? Is the "temporalization of complexity" a possible strategy? Can political actors resort to a meta-resource to replace the solid ground upon which to begin new decision-making' (2011: 230)? Laux remains pessimistic when addressing these questions and says: 'The discrete time demands of the parliamentary process remain essentially unchanged in the last decades and politics has become transformed from the pace-setter of social development into the main hindrance in the modern context. The result of this development is a massive desynchronization between tempo of political decisions and that of social evolution' (Riescher in Laux 2011: 231; Rosa 2005).

What is at stake is an implosion of the 'temporal sovereignty' of the democratic state, its institutions and the public sphere. This radical asynchronicity between the pace of capitalism and traditional state-democratic institutions generates clashes, tensions and contradictions that prompt various forms of reactions, mitigations, integrations, and resistance. Whilst the following debates and theories focus on parliamentary and legislative processes, my fieldwork indicates that temporal tensions also occur within the broader context of the transformation of academia (cf. Pels 2003). This will be further expounded in later chapters. For the moment, we can proceed by illuminating the main strands in the debate. There are three contrasting, but in some ways complementary, positions reflecting on the problem of the collision of different temporal orders, which we can brand as 'adaptational/reflexive', 'vitalist/pluralist' and 'protective/separationist'. Additionally, there is an internal tension within capitalism that will be referred to as 'contradictory/reproductive' in the discussion.

Scheuerman (2004) asserts that the slow-motion deliberation and decision-making inherent to the cognitive merits of liberal democracy are in jeopardy due to the rising dominance of executive powers siding with the forces of acceleration. His response might be framed as adaptational/reflexive. The response he lays out is that institutional adjustments will reform and revitalize liberal democracy under the conditions of social acceleration. These essentially amount to an elimination of unnecessary sluggishness in political deliberations: 'unless we can improve the decision-making operations of liberal democracy, it remains unlikely that we can successfully negotiate the challenges of social speed' (2004: 195). He then suggests three arenas for reform: firstly, that high-speed ICT should sustain broad public debate and deliberation; secondly, that law-making procedures could better exploit and reflect the possibilities of speed; and thirdly, that it is inevitable to update legislative operations by establishing 'reflexive law' which is predicated on the possibility of advancing decision-making infrastructures sensitive to external influences of acceleration and its side effects. By implementing these measures 'we can take a modest step toward recalibrating liberal democracy in accordance with our age of speed' (2004: 224). Scheuerman's 'institutional and temporal reformism' is deeply implicated in his view of social acceleration. Its 'totality' – as advanced by Rosa – represents an irrevocable facet of contemporary existence because acceleration 'is here to stay' (2004: 187). Simultaneously, not only is slow impossible, it is also an undesirable antidote to speed: 'Notwithstanding its many pathologies, social speed contributes directly to the liberties that we moderns take for granted, and a frontal assault on social acceleration risks becoming an attack on modernity's most worthwhile accomplishments' (2004: 194).

It is a balanced, compelling and attractive argument, but is it really the case that 'speed of social change and the dynamics of socioeconomic, cultural and technological development threaten to undermine the proper functioning of democracy' (Rosa 2005: 446)? Have democratic institutions altogether failed to deliver their modernist promises in the conditions of an accelerating world? Do they need to be 're-synchronized'? Are speed and acceleration overwhelmingly taxing features of economic/technological/capitalist structures and cultures? If the rhythms of democratic polity are fully subordinate to those of fast capital then Scheuerman's analysis is correct. If, however, we adopt a different perspective and admit – in a rather anti-Luhmannite manner – that the praxis and administrative operations of liberal democracy and its institutions, as well as its temporal structures and evolution, have always been actively engaged

and deeply entangled in the accelerative determinants of capitalism, then Scheuerman's approach might not be entirely convincing. William E. Connolly and Simon Glezos advance this perspective and claim that it might be useful to explore speed and its increasing rates as an ambiguous medium that contains positive possibilities.

Connolly departs from the same assumption as Scheuerman, yet his response operates on a slightly different level of abstraction, resulting in analogically different foundational assumptions for his arguments. Connolly's organizing claim, anchored in his long-standing neo-vitalist views on democratic culture and pluralism, is that democratic politics needs to embrace the constantly shifting grounds of accelerating capitalism while protecting zones of slowness: 'perhaps the best way to proceed is to strive to modulate the fastest and most dangerous military and corporate forces while intervening politically with accelerated process of communication, travel and population flows' (2002: 148). This 'double orientation' of the democratic polity's engagement with acceleration should contain both resistance to the fastest and most dangerous features of modernity and 'rhizomatic' potential for embracing accelerative rhythms. This will prevent the democratic polity from sedimentation, fixation, fundamentalism and hierarchy (similar to, albeit a more radical version of, Scheuerman's view of slowness). Acceleration and volatility, according to Connolly's vitalist/pluralist response, are preconditions for pluralizing 'becoming-' democracy, which is an inherent site of tension and dissonance: 'by freezing actors to stone they expunge the very traits of citizenship crucial to a fast-paced world' (2002: 161). Embracing 'good speed' and resisting slowness is crucial for Connolly. A quickening tempo of life sets a crucial condition of possibility for the 'vibrant practice of democratic pluralism' (2002: 162). Connolly asserts that it is more possible to negotiate democratic ethos 'congruent with accelerated tempo of modern life than it is either to slow the world down or to insulate the majority of people from the effects of speed' (ibid.). The romantic nostalgia for a slower and simpler life may inspire an 'accusatory culture', thinks Connolly. Those who identify themselves with dynamic acceleration – such as managers, technophiles and, despite all odds, even scientists and academics as we will see – may be vilified and accused of destroying 'inherently slow' nature and human authenticity (Grove 2010: 192); the devotees of progressive social movements, sexual and other minorities and so on might be viewed as disruptive elements challenging 'stable' and 'certified' values and consequently perceived as 'paradigmatic agents of nomadism, fashion, promiscuity, style, instability, anchorless amorality, nihilism, or narcissism ... [for those who]

insulate capitalism from critique and express nostalgia for the long, slow time of the putative nation' (Connolly 2002: 162).

Glezos advances and substantiates some of Connolly's points. He claims that 'accelerative technologies and a general social acceleration of time provide at least as many possibilities for democratic activity as they do pitfalls, and that a careful consideration of these possibilities can serve to foster democracy in spite of these changes, as well as because of them. Acceleration, though a challenge to democracy, is not fundamentally opposed to it' (2012: 16). Here Glezos challenges the ways in which acceleration is conceptualized, by Rosa and Scheurman in particular, but also by critics of acceleration such as Hassan and Agger. He notes that 'accelerative technologies provide the legislature with the possibility of being, if not as "energetic" as the executive, certainly a lot less sluggish than the liberal narrative of speed [of which Scheurman is the main representative] takes for granted' (ibid.). Glezos notes that that the rise of the executive and 'fast-policy making regime' is not anchored in the functional threat which acceleration imposes on the democratic state institutions and practices, but it rather stems from the existential threat that acceleration embodies: 'the push for increased executive authority is the result of an existential resentment against speed, against the uncertainty and destabilization which acceleration brings to fixed narratives of political community and identity' (2012: 13). According to Glezos, the thesis postulated by Scheurman is based on a flawed interpretation and ontology of acceleration. It is not the slower, differently paced tempo of the democratic state which is being replaced by a faster executive pace of decision-making that is best adapted to the accelerated pace of late capitalism, but fear and *ressentiment* against acceleration and an open future that fosters anti-democratic and authoritarian sentiments – for instance the fear of the 'speed of collapse' (Hassan 2011) and all sorts of looming 'ticking-bomb scenarios' (Glezos 2012: 10–42). In fact, for Glezos, despite his admission that 'acceleration produces grave challenges to political, economic and social life' (2012: 9), it also yields beneficent conditions for progressive democratic polity: 'it is not just the process of change which identifies speed, but also the element of the unexpected, the unpredicted, the surprising' (Glezos 2012: 24) that needs to be accounted for.

Sheldon Wolin (1997), similarly to Scheurman, assumes that the accelerated rhythms of the capitalist system pose considerable challenges for the democratic polity, yet his approach differs radically from the previous ones, particularly in his conceptualization of slow time being integral not so much to administrative matters, but to democratic citizenship.

State-democratic institutions that adopt this temporality would betray the ethos of democracy by accepting the anti-democratic principles inherent to capitalism. Thus there is a need to conceptually and practically protect and separate democratic temporality integral to its institutions. If accelerated, democratic praxis would turn into mere 'shadow boxing' (2005) because democratic time is:

political time [that] is out of synch with the temporalities, rhythms, and pace governing economy and culture. Political time, especially in societies with pretensions to democracy, requires an element of leisure, not in the sense of a leisure class (which is the form in which the ancient writers conceived it), but in the sense, say, of a leisurely pace. This is owing to the needs of political action to be preceded by deliberation and deliberation, as its 'deliberate' part suggests, takes time because, typically, it occurs in a setting of competing or conflicting but legitimate considerations. Political time is conditioned by the presence of differences and the attempt to negotiate them. The results of negotiations, whether successful or not, preserve time ... Thus time is 'taken' in deliberation yet 'saved'. That political time has a preservative function is not surprising. Since time immemorial political authorities have been charged with preserving bodies, goods, souls, practices, and circumscribed ways of life. (Wolin 1997: paragraph 4)

In contrast to Connolly and Glezos, Wolin maintains it is localities and sites where this type of time may flourish and inflict an embryonic counter-acceleration condition. Wolin aims at the resuscitation of his version of radical democratic citizenship, practices and habits by employing the idea of agitation.

In comparison with Scheuerman, but also similarly to Connolly and Glezos, Wolin yields to the possibility, albeit limitedly, of 'good speed'. 'To agitate', Wolin notes, is both to energetically stir up, perturb and excite *as well as* to discuss slowly and deliberately. In the first instance, energetic, frenetic, disruptive tempo of democratic agitation surely exploits accelerative forces (be it technologies or, metaphorically, the ebullience and passion of agitators). After all, the aim of revolutions and their fervour is 'to disrupt the ordinary tempos of the political process' (Wolin 2005: 2). Revolution-cum-disruption of the status quo 'in which substantial part of the population participates represent an effort to hurry events, and make things happen more rapidly than the resistance to change – the slow pace associated with the regime representative of past – allows' (Wolin 2005: 5). The second notion implies a sedate,

leisurely pace inherent to openness 'due to a presence of difference and a consequent need to persuade or reconcile' (Wolin 2005: 3). It is an action in slow motion where the tempo is governed by procedures that protect the expression of will, deliberation and difference. Nevertheless, the balance between the fiery and deliberative aspects of agitation is co-opted by a 'troika effect'

issuing from the union of capital, technology and science. That combination of powers has made possible a unique revolutionary tempo. By enlisting technological innovation and scientific discovery and joining them with its own impulses, capital has produced an unprecedented form of power. The combination has quickened the rate of change throughout the world, hurrying premodern societies into postmodernity, shaking up social structures, undermining traditional authorities ... the troika effect set the tempo of our times; in the process it has rendered obsolete the modern conception of revolution as aimed at a culminating moment when democratic and egalitarian forces would have triumphed and the frenzied time of revolution would give way to the new and measured tempo of consolidation. (Wolin 2005: 8–9)

Wolin's main point is this: the protection of slow motion democracy requires massive energy and a degree of agility, which would stem from locally situated antipodes with the capacity to challenge the revolutionary tempo of what he calls the troika effect.

David McIvor advances Wolin's approaches and makes explicit connections to the Slow Food movement (Andrews 2008), which would reconcile 'the speed of modern life with a deep commitment to nurturing sites of commonality through a decelerated family of practices' (McIvor 2011: 82). The ethos of slowness is elevated to a normative emancipatory force, which he says is not a 'nostalgic movement for "authentic" living but a savvy relationship between slow-time practice and fast-paced and globalized communication and transportation networks' (ibid.). It also effectively reminds us that democratic political action is founded on 'slow nurturance of relationships and identities over time and across space' (ibid.). The Slow Food example and its ethics, according to McIvor, may serve as a 'guide' for revisiting and maintaining the idea of commons 'best achieved through slow-time practices of negotiating shared grievances with other in our local political spaces' (ibid.).

Whereas the previous positions focus mainly on the specific consequences of fast capitalism for the state and governance, it is possible

to identify another temporal tension relevant for further analysis. It appears that there is an important acceleration-related temporal contradiction not only *between* differently paced social domains but also *within* the capitalist system itself. Such a temporal condition might be called contradictory/reproductive. Not only left-leaning critics, but also capitalism's cheerleaders, business pundits and the neoliberal political class recognize that, by default, capitalism cannot hibernate, stagnate, stop, *stand still*: 'The forces of capital were never interested in preservation; they were never "conservative" in that sense' (Vogl 2014: 4). The compulsive need to swiftly generate innovations in the form of commodities is at the heart of the capitalist system. Rosa notes how capitalist entrepreneurs obtain a competitive advantage through acquisition and exploitation of time 'through the introduction of new production technologies or new products [which are] ... of fundamental importance for the generation of the "surplus profits" necessary for survival in the struggle for competition' (2013: 162). In effect, this 'race for time' means that capitalist entrepreneurs seek to sell commodities in a shorter time period 'at clearly higher prices than the costs of production' and/or produce them for much lower costs than presently dominating 'market value before the competition catches up' (2013: 162). Therefore innovation cycles and technical or technological progress – and indeed the 'shortening of product life cycles' – needs to be in a constant accelerative motion. It is not only vital for the survival of a capitalist entrepreneur, but this logic seems to be a key propellant that provides an explanatory framework capturing the structural need to introduce ever-new products in ever-shorter periods. If capitalism stops and does not generate innovations, crises and creative destructions follow. Hence comes the paradox:

On one hand, converging digital technologies enable major capitalist enterprises to exploit the capacities of real-time communication networks. Profit is a function of the drive towards internetworked instantaneity. For financiers, corporate executives, industrial designers and marketers, the central question is: can lengths of lags of time be reduced or eliminated? The net result is a contraction in the temporal horizons of profit and a general acceleration of economic activity. On the other hand, capitalism must reproduce itself over time. All capitalist economies, capitalist sectors and business organizations must acknowledge the temporalities of duration, sequence, planning and chronological ordering. These temporal prerequisites of capitalist stability also find expression in the extra-economic

frameworks of government, law, representative institutions and civil society. (Hope 2009: 63)

Capitalism thus needs to be in continuous movement, expanding, growing, constantly generating innovations; mobilizing and moving its internal contradictions, geographically and sectorally (Harvey 2010). Capitalist infrastructures that enable heightening rhythms of capital circulation and exchange are often, if not always, underpinned by innovation processes and temporal path-dependencies. Such motions and the very propellants of capitalist production, however, require and assume a substantial amount of time to develop, establish, and take shape. David Mowery and Nathan Rosenberg noticed that when it comes to commercial innovations, a 'huge [temporal] gap typically exists between a scientific breakthrough and a new product or process' (1998: 1). They further highlight that the 'paths of innovations' are protracted, rarely linear and almost never fast. Various sorts of intermediate arrangements, and auxiliary and unexpected inventions are needed for commercial deployment, and redesigns, (re)adaptations and reorganizations are necessary to realize the complex production processes and often multi-directional paths that separate an idea from its commercial application. The time needed for multiple socio-technological developments and arrangements typically takes years and decades (1998: 2–3). Discussing the innovation process, Keith Pavitt furthermore illuminates three overlapping innovation sub-processes: 'the production of knowledge; the transformation of knowledge into artifacts – by which we mean products, systems, processes, and services; and the continuous matching of the latter to market needs and demands' (Pavitt 2004: 86). Tracking complex developments in chemistry, electric engineering and electronics, Mowery and Rosenberg state: '[The] process of learning, modification, and refinement, along with often prolonged process of adoption of these new technologies, means that even in this technologically revolutionary century, realization of the economic effects of new technologies requires considerable time' (1998: 2)

Here we encounter a fundamental internal contradiction of the capitalist system: on the one hand capitalism assumes faster circulation of commodities, information, peoples, tastes, fashions, news, styles and so on in order to reproduce itself; it needs ever-new (technological) infrastructures and commodities for capital circulation. On the other hand economic, social and technological innovations (even in the most proto-capitalist domains) that *condition and enable* such faster circulation simply take time; they take shape in often unpredictable and contingent

temporal cycles which depend on manifold external and institutional circumstances and are difficult or even impossible to speed up.

Simply put, economic, social and technological innovations that enable the fast motion of capitalist circuits *need time* – time for developing, mobilizing, applying, scaling, massifying innovations of whatever kind. As Rosa notes: ‘society’s creative capacity for truly innovative responses to changing conditions might require quite a considerable amount of “free” or abundant time-resources which allow for play, boredom and idleness as well as for wasteful and seemingly erroneous time-allocation’ (2010a: 73). Zones of ‘slower time’ represent foundational reproductive mechanisms enabling capitalist acceleration. Rosa continues: ‘various forms of moratoria are developed and implemented ... in order to make time for the solution of fundamental technical, social, legal, or even environmental problems that appear to be an obstacle to further endeavors to accelerate or modernize’ (2013: 87). The main property of such zones is ‘functional (acceleratory) deceleration’ (2010a: 36). Ironically, capitalist acceleration, therefore, assumes background conditions of de-accelerated nature, institutional mechanisms of ‘shackles and breaks’.

Moreover, *any* innovation or invention, whether institutionalized or not and regardless of its channelling into or detachment from the capitalist rationality, assumes a very specific temporality. From artistic and cultural artifacts, arrangements of labour processes, technical, engineering and infrastructural solutions, advancements in biotechnological and experimental pharmaceutical research to archival work, indeed any creative, analytical investigation of social phenomena, essential activities accompanying scientific and academic production – all these activities require *time and duration* to take shape, emerge, be invented; not to mention the time necessary for their deployment and diffusion. It is paradoxical: the obsession to generate ever-new innovations at an ever-faster pace might, in fact, generate its exact opposite. Rosa in this respect says: ‘it might precisely be modern society’s tireless strive for incessant innovation and dynamization that undermines its capacity for essential innovation and creative adaptation’ (2010a: 73).

Conclusion

After identifying the interface where capitalist mechanisms and dynamics encounter speed, critically surveying theories that discuss political implications and possible responses to modalities of intensive capitalism, we will proceed to higher education. How do the articulations

developed in this chapter play out in the transformation of academia? Is the academy 'retreating' from the Humboldtian and Newmanian 'idea of university' and fully surrendering itself to the forces of capitalism; 'compressing' its infrastructures, operations and provisions; attempting to develop a platform for 'slow time'? Are universities being increasingly 're-synchronized' with the capitalist system and its material and cultural imperatives? Are universities becoming quasi-capitalist actors which, driven by the diktat of competitiveness and endless growth, are forced to generate ever-new yet conserving innovations? How do academics experience this transformation of the academic workplace? How do speed imperatives manifest, and with what consequences, in specifically circumvented diverse university sites? How does the cultural logic of acceleration – including 'racing' in the 'fast-changing' world – play out in the university sector? The rest of the book will tackle these questions. Chapter 3 will provide an examination of the transformation of academia by inquiring into the knowledge economy discourse – the fundamental framing of the transformation of academia over the last decades, stressing that knowledge and its production now constitute a distinctive and driving economic domain – by discussing four influential analytical approaches that will become a blueprint for subsequent analysis.

3

Vehicularity: The Idea of the Knowledge Economy

Academic institutions today are often run as market-driven businesses and expected to be core drivers of economic growth (for critical appraisals of this trend see e.g. De Angelis and Harvie 2009; Holmwood 2011c; Halfman and Radder 2015). Additionally, policy focus on higher education and state intervention in the modes of academic governance has increased to an unprecedented degree. In higher education policy documents, in speeches delivered by the top political class and in university statements, it has become the new normal to read things like this:

As part of our long-term plan to help secure Britain's economic future, I want to see higher education and enterprise work hand in glove to boost growth and create even more jobs. Our world-leading universities have historically been at the heart of innovation but we need to give them the tools to be even better at cultivating the seeds of growth as well as knowledge. (Cameron 2013)

Boosting growth, securing the economic future, the heart of innovation – this is common language in higher education policy discourse now dominant everywhere, not only the UK (see e.g. Kenney and Mowery 2014). Yet from where did such rhetoric and emphasis on economic gains deliverable by academic institutions emerge? Progressives and conservatives alike are preoccupied by the latent and overriding imperative of *change*. Paul du Gay says:

'Change' ... is frequently represented as unalloyed good. Indeed, it has become a matter of serious criticism to accuse an institution or an individual of being incapable of adjusting to – or, better still, 'thriving on' – change, or of failing to grasp its multitudinous 'opportunities.'

Change means transformation, not piecemeal reform, but radical transmutation: those who cannot or will not accede to its demands are 'history'. (2003: 664)

Most contemporary governments and policy-makers strive to change academia in ways which would enhance its ability to respond and correspond to contemporary expectations associated with socioeconomic realities and ideologies. Some critics, on the other hand – while maintaining that academia 'is to be allowed to exist as an organic institution, adapting to and evolving for an ever-changing social and cultural environment' (Docherty 2011: 3) – defend 'the idea of the university' from gradual decay inflicted by capitalist imperatives. Nowhere has this clash been more apparent than in the debates around the conception, role and value of *knowledge*. According to some neoliberals, knowledge is the new economic base and the field of competition for the global market; others tenaciously warn that knowledge, as seen only through an economic lens, has been degraded to commodity status and consequently divested of its core principles such as search, discovery, inventiveness and *Bildung* (Liessmann 2009).

At this point a slight detour is necessary: in order to situate this investigation of acceleration as a temporal imperative, cultural modality and experience, we must locate and qualify the ways in which academic institutions have been ideologically framed and gradually channelled into the (neoliberal) economy and, as previously discussed, into capitalist imperatives. For this purpose, the vehicularity of the idea of the knowledge economy will be addressed and critically analysed. The analysis will emphasize the centrality of understanding the limits and significance of the concept of knowledge and lay ground for further inquiry into temporal shifts in and of academia.

The idea of the knowledge economy¹ comprises a crucial starting point for assessment because it has become the dominant economic imaginary² and political strategy affecting the policies that have significantly driven higher education and science reforms in the last two or three decades. The knowledge economy is, however, hardly an accurate reflection of an 'actually existing economy' (Jessop 2008a) – something which would barely be possible anyway – but rather is a derivative of the post-Fordist capitalist mode of production, tracing and foreseeing desirable socioeconomic formations. The idea of the knowledge economy is rooted in various policy paradigms such as the 'National Systems of Innovation', as well as in voluminous intellectual assessments, narratives and predictions that have been tracking modern societal transformation since the 1950s.

The most prominent of these include Fritz Machlup's (1962), Daniel Bell's (1973), Peter Drucker's (1969), Alvin Toffler's (1970) and Alain Touraine's (1971) analyses of the role of knowledge and information in the post-Fordist capitalist mode of production, as addressed in the previous chapter. These commentators set out a particular intellectual agenda that has been dynamically evolving ever since. Beniger (1986) identifies 75 grand concepts and buzzwords capturing and describing the transformation. Carlaw et al. (2006) provide a comprehensive survey of the 'knowledge economy/society' and cognate terms, as well as various critical commentaries on them.³ They contend, however, that quantifiable and *non-circular* definitions variously illuminating, analysing and describing the knowledge society/economy are rather lacking. As this chapter argues, circularity can better be captured by the concept of 'vehicularity', which helps to map out the dynamics of the idea of the knowledge economy. The concluding section will highlight that the continuous need for change expressed in the idea of the knowledge economy is crucial to the 'stylistics of expertise and mediation', which are intertwined with capitalist imperatives and affect higher education policy discourse. The following chapter will show that this dynamic – along with the temporal preferences and horizons it unintentionally establishes – is not necessarily 'in sync' with the different tempos which are integral to institutional habitus and the integral routines of academia. Therefore, the argument developed in this chapter proceeds as follows.

First, I will explore the historical formation and origins of the knowledge economy as a hegemonic representation and concept that informs and resonates in theoretical and policy paradigms. I broadly follow Jessop's (2008b) approach in analysing the knowledge economy as an economic imaginary which has influentially shaped policies and strategies across many different fields of social practice and, importantly, which underpins theoretical and policy paradigms for the institutional design and orientation of academia. In the case of the knowledge economy, as an economic imaginary and assumption, Jessop proposes to investigate 'its origins, selection, and hegemonic stabilisation; its translation into and/or articulation with other discourses; and the manner and extent of its actualisation in specific policy initiatives in different arenas and their on-going implementation' (2008b: 2–3).

Following this scheme, I will briefly look at the intellectual genealogy of the imaginary by reviewing some notable accounts that explore the social meta-transformation from Fordist to post-Fordist social formations. Subsequently, I will exemplify the selective processes by investigating

the ways in which the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an important international economic organization stimulating economic growth and free-market ideology, and a major educational research think-tank, which has been actively promoting and guiding the idea of the knowledge economy. Assuming that such an idea has become an 'organic discourse', I will centre the discussion on Tom Osborne and Gregor McLennan's notion of 'vehicularity' (McLennan and Osborne 2003; Osborne 2004; McLennan 2004). I will show that the categories developed by Osborne with regard to intellectuals – legislator, expert, mediator and interpreter – can be applied not only to intellectuals, but also to institutions such as the OECD that can promote and mediate the idea of the knowledge economy. I will also argue that the idea of the knowledge economy is a 'propellant' in response to which academia is expected to 'keep up' with the economic imperatives, and also that mediators of the idea are themselves fast-moving and agile actors.

According to McLennan:

vehicular ideas have *something* of the principled theory or committed ideology to them, but in many ways are resistant to theorization in any rigorous sense. And this is not exactly their point. Rather, they serve as inclusive umbrellas under which quite a range of advocates can shelter, trade and shift their alignments and allegiances ... They serve to make things happen at a particular time, after which their time may be up. (2004: 485, emphasis original)

In this vein, I will describe the specific motion and dynamics of the idea of the knowledge economy itself, from the ways it has effectively been 'legislated' by leading OECD economists (especially Bengt-Ake Lundvall and Dominique Foray), and both 'legislated' *and* 'mediated' by the OECD as an institution, to the ways in which it is implicitly 'mediated', reincarnated and translated into an object of analysis assessing new modes of knowledge production, institutional settings and management of academia.

Secondly, I will analyse relatively recent and prominent concepts (Mode 2, Triple Helix, Academic Capitalism and Enterprise University) that capture the shifts in knowledge production and the transformation of university administration and governance. Particular attention will be paid to the overall claim that knowledge should be seen as an important resource – if not the *source* – of economic growth and development. Some of the concepts that will be explored – particularly Triple Helix and Mode 2 – have in themselves become resources for policy-making,

thus their authors can also be perceived as mediators of the idea of the knowledge economy. Here again, using the concept of vehicularity, I will look at the ways in which the economic imaginary is translated into discourses and objects of analysis, and how sometimes the very concepts that address the transformation of academia become resources for policy-making. More specifically, by looking at models of the idea of the knowledge economy through varying stylistics of expertise and mediation, I will put forward an argument that the variants are capable of acquiring reality and force (Tarde, cited in Barry and Slater 2005: 3). This will provide us with a framework of understanding in which I will further explore the changing character of temporal order in contemporary academia.

Genealogy of the idea of the knowledge economy

In the last 30 years or so it has become a rather unquestioned and commonplace thing for academics, intellectuals, politicians, policy-makers and 'global leaders' to acknowledge and actively promote the idea that we live in an age where knowledge has acquired a prominence heretofore unparalleled. This evolutionary model reflects the belief in a shift from physical to mental powers, from brawn to brains, and in a 'productive' partnership between 'body' and 'head' nations (Brown et al. 2011). Moreover, knowledge (and derivative activities such as innovation, learning and 'skilling') is believed to be an important bearer of social good, economic prosperity and human betterment. In this sense, it has been argued that contemporary societies increasingly depend on knowledge for economic production that in turn structures social organization (Stehr 1994; Castells 2000a; Carlaw et al. 2006).

These attitudes loosely mirror the faith in scientific endeavour and reasoning where modes of expertise have been central to social organization in the modern secular age. We have become so accustomed to the notion that the society we live in is knowledge-*driven* – that (scientific) innovations should boost economic growth and continuous learning and education should be pre-requisites for 'good' jobs – that we subsequently tend to forget (or at least forget to question) where such notions originate. A starting point for the exploration of this concern may well be global, transnational and national institutions. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Union and indeed the OECD all act as advocates that have deeply internalized this idea, constructing and producing the agendas which feed the policy-making decisions of nation-states and regional entities accordingly (e.g. Everett 2004;

Godin 2006; Robertson 2009a). Hence it is not an exaggeration to claim that the idea of living in a knowledge epoch has had strong transformative power in the way it has shaped the generation and framing of knowledge-related policies, norms and recommendations by transnational organizations.

That we currently live in a knowledge economy is in itself not really new, because we may say that *all* economies can be considered knowledge economies. To say we live in a 'knowledge' or 'information' economy is no different from saying we live in a 'power' or 'money' economy (Fuller 2001). Nonetheless, knowledge-related labels, concepts and buzzwords do have significant momentum in the ways they are deployed by international institutions and co-shape socioeconomic reality. The political scientist Mark Blyth succinctly captured the power of ideas when he said: 'Ideas ... do not "really" need to correspond to the "real" world in order to be important to that world' (2002: viii). It is not only technological advancements and shifts in modes of capital accumulation which drive social change; ideas play an equally important role. As Carlaw et al. note: 'technology on its own is insufficient to create economic growth; therefore such growth comes from a combination of influences including *changes to the values and ideas* underpinning a particular society' (2006: 637, emphasis original). Therefore the next section, building upon this insight, will trace the historical and discursive evolution of the idea of the knowledge economy.

The fabric of social structures and formations is not driven solely by ideas, as the historical *material* conditions that precede a given period of time are equally important. Nico Stehr convincingly tackles this by referring to industrial society as an arguably social meta-setting that predated the knowledge economy: 'In the process of "solving" its problems, which industrial society both inherited and saw as its own peculiar agenda, industrial societies not only produced new problems and conflicts but exhausted the sources as well as the organization frames that were crucial for the resolution of old problems; at the same time, industrial society reached the limits of enlarging its capacities in the same direction and in the same fashion' (1994: 261). Thus, in the post-war period, grand concepts of social transformation started to emerge as the economy of the industrial society was undergoing gradual mutation: '[t]he sources of its wealth or added value have been exhausted and a new force of production takes the place of the productive factors, labour and property, that had dominated industrial society' (ibid.). Amidst various, often opposing, opinions reflecting and describing this change, there was a consensus that there was something

special about that era. The very defining characteristic of the period seemed to be the importance of knowledge across and through the societal, technological, economic, occupational, spatial, temporal and cultural realms. What were the intellectual foundations that framed the theories of the knowledge economy? In addressing this question, they can be aptly illustrated by Daniel Bell's account of post-industrial society, which partially draws on the work of Radovan Richta and his colleagues (1966), and by the vast body of criticism his intellectual assessment has attracted.⁴

Bell's account is above all an optimistic forecast, a prediction and an analytical construct. It can be characterized by three features. First, according to Bell, capital as the dominant factor of production will be replaced by knowledge – the factor of production of the future. This idea of 'post-capitalism' was indeed largely shaped by the socioeconomic context in which Bell was writing; western economies were enjoying stable growth rates and the welfare state had become the dominant model of social organization. Second, the dominance of mechanical technologies and economic calculation based on cost-saving was being replaced by 'soft' intellectual technologies of expertise. These would then be channelled into progressivist politics, including education and research. Third, industrial enterprise as the dominant organizational form of society and economy would be succeeded by academia.

Employing Jessop's criticism, all three predictions deserve a careful dissection, because they were fundamental to the propositions Bell put forward and because they continue to be the source of the reasoning that underpins the idea of the knowledge economy, and key to the analytical purposes of this chapter. Let us start with the *first* claim. Bell's prediction is only partial and has been empirically refuted; however, it was highly influential in the formation of grand theories that spilled over into various discourses shaping and calibrating policies and visions. Even though this prediction does not adequately describe the dynamics of world markets and the role of knowledge, it still remains a powerful source of construction for the idea of the knowledge economy. As Jessop cogently writes: '[Bell's account] misrepresents knowledge as a "factor of production", understates the extent to which every economy is a knowledge economy and mistakes one societal self-description for a more complex discursive-material reality' (Jessop 2008a: 14).

Secondly, production and use of knowledge have become increasingly subordinate to an economic logic oriented towards profit-and-loss calculations. Bell's prediction that the organization and purpose of

material production would become subject to 'progressive' intellectual technologies concerned with the public good has not been fulfilled, and in fact expert knowledge (for instance dominant neoliberal economics) has become fetishized and deployed not only in economic theories – that is, theories of allocation – but also in theories of social organization and control.

Thirdly, academia has become subject to financial, administrative and ideological pressures to act more like economic enterprises 'that aim to maximise their revenues, market their education, research and other knowledge transfer capacities, position themselves competitively vis-à-vis other types of suppliers of these services at home and abroad, and, additionally, serve the demands of various local, urban, regional, national or even supranational knowledge-based economies' (Jessop 2008a: 14). The last three decades have been marked by the gradual reformation of academia in this direction and by shifts in emphasis that advance 'the primacy of direct economic benefit' (Boulton and Lucas 2008: 9) of knowledge. Yet, at the time Bell was writing, attempts to formulate other than business and industrial purposes of academic knowledge production were commonplace in policy-related thinking (in the UK, the Robbins Report 1963; in the US, Kerr 2001). These endeavours accounted for, as John Holmwood pertinently summarizes, 'educational policy that sought to establish [higher] education as a social right' (2011b: 19). Nevertheless, especially since the 1980s, this dimension has lost its resonance in governmental discourses. Governments and market ideology gradually started urging the university to become the dominant organizational platform of knowledge production for economic ends. Moreover, this resulted in an academia that is not only 'business-facing but *business-led*, involving an evolution of academic science from a public good to a private good' (Moriarty 2011: 58, emphasis original).

Even though there is little agreement on the major characteristics of knowledge, it has beyond doubt gained a special significance in the contemporary social dynamic. Influential knowledge-related concepts have established a powerful currency and have laid the foundations for a meta-discourse that – with its intra-disputes – continues to be relevant to this day. Bell's fundamental propositions were received rather sceptically among academics – as shown earlier in Jessop's plausible critique – yet they nonetheless received a great deal of attention from policy-makers, the press and international organizations (Robertson 2009a). Before I look closely at the way the OECD has adopted and spun the idea of the knowledge economy and the ways in which knowledge has been designated a new factor of production, I will focus on the importance of what Webster

calls 'theoretical knowledge/information' (2006: 9). Webster's conception does not advance a blunt claim that there is more information today (which many of the endorsers of 'information society' suggest, see for example Poster's postmodern idea of 'mode of information' [1990]) but rather analyses *the character* of knowledge as a distinctive feature which (arguably) has transformed how academia conducts itself institutionally and how its inner temporal rhythms are made and remade.

Qualifying knowledge

The contemporary idea that innovation, research and knowledge should be the driving forces of an economy is rooted in an expectation that theoretical and scientific knowledge would play a key role in capital accumulation – especially in comparison to earlier historical eras when situated and practical knowledge was dominant in social reproduction (Webster 2006), and when authority systems and occasionalism structured social formations. As Webster adds: 'it is hard to think of any technological applications in which theory is not a prerequisite of [social] development' (2006: 29). This feature is rather ignored in the idea of the knowledge economy which, almost exclusively, focuses on the application, usefulness and economic impact of knowledge. The dominance of, and the faith in, systematic enquiry, observation, classification, objectivity and theoretical development is not restricted to cutting-edge innovations in economically-preferred fields such as biology, aeronautics or pharmacology. Many activities that used to be a matter of experiment, experience, skill, trained common sense and best available practice and techniques (such as building construction or even maintenance and repair of the everyday technologies we use) are now subjected to theoretically-based principles and techniques usually formalized through specialization, expertise and codification. In this sense, Touraine (1971) noted the programmed and technocratic society whose emergence accompanied the shift from an industrial to a post-industrial social configuration. Yet the primacy of theoretical knowledge goes far beyond the traditional boundaries of established and codified academic disciplines.

Today, its precedence is most evident in the 'supremacy of experts' (cf. Carlaw et al. 2006; Arnoldi 2007a), who are entrusted with the ultimate task of providing immediate solutions and scientific advice in the politics, governance, education, social services, media and even the arts. Our lives and social world are driven by 'risk assessment' and 'cost-benefit analysis' rather than by traditions or our natural dispositions,

and these reflexive tools are most reliable and efficient if they are thoroughly informed by theoretical knowledge: '[T]heoretical knowledge could be taken to be the distinguishing feature of an information [and knowledge] society as it is axiomatic to how life is conducted and in that it contrasts with the ways in which our forebears ... existed' (Webster 2006: 30; see also Stehr 1994).

However, theoretical knowledge has not assumed its prominence only in recent decades. It is rather an outcome 'of a tendential process inherent to modernity itself, one that accelerated especially during the second half of the twentieth century and continues in the twenty-first' (Webster 2006: 31). So it is theoretical knowledge that is the constitutive component of the idea of the knowledge economy, often legally framed as intellectual property (IP). As Susan Robertson argues: 'knowledge is defined as intellectual property that has commercial value. By patenting various kinds of knowledge ... value can be realised, in turn creating economic value and thus economic growth' (2009a: 5). IP is itself protected by institutions such as patents, secrecy, first-to-market and copyright. Theoretical knowledge in the knowledge economy is not merely an 'analytically constructed' rhetorical scheme; neither is it a solid and accurate reflection of 'actually existing socioeconomic reality'. Rather it mirrors what we can call discursive-material reality, wherein both discourse and materiality co-constitute and inform each other. As *Times Higher Education* reported in 2003 when reporting on the OECD conception of economically useful knowledge: 'the focus on generating knowledge through investments in R&D, use of ICT, patenting, development of scientists and engineers is extending to a wider range of countries ... [and] ... this suggests increasing competition for the factors that generate knowledge – skilled people, innovative businesses and capital' (Times Higher Education 2003). Hence what is at stake in the idea of the knowledge economy is theoretical knowledge propelled by the impetus of economic rationality. Having demonstrated OECD's promotion and governance of the idea of the knowledge economy, we now turn to how it was set in motion or, in Osborne's (2004) and McLennan's (2004) conception, became 'vehicular'.

Promoting and stabilizing the idea of the knowledge economy

Though the OECD was already influenced by the idea of the 'information society' in the 1970s – due in particular to economist Marc Uri Porat – the idea of the knowledge economy had not really entered into its agenda

before the end of the 1980s. 'The concept of knowledge-based economy was added in the 1990s; it was an idea that had entered OECD's work in the 1970s, however it had not stabilised into becoming the master or umbrella concept that we know today' (Robertson 2009a: 5). So how did it happen?

Godin (2006) proposes that there are two ways in which to interpret the relationship between expert knowledge of statistics and policy-making procedures. First, it is the case that statistics give rise to concepts and subsequently to policies; for example, in the rise of the concept of a 'new economy' that was preceded by the growth and measurement of the usage of ICT. Second, a concept itself may give rise to policy. The rise of the knowledge economy as a concept was accompanied by the OECD's promotion, which 'collects nearly 60 indicators aimed at measuring the knowledge-based economy' (2006: 17). The OECD can best be viewed as a brokering think-tank and its key consultants as agenda-setting intellectuals. It is rather evident that the concept of the knowledge economy is rooted in the intellectual articulation of a mostly economic significance for knowledge, as laid out and advocated by Bell, Touraine and Machlup. What is also important is the centrality of theoretical knowledge as framed above: as Godin notes, the knowledge economy is 'a concept that serves to direct the attention of policy-makers to science and technology issues and to their role in the economy' (ibid.). The idea of the knowledge economy has been *conceptualized* in such a way that it is theoretical and economically useful knowledge that matters the most.

The idea of the knowledge economy arose from the limitations of a similar conceptualization of knowledge in the framework of the National Systems of Innovations (NSI), which was arguably the most important policy platform guiding science and technology in the 1980s and early 1990s. One of the most significant advocates of NSI, Lundvall, says that it 'is constituted by elements and relationships which interact in production, diffusion and use of new, and economically useful, knowledge' (cited in Godin 2006: 18). In Osborne's interpretation of Bauman's typology of intellectuals, 'legislation' 'consists of making authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions and which select those opinions which, having been selected, become correct and binding' (Bauman, cited in Osborne 2004: 483). Therefore, we can say that Lundvall was a prime 'legislator' of the economic importance of theoretical knowledge and of learning. Furthermore, he launched the cognate concept of a 'learning economy', which 'involves the capability to learn and to expand the knowledge base. It refers not only to the importance of science and technology systems – universities, research organization, in-house R&D

departments and so on – but also to the learning implications of the economic structure, the organizational forms and the institutional set-up’ (Lundvall and Johnson 1994: 26). Lundvall legislated this specific conceptualization when he held the position of deputy director of the Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry at the OECD. This institutional affiliation certainly gave him great room for manoeuvre and for implementing his intellectual and policy agenda. Again, drawing from Osborne’s take on Bauman, Lundvall exactly conforms to Osborne-Bauman’s characteristics. Lundvall, through his interpretation and implementation of NSI while at the OECD, developed a ‘methodology of rationalizing the reproduction of social order’ (Bauman quoted in Osborne 2004: 438).

Since the OECD developed NSI performance indicators under Lundvall, it is obvious that the very idea of the knowledge economy has had – albeit not immediately – tangible manifestations and powerful empirical exemplifications. This is the very moment when the discursive translates into the material. Lundvall proposed that ‘the most relevant performance indicators of NSI should reflect the efficiency and effectiveness in producing, diffusing and exploiting economically useful knowledge’ (quoted in Godin 2006: 19). This is clearly echoed in the way contemporary higher education policies are structured, and in various modalities and mechanisms that are significant components of the ‘audit culture’ (Power 1997) that has been gradually penetrating and structuring English-speaking higher education systems (e.g. Apple 2005 in the US; Shore 2008 in New Zealand; Head 2010 in England; also Chapters 4 and 7).

As suggested above, in the mid-1990s the extension of NSI, re-conceptualized as the knowledge economy, was strongly promoted – both ‘legislated’ and ‘mediated’ in Bauman’s and Osborne’s terminology – by the OECD and especially by its key consultant, Dominique Foray. Even though the concept of the knowledge economy first emerged in 1962 in Machlup’s work, the OECD used several strategies to restore it and give it desirable content. Godin identifies two strategies: the enrolment of the promoters and consultants of the knowledge economy, and the use of statistics, which ‘helped to crystallize the concept by giving it empirical content’ (2006: 19). Both strategies imply that we can perceive the knowledge economy as a vehicular idea: it had something of a theoretical and ideological commitment, but at the same time remained relatively, and perhaps deliberately, vague and pre-emptive. With the backing of a recognized think-tank, the idea needed its legislators and active mediators who would set up its desirable content by installing a specific register. The position and significance Lundvall provided

for NSI was similar to that of Foray for the knowledge economy. Even though Foray had criticized the inadequacy of Lundvall's framing of NSI and focused on the distribution and use of knowledge, in 1996 they joined forces – directly following the organic discourse of economically-useful-knowledge-matters-most – and argued that the 'economy is more strongly and more directly rooted in the production, distribution and use of knowledge than ever before' (quoted in Godin 2006: 20). This became a sort of 'preliminary mantra' in every OECD document dealing with the knowledge economy and was a strong agenda setter. Conceptually the idea of the knowledge economy synthesizes NSI and other recent studies in science and technology studies as well as, for instance, new growth theory. It also draws on fashionable ideas such as 'tacit learning, learning-by-doing, user-producer interaction, diffusion of technologies, clusters and networks' (Godin 2006: 23).

What was significant in the 'Forayian' period was that the OECD developed a portfolio of new indicators and tools of measurement 'that built on existing ones to measure inputs, stocks, flows, networks, learning, international trade, employment, structural change, and so on through target conferences, papers and the use of consultants' (Robertson 2009a: 7). There were, then, certain parameters according to which the development of these indicators was articulated. These above all included: mobility of human resources, patents, innovation capabilities of firms, internalization of industrial R&D and government support for innovation and information technology (Godin 2006). These were mechanisms that actually strengthened and stabilized the idea of the knowledge economy. In turn, the idea becomes very fertile 'theoretically' and empirically and 'can be used for any issues in science and technology – and anywhere' (Godin 2006: 23). Thanks to the momentum Foray and others triggered, not only did the idea of the knowledge economy materialize but it could now move and 'travel' in directions other than policy-making. Osborne's comment about intellectuals can be applied to institutions in this case. A mediator is the 'enabler, fixer, catalyst and broker of ideas. Perhaps the salient feature, though, is the association of mediators with movement. The mediator is simply the one who *gets things moving*' (2004: 440, emphasis original). Essentially, the OECD set the idea of the knowledge economy in vehicular motion and even accelerated its movement to a desirable destination, such as feeding higher education policies across OECD countries.

There were various strategies through which the OECD mediated and mobilized the idea of the knowledge economy. Godin (2006: 23) identifies two: the institutional and the rhetorical. The former includes

activities such as the organization of conferences and workshops to discuss policy issues; the dissemination and publication of books, reports, press releases, brief texts, studies and even journals; the setting up of committees and working groups composed of national delegates; the sharing of workloads with OECD member countries; and incentivizing national bureaucrats to join the OECD. The latter involves 'organizing and packaging the previous material into a conceptual (or policy) framework with buzzwords and slogans as labels' (Godin 2006: 23). Through these strategies the OECD 'mediates' the knowledge economy as an idea, especially in the way Osborne suggested when arguing that 'ideas are of no premium unless they are capable of being "mediatized" ... in a sense of being performative, capable of arousing attention and making a communicative difference' (2004: 440–441). Furthermore, what Osborne says about intellectuals as idea mediators can be said almost without any amendment about the OECD and the idea of the knowledge economy. The knowledge economy as a vehicular idea is meant to get us from one place to another; it is a *propellant* capable of making a difference; affecting policies and further shaping intellectual discourse. Highlighting specific 'talks' in the contemporary higher education discourse, the next chapter will examine the different angles from which rhetoric can be seen as a propellant, or for that matter, a cultural accelerator.

Godin (2006) plausibly analyses the mode by which the idea of the knowledge economy, as it was conceptualized and diffused by the OECD under Foray's leadership, informs not only the policy-making process shaping higher education policy, but also how knowledge is qualified (usually as innovation and enterprise), channelled into the economy and measured. Effectively, the OECD fulfils both of Osborne's roles of legislator *and* mediator. As an institution it provides a predictive and normative framework where a predictive and diagnostic concept is grounded. The knowledge economy as an umbrella concept has been reincarnated not only in higher education policies, but also in higher education discourses and ideologies, and has become a path-dependent modality (or at least in some of its parts) that spawned other concepts and analytical typologies. This strategy, as we will see, was both an initial position and the object of analysis of specific intellectual accounts that were diagnosing the transformation of knowledge production and higher education development throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In other words, I will investigate in these diagnoses: a) which implications of the materialization of the idea of the knowledge economy they highlight and b) why and in what ways they became other 'carriers' of the idea of the knowledge economy *themselves*.

Academia in the conditions of the knowledge economy: diagnoses, analyses, extensions

There is a consensus among contemporary scholars criticizing higher education policy discourse that 'today's universities are expected to function as dispensers of credentials and engines of economic growth' with the consequence that 'academics are no longer in full control of their performance standards' (Fuller 2009: 15). Another significant consequence for contemporary academia stemming from the above discussion is a significant institutional isomorphism and convergence – particularly in terms of self-understanding, mission and governance. This predominantly takes place under the rubric of 'excellence' and as Readings observes: 'University mission statements, like their publicity brochures, share two distinctive features nowadays. On the one hand, they all claim that theirs is a unique education institution. On the other, they all go on to describe this uniqueness in exactly the same way' (1996: 12; also Chapter 4). Fuller's and Reading's observations exemplify the painstaking characteristics and implications of the 'materialization' of the idea of the knowledge economy in higher education. With the affinity of academia and knowledge for industry, business and economy, degrees (i.e. educational services) are to be channelled into the needs of external subjects; innovation and enterprise are considered to be 'draught horses' of economic growth; scientific discovery is expected to generate economic profit. Along these lines, academics are subjected to an increasingly autonomous apparatus of control and surveillance and to the fetish of indicators which 'measure' knowledge production. What is more, governance models of the university have adopted an ideology of 'excellence', which is further reinforced by the increasingly uncritical acceptance from the majority of university managers and administrators of academic league tables and rankings as the ultimate criteria informing institutional management style. In sum, it is impossible *not* to be excellent nowadays.

The productivity imperative, its origins, implications and parameters will be further explored in the following chapters and specifically contextualized within cultural acceleration. I will now look at the main features and contours of the idea of the knowledge economy and its broader implications for the transformation of academia against the background of four prominent theses: 'Mode 2', 'Triple Helix', 'The Enterprise University' and 'Academic Capitalism'. A common feature these all share is that they emerged in the 1990s when the OECD's knowledge economy agenda (either as a newly established concept or a residuum of NSI) was under

way. Also, they all tackled the ways in which knowledge is generated and were influential intellectual frameworks that inquired into the transformation of academia. The theses are ordered particularly, beginning with the most policy-centric and agenda-setting, and ending with, arguably, the most critical. Additionally, the analysis carves a path from grand transformative notions of the knowledge economy to more specific institutional metamorphoses in academia. It must also be noted that the discussion below is a rather heuristic analytical overview that peels back various layers of the debate concerning the transformation of knowledge and academia. It does not aspire to be a systematic exposition of the concepts.

The authors of Mode 2 or the 'New Production of Knowledge' describe a framework whereby knowledge is generated. They then analyse the new dynamics and modalities this new regime contains and imposes. The concept suggests that the role of knowledge in society has fundamentally changed and a new mode of knowledge production has emerged as a result. Above all, this mode entails a new method of invention. It traces allegedly revolutionary changes in the constitution of science and research practices. The salient feature of this new mode is that science and knowledge are produced *in the context of application*. The authors of this concept sketch the birth of a research system that is inherently interactive and socially distributed (Gibbons et al. 1994).

The core argument is that while the production of knowledge used to be located in scientific institutions and was structured by disciplinary and sectoral boundaries, its principles, practices, techniques and locations are now more heterogeneous. The control of quality has also changed. The knowledge produced within Mode 2 is inherently 'dialogic', transdisciplinary and reflexive, and coexists alongside a Mode 1 which is – on the contrary – characterized by solid disciplinary boundaries, homogeneity, autonomy and academic context. Mode 1 is 'discipline-based and carries a distinction between what is fundamental and what is applied; this implies an operational distinction between a theoretical core and other areas of knowledge such as engineering sciences, where the theoretical insights are translated into applications' (Gibbons et al. 1994: 19). By contrast, Mode 2, which does not fully replace Mode 1, is 'characterised by a constant flow back and forth between the fundamental and the applied, between the theoretical and the practical' (ibid.). In Mode 2 knowledge production, the search for fundamental principles, laws and 'truths' is oriented towards contextualized results, whereas in Mode 1 any knowledge being produced is first of all validated and sanctioned by clearly defined epistemic communities of academics, scholars and

scientists. Hessels and van Lente noted the underpinning of Mode 2: 'sensitivity to the impact of the research is built in from the start ... [and] ... traditional discipline-based peer review systems are supplemented by additional criteria of an economic, political, social or cultural nature' (2008: 742). Under those criteria, discovery, application and use are integrated into an interlinked and mutually constitutive configuration. On a structural level, the rate of diffusion and the related density of communication, both with nature and with the producers of knowledge themselves (and between science and society), increases as the boundaries between societal segments and sectors dissolve. What is thus implicit in Gibbons, Nowotny and their colleagues' concept is *the increasing intensification of knowledge production and the shortening of its temporal horizons*. Moreover, knowledge, according to them, is produced more horizontally, with various actors active beyond the institutional confines of academic institutions.

One of the important aspects of Mode 2 the authors focus on is the commercialization and marketization of knowledge. These tendencies are accompanied by the rise of entrepreneurialism, which is assumed to be a dominant driving ethos of Mode 2 knowledge production. This conceptualization correlates with the OECD's construction of a type of knowledge which should primarily play an economic role. Apart from the production (supply) of knowledge under the new regime, Gibbons and his colleagues highlight the demand side of businesses, industries and firms that are active participants in the dynamics of the relationship between relevant players and processes that comprise the Mode 2 regime. However, this does not mean the producers of knowledge have fundamentally altered. The production process remains institutionalized and the actors practically involved in the production process are still scientists, researchers, academics and scholars. However as a result of this entrepreneurial trend, some commentators believe it is becoming evident that universities are gradually ceasing to be the core society's centre of knowledge production (see Lock and Lorenz 2007) and at the same time R&D industrial departments and think-tanks (McLennan, Osborne and Vaux 2005; Arnoldi 2007b) are assuming the role of important knowledge producers and distributors. As Holmwood notes when reflecting on Mode 2, the 'university is no longer the privileged space for research. This follows from the increased marketability of knowledge, with concomitant commercial investment in its production, and government concerns about maintaining effective investment in research and development' (2010: 642). Knowledge production therefore stretches beyond the traditional setting of the university

and, at times, even beyond traditional systems of evaluation such as peer-review.⁵

Even though Gibbons, Nowotny et al. claim that the Mode 2 regime absorbs extra-academic forces in the knowledge production process, they do acknowledge at the same time that the 'greater part of research is still considered as an elite activity, even if [it is] carried out by large numbers of people and requires intense socialisation in an academic discipline' (1994: 70). This fundamental modality has nevertheless been accompanied, and even driven, by the involvement of different actors and institutions (the business lobby, patent lawyers, production engineers) in the very process of knowledge production.

Hence, Mode 2 knowledge production is a regime where the traditional processes of Mode 1 are supplemented by the behaviour, agendas, needs and desires of non-academic extra-disciplinary actors. The presence and ideology these actors carry in the field of Mode 1 knowledge production may in turn considerably affect the ways in which in-house university actors construct rationales for research plans and projects. In other words, the methodological and epistemological autonomy of epistemic communities within academia is challenged. Broadly speaking, knowledge producers, researchers and scientists in the Mode 1 regime '... attempt to discover laws of general acceptability for a circumscribed group of phenomena in order to make the interconnection of these phenomena as clearly understandable as possible' (Einstein 1949). This observation, articulated by Albert Einstein over 60 years ago, would probably have rather different rationales and drivers under the Mode 2 configuration. Under Mode 2 the impetus to discover is not necessarily driven by an itching need to understand or disclose a phenomenon, or to improve and intervene into social, environmental and living conditions to that end, but rather by the instrumental needs of external conditions and ideologies that co-shape the new regime of knowledge production, particularly its temporal order.

Max Weber's observation (1946a) that science has become a vocation comes to fruition here. When referring to the fate of junior scholars, Weber predicted the penetration of a capitalist ethos long before universities became 'knowledge factories' and long before the idea of the knowledge economy established itself as transformative discourse: 'The large institutes of medicine or natural science are "state capitalist" enterprises, which cannot be managed without very considerable funds. Here we encounter the same condition that is found wherever capitalist enterprise comes into operation: the separation of the worker from his means of production' (Weber 1946a: 130). Weber, unusually

using quasi-Marxian vocabulary, points out an important dimension intrinsic to Mode 2. Alienation and class institutional practices within the academy are something rarely pointed out in the literature (for notable exceptions see e.g. Harvie 2000; Reay 2004; Archer 2008). The commodification of knowledge, the imperative to transmit knowledge into tangible capitalist assets and the entrepreneurial and commercial ethos are all generating conditions for the rise of academic hierarchies and tribalism. Similarly, as Slaughter and her colleagues (whom we will explore later) note, the profit motive has established itself as the primary organizational principle (at least in the US) of the higher education system. Gibbons et al. imply that the push within Mode 2 'to discover' and produce knowledge is very much related to the imperatives of commerce and markets. They therefore talk about 'marketable knowledge' (1994: 46) that serves businesses and industries.

The descriptive character of Mode 2 is problematic and it is questionable whether Mode 1 ever existed in a pure form. Some commentators argue the production of knowledge has always existed in a Mode 2 regime, and in that sense Mode 2 is an 'interesting false problem' (Pestre 2003). However, we are concerned with Mode 2's prescriptive features, how grounded it is in the idea of the knowledge economy and how it reinforces the very idea itself. The final chapter of Gibbons et al.'s 1994 book gives specific policy recommendations and thereby solidifies and materializes the idea of the knowledge economy on its orbit of vehicularity in yet another way. In the 2001 sequel, the grounding in the idea of the knowledge economy is elaborated further and the authors grant Mode 2 knowledge a fundamental, almost determinant, role as it 'has become so pervasive, seemingly so central to the generation of wealth and well-being' and its 'production ... has become, even more than in the past, a social activity, both highly distributed and radically reflexive' (Nowotny et al. 2001: 1). Not only is knowledge production taking place under Mode 2, the very texture in which this process is happening is labelled as 'Mode 2 society', an inherently postmodern society where categories of modernity have been replaced by the co-evolution and co-mingling of culture, politics, market, society and science. What takes place under Mode 2 conditions, according to Nowotny et al., is the 'socialization of science' and the 'scientification of society' (2001: 3). Thus, the idea of the knowledge economy matters here in a postmodern fashion of de-differentiation of social spheres, similar to the case of Triple Helix.

The Triple Helix – a concept developed by Henry Etzkowitz and his colleagues – is a direct extension of the idea of the knowledge economy

as specified above, and in a certain sense, the authors are both legislators *and* mediators according to Osborne's typology. One of the fundamental categories conceptually addressed by Etzkowitz et al. was the notion of enterprise and its expansion in higher education. The emergence of an 'entrepreneurial academic paradigm' is a corollary of and a response to the increasing importance of knowledge in the national, regional and global economy. In this framework, the university is recognized as a 'cost-effective and creative inventor and transfer agent of both knowledge and technology' (Etzkowitz et al. 2000: 314). At the same time, governments in many parts of the world 'are focusing on the potential of the university as a resource to enhance innovation environments and create a regime of science-based economic development' (ibid.). The Triple Helix is then used as a model through which Etzkowitz and colleagues interpret these changes. It is a triple helix of university-industry-government relations, transcending hitherto existing models of institutional relationships, whether laissez-faire or socialist, where knowledge plays a rather subsidiary role. The Triple Helix illustrates a new configuration of institutional forces wherein knowledge is elevated to a constitutive economic factor of production, pushing universities into the foreground as producers, providers and disseminators of innovation, intellectual property, patents, prototypes and human capital. The public, private and academic institutional spheres are increasingly interwoven 'with a spiral pattern of linkages emerging at various stages of the innovation and industrial policy-making processes' (Etzkowitz et al. 2000: 315). The boundaries between university and industry, public and private, science and technology are in constant flux and the frequency of (ex)change between helices needs to accelerate. Universities develop new linkages and ties with industry and devise formats to make teaching, research and economic development compatible (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1998). We can see from their conceptualization that higher education as an economic sub-field is expected not only to 'keep up' with the dynamics of the knowledge economy, it is to actively propel and, if possible, *accelerate* capitalist economic development.

The triple helix metaphor is inspired by the structure of DNA and, as in the case of other post-modern lexicons, is borrowed from natural sciences – similar to Gilles Deleuze's 'rhizome', for instance. Loet Leydesdorff (2001), one of the main proponents of the Triple Helix, claims that knowledge production is so multifarious and complex that unintended consequences will prevail, and its dynamics will develop in interaction with other spheres of society (e.g. state, businesses), i.e. it is inherently non-linear. Moreover, the lack of consensus in the various

accounts and the policy extension of the idea of the knowledge economy prompt him to offer a combination of neo-evolutionary and reflexive treatment, grounded in systems theory. On that basis, he claims that the Triple Helix model has self-organizing potential. The relationship of universities, industries and governments operates in accordance with the following functional and technical features:

In contrast to a double helix, that is a coevolution between two sub-dynamics (e.g. production forces and production relations), a triple helix cannot be expected to be stabilized or resolved. A model of three helices is sufficiently complex for understanding the complex dynamics of the ongoing transformation processes. The (three) double helices on which the triple helix builds, continuously 'lock-in' into to local coevolutions that are expected to 'clot' into provisional solutions shaping the ruggedness of the corresponding landscapes. (Leydesdorff 2001: 8)

This complex regime overlays communication in university-governments-industry relations, where knowledge is produced. This in turn implies a new unit of analysis for understanding the allegedly inherently unstable, multiple system which 'rests like a hyper-network on the networks on which it builds, such as the disciplines, the industries, and the national governments' (Leydesdorff 2001: 15). This 'rhizomatic' conceptualization is constructed as a meta-framework where 'knowledge-based innovation policies should be aimed at influencing the political economy of a technology and not merely at addressing the trajectory of its further improvement' (ibid.). Thus, the all-encompassing ambition of the Triple Helix concept is to merge universities, industries and governments into a uniquely dynamic and self-organizing 'solid amalgam' that can generate progressive economic and social policies through reflexive science, technology and innovation (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1998).

The Triple Helix can therefore be interpreted as a specific conceptual extension of the idea of the knowledge economy. As Leydesdorff maintains: 'from the 1970s onwards, a scientific-technological revolution can subsequently be distinguished, gradually shaping a knowledge-based mode of production and distribution at the global level' (2001: 6; also for a different – Marxist – historical perspective see Braverman 1974). Thereby the idea of the knowledge economy has been reincarnated and translated into the Triple Helix concept. The post-modern resilience of Triple Helix readily absorbs, accommodates and is significantly fed by the vehicularity of the idea of the knowledge economy as

conceived by the OECD. As McLennan says: 'in the distinctive mode of vehicular ideas, the interpretative and rhetorical indeterminacy that such discourses sponsor, together with the energy and talents of their mediators, are just what make for *success*: not so much the profound and systematic truth or wisdom of the doctrine, but its availability, ubiquity and quality of speaking in the moment' (2004: 488, emphasis original). It is exactly the availability and ubiquity of the idea of the knowledge economy, the hype around it, its sponsors such as the OECD and the energy, talents and 'speedy' adaptability of its mediators (such as e.g. Lundvall and Foray) that form the basis and ground for the Triple Helix.

Drawing on their extensive research in the Australian higher education sector, Marginson and Considine (2000) identified 'enterprise' as a core feature of the (then) emerging type of 'new' university – an archetype they termed *The Enterprise University*. They based their analysis on carefully selected criteria which include governance, institutional cultures, executive leadership, decision-making systems and research management. These were essentially their 'indicators' for 'measuring' the extent of entrepreneurialism as a salient feature of Australian universities, especially when examining the origins of changes in strategic manoeuvres and the reinvention of academic governance. For the authors "'enterprise" captures both economic and academic dimensions, and the manner in which research and scholarship survive are now subjected to new systems of competition and demonstrable performance ... it is as much about generating institutional prestige as about income' (2000: 5). When qualifying what they mean by the 'Enterprise University', they emphasize the very reason why they selected the term. According to them, the alternatives, such as 'Entrepreneurial University', 'Corporate University' and 'Academic Capitalism', suggest a 'one-dimensional institution solely dominated by profit-seeking [and] an organizational culture totally reduced to the business form' (2000: 4). They justify this by exposing the inadequacy of the evidence which could substantiate the terminology and convincingly demonstrate that 'universities must mirror markets in order to serve markets, must become corporations in order to treat with firms, or should organise themselves in the manner of an industry in order to play a useful role in assisting industries to innovate, plan and manage their fortunes' (2000: 5).

Throughout their study they maintain that academic institutions are not the same as fully profit-driven capitalist corporations, because the spirit of 'enterprise' is driven not only by profit-seeking, but also by a 'desire for institutional status, and more engaging academic

cultures and by the requirements of the governments' (2000: 51). Even though some consider their book an uncritical handbook for senior university managers and 'an apologia for market enterprise' (James 2002), their qualification of the 'Enterprise University' remains revelatory – especially in the light of the OECD's knowledge economy agenda, which conceives the university more as an entrepreneurial and contractual arrangement between the participant actors than as a pure business. As Barbara Ischinger, director of the OECD Educational Directorate, stated in 2006:

Education reform is far more than just about funding or turning education institutions into businesses. It is about promoting a new social contract involving all stakeholders, beyond governments, teachers and students. The terms of the social contract which has underpinned these institutions until now – mainly public finance based mainly on taxation – are changing. Also, governments have to make sure the challenges are met quickly since the knowledge economy relies heavily on higher education for its raw material of human capital. (Ischinger 2006)

The institutional governance of universities – the focus of Marginson and Considine's inquiry – changed considerably in Australia in the 1990s, and many of the features they identified are salient in today's universities worldwide. They include in the trend 'a more emphatic executive leadership; executive strategies that are prone to isomorphism; the sidelining or co-option of older collegial structures and the rise of vice-chancellor's groups, commercial arms and informal methods of consultation and communication; the declining salience of the academic disciplines in research organisation; the enhanced flexibility and continuous re-engineering' (2000: 234).

Their aim can be interpreted as an attempt to detect the specific material implications of the vehicularity of the idea of the knowledge economy – as they illuminate the transformation of the Australian university into a more competitive, managerial institution that strives for a unique institutional identity, but at the same time follows the 'imitate-or-perish' imperative that organizes the Australian university sector. They foresaw even harsher reforms would follow this trend: universities would adopt criteria that would structure the production (research) and transmission (curricula, teaching) of knowledge. They would embrace even more business-like practices, making them more effective and 'just-in-time', with short-term horizons to meet the demands

and requirements of the competitive global economy. Surprisingly, Marginson and Considine hardly ever use the term 'knowledge economy'. One instance in which they do is in reference to Ferdinand Braudel, when they suggest that changing intuitional missions and organizational structures are the ultimate expression of 'the rise of new epochal movements of an economic and socio-cultural kind' (2000: 52). This can be interpreted as the materialization of the discourse examined above – the material implications of the idea of the knowledge economy embodied in the realities of higher education – and, moreover, is the very acknowledgement of the significance and power of the idea of the knowledge economy as a *transformative* idea which translates into how contemporary academia is defined, organized and governed.

At the beginning of this book we referred to a reflexive observation by Marginson and Considine, which they arrived at as a by-product of their investigation. They highlight their surprise at the increased rate – speed – of the changes that took place in the Australian university sector in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, it is not all that surprising in the context of their study, when we take into account the core pillar of their argument – that the university's ability to reinvent and re-engineer its institutional forms of governance, speedy change, speedy adaptation to the external environment and shifting economic priorities associated with the knowledge economy and its flexibility and dynamic response are key features of the Enterprise University. As they explicitly claim: 'In the Enterprise University the capacity to read "change" and respond to opportunities is crucial' (2000: 236). Therefore, acting upon this reading of change – in the sense of implementing various institutional schemes and tools – becomes equally important. Clark (1998) also notes that enhancing the flexibility of entrepreneurial capacity is fundamental. He says that the reconciliation of managerial values with traditional academic ones is crucial for becoming *quicker* and more flexible in the face of changing demands. Although Marginson and Considine were hardly explicit about it, both their findings and their theoretical springboard mirror the idea of the knowledge economy, and must be administered by strong institutional governance that aligns the university more closely with economic priorities.

Whereas Marginson and Considine's focus is aimed more at the institutional organization and governance of the university, the concept of *Academic Capitalism* attempts to critically dissect and elucidate the political economy of the transformation of the university sector in the United States by focusing on the role of knowledge in the global economy. Slaughter and Leslie's (1997) concept takes into consideration the growing

role of business and industrial principles and culture in university life, highlighting the metamorphosis of science-based research from a disinterested inquiry to an entrepreneurial mode. It is in this sense that the authors examine 'technology transfer', which means the movement of research findings from university to industry (a different perspective will be elaborated on in Chapter 6). Similarly to Clark, they note that academics grapple with the entrepreneurial mode and traditional academic values such as autonomy and curiosity-driven investigation. Furthermore, using resource dependency theory, Slaughter and Leslie suggest that, with the changing nature of knowledge, universities will do whatever is necessary to maintain the flow of revenue and enhance their institutional prestige. As a result, the ethos and nature of academic work in the United States has fundamentally changed since the 1980s, according to the evidence the authors present. Simply put, as universities receive increasingly less public funding (though still a considerable proportion of their budgets) and as they find themselves in a situation in which the state openly deploys and explicitly encourages the mechanisms of privatization, deregulation and commercialization, they seek alternative resources in the private sector from external revenue obtained by 'professorial market or market-like efforts' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997: 8; also Burawoy 2011). This motive in turn translates into an organizing feature. Academics and academic managers/administrators who work in the disciplines closest to markets and industries (e.g. engineering, biomedicine) are becoming 'state-subsidized entrepreneurs'. In sum, what is at stake for Slaughter and Leslie is 'the encroachment of the profit motive into the academy' (1997: 9).

This is, however, not to say that universities have become fully and entirely profit-driven institutions, as Slaughter and Leslie carefully point out. Capitalism connotes private ownership of the means of production and an axiomatic principle of generating surplus value, where the product that is a source of profit is itself often rather unimportant in the commercial enterprise. Academic prestige – a form of 'symbolic capital' – can be commercially exploited, but can also be an end in itself. This brings the concept of Academic Capitalism in line with the concept of the Enterprise University. The issues of status and prestige – be they on an institutional or individual level – embody a 'new spirit of enterprise' that cannot be entirely reduced solely to a profit motive. Although status, prestige and various struggles for recognition can be reoriented and translated into instruments that serve as competitive advantages on the market, they can also be potent factors completely detached from the profit motive and are achievements in themselves.

Slaughter and Leslie deliberately chose the term Academic Capitalism because their aim was to highlight the contradictions intrinsic to new capitalist trends within academia.

Still, in the applied sciences, and in disciplines tethered to specific industries, corporations and markets, the crucial concern was that although academic workers work for a *de jure* public institution, they are *de facto* (forced to be) increasingly autonomous of it as higher education policy becomes a subset of economic policy (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). To this end, universities, faculties, departments and professional staff have to expand their ability to compete in an increasingly market-driven environment. Their activities include 'competition for monies, whether these are from external grants and contracts, endowment funds, university-industry partnerships, institutional investment in professors' spin-off companies, student tuition and fees, or some other revenue-generating activity' (Slaughter and Leslie 2001: 154). The concept or theory of academic capitalism serves as a critical and explanatory tool for understanding behaviour across a variety of units and actors in public universities – especially as the university is increasingly constructed as a significant sub-system of the economy. It is clear that such an idea of the knowledge economy is inherent in their master concept. When they address the intrinsically problematic notion of human capital, they say 'almost everyone, today, is aware that the knowledge and skills possessed by workers contribute to economic growth ... [and that] ... these worker capabilities make their contribution by adding to the quality of labour, which of course is one of the three factors of production, land and capital being the other two' (1997: 10). Having said that, they simultaneously recognize the role of academia as the 'repository of knowledge', and the role of knowledge in contributing to the generation of economic growth. Again, this brings us to the central role of knowledge as a factor of production of economic growth and in turn to the fundamental principle of the knowledge economy.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the particular dynamics and the vehicularity of the idea of the knowledge economy as a hegemonic economic imaginary. Using Osborne's and McLennan's framework for exploring various modes of the 'stylistics of expertise and mediation', the analysis first demonstrated the transformative potential of the knowledge economy as it has been legislated, mediated and promoted by the OECD and its key intellectual representatives. The chapter also presented

and contextualized four prominent concepts that analyse (Academic Capitalism), diagnose (Enterprise University) and extend (Triple Helix and Mode 2) the broader implications and textures of the idea of the knowledge economy for higher education and beyond. It also suggested that the knowledge which 'matters' is constructed in accord with economic rationality and draws both implicitly and explicitly on the idea of the knowledge economy, which promotes knowledge as *the* factor of production in the capitalist economy.

Overall, this chapter presents the context in which sectoral and institutional transformations and metamorphoses have been taking place. The purpose of this exposition is to situate some important developments in academia and thereby frame the following chapter, which looks closely at particular ways in which the university has been reshaped according to the idea of the knowledge economy. Although a similar trajectory of how the idea of the knowledge economy has been systematically channelled into economic systems can be observed in other English-speaking countries such as Australia, the United States and Canada,⁶ I will focus on the British case. This is because at least since the New Labour government of the late 1990s, the idea of the knowledge economy has been navigating and substantially influencing the overall direction of higher education policy (see De Angelis and Harvie 2009; Robertson 2010). The subsequent chapter will therefore investigate particular *rhetorical and cultural imperatives* saturating influential policy currents and establishing new discourses anchored, either implicitly or explicitly, in the idea of the knowledge economy as explored above. It will be argued that rhetoric – which underpins contemporary higher education policy discourse – represents a crucial component that weaves the temporal priorities of capitalist practice and market ideology into academia. I will claim that the constitutive cultural missions of the university – education and scholarship – have been challenged by their mobilization toward instrumental and myopic ends which serve mainly to strengthen the increasingly concentrated economic and political powers of the current variant of capitalism (cf. Docherty 2011). The chapters that follow will therefore examine temporal tensions between the installation/promotion of specific temporal imperatives integral to the idea of the knowledge economy and the ways in which those tensions are enacted, contested and experienced.

4

Performativity: Competitiveness and Excellence

A number of authors have recently criticized the transformation of academic institutions under neoliberal hegemony (e.g. Martins 2004; Lock and Lorenz 2007; De Angelis and Harvie 2009; Molesworth et al. [eds] 2010; Bailey and Freedman [eds] 2011; Vincent 2011; Docherty 2011; Holmwood [ed.] 2011c; Collini 2012; Lorenz 2012; McGettigan 2013). However, it should be noted that this type of critique can barely be restricted to the era of the knowledge economy and the post-Fordist regime of flexible accumulation. Classical social theorists, such as Max Weber (1946a) and Thorstein Veblen (2009), took into account the social dynamics of modernity and articulated a similar type of critique at the beginning of the 20th century in Germany and America. Drawing on this critical tradition, both in its classical and contemporary variants, this chapter focuses on the transformation of organizing rules and its effects on the realities of academic life. Specifically, it explores what Kenneth Burke (1969) called the 'rhetoric of motives' and argues that not only is rhetoric a crucial aspect of the way in which academia is understood in public discourse, but it can also carry the intention of accelerating desirable developments.

In the academic sector there have been strong business-oriented trends and arrangements accompanying the production and reproduction of the idea of knowledge economy. Reformist currents particularly have informed the arrangements implemented by both socialist and conservative governments, with the intention of reconfiguring academia by synchronizing its rhythms to those of the (fast) knowledge economy. As seen in the previous chapter, ideas are not only informative but also informational (Arnoldi 2007b) and *vehicular* (McLennan 2004; Osborne 2004). In a similar vein, metaphors drive development (Robertson 2009b) and discourses can be 'uplifting' (Peck 2011). Here

I will focus on specific discursive examples and mechanisms that aim to accelerate academia and the reasons why they do so. Also, given the framework of analysis discussed in the opening chapters, the present chapter will take into consideration the specific tensions that governmental polity provokes among academics (in the 'groves of academe'). This chapter looks at two prominent rhetorical clusters of discourses clusters – competitiveness and excellence – which, in recent years, have been steering the temporal order of academia into a more market-oriented and corporate-like model.

Vieira (2011: 382) argued that Rosa's analysis largely neglects how discourse, language and representation affect time as a social and political construct. This gap accounts for important shortcomings as 'it is only through language that phenomena can become framed as experience, and it is also only through language that individual experiences can be communicated and translated into intersubjective forms of meaning' (Vieira 2011: 383). In amending Rosa's notion of 'motors' of acceleration, this chapter provides a corrective for this drawback and argues that the aforementioned discourses – including language and rhetoric – can be understood as *performative technologies of acceleration*. Rosa's idea will thus be expanded by highlighting the influential 'discursive motors' that have been significantly navigating the temporal ordering of academia as well as reshaping temporal priorities associated with its management and organizational style. These discourses assume, often latently, that academia is ill-equipped and stagnant, that it is too 'slow' and static for the priorities and agendas of the dynamic knowledge economy. Therefore, infrastructural operations, responsiveness to the needs of the 'real world' or 'the economy', varying degrees of impact and engagement, closer integration with circuits of capital (e.g. turn-over time of patenting) and the imperative of innovation and enterprise are all designed to restructure the temporal order of academia by synchronizing it with the rhythms of the knowledge economy.

Rhetoric, it has been claimed, is the central notion integral to cultural change within academia (Cherwitz and Hartelius 2006: 289). Broadly following and extending that claim, this chapter looks at overlapping rhetorical clusters or 'types of talk' in contemporary British higher education policy discourse. First, we can register that there is accelerative rhetoric which implies movement, motion and the need to 'start/launch', 'boost', 'drive' and 'catch up' desirable processes according to the principle of *competitiveness*. Second, there is rhetoric implying perfection and achievement including the notions of 'best practice', 'world-class', 'leadership' and, most notoriously, *excellence* as defining

academic values and practices. Both concepts (although more so the former) often tacitly assume a promise of immediate delivery (Tomlinson 2007a) anchored in the imaginary of a 'fast-changing world' in which fast behaviour is a requirement, if not existential necessity. In our perspective, *slower* motion, as a distinctive characteristic of academic conduct (Pels 2003), is the foremost target of contemporary higher education policy discourse. The chapter argues that attempts to eradicate academia's specific temporality produce serious challenges for knowledge production, and perhaps surprisingly even in the corners of academia which are by default intimately tied to business and commercial applications. Moreover, the intentional speeding-up of 'too-slow-academia' is not achieved as smoothly and unequivocally as policy-makers and stakeholders assume. We will see that the contemporary types of talk in higher education policy discourse are often regarded as alien and self-referential with detrimental effects on academic values such as disinterestedness, communalism (scientific communism), universalism and organized scepticism (see Merton 1968).

The material significance of rhetoric

Several keywords or nostrums which saturate higher education policy discourse have proliferated in the last two decades or so. As well as 'engagement' (McLennan 2008), 'marketisation' (Brown [ed.] 2010; Robertson 2012), 'internationalisation' (Harris 2008), and 'employability' (Clegg 2010), there are several others which have been increasingly deployed and are gaining prominence as rhetorical instruments. This chapter explores whether these keywords – especially competitiveness and excellence – may be thought of in terms of cultural acceleration and whether there is a specific rhetoric associated with the *pace* of the (transformation of) contemporary academia. Yet can we actually think about rhetoric, keywords and imaginaries in terms of acceleration, speed, movement, energy? Can these ideas contribute to a temporal (re) ordering and institutional reconfiguration of academia? And if so, how?

The relationship between the ideational and the material has been a long-term concern for social scientists and philosophers. It has been a serious and ongoing issue in social theory, reflected for instance in Foucauldian analysis, Actor-Network Theory and Cultural Political Economy. Perhaps this has always been a difficult issue. If ideas, energies, cultures and rhetoric are not purely derivative and super-structural, if in fact they are in a sense constitutive of the socio-material nature of a social formation (for example notions of legal property rights and entitlements related to capital ownership), then clearly ideas expressed and embodied

in motivation and behaviour have an active ('actant', to use ANT terminology) presence and force in institutional, collective and individual dynamics. How exactly to theorize this without becoming an 'idealist'? It is difficult to pinpoint the concern, but something similar provided the impetus for the 'cultural turn' in sociological analysis in the 1990s–2000s. It is there nowadays, in the 'new materialism' and the sociological (theorized) 'descriptivism' of the 21st-century turn to vitalism, network-ism, Whitehead-influenced notions of social fluidity and assemblages, and the 'turn to affect'. Importantly, in some overarching but thin sense, these strands of thought are trying to stay materialist. This chapter does not try to resolve this difficult issue, but only to convey one important source of continuing – but surely productive – puzzlement, in terms of causality and confluence associated with the processes and experiences of acceleration in the contemporary social world.

This investigation draws on the Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach developed by Lancaster School scholars, especially by Jessop (e.g. 2004, 2010, 2011), Sayer (2001) and Sum (2009a, 2009b, 2010; see also for example Jessop and Sum 2010; Sum and Jessop 2013; also Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008). Using CPE, this analysis will identify rhetorical and semiotic devices, prescriptive imaginaries and visions and influential discourses that are helping to (re)shape and (re)invent the contemporary university. However, CPE does not underestimate the role of the extra-semiotic in the variation and retention of given systems and structures. It synthesizes the cultural (semiotic and meaning-making) and the extra-cultural (structural, material), proposing their co-constitutive and co-evolutionary interdependency and their embedding in broader sets of social relations (Jessop 2010: 336).

To gain perspective on the place of the cultural in CPE, it may be useful to remind ourselves of some intellectual and philosophical currents and debates addressing the role of rhetoric in human and social sciences and in scientific inquiry. Particularly relevant are the debates which took place under the rubric of a movement referred to as the 'rhetorical turn.' The main crux of these debates was to revisit the (non)importance of the rhetorical dimension in scholarly and public discourse. In particular, a number of scholars who took part in these debates were concerned with wider questions about the role and function of rhetoric in the formation of disciplines and in public affairs. That investigation of rhetoric was not directly concerned with deconstruction as a means of undermining objectivist claims and pretensions, but was rather framed as a study of appropriate forms of persuasive language and argument (Booth 1974; Perelman 1979; Edmondson 1984; Nelson et al. [eds] 1987b;

Simons [ed.] 1989, 1990; Toulmin 2003). Some of the main claims involved in the rhetorical turn challenged for instance the notion that 'serious' inquiry can be *free* of rhetoric and rely purely on 'hard' objectivistic facts and 'cold' logic for support. Nonetheless, it needs to be stressed that these investigations of the 'rhetoric of inquiry' did not aspire to 'replace logic of inquiry as an authority over research in substantive fields; nor can it become an academic discipline in its own right. It seeks merely to increase self-reflection in every inquiry ... [and] explores how reason is rhetorical' (Nelson et al. 1987c: ix).

In parallel, questions of how scholarly and public discourses are shaped by tropes and figures, by the framing and naming of issues, and by the need to adjust and amend arguments to desired ends, specific audiences and/or circumstances were addressed. A subsequent series of claims explored how rhetorical invention guides scientific invention (e.g. Campbell 1990: 58–90) and how rhetoric assists (political) judgement (e.g. Wells 1990: 208ff; Nelson 1990: 258ff). In the discipline of economics, for example, Deirdre McCloskey demonstrated how economic discourse employs figures of speech, metaphor, appeals to authority, symmetry and analogy as rhetorical means of persuasion. But as she makes clear, economics is not *just* about rhetorical means: 'Finding that economic conversation depends substantially on its verbal forms would not mean that economics is not a science, or just a matter of opinion, or some sort of confidence game. Economics is pretty successful as a science. In fact, its failures over past fifty years ... can be related directly to its sleepwalking in rhetoric' (McCloskey 1998: xix). McCloskey does not make any deconstructionist or relativist attack on the authority of economics as science; she only questions its exaggerated and overrated claims for objectivity, maintaining that 'the invitation to rhetoric is not an invitation to "replace careful analysis with rhetoric" or to abandon mathematics in favor of name-calling or flowery language ... it is an invitation to leave the irrationality of an artificially narrowed range of argument and to move to the rationality of arguing like human beings' (McCloskey 1998: 168). There is also a powerful emphasis on agency when rhetoric is deployed in the sciences: 'Rhetoric of inquiry is needed precisely because facts themselves are mute. Whatever the facts, *we* do the speaking – whether through them or for them' (Nelson et al. 1987a: 8, emphasis original).

The next section will argue that a certain vision or image of contemporary academia underscores the present higher education policy discourses and its rhetoric, which may further steer and accelerate desired developments. The image of contemporary and future academia is often

shaped by the dominant organizational academic cultures of new public management discourse, and by funding regimes, political preferences, transformations of leadership, the values associated with knowledge production and organization and the structure of the academic workplace. As Lorenz (2012: 625–626) and Collini (2012) note, this image is more often than not underpinned by rhetoric or types of talk that help to sustain or even determine the desired vision, state and temporal order of academia.

Competitiveness-talk¹ (or, against slowness)

Integration of the vehicular idea of the knowledge economy into higher education policy discourse has been a stable reformation strategy pursued by British governments of last 15 to 20 years or so. Importantly the idea of the knowledge economy was a major framing device that should have facilitated, in the words of Tony Blair, ‘acceleration of progress’. It was indeed part of New Labour’s broader agenda throughout the 1990s and 2000s that blessed rapid technological advancement, energetic entrepreneurialism and a fast-paced consumerist lifestyle as an important feature of material and some (ill-defined) moral betterment (Tomlinson 2007a: 23). One of the crucial devices and instruments for achieving this agenda has been the principle of competition. As we saw in Chapter 2, competition is the dominant axiom of the capitalist system. However, building on that analysis, we said that next to political economic imperatives, there are accompanying and dialectically related *cultural* aspects too. How can we conceive of competition as a culturally constituted phenomenon with socio-material implications?

In higher education policy discourse the rhetoric of competitiveness evokes a tendency to continuous acceleration of academic operations, both internally (that is, concerning aspects found within, such as quality, accountability and auditing) and externally (in relation to other universities, to ‘new providers’ of higher education and to funding bodies).² Various types of ‘racing’ and ‘competitiveness strategies’ have been openly declared and required of universities and their integral components – predominantly academics – in a number of recent governmental policy documents. However, racing and endless competing as an *organizing and governing principle* is a relatively new phenomenon in higher education policy discourse. It is also an important component of stakeholders’ attempts to reinvent the *idea* of the university. In this respect, some critics suggest that ‘the “ivory tower” has been breached. The university is no longer a refuge from the

hustle-bustle, a slow zone for reading and reflection, critical dialogue and knowledge creation – to the extent that it ever was’ (Menziez and Newson 2007: 83). As we will see in the next chapter, this condition and these experiences are *differentiated*, depending on one’s disciplinary grounding, perspective, biography and other sociologically relevant variables. For the moment let us stay with the ivory tower as a catch-all metaphor for academia.

Reducing the idea of the university to the ivory tower *only* – a retrospective past imaginary, as Menziez and Newson would have it – is slightly romantic and partial. The idea that academia is separate from wider socioeconomic and cultural forces is to a large extent mistaken, because academia has *always* been engaged with the wider society in some respect and with the economy in particular (Veblen 2009). Despite occupying a distinctive social space with its unique temporal rhythms (Pels 2003: 3), academia has never ceased to be an integral and active component of social life (see e.g. Mowery et al. 2004: 10ff). In Britain, as elsewhere, the institutionalized ‘unhastened’ zone was also involved in the reproduction of social elites, a state of affairs which persisted throughout most of the 20th century (Holmwood 2011b: 12).

Yet the asymmetrical connection between different time cultures (that of the wider society which Rosa discusses in his concept of social acceleration, and that of academia – characterized by its “‘lack of haste” ... its socially sanctioned withdrawal from the swift pace of everyday life’ (Pels 2003: 2)) does not necessarily and automatically mean that the temporal orders and horizons of each culture would be homogenous and one-dimensional. Whereas the democratization of UK universities promoted by the 1963 Robbins Report set out to establish a public and largely anti-elitist status in academia while maintaining a specific ‘politics of time’ associated with academic conduct, the situation in the 1990s was marked by a radically different discourse (Collini 2012, 2013) which assumed the distinct temporal order of academia as largely irrelevant. Only in the late 1990s did British governments set out to *systematically* challenge the relatively long-lasting temporal detachment of the university and also, by extension, its residual intellectual elitism. As an unintended consequence, the new higher education discourse has generated a new kind of philistinism and instrumentalism. Academia, as an institutionalized slow zone and a temporally detached space of a different order of time, is now facing substantial attack by the still prevailing austerity-driven neoliberal mindset.

The notion of competitiveness should have become a major defining and governing principle of ‘the new academy’. Seen through the

temporal perspective, the elitist academy was in the eyes of many too self-referential, 'detached' and slow for the knowledge economy. The defining component of the new idea of the university was the synchronization of academic infrastructures with the knowledge economy by adopting dynamic business practices which are predominantly associated with discursive currents in post-Fordist capitalist rationality. One of the architects of this reinvented new academia proposed the following:

Today, once again, we are seeing a transformation in the purpose and self-image of universities. Today, academics and politicians are beginning to see the universities not just as creators of knowledge, as developers of young minds, and as transmitters of culture, but also as major agents of economic growth in the economy. This change in the purpose and self-image of the university has been driven by the concept of the knowledge economy, an economy in which ideas, and the ability to manipulate them, are of more importance than the traditional factors of production. In this economy a world-class university looks an increasingly useful asset. (Sainsbury 2004)

We detect two features in this statement. First, the university needs to actively engage with the wider social world while the main priority is being/becoming 'agentic' for economic growth. Second, we witness the expectations that have been invested into the vehicularity of the idea the knowledge economy. Sainsbury, unwittingly situating himself in the role of mediator (Osborne 2004), incidentally demonstrates 'the ability to manipulate' an idea: a variant of the idea of the knowledge economy is expected to drive change in purpose of the university by reducing it to an 'economically useful asset'.

The idea that the university is expected to deliver economic gains is then part of a self-fulfilling prophecy constantly repeated in higher education policy discourse:

No one nowadays can ignore the economic impact of universities. This is not the whole story. What goes on in universities is fundamentally worthwhile in its own right. It is part of being a civilised society. But you can recognise that and at the same time welcome the sheer economic *boost* provided by our universities. (Willets 2012, emphasis added)

Agentification of the university is accompanied by a particular language that implies acceleration, such as 'boosting', 'fostering', 'driving' and

'steering'. This vocabulary is often evident in the attempts to install effectiveness as an important modality of both institutional/governance and academic conduct. *Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* (a document by the Universities UK from 2011) is probably the most prominent example. It postulates 'efficiency as part of a wider strategic objective to enhance effectiveness of institutions and ensure they continue to deliver high quality teaching and research' (Universities UK 2011a: 6). Furthermore, universities are expected to become 'change agents' by developing closer ties to business and industry (see also Chapter 6) and by promoting and delivering 'skills' that are 'the fastest and best' (Thrift 2000: 674).

Next to budgets, financial matters, incentives, control mechanisms and other derivatives of competitiveness-talk, the use of 'triggering metaphors' (such as efficiency/effectiveness) is a crucial aspect of the 'logistic of implementation'. The aim is to encourage smoother installation of appropriate and desired policies and arrangements intended to re-energize the assumed 'slow zone' of academia. It can also be characterized as a legitimating strategy and a reflection shaping the present (Adam and Groves 2007; Dale 2007: 29). Furthermore, acceleration-inflected language appears to be underpinned by specific positive cultural values and promises associated with the culture of mechanical speed (Tomlinson 2007a). The faster the idea of economically-driven competitiveness becomes the governing principle (Sum 2010), the better it will be for the actors and participants in a given remit, that is, universities, academics, students and other relevant stakeholders:

Enabling greater competition, while removing unnecessary regulations, is an important theme ... because of the benefits for all users of higher education. (Department for Business, Innovations and Skills 2011: 19)

[U]niversities themselves will have to be more efficient and effective. Universities already need to be rigorous in withdrawing from activities of lower priority and value, so that they can invest more in higher priority programmes. This will need to intensify. (Department for Business, Innovations and Skills 2009: 4)

The prioritization strategy remains, however, rather mysterious. What is a 'low priority activity'? A friction or barrier that 'slows down' the desired pace and tempo of reinventing the new competitive and energetic academia? Do we mean an academic discipline, institutional unit

or administrative arrangement? Although an explicit answer is not offered, Peter Mandelson elaborates in a different section of the same text. Using he claims that competitive universities need to focus

on the key subjects essential to our economic growth, and boosting the general employability skills expected of all graduates. We [the government/BIS] will enable universities to compete for funds to provide courses in subjects relevant to Britain's economic future, working in partnership with business. Institutions unable to meet such strategic needs can expect to see their funding reduced to provide resources for those who can. (Department for Business, Innovations and Skills 2009: 4)

According to this view, not only is it the university's key need to reduce and restrict its core activities to those that are essential for economic growth, the university is also expected to eliminate activities which limit its ability to compete for funding.

Universities are thus asked to accelerate in a specific sense – intensify the elimination of barriers that are not part of high-priority activities mostly associated with provision of knowledge (both through education and research) 'relevant to the economic future'. At the same time 'standstill' is a regressive strategy for academia in the 'fast-changing world' – an ever-occurring theme. Charles Clarke, ex-secretary of the Department for Education and Skills, declares:

British universities are a great success story So it would be possible to opt for a quiet life. To coast along, bask in previous successes, shirk the need for reform. Though such an approach would be possible, I do believe that it would be wrong. It would be wrong because the world is already changing faster than it has ever done before, and the pace of change will continue to accelerate. (Department for Education and Skills 2003: 2)

In other documents, the 'fast-changing world' to which Clarke alludes is couched as a 'competitive world' where the crucial field of competition is not only knowledge creation and dissemination, but mainly its translation into a tradable commodity. Increasing competitiveness, despite being a long-term strategy, often advocates for its promoted changes to happen immediately. Hans-Georg Brose, similar to Scheurman, Connolly and Glezos (see Chapter 2 p. 52ff), notes that this is a tendency which originated in the late capitalist and business-oriented

environments: 'The strongly expressed uncertainties of future developments compel companies to take short-term strategies of profit-realization and dramatically increase the need for decision-making' (2004: 12).

Similarly, in the academic sector, the need to adjust, catch up, lead and eliminate barriers that may 'slow down' the desired pace is significant. The notion that the 'world around us' is accelerating accounts for a crucial discursive framing of the intended acceleration of university operations:

As a developed country we are operating at the knowledge frontier. We no longer have the choice in the globalised world to compete on low wages and low skills. We compete on knowledge – its creation, its acquisition and its transformation into commercially successful uses. (Department for Business, Innovations and Skills 2009: 3)

[O]ur [English] competitive edge is being challenged by advances made elsewhere. Other countries are increasing investment in their higher education institutions and educating more people to higher standards. (Browne Report 2010: 2)

I see our universities as being a major national asset for this country in the global 'knowledge economy' in which we now have to compete. In the years ahead it is imperative that we nurture them carefully, and see that they are properly funded, not smothered in rules and regulations, and encouraged to compete for the best students and the best academic staff. (Sainsbury 2004)

Not only top political officials, but also representatives of influential think- and policy-tank officials promote competition as a defining and necessary feature of the contemporary university. Competition is the core driving force that aims to 'empower' the academy by saving it from the regressive slow zone and the outdated 'monastic silence' of the ivory tower and its temporality of doubt and distantiation (Pels 2003: 179ff). This approach is evident in the rationale of the former head of Universities UK:

[M]any of the reforms carried out by the coalition government and its predecessor are aimed, at least in part, at strengthening the overall standing of higher education with regards to its global competitors ... Much of the change we are experiencing has been driven by the fiscal environment, but there is also a strong push to introduce wider changes such as more competition. (Smith 2011: 127)

The rhetoric of a later president of Universities UK maintains the same trajectory and manifests worries of lagging behind – being too slow:

It is imperative that we maintain our position in what is an increasingly competitive global environment. The UK's capacity to punch above its weight in terms of research output and productivity remains vital to this, as does continued investment in high level skills. And it is through investment in our universities that these will be delivered. Despite recent increases in the proportion of individuals participating in higher education, our aspiration must be to increase this further. The UK remains behind many of its competitor countries in terms of the proportion of graduates in its population and the distribution of high level skills within the country is still uneven. Success in the knowledge economy is the route to maintaining our competitive advantage. (Universities UK 2011b: 1)

The accelerative potential of the competitiveness-talk involves multiple *material* developments in the British higher education sector which can be identified by several significant trends: expanding access, transnational student mobility, the rise of for-profit providers of higher education services, branch campuses, research and innovation policy, assessment of research outputs, and rankings. Although these developments are indeed material in their nature, consequences and contestations, they often result from a carefully crafted discursive trajectory of politically-enforced measures and provisions. Robertson notes that the gradual implementation of competitiveness affects two main academic missions: it is manifested in the transformation of teaching/access and research/innovation (2010: 196). The rhetoric of competition has also resulted in a sustained attempt to widen access to higher education – this, according to the policy architects, will assist in building a competitive knowledge economy. That move has several implications for the everyday reality of the university. First, the notable increase in higher education enrolments: in 1999/2000 there were 1,856,300 students enrolled in HE in the UK, while in 2010/2011 there were 2,501,300 (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2012). Secondly, the rhetoric advocates a greater effort to attract fee-paying international students – one broader implication of the ‘internationalization’ agenda. The consequent changes in the terrain of research and innovation will be discussed in Chapter 6 in greater detail – particularly by focusing on what I call the ‘re-missioning agenda’. Another widespread implication is the emergence of rankings and league tables that is not extensively discussed in this book (see e.g. Hazelkorn 2011).

Although various stakeholders – government agencies, policy-makers, think-tanks, university managers – desire that universities increasingly compete among each other to secure their positions in the knowledge economy, they also sustain a particular concept of education. The need for ‘delivery’ of knowledge and university graduates with appropriate properties/dispositions/skills should help install the ethos of economic competition as the defining feature of inner university infrastructures. One of my interview respondents acknowledged this tendency:

Anything that raises standards is good, as far as I am concerned. The days when you do a stand-up lecture, when you have got no other support rather than talk are gone. In my opinion, quite rightly, what we have to do is to ensure that students think for themselves and what we do is give proper support to enable them to think for themselves. It is more professional, standards will be enhanced and raised and as we are in a competitive environment now, with student fees, I think it is a good thing. I think it is good that the universities are now run more like businesses. (Interview 9, professor, engineering, male)

More frequently, however, the transformation of the university, sustained by the accelerative rhetoric, is nevertheless met with considerable, yet unequally distributed resistance: many academics reject, or are at least sceptical about competitiveness-talk. Rhetoric that sustains various types of managerial jargon is met with reservations – this is so even in the corners of the university where it should be most ‘at home’, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects.

Competitiveness-talk is anchored in business discourses that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Nigel Thrift eloquently captured this business rhetoric, evoking a strong tendency towards acceleration. From the rhetoric investigated so far, it should now be evident that by constant and relentless articulation of competition, universities are expected to behave as market-driven business organizations. Thrift, referring to changing business cultures at the turn of the century, noted that the fast business organization is ‘under growing pressure to constantly perform, as the whole process of reproduction of products and services becomes subject to more and more demanding discipline in ways that are inevitably self-reinforcing, as successful competition between firms seems to increasingly depend upon success in adopting these disciplines’ (Thrift 2000: 676). Once the ‘zero-sum’ game of economic competition is instantiated, and once universities are expected to compete incessantly, the competition itself turns into an unproductive

'rat-race', which results in a perpetual politically-assisted contest. The main problem, therefore, with more intense political prioritization of the competitiveness agenda, is that it considerably facilitates the shrinking of time horizons and the multiplication of deadlines, which results in a marked loss of autonomy on the part of institutions of higher education (Pels 2003: 2). One STEM-subject lecturer meditated on the ongoing shaping of academia by economic imperatives in the following way:

[Science and research] shouldn't be driven by economics, shouldn't be driven by what some bureaucrat decides should be the focus of science this year ... I mean it should be ... it is a horribly idealistic view, but science should be shared, it should be common, we [academics] should all be pitching ideas together ... there should absolutely be a distinction between academia and business, between the college and economics, definitely, definitely, because ... we want to ... engender knowledge, we want to improve or accent the curiosity of the students while they are here without the pressures of having to perform, and the same goes for academics ... [it shouldn't be about] having to meet certain targets, how many papers you produce, how much grant income you get ... it should be about free thinking. (Interview 8, lecturer, chemistry, male)

One of the embodiments of competitiveness-talk is the initiation of a culture of short-termism (Sennett 1998; Brose 2004; Spurk 2004). This culture is grounded in certain values associated with the promise of shortened time-scopes and the immediate or very quick delivery identified by Tomlinson. Moreover, short-termism comprises one of the defining aspects of 'smart' and ICT-savvy metropolitan business cultures. In this situation, naturally, long-term and process- (rather than result-) oriented contemplative scholarship are seen as anachronistic by competitiveness advocates. Immediacy not only characterizes the social experience of ever-faster ICT-saturated work and life environments, as Tomlinson says, but it also structures competitive environments, including the academic one. In this sense, many academics find themselves in a constant *race* for obtaining grant funds:

It is very much a short-term culture and there is no consistent guidance as to what they want to see. I think that is damaging ... a lot of my time is now spent on chasing research grant income and I can't do the work I thought I would do: being a lecturer at the university! (Interview 12, reader, engineering, female)³

Moreover, short-term culture, increased decentralization and flexibilization associated with the transformation of the late-capitalist workplace – including the academic one (e.g. Gill 2009) – might account for an explanatory resource that can help us to understand the common experience of fragmented and discontinuous time. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The imperative to compete not only aims to disturb what is largely misconceived as slow-moving ivory tower by advocates of the fast knowledge economy, but also challenges the dynamic pace intrinsic to academic work. In fact, installing high-speed, up-tempo competitiveness-talk challenges the productive interface between fast and dynamic engagement on the one hand, and scientific intervention and the slow contemplation involved in testing, experimenting, prototyping and measuring on the other. These are often not opposed but complementary and synergistic:

I think that in principle it is important for academics to be responsive. We have recently seen that a question or problem suddenly becomes prominent. Not in my field, but take for example the avian flu where people had to work fast and produce solutions. I think it is important to be responsive in that respect. But I also think there is a difference between being able to be responsive and constantly working at high-tempo, because I think the flipside is that there is value in long-term thinking. (Interview 16, professor, experimental psychology, male)

One of the main problems with competitiveness-cum-acceleration becoming an agent is its detrimental effect on academia and education, as discussed by Thomas Docherty. In *Times Higher Education* he raises a plausible normative critique of the notion of competition as it is crafted by policy agents: ‘Our contemporary language derives partly from a badly misunderstood version of Darwinism, where survival by adaptability turns into the victory of the most ruthlessly, aggressively competitive. That yields a false version of a morality measured only by success over others’ (2012: 36). More specifically, Docherty, similarly to Thrift, notes how the rhetoric of competition turns into an organizing principle that has its roots in the business world. The source of the ethos of competition ‘comes from the commercial world that we are enjoined constantly to ape, where “competition” is seen as the driving force for innovation and for the improvement of the quality of goods and services’ (ibid.). However, this assumption, Docherty claims, is

false. Business enterprises by definition do not welcome regulations and arrangements that drive profits down while promising ever-improving quality. Quite the contrary, the imperative of competition tends to produce conformity and standardization. Successful products in the world of business are copied, consumer choices are reduced. In the case of the higher education sector, the drive for competitiveness and associated policies diverts attention and energy from classrooms and research labs towards a continuous search for the right measures and arrangements, which leads to incessant tinkering with bureaucracy and administration experienced by institutions, faculties, departments and academics. This dynamic may give the impression of ‘speed of change’ to which Marginson and Considine, for instance, refer (2000: 2). And yet the academic environment is gradually becoming increasingly *conservative* and, in the words of Müller (2014), a Darwinistic competitive race among (especially young) academics – for funds, citations and publications, not for better crafted and more convincing (counter)arguments, which leads more or less to the reproduction of the ever-same with psychological and personal ramifications. Furthermore, academic quality is not something inherently determined only by competition governed by academic criteria, but increasingly by oligarchic and cartel allegiances often formed between and among top/senior university managers, policy think-tanks, government officials and their institutional vehicles. In recent years one of the most important proxies for academic quality has been excellence, to which we now turn.

Excellence-talk

The idea of excellence – often seen as an ideal-type driving mechanism for improving competitiveness in the business world, and as an attribute immediately to be sought in this ‘fast-changing world’ – has become an excessively used rhetorical formula in academia. From policy documents to the mission statements of universities, the commitment to excellence appears to be an omnipresent criterion in contemporary higher education discourse that permeates agendas and registers. Consider the following declarations (all emphases added):

The Universities are today at the heart of knowledge-driven economy and society, and we must make certain that we fund them properly and that they have the administrative and financial systems to deliver the *excellence* we require of them in the areas of research, teaching and knowledge transfer. (Sainsbury 2003)

We are already established as being amongst the world's top one hundred universities but we want to rise further and be amongst the very few premier global universities. We will achieve this through the *excellence* of our research and teaching, as well as the quality of our staff and the exceptional nature of our graduates. (Univeristy of Birmingham 2012)

Our priority ... is to enhance our reputation for *excellent* research that has a positive impact on the economy and society, advancing solutions to some of the most pressing concerns facing us regionally, nationally and internationally. (University of the West of England 2012)

In order to maximise the sector's contribution to upward social mobility, it will be essential to support *excellence* in all its diverse forms. (Universities UK 2011c: 12)

[H]igher education is an increasingly important engine room for sporting *excellence* in the UK – not surprising considering that academic and sporting ability often go hand in hand – and most world class sportsmen and women are either in the student age group or only a year or so older. (University Guide n.d.)

[O]ur commitment to internationally *excellent* and world-leading research [will continue to be] promoted through the dual support system and effective collaboration with the Research Councils, charities and industry funders of research. (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2011: 7)

Excellence has indeed become the keyword in higher education policy discourse and in universities' self-understanding – but in comparison to competitiveness, which denotes specific activity and explicitly maintains that resources and developments are managed through escalation of competition, excellence remains inherently vague and mutable. No wonder that Michèle Lemont argues “‘excellence’ is the holy grail of academic life. Scholars strive to produce research, which will in turn influence the direction of their field. Universities compete to improve their relative rankings. Students seek inspiring mentors. But, even though excellence is ubiquitously invoked, there is little cross-disciplinary consensus about what it means and how it is achieved, especially in the world of research’ (Lemont 2009: 1–2). Excellence was perhaps most aptly

analysed by Bill Readings, who reveals its fundamental emptiness and hence administrative appeal: 'As an integrating principle, excellence has the singular advantage of being entirely meaningless, or to put it more precisely, non-referential' (1996: 22), while at the same time he makes clear that 'the need for excellence is what we all agree on ... because it is not an ideology, in the sense that it has no external referent or internal content' (1996: 23).

The rhetoric of excellence has nevertheless become a driving force and common denominator, a top-ranking concern and criterion in evaluation processes. The commitment to excellence is poised as the principle around which the university's mission is centred. However, Readings points out the vagueness of the term excellence, which cannot be invoked as a criterion in any way because it 'is not a fixed standard of judgement but a qualifier whose meaning is fixed in relation to something else' (1996: 24). Despite, or maybe *because* of this problem, excellence is a 'condensation symbol' (Gillies 2007) with tremendous capacity to govern and structure academic life and culture.

The commitment to excellence originates in Total Quality Management (TQM), which is a set of technologies aimed at making business operations more effective and agile through constant improvement of the quality of processes and products. In policy discourse, this commitment informs the visions, values and *x*-year plans proposed and implemented by educational managers, and significantly frames institutional arrangements that subsequently determine the conditions of the temporal possibilities for teaching and research. Excellence as an empty signifier is, as Readings implies, open for all sorts of fillings that are meant to secure desirable outcomes. Specifically, one of the 'stuffings' of the notion excellence we may often, but not exclusively, find in applied research is the notion of *delivery*. Simon Head notes that 'the academy must deliver its research "output" with a speed and reliability resembling that of the corporate world and also deliver research that will somehow be useful to the British public and private sectors, strengthening the latter's performance in the global marketplace' (2010). Excellence and delivery of research outcomes are probably best embodied in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) whose roots are in the corporate, not academic, world. Head further says that REF 'is really a "quality control" exercise imposed on academics by politicians; and [its] grades are simply the raw material for Key Performance Indicators, which politicians and bureaucrats can then manipulate in order to show that academics are (or are not) providing value for taxpayers' money. The grades are at best a measure of competence, not of excellence' (2010; see also Sayer 2015).

However, it is not only that the reference to excellence organizes a particular temporal regime imposed on academic work, there is another sense in which the rhetoric of excellence may be a technology that manoeuvres various aspects and features of higher education when it is applied to the rhythms of the knowledge economy. Readings outlines this relationship pertinently: 'Excellence responds very well to the needs of technological capitalism in the production and processing of information, in that it allows for the increasing integration of all activities into a generalized market, while permitting a large degree of flexibility and innovation ...' (1996: 32).

At the same time the logic of excellence is also a logic of competition-based perfection in which the acceleration imperative is inherent in performance control and management. Similarly to the previous type of talk, the notion of excellence and its derivatives generate multiple material implications. Despite the complementary ties between excellence and the imperative of competition, their characteristics are somehow different. Besides TQM, excellence can also be seen as an ideological offshoot of the New Public Management that has been an integral part of public sector reform in the UK for a number of decades now:

Since the 1980s, successive British governments have sought to improve public sector performance through various initiatives known collectively as the 'new public management'. These policies have had a cumulative, extensive impact on (re-)organizing and (re-)prioritizing the daily routines within what is now heralded as a revived, 'modernizing' public sector. Constructed through a discursive mix of metaphors which privilege such artifacts as 'quality', 'customer care', 'value for money', 'public accountability' and 'private-public partnerships', virtually all the changes have involved some degree of performance measurement accompanied by control rituals and routines such as performance targets and indicators, 'best practice' models and varieties of 'league tables'. (Keenoy 2005: 303–304)

Where does acceleration reside here? In the context of these conditions the academic culture and especially the autonomy of scholarly conduct is imbued with the discourse and practice that considers acceleration and fast conduct as its top-ranking concern. The need for acceleration underpins the pursuit of excellence in several senses.

First, the faster a 'benchmark' or 'best practice' that would pave the way to excellence is implemented, the better – in a 'fast-changing' world, when emergency has become the norm, and in

a competitive environment, where the fastest and fittest survive, continuous commitment to excellence is frequently *imagined* to be progressive polity. Second, if a discourse or arrangement speeds up particular operations and activities that may result in consolidation of excellence, it is often viewed as desirable and progressive – for instance the mushrooming introduction of ‘accelerated degrees’ in business subjects and computing at, for example, the universities of Plymouth, Staffordshire, Bucks and UWE. Third, excellence is achieved through more performance indicators (not fewer) and this results in the ‘crowding’ of professional and bureaucratic demands that can be experienced as time-pressure. Before we examine the third aspect in the following chapter let us have a look at the conflictuality associated with the first two moments. How do the promotion of excellence and striving for performance perfection manifest themselves in the academic experience?

As highlighted in the opening quotations of this section, the notion of excellence is often connected with research and ways and means of assessing and evaluating research. Excellence becomes a normative measure, a foil that ‘relies on the failure and the threat of failure to propel people to engage in acts of self-exploitation simply to keep their place in the university of excellence’ (Menzies 2010: 40). Regulation through the measurement of performance comes to be a crucial determinant of the value of academic labour. In this sense, acceleration, similarly to the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes, becomes the key operational modality. Moreover, acceleration and performance are, by some interpretations, two sides of the same coin: ‘research assessment “counts” publications in a “publish or perish” climate which not only determines faculty and institutional reputation, but also levels of research funding. Universities have become “theatres of fast knowledge” driven by the ethos of performance in teaching and research’ (Besley and Peters 2005: 115). However, the notion of fast conduct is not unequivocal and appears to be highly differentiated. Sometimes it comes as a natural and desired component of scientific practice; sometimes it manifests itself as an undesired and detrimental necessity associated with performance conformities and standards.

In some (applied) disciplines, fast conduct and fast distribution of fresh knowledge are inscribed in their epistemological ordering, which existed before and beyond excellence-talk and would probably exist regardless of any policy-driven performance fetish. Fast production of knowledge and knowledges that are quickly applicable are inscribed in the progressive ethos of academic conduct in the case of some

disciplinary cultures. A professor of engineering elaborated on a need for speed-friendly and dynamic academic infrastructures:

Here is an idea: Someone puts a problem to be solved; then there are cascading ideas, brainstorming, people fire ideas; in the end a patent can come out if it; and you can identify who is part of the ownership of the patent – how liberating is that? So the new university needs effective rules. Our current university model is old-fashioned ['slow']; we don't need it anymore, this is a 13th century relic. You could argue you need less staff to teach; you can buy your teaching externally from some web-resource. We may end up having, say, the most prestigious Ivy League scholars ... or they may have something from us! And then you have a premier league of teachers. How you can do that with research I don't know. Yet you can have lots of very clear market-led dynamics and I think that will be great. In this sense, I am libertarian. (Interview 9, professor, engineering, male)

The speed of conduct associated with performance management and control, according to some commentators, compromises knowledge creation, while the main concern is output and delivery and only secondarily content (Menzies 2010). This type of claim might be exaggerated, not in its relevance but in its unequal distribution across disciplines.

In another sense, referring to psychology, two scholars discussed what they call 'bite-size science.' Acceleration and performance are implicit in the trends that they observed. Despite their critical tone towards the trend of acceleration of scholarly communication, they recognized the (however marginal) *advantages* of acceleration, which go beyond policy discourse:

In journals from all areas of psychology, there is a trend toward short and rapid publications Those in the field have claimed that there are many advantages for short reports: faster communication of results; ease of assimilation; ease of access for people outside the field; ease of processing for editors and reviewers; and more dynamic exchange of fresh ideas, even if they may turn out to be wrong. In addition to these advantages, there are practical considerations affecting this trend. The main one is an increased pressure on researchers to produce quantifiable output. (Bertamini and Munafo 2012: 67)

Whereas some knowledges could be unproblematically saturated with 'fast knowledge', other disciplinary cultures and situated political

economies may conceive much more differentiated ecologies with more salient temporal tensions. Nevertheless, the excellence and performance fetish is generally perceived as an important detriment by many scholars. Not that they would not strive to pursue excellence in their own disciplinary terms and in their own terms of reference; the main issue that emerges from the interviews seems to be a direct and explicit refusal of the square imposition and dogmatism of excellence. The main objection is that excellence-talk drives developments in advancing and installing business, not academic norms and expectations – and may paradoxically prevent research infrastructures from being responsive to burning societal, medical or economic problems. This may indeed have idiosyncratic characteristics and features across academic disciplines and will be explored in Chapter 7 using the example of sociology.

The ways in which the interplay of performance, acceleration and control – more often than not driven by excellence-talk – are sometimes perceived among senior scholars is striking:

I believe in any job you have to decide what you have got to do to meet the requirements of the institution. Now I am sure that institutions themselves can put lots of time-pressure on people beyond realistic expectations – in terms of targets or whatever. But by and large the individual scholar has lots of scope ... and one of the problems I have is that the people who say they are under pressure quite often impose it on themselves. And I don't understand this conundrum to volunteer and take on more work. (Interview 4, professor, engineering, male)

Institutional signals aren't always as draconian as we like to represent them as being ... and REF is a very good example of that. (Interview 5, professor, human geography, female)

This perception of the cascading imperative of excellence was relatively frequent in the testimonies of my interviewees. It could be assumed that the relativization of increasingly demanding institutional requirements and expectations is often determined by the seniority of the respondent. Libertarian perceptions might not only be ascribed to an underpinning, although perhaps tacit, political perspective, but also to the very ranking and positioning of a given person in the academic hierarchy. Job security or tenure allow one to experience and view the academic world from a particular perspective that may be considerably remote to that of an early-career academic precariat (cf. McAlpine 2012; also Fochler et al. 2015).

It is perhaps no surprise that many senior academics at the rank of professor are often content with their current roles and situational responsibilities. Importantly, as Luanna Meyer (2012: 211) notes, professors are often likely to have tenure and their salaries and job security are minimally affected by their levels of productivity.⁴ In comparison, junior academics receive considerably lower salaries and are expected to demonstrate productivity before they attain job security. At the same time, they often raise young families and not uncommonly struggle with the complications of maintaining dual (academic) careers. However, even among relatively job-secure and senior academics, an attitude of hostility to the ineffable imperative of excellence was generally common, maybe more so than Meyer acknowledges – and in some cases senior academics expressed worries about the possibilities and prospects of young academics' pathways in the current academic climate. The incessant need to perform and demonstrate productivity was not necessarily perceived only in terms of time-pressure as other higher education studies ascertain (Menzies and Newson 2007; Ylijoki 2013), but also in terms of de-professionalization stemming from the interplay of relatively pointless needs for acceleration and fetishes of performance:

There is a pressure to be ever-more excellent. One is constantly assessed, and it is not enough to trust a colleague to be doing excellent work, it always has to be demonstrated. We are subject to review processes and those processes themselves of course take time, and that relentless pressure makes one feel ... it is an interesting question of how subjective this is because we always cared about our work being good, we always wanted an international reputation, scholars have always wanted that and they have always been quite competitive about that, but the way it has been institutionalized has made people feel that it is a greater burden, because it is not just a personal expectation, the institution is creating quite short-term expectations and there can be consequences for you and your career. (Interview 10, senior lecturer, history, male)

We are all forced to produce at a particular rate, as if we are doing piecework but don't have time to read any of the crap that we are publishing. We read a tiny fraction of what is actually being published. So what we should do is to encourage people to publish less, but better stuff so that every single piece I have to read is actually really good. Because of the pressure to publish, people publish crap and also publish the same

thing over and over again, which I categorically refuse to do. I am not gonna do it. We have been massively de-professionalized. Things we are used to as professionals assume that we police ourselves ... that we are not constantly policed externally showing what we are doing. (Interview 7, professor, politics, female)

Whereas competitiveness-talk imposes a racing modality as an instrument for 'just' distribution of funds, status and competencies, excellence-talk entails an ongoing – and competitive – striving for perfection in multiple internal academic settings. This is not to say that competition for recognition and striving for perfection are new and somehow distinctive aspects of academia, least of all to say social instances and modalities (Honneth 1996). What is perhaps different and relatively new is the brand of publicly and culturally endorsed competition and the hegemony of excellence that is sustained, promoted and installed with the help of rhetoric clearly oriented to economism. Even though policy-makers and stakeholders consider the business jargon of accelerative rhetoric that is saturating higher education policy discourse to be salutary, academics often see the criteria of allocation it enforces as inadequate, inappropriate and in conflict with academic value systems, norms and temporal horizons.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that a particular rhetoric – that of competitiveness and excellence – sustains the transformation of contemporary academia. These two types of talk are never *just* talks – they are performative as well as conflictive. They aim to trigger particular material developments and at the same time are discursive responses both to the dynamic needs of the knowledge economy and to imagined versions of a 'fast-changing world'. We also saw that despite strong and powerful policy promotion of these talks, academics themselves – even those who are at the forefront of the use of these slogans – only minimally appreciate them. It seems more likely that they perceive them with substantial reservations if not straightforward hostility. Rhetoric can thus be seen as accelerative in two ways. First, it is a type of rhetoric that intends acceleration by imposing measures and arrangements from the business world. Here, acceleration is a means for achieving a desired state – often articulated with regard to an image of an academia that is too slow. Secondly, the measures, and the sheer overwhelming quantity of them, may simply require faster conduct to comply with them.

However, in this case, the situatedness and positioning of the observer in the academic terrain may significantly shape the perception of the need for speed. In other words, acceleration might be seen as something that serves as an operational modality when achieving and pursuing an ideological agenda; it might also be an unintended effect of the intrusion of new types of talk into academia. It is in this sense that accelerative rhetoric aims to restructure academic values that potentially redraw temporal horizons and the priorities of the academic vocation. Drawing on the analysis conducted in this chapter, what follows is an experiential analysis of acceleration in academic life.

5

Acceleration in the Academic Life-World

There is no doubt that as a category of lived experience speed is elusive: how can one possibly know and describe the personal reality of speed apart from one's impression of it? (Divall and Shin 2012: 4)

When diagnosing the social experience of acceleration, Rosa and Scheuerman (2009: 5) imply that increasing pressure to accelerate is gradually dismantling the subjective life-world. As we saw earlier, this may have detrimental consequences for the temporal autonomy of both individuals and institutions. However, one of the questions I will explore in this – *interview-led* – chapter is whether this is true of academics. Hence, this chapter will investigate whether academics are chronically busy, and suffering psychologically and professionally from time-pressure. I conducted twenty interviews (a list of participants can be found in Appendix 1) which confirmed that – in accordance with existing research in this area – academics do not have as much time as they require for pursuing work-related duties and self-driven research activities. The interviews re-establish that the ideologies discussed in the previous chapters actually do structure institutional configurations and that the contemporary university in the UK ‘manifests itself ... in the permanent acceleration in its regime of time’ (Lorenz 2012: 606). My findings, however, differ in two significant respects from existing analyses that have explored the lived experience of the increased tempo of academic life.

First, it emerges that acceleration is not experienced as pathologically and chronically as some accounts maintain (Szollos 2009). Nor does the experience of acceleration have any significant psychological and disrupting implications such as health-threatening stress, exhaustion,

insomnia, anxiety, shame, aggression, feelings of out-of-placeness and fraudulence and fear of exposure (Gill 2009; and more generally Hassan 2012). Still, the experience of the ‘treadmill’ – where individuals have to ‘run faster and faster to stay in one place’ (Rosa 2010b) – seems to be an appropriate metaphor that aptly captures the present condition of the academic workplace.

Nevertheless, time-pressure is far from being a single overwhelming concern. As we already saw, other issues such as the de-professionalization and general dislike of the reification of education and research appear to be equally burning concerns. According to the present inquiry, the ways in which academics experience and structure their professional temporal landscapes vis-à-vis institutional and disciplinary requirements and expectations is not as bleak as authors like Rosa (2010a), Ylijoki and Mäntylä (2003), Menzies and Newson (2007), Sabelis (2007), Gill (2009), Ylijoki (2013) and Chow et al. (2010) seem to suggest – at least not in the ‘red brick’/Russell Group institutions on which this investigation was focused.

Importantly, however, this focus – on elite institutions and mostly senior academics – may be over-determining for the results that are presented here and may be representative only of institutions and academics of similar rank. Probing into lived experience reveals that notwithstanding the accelerating pace of academic life, senior and tenured academics do enjoy *some* temporal autonomy. Following Moustakas’s (1994) concerns with phenomenological inquiry – that is, focusing on what an experience means to individuals and how they articulate the meaning and essence of that experience – my investigation allowed me to register important characteristics of the acceleration experience. Therefore, the second major finding is that subjective, positive experiences of acceleration, what Rosa metaphorically calls the ‘pleasures of the motorcycle’ (2010b), are widely experienced among academics across diverse disciplines. Two further challenges to the tacit assumptions associated with social acceleration will be raised in this chapter. These claims provide a conceptual terrain which both inspires empirical enquiry and subsequently frames the analysis of the empirical results on which the concluding propositions are grounded:

- (1) Drawing on Dörre’s observations of some of the critical remarks developed and advanced in Chapter 2 and on empirical evidence, it will be argued that the *overwhelmingness* of acceleration is, to a large extent, an overstatement. Furthermore, as Michael Flaherty noted, individuals tend to alter and customize various dimensions

of their temporal experience and resist external sources of temporal constraints and structures (2011: 3). If we accept that the experience of acceleration is one of the dimensions of subjective temporal experience, a similar observation can be made in our case: acceleration may be negotiated and does not necessarily determine or eliminate temporal autonomy. In fact, the possibility that individuals *process* the acceleration experience, rather than being passively enfolded by it, also provides us with the possibility of conceiving acceleration as a multi-faceted, ambiguous experience and social phenomenon. This somewhat agency-oriented approach does not underestimate the structural forces of acceleration or the social situatedness of human agents, but highlights the subjective capacities and differentiation of the negative experience of acceleration. Thus, the first section looks at the subjective experience of time in the contemporary (Russell Group) university and degrees of individual temporal autonomy.

- (2) Among the major proponents of the theory of social acceleration, there is a general consensus that life-world manifestations and experiences of acceleration are predominantly, perhaps *only*, negative and obstructive. Yet the social critique of acceleration's unfavourable implications (e.g. Rosa 2010a: 67–97) cannot fully rule out at least the possibility of a positive experience of acceleration. Rosa does, albeit in a minimal way, acknowledge this dimension of speed: 'it would be dead wrong to think that individuals are nothing but the hapless victims of socially caused acceleration. Quite the contrary, we are not just agents of acceleration; we also enjoy and desire the dynamization of our material, social and spiritual worlds' (2010b). Yet, this aspect of acceleration remains substantially sidelined and underrated in his account. In fact, both negative *and* positive experiences of acceleration can, and often do, coalesce in the human life-world. The findings gathered in the academic environment presented here affirm the inherent ambiguity of the acceleration experience. They conform to Tomlinson's historical-cultural understanding of acceleration, which recognizes the complex nature of acceleration and the somatic and psychic experience it produces. For him, acceleration 'exhibits different aspects; it offers both pleasures and pains, exhilarations and stresses, emancipation and domination. And frequently, these aspects appear to us so intertwined that it seems impossible, as individuals, to say whether an increasing pace of life is, in essence, a good or a bad thing' (2007a: 3). The evidence analysed below is not therefore a denial of, or a substantial critique of critical accounts of acceleration, but

should be understood as supplemental to attempts to stress the inherent ambivalence of acceleration effects. Thus in the second section of this chapter, I develop four typologies of the experience of acceleration in the academic life-world and pay particular attention to the nuances in the phenomenology of acceleration-effects. In the conclusion, against the background of the data analysed, I propose along with Tomlinson that ‘disapproval [of acceleration] doesn’t always amount to a direct rejection of ... [its] value ...’ (Tomlinson 2007a: 4).

Socially differentiated temporal autonomy

Architects of the theory of social acceleration advocate a thesis maintaining that the late-modern individual is fully and (almost) helplessly subject to the forces of acceleration and subordinate to a relentlessly ‘fast-changing world’. This holds both for acceleration pathologies (e.g. burnout) and also for deceleration pathologies (e.g. depression). As we saw in Chapter 1 in Rosa’s interpretation, acceleration and various forms of deceleration are couched as consequences of the singular logic of the socio-historical process of social acceleration. However, this claim arguably underestimates the complexity of the processes analysed, in particular the subjective subtlety and temporal resourcefulness of human agents.

Cursory observations would suggest that academics are not exceptionally resistant to the structural forces of acceleration – quite the contrary; they may be even more vulnerable and susceptible due to the unique temporality of academia (Pels 2003). Moreover, Rosa implies that individuals are affected by social acceleration regardless of their position within a society. Everybody appears to be subjected to the workings of acceleration, which no longer know any real social differentiation (Rosa 2009; cf. Dörre 2011: 70). However, Dörre maintains that control of temporal resources is unevenly distributed and depends both on the political economy of labour and situated social struggles (Negt, cited in Dörre 2011: 70). Drawing on Dörre’s corrective of Rosa, I propose that the experience of acceleration and its effect of diminishing temporal autonomy cannot be assumed to impact all individuals across society equally, and moreover, that it appears the experience and its effects are diverse even within a specific segment of society such as academia.

If we look at the actual experience of time in academia, the overall picture of structurally determined acceleration becomes slightly complicated. I interviewed a humanities scholar who reported a very distinctive experience of time-pressure, and I am unwilling to suggest that she

is a straightforwardly passive and helpless victim of the accelerating pace of academic life. Her comments show the inherent ambiguity associated with the nature of the experience of time-pressure. It should be noted that commentaries of this kind were rather frequent in participants' narratives of their time experiences. When I asked if she has enough temporal resources for scholarly activities, this scholar replied:

Yes and no. Time for what? I think in some ways we are often in charge of our own time and it is sometimes a matter of my own choice of what I do with my time, up to a point. Of course I like to do many things, many different things and I think that is one of the reasons why it seems to me I never have time, but also because ... sometimes objectively I am more busy. This year for example I am teaching a unit which has more than 100 people and although I have somebody who will help me with the marking, I still have more than 50 essays to mark and that is something that objectively limits my time. If I have to mark 50 essays it takes me more time than if I have to mark 20 essays. There are objective things that put pressure on my time: an increased number of students, more teaching I have to do, constantly preparing new units instead of always teaching the same one and so on, but also ... sometimes it is also a matter of my own choices and of my own lack of ... making the most of the time that I have. But yes, on the whole, I do have this feeling that I don't have enough time and I wish I could be able physically to work for 16 hours or 18 hours a day but unfortunately I find that impossible. I could easily fill my time with work 24 hours a day ... it is just that I don't have the stamina. (Interview 18, Reader, classics, female)

Although the feeling of not having enough temporal resources was more or less affirmed, it was dispassionately and reflexively situated within the broader context of the changing institutional structures of teaching and research duties. Interestingly, we note the overall tone of the testimony is not that of an unnerved and worn out academic.

This was common in other testimonies too – none of the twenty academics interviewed appeared to be severely stressed due to time-pressure. Quite the contrary, against all expectations, the majority of respondents conveyed that they still possess a reasonable amount of temporal autonomy. This does not mean that negative acceleration is not present and 'felt' in the academic environment as a result of institutional changes, increasing workloads and the proliferation of audit culture. It is probably a peculiarity of the academic profession and its

subjectivity that despite being systematically colonized by the logic of market, with its time regime and demands (by straightforwardly employing organizational and management models that originate in capitalist business organizations, by New Public Management, or by being an important 'non-capitalist other', as Dörre has it), academia still appears to be, perhaps residually, a temporally autonomous space:

We [academics] have a lot of freedom over our time, especially in comparison to many other people ... probably compared to the majority of people in the workforce ... we are very flexible in terms of how we spend our time. (Interview 6, senior lecturer, history, male)

If you look at the time I have to do my work there is probably plenty ... Basically I am paid reasonably well to pursue a hobby ... and they give me time, space and resources ... budget, background of big university ... it is a dream-job ... where else would you get that? (Interview 10, senior lecturer, medical sciences, male)

There is also a sense in which if I don't teach at 9am I can come in at 12pm and I can work till 8pm and then I can go home ... I can shift my day as I need it ... if I don't have these meetings, contact hours with students ... it is very flexible ... that is my experience of time and it is wonderfully liberating compared to a lot of other workers ... because I see myself as a worker ... well I am an academic, that is my job, but I am a worker, I work ... but I can shift my time, which lots of people can't ... they work very set hours. (Interview 3, lecturer, sociology, female)

One of the wonderful things of being an academic is that you have an awful lot of flexibility, ... you are much more in control of your time than you would be if you were in an organization where people have time-sheets and ... have to be at work between 9 and 5, so in that sense we are lucky. (Interview 17, senior lecturer, law, female)

The findings presented here show that academics 'manage' the accelerated pace of change, reflect upon it and more or less skilfully juggle changes in the temporal structure of their academic jobs. Moreover, there is a clear pattern demonstrating that scholars *still* enjoy their profession, including its temporal specificities.

Some existing accounts (especially those of Gill 2009; Clegg 2010; Chow et al. 2010) indicate that being an academic in the contemporary

university is stressful and unfulfilling – and importantly, that these characteristics are prevalent in the higher education system as a whole. Burrows (2012a) maintains that humanities, arts and social science scholars in particular are now subjected to hegemonic metric assemblages, struggling to learn how to ‘live with h-index’, that is, being permanently exposed to an index that endeavours to measure and quantify both the productivity and impact of the published work of an academic. While these arguments are relevant, worrying and extremely pertinent (see also discussion in Chapter 7), the testimonies of my respondents suggest that the alienated, time-poor *homo academicus* (Bourdieu 1988) is not a uniform, omnipresent archetype. Moreover, disciplinary division does not seem to *significantly* determine the (lack of) temporal autonomy of academics. (However, for specific reasons, some disciplines seem to be more prone to the crippling impact of metric assemblages than others, see Chapter 7.)

The feeling of not having enough time is, perhaps paradoxically, complemented by the awareness and experience of temporal autonomy and integrity. One of the most common problems identified by respondents, which represents this paradox, was the lack of *uninterrupted* and *undisturbed* time. This affirms Dörre’s observation about the discontinuity of time – not in the sense of personal biographies, but rather on the level of expectations and requirements imposed on contemporary academic workers. At the same time, the experience of discontinuity is not a significant turn-off for academics or an overwhelming preoccupation with some severe psychological consequences, as Gill (2009), for example, suggests when she says that the ‘punishing intensification of work has become an endemic feature of academic life’. While the intensification, i.e. acceleration, of academic work – and its severe psycho-personal consequences¹ – is something hardly disputable, what seems less convincing is the claim that it is *squarely* ‘punishing’ individual academics. Indeed academics now need to be ‘always on’; the academy is undoubtedly ‘without walls’ and ‘sleeplessness in academe’ is evident – yet academics can and do embrace some of the opportunities brought about by the dynamization of academic life and even perceive the trends that underlie these experiential umbrella-metaphors as progressive.

Still, this type of experience – or for that matter *lack* of time-pressure – might be very much restricted to the ‘top academics’ at ‘top universities’ and does not adequately reflect the life-world of younger, job-insecure academics. Untenured (and even tenured), scholars in precarious situations might disagree altogether with the nuanced diagnosis offered here (see e.g. Mountz et al. 2015). However, temporal autonomy and

'expropriation of the control of disposal of work time and life time is taking place in a socially differentiated manner' (Dörre 2011: 87). The present investigation was undertaken in an 'red brick' institution which is part of the Russell Group – an association which includes twenty-four UK research-intensive universities representing only 15 per cent of the higher education sector but accounting for 75 per cent of total income from Research Councils (Russell Group 2012). This fact plays a decisive, material role in determining the status and privileges of highly positioned individuals within a given institution. As we can see in Appendix 1, the respondents were, with one exception, senior scholars, often professors. Similarly, as discussed in the previous chapter, this variable may provide a specific subtext to the results. It may also, by default, give only a partial snapshot of academic realities. The situation in a post-1992, non-Russell Group institution might be altogether different. Temporal autonomy might therefore be an 'enclosed autonomy' highly dependent on the social position of an academic and his or her institution (see Harvie 2000). It might well be that temporal autonomy is a privilege of those individuals and social structures which are materially secure:

No I don't think acceleration of change and related time squeeze affects my career directly, but partially this is because I am at this university, probably. (Interview 19, reader, policy studies, female)

Pleasures and pressures of acceleration

Using a large-scale survey, and transposing Rosa's three dimensions of acceleration onto working life, a team of Austrian social psychologists explored the problem of agency by looking at what they called 'acceleration-related demands' among care workers for older adults in Austria (Kubicek et al. 2012). They concluded that besides cognitive, emotional and physical work demands, acceleration-related demands correlate positively to employee burnout and negatively to engagement in job duties calling for 'vigour and dedication'. The results of their study confirm the job-related experience of acceleration among care workers.

Despite exceptional methodological rigour and transparency, and despite that it is one of the few existing quantitative studies openly and explicitly dealing with the theory of social acceleration, a main problem of this inquiry is how it operationalizes and tests Rosa's theory. Kubicek et al. adopt a value-base that is associated with Rosa's interpretation and stay solely on the level of the subjective experience associated with

accelerative ICT, the ever-increasing rate of demands for acquisition of new skills and knowledge required of workers and the compression and intensification of time schedules, deadlines, and multitasking. Technological acceleration, acceleration of social change and acceleration of the pace of life ‘manifest themselves in the requirement to adjust to more frequent changeovers to technical and medical equipment and to update one’s professional knowledge in ever shorter periods of time and in work intensification’ (Kubicek et al. 2012: 9). Whilst this benchmark study empirically verifies Rosa’s association between acceleration and alienation, it nonetheless – in its very design and the articulation of its hypotheses – leaves intact and unprocessed the question of whether acceleration can also be thought of as a dynamic and positive experience.

However, Kubicek et al. reveal an ‘unexpected finding’ (2012: 10). Their study disclosed an ambivalent relationship between acceleration experience and well-being. Demands associated with the increased pace of life might be hindering, due to their association with burnout, whereas demands related to technological acceleration and societal change might be ‘challenging’ and have ‘ambivalent, that is positive *and* negative, effects on the individual’ (ibid., emphasis added). Although this aspect was not built in to the operationalization and transposal of the theory of social acceleration, the authors add an important, qualitatively-supported distinction to Rosa’s theory. Despite Kubicek et al. not including the possibility that a subjective experience *might be* a distinctive research finding, their results nevertheless – ‘unexpectedly’ – demonstrate that the acceleration experience can be challenging, convenient and non-alienating. Their very empirical inquiry acknowledges the integral ambivalence of the social and individual experience of acceleration in modernity, as earlier discussed.

While some academics admit to a degree of temporal autonomy, as indicated above, temporal pressures remain part of the academic, and more generally, the modern life-world. In this section experiential modalities of acceleration are explored. What is lacking in most of the empirical inquiries dealing with (or, as in Kubicek et al.’s study, only gesturing at) acceleration effects is the ‘time-pressure’s other’: that is, individual pleasure associated with accelerating temporal rhythm and pace; something we may call positive acceleration. Commonly, acceleration mostly denotes individual time-pressure and its psychic and/or personal consequences. Whereas the previous section argued that acceleration cascades into the individual life-world of academics rather unevenly, this section examines *both* the positive and negative experiences of

acceleration. The experience of acceleration in academic life, therefore, is not a straightforward matter. We will screen both modalities by conceptualizing pleasant, adopted accelerations, and resisted, detrimental accelerations respectively.

Acceleration embraced

Pleasures in and of academic life are rare objects of scholarly investigation (notable exceptions include McAlpine 2010; Harris 2012; Gornall and Salisbury 2012). The pleasures associated with the modern experience of acceleration are also awarded little attention. Even Hartmut Rosa admits, towards the end of his book *Alienation and Acceleration*, where he outlines the critical theory of acceleration, that he overlooks productive and positive aspects of acceleration. The critical theory of acceleration stresses dangers and pitfalls and neglects ‘the gains and opportunities of speed’ (Rosa 2010a: 98). What emerges from my interviews appears to partially fill these two complementary gaps while maintaining that these experiences occur in a socially differentiated manner.

The acceleration experience in academic life *can be* willingly, consciously, deliberately – and yet carefully – embraced and sought. Some academics suggested that they positively experience acceleration, although not acceleration that would be out of bounds and beyond control, but rather a pace and tempo over which they have full command:

I am quite a fast person, I like fast, but it can be exhausting.
(Interview 19, Reader, policy studies, female)

No, I wouldn’t embrace anything like slow university/academy/science à la slow movement, I still would want to work at the pace that I do now. (Interview 13, senior lecturer, engineering, male)

How can we theorize the pleasures and thrills of acceleration? Aside from the different narrations of speed Tomlinson analyses and the cognate promises of acceleration I discuss in the following chapter, there is also a specific phenomenological and perhaps psychic dimension to the acceleration experience.

This perspective can be discerned and further illuminated with reference to the Hungarian psychoanalyst Michael Balint (1959), whose theories were imaginatively extended by Peter Wollen (2002). Balint makes a distinction between directly experienced corporeal speed and indirectly, vicariously experienced speed. His work could be read as a complementary source for those analyses discussing the pleasures

associated with the early modern individual and collective experience of speed in cars, trains, motorcycles and even on bicycles (cf. Kern 2003; Tomlinson 2007a; Duffy 2009; Divall and Shin 2012).

Balint's subtle psychoanalytical investigation of the structure of thrill outlines three acts integral to the corporeal speed experience. They are 1) an amount of conscious fear or awareness of real external danger; 2) a voluntary and intentional exposing of oneself to an external danger and to the very fear provoked by it; and 3) a confident hope that fear can be tolerated and controlled and a relative degree of security that one will be able to return unharmed to safety: 'This mixture of fear, pleasure and confident hope in the face of an external danger is what constitutes the fundamental element of all thrills including speed thrill' (Balint 1959, Part 1, Chapter 1). Balint notes that the subjective speed pleasure found at fun-fairs, amusement parks and other similar social spaces is straightforwardly designed for the direct experience of (speed) thrill. In this regard, Balint talks about the connection to *high speed* that is involved in racing, horseback riding and jumping, motor-racing, skating, skiing, tobogganing, sailing, flying and the like. Activities that involve speed thrills can be understood, according to Balint, as historically new forms of satisfaction, new objects of desire and unfamiliar methods of gaining pleasure – in this regard Balint talks about 'virgin realms of speed'. The second category, vicarious speed, involves second-order enjoyment of activities that transmit the thrill of speed. This means being situated in the role of *spectator* and witnessing, for instance, various aerobatic performances in a circus. Furthermore, the experience of being exposed to motion-pictures, where one is not directly involved in the physicality of speed, yet does experience excitement, is a significant matter to Balint. This type of excitement appears to be the ultimate currency and purpose of second-order speed thrills.

What concerns us is the first category, that is, direct involvement in the corporeal thrill of speed-experience. This not to say the academic profession assumes or requires direct corporeal, physical experience of speed and acceleration, nor that it is a profession filled with avid speed-thrill seekers – in Balint's terminology, 'philobats'. Nonetheless, certain thrills of occasional and controlled acceleration, that is the ability to move fast when one wants to and to 'change gears' and operate in different temporal modes is surely appreciated. This also relates to the notion of being able to pace and manage temporal rhythms:

I am someone that likes diversity and variety. I get bored quite easily, so it is always nice to be in fifth gear for a while but then to be in the

first or the second. I like being able to change the gears. (Interview 2, Professor, history, male)

However, Balint also mentions that a constitutive dimension of speed-thrill is not only being involved in or exposed to dangerous situations, but also experiencing the pleasure associated with being involved in highly competitive activities. In this relation Wollen says: 'Speed is closely connected to various forms of struggle or contest, ranging from races and, more threateningly, chases, up to its decisive role in combat where greater speed gives a clear advantage over an opponent' (2002: 106). Consider the following testimony:

I want to be on a right race-track. If I could reflect it backwards ... it is not that I was sort of on a treadmill, it is just that I wasn't on the journey I thought I was. I was being slightly used to create something and thought that I was in a race and there was going to be prize at the end. Then I realized that I was just doing the traffic and that was it. And because I categorized it as a race it really felt exhilarating at the time. (Interview 1, research associate, education, male)

In this sense, being fast is not only enjoyed corporeally; it is also considered an embedded competitive advantage:

[We have to be fast,] yes, because if we are not ... it is all about the loss of opportunity we are scared of ... many opportunities are just something I can easily get, but because I have not looked, someone else got it ... but I would have got it had I known about it ... so it is this sort of reasoning that I have resorted to. (Interview 12, reader, engineering, female)

There is also a competitive advantage to carrying out research as quickly as possible. Yet it is not a competitive advantage alone. There are specific, perhaps Weberian ideal-type, aspects of academic work associated with the enjoyment of (re)searching. There are phenomenological aspects of the academic vocation that include 'thrilling' experiences associated with breaking through, discovery, enthusiasm, zeal and passion. The research process is enhanced by particular types of fast, triggering modes of thinking:

I have got a large research group and lots of stuff comes from brainstorming ... brain-storming accelerates these [research] processes. (Interview 9, professor, engineering, male)

The need for speed and (re)acceleration connected to competition is an important dimension of Rosa's theory of social acceleration. As discussed earlier, the capitalist logic of competition is undoubtedly a fundamental structural motor of social acceleration and can legitimately be seen as 'the dominating mode of allocation in virtually all spheres of social life' (Rosa 2010a: 27). Even though Rosa's comprehensive analysis of the logic of competition as the main driving force of social acceleration is illuminating and convincing, it has a critical shortcoming. The modern individual is not powerlessly subject to the 'invisible hand' of the logic of competition; he or she can – as the preceding quotes demonstrate – willingly embrace, or at least calibrate, the very logic of competition and/or *enjoy* the act of competing. This does not mean that the forces of competition/acceleration are free of alienating and unpleasant consequences for the formation of individual subjectivity. However, active agency – the thrill of speeding up in a race – when individuals consciously compete, speed up *and at times enjoy it*, appears to be quite a significant dimension of the acceleration experience.

At the same time, besides the logic of competition and phenomenological 'thrills' integral to scholarly activities, academics are also driven to seek esteem, which is not only competitive, but cooperative and mutual. Judith Brett (1997) notes that collegiality is the defining aspect of academic work and 'is most obvious in academics' collegial and disciplinary life, but it is also the case in relation to academics' research and writing where many people's creativity is enhanced by relations of trust with a small group of others' (1997: 22, see also Tynan and Garbett 2007). This was apparent in one of the testimonies:

We are aware of other departments and universities in our field that are publishing [extensively]. Maybe I am exceptional but I view a really good paper from another institution in my field as a fantastic thing. I look at science holistically and I think this is great, because now our knowledge has improved and expanded and we know more about the universe than we did before. I like to do papers like that as well, and would like to think that other scientists would see my work in the same way. I can remember instances where I have had ideas and then for whatever reason, working on something or whatever, I haven't pursued them and then they have subsequently been independently discovered and published by someone else ... and rather than banging my head against the table I think, that is fantastic. Obviously my idea was the right idea, so I think again and because I am publishing decent papers in decent journals, I don't

feel that competitive pressure ... certainly not the one you get in the U.S. If you want tenure track you are actively competing with one of your peers to get a position at the end of it ... that is just horrible ... that is stress personified. Of course we need to get internationally important publications in order to keep our position, but there is no over-pressure put upon us to do that ... the more you put the pressure on, the more stressful it gets and the more innovation falls away ... we are very lucky here, we are given a lot of room. (Interview 8, lecturer, chemistry, male)

However, from Pierre Bourdieu, we also know 'that individuals have an interest which is defined by their circumstances, and which allows them to act in a particular way within the context in which they find themselves in order to define and improve their position' (Grenfell 2008: 154). Respect/rivalry and cooperation/competition thus seem to operate dialectically in shaping academic subjectivity.

Several respondents also conveyed a positive attitude that can be attributable to executing tasks quickly and making quick decisions. This I would call strategic acceleration, that is to say, an acceleration that has a clearly defined purpose:

Sometimes I have to take short-cuts to do some things quickly so that I can have the time to be able to do the research in a more meaningful way. (Interview 6, senior lecturer, history, male)

There is something potentially positive about quick decisions. I can see the enabling potential of quick decision-making through ICT and other kinds of mechanisms. (Interview 2, senior lecturer, history, male)

Corporeally experienced acceleration is also evident in the experience of 'technical speed' (Kingwell 1998) enabled by ICT which is integral to nearly all aspects of academic life. Broadly speaking, the pleasure of speed, often associated with the inventions of early modernity such as the automobile, locomotive and so on, is also, in a modified variant, evident in the widespread use of gadgets and communication technologies in scholarly pursuits:

[Speed] is wonderful. You know I do comparative research, and the speed of communication now around the world is fantastic. It can get to a little bit of a tipping point but for my work it is fab. It just makes all the difference. I work on projects in remote countries and

many things are so much easier compared to how it used to be when I started. (Interview 19, reader, policy studies, female)

A number of scholars acknowledged that electronically mediated fast communication is enabling and appreciated in many ways:

I am struggling to think of any ways that [ICT] would be a significant hindrance. (Interview 14, professor, biochemistry, male)

In the context of international research collaboration it feels like these kinds of technologies do enable projects to keep moving. Maybe speed is about movement and when things get stalled, it can be frustrating – mainly in terms of research where it feels like you have got the point and someone else hasn't, there is a sense of being able to work together more quickly. (Interview 2, professor, history, male)

[ICT] is power at my finger-tips. I remember when I started the first year of my PhD, this was when computers started to become a main feature of the university life, and when I wanted to find particular a paper in a particular journal I had to write it down, get up off my seat and walk to the library, go on the shelves, find the relevant journal, page, have a photocopy etc. This took a long time to do. Now I can just click, get the article and it is right there, I am reading it ... so yes I find [ICT] tremendously enabling. (Interview 9, lecturer, chemistry, male)

Twitter is useful ... if you follow the right people you get a synopsis of things they find interesting in a particular moment and it is very easy to screen the information that comes through, because it comes through in quite a small packets, and it can highlight things that you may not have been aware of, recent developments in particular field for example. (Interview 16, professor, experimental psychology, male)

This evidence is slightly at odds with the dominant interpretative narratives maintaining that ICT and the 'tyranny of e-mail' in particular are inherently negative, if not pathological, features of the academic life-world. Moreover, this type of acceleration experience acknowledges the pleasures and professional advantages enabled by ICT (cf. Gornall and Salisbury 2012: 151). Even the possibility of conceiving of acceleration as something ambiguous (let alone positive) is omitted from the very design of the research projects which investigate the accelerated pace of academic life. One of the problems with existing accounts, therefore,

appears to be folded into the framing of acceleration as a phenomenon. One does not necessarily have to follow neo-vitalist ontologies in order to sustain the possibility of acceleration as a positive *and* negative phenomenon. Acceleration can be appreciated as a practical and convenient modality.

Acceleration juggled

Academics often process and juggle acceleration. They directly or indirectly identify with either the technological or the cultural forces of acceleration, and the very experience remains folded within the realm of personal comfort zones. No doubt contemporary academic cultures do require prompt and swift behaviour – often expressed in metaphors like ‘publish-or-perish’ or ‘racing’ or an emphasis on performance, outcomes and efficiency as postulated by the neo-liberal ideology of New Public Management (e.g. Lorenz 2012; see also Müller 2014). Even though academics who convey this type of experience do recognize an acceleration of the changes related to their vocation (in the workplace, in institutional rearrangements and bureaucracy, in the changing nature of education imperatives, in the rapid development of the university sector under the auspices of the knowledge economy and in competitiveness and excellence), there is no significant problem that indicates *seriously* negative personal or psychological implications:

My experience is that the job changes throughout the year; the amount of work is uneven. Sometimes teaching and admin dominates, and sometimes the research is allowed to be recovered. (Interview 11, professor, biochemistry, male)

For me the key part of being an academic is to be able to keep up with the [fast] information flow ... because this is essentially what being an academic is. It is about processing information ... whether it is information that you generate yourself in your research or information communicated by students, information that other people are giving to you. (Interview 14, professor, biochemistry, male)

Although the experience of human and social scientists might be different, acceleration can be – up to a point – skilfully negotiated and rationalized. Doing things quickly is not necessarily accompanied by some degree of enjoyment or seen as an advantage enabled by ICT, as in the previous category of experience. It is rather perceived as ‘normal’

and is individually processed as an almost unquestionable aspect of the academic vocation. It is common to act and think quickly.

However, at the same time, many of the academics interviewed expressed reflexive attitudes towards this demand. A number of respondents indicated that fast conduct makes itself felt elsewhere; it has its costs. Some activities might be negatively compensated if they are executed at a speedy pace:

[Y]ou can do things more quickly but then you may lose accuracy ... I could try and answer some e-mails more quickly, but then the quality of my answer would not be good ... which would then create another e-mail because I haven't explained things properly in the first one ... which at the end would not necessarily save me any time ... so these are the paradoxical consequences of being fast ... and that is another thing ... if you don't answer e-mails at all ... the request becomes obsolete that you don't have to answer it anymore ... while if you answer, people ask more. (Interview 18, reader, classics female)

This category is not dissimilar to that of 'fast subjects' (Thrift 2000; 2005, Chapters 2 and 7) where acceleration, as work-related modality, becomes cultural and professional 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1986). Fast conduct, the urgency to execute tasks quickly and to work swiftly, is considered as an integral practice in contemporary academia. Juggled acceleration correlates with observations made by Gornall and Salisbury (2012) who developed a concept of 'hyper-professionalism' that captures:

the alignment between the professional, the always connected modality of a continuous electronic environment and research with academics in their important but unseen work. Hyper-professionalism is not empty repetitive behavior but often highly productive professional work. The term is an attempt to capture elements of "giving more", "going beyond and above" in the professional context. This is in contrast to less nuanced descriptions of dysfunctional "overwork". (2012: 150)

The hyper-professional, fast academic rarely 'switches off' and is prepared to speed up (or slow down) depending on circumstances and institutional/subjective agendas. Here, acceleration is understood as a nearly compulsory modality. That is in contrast to the previous category where acceleration is a compulsive modality (cf. Gornall and Salisbury 2012). Bearing in mind the fact that fast academics recognize the 'costs'

of acceleration, this category could in a sense be read as a rationalization tactic. The individual academic processes the accelerated pace of change and need for speedy behaviour by rendering acceleration a natural and objective exigency of the academic vocation.

Acceleration wrestled

This category is different from the previous one in one important respect: acceleration is experienced as a predicament. However, even in this case, academics do have explicit strategies and tactics which help them to maintain and sustain their agendas and their tempos. In comparison with the previous category, academics do not find acceleration a natural occurrence. They recognize it happening in their environment and experience it directly. What differs is their reactions and the effects, as well as the perceived 'costs' of acceleration:

Far too many times I have thrown myself into the cogs of the machine. I think the way to resist is to float on the surface. So rather than being pulled around currents ... the way I try to deal with that is to be in touch with everything that is going on and everything that is [happening] in my work life ... I try to bubble on the surface, you know, just balancing and feeling the tension of water membrane beneath me, rather than just plunging down and risking being drowned. (Interview 1, research associate, education, male)

I think that the workload is challenging to cope with. I tend to develop strategies to cope with the workload but I don't necessarily know if ... I don't feel that the institution helps in that ... but you kind of develop those coping mechanisms or strategies to survive anyway. (Interview 2, professor, history, male)

I take on a lot because I am reasonably clear about my need and right to have a life as well as a job. So I wouldn't go home at night and as much as possible I try to have a one- or hopefully two-day weekend because I think that is both a need and right. But what that means is that I do very long hours during the week and I am often doing more than one thing at one time, which is no good. (Interview 5, professor, human geography, female)

I don't have enough of time. I mean ... it is certainly true of my job that if you take any one bit I am involved in ... in most cases not absolutely all the time, I am very pleased to be doing it. It is just,

in aggregate, there is not enough time to do the things I should be doing, and so it can come to the point where ... people will always say: prioritize. But that just means choosing who you let down, that is the situation I dislike the most, the feeling that I have to let someone down ... so certainly time is short. (Interview 6, senior lecturer, history, male)

These testimonies indicate that although academia is subject to acceleration and the neoliberal time regime, individual actors do at least have opportunities and capacities to wrestle with the temporal demands. They exercise agency and various rationalizations to mitigate the intrusive nature of acceleration. Whether the resistance is successful or not is a complicated matter that would need to be further qualified. It has, for instance, been claimed that academics are often complicit in the reproduction and proliferation of complex administrative systems larded with excessive bureaucracy and paperwork, as well as evaluative assessments and business rhetoric (Taylor 2008; see also Graeber 2015).

Yet a further observation could be made: it is obvious from the interviews that academics with professional experience outside of the academic environment cope with the its pressures somewhat easily and tend to consider the temporal expectations of the academic vocation to be relaxed – especially compared to those they experienced in capitalist/profit-driven organizations (corporations, media). When I probed into the problem of having or not having enough time this was one of the answers:

Personally? Yes, I think I do [have enough time]. Yes, I don't know if I am exceptional in this regard but this is my second career. I started off working in business and finance for the best part of ten years and then switched radically to do a PhD in science and stayed in science ever since. So I am sort of appreciative of the difference in time-management and the fact that maybe I view science and research as a bit more of a hobby if you will, so I don't begrudge spending time doing something that I genuinely love and have already given up a career to do ... so I think I have more than enough time ... and I don't draw any distinction between the time that I spend here in my office and the time I spend at home. (Interview 8, lecturer, chemistry, male)

Particular biographical facts and professional experience lay the groundwork for absorptive capacities of this kind. This significantly determines the personal framing of one's position and subjective perception of

time. Perceiving and 'living' an academic job as a hobby is clearly associated with past professional experience of different, heavier workplace demands. The biography of an academic can substantially structure his or her perception and impression of acceleration. Having said that, personal histories can tremendously shape the ways in which individual academics perceive and process the acceleration experience. Substantial life experience in 'faster' societal domains can be seen as automatisms that not only resist acceleration in and of the academic vocation, but also allow an individual to control, direct and manage time more skilfully.

Acceleration resented

Academics in this category expressed considerable concern about the accelerated pace of academic life resulting from the changes in their work environment, although they did not directly affirm any chronic or serious psychological symptoms. Nevertheless, frustration, dissatisfaction and signs of estrangement and resentment are indeed clearly detectable in the interviewed sample:

I can't remember the last time when I read a book, an academic book. I always only dip in, I read a little bit that might be relevant and then I go on to the next thing. I never read anything longer than an article anymore because there is not enough time. (Interview 7, professor, politics, female)

I absolutely don't have enough time, everything is a constant balance as to what I devote my time to, whether it is personal or professional, the other day when I was in a car talking to my wife, I wished the day was twice as long as it is, because I simply don't have enough time to do what I want to do. (Interview 13, senior lecturer, engineering, male)

I do some things fast ... so I can do other things I want to do slowly – to work on articles and writing and things like that ... but even with that I am cutting corners, doing things as quickly as possible, reading things as quickly as possible ... it is superficial and I am unsatisfied with my engagement with the scholarship. (Interview 20, senior lecturer, sociology, male)

Where do I literally have the sensation of having to speed up? It is in simply getting through any given day and demands upon me from a

whole range of people. That is where I would feel a sense of having to do things more quickly. (Interview 6, senior lecturer, history, male)

Some academics expressed despair when considering the current academic climate holistically. At the same time, the need to accelerate was always talked about in relation to very specific, often intellectual, activities. The particular moments of work where respondents felt the greatest degree of temporal pressure were associated with the normally unrushed and (ideally) stress-free activities of conducting research, reading, and writing. Some respondents expressed a feeling that academic and scientific activities involving 'a typical delay and deferral of decisions about what the world is like, how to describe it and explain it, and what to do about it' (Pels 2003: 2) need to be reclaimed and liberated from the forces of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Chapter 3); see also the general tendency to McDonaldize academia (Parker and Jary 1995; Ritzer 2015: 103, 108–110) and New Public Management discourse (Deem et al. 2007; Lorenz 2012). As the last quote above demonstrates, the fast pace of mechanistic activities may frustratingly 'eat up' and reconfigure (i.e. aggressively speed up) the 'leisure time' inherent in the pursuit of scholarship.

Respondents experiencing acceleration as a significant impediment noted that for them, time autonomy is a prerequisite of academic autonomy and is one of the most important academic principles, both in the normative and functional sense. A few academics mentioned they struggle with finding time for thought and that they are often forced to 'think fast', both in terms of pursuing daily, routine administrative tasks and also in terms of scholarly and intellectual activities. The core problem of thinking fast, a near-oxymoronic phrase, was brilliantly captured by Bourdieu's analysis of the 'microcosm' of television:

It's an old philosophical topic – take the opposition that Plato makes between the philosopher, who has time, and people in the *agora*, in public space, who are in a hurry and under pressure. What he says, more or less, is that you can't think when you're in a hurry. It's a perspective that's clearly aristocratic, the viewpoint of a privileged person who has time and doesn't ask too many questions about the privileges that bestow this time What is certain is the connection between thought and time. And one of the major problems posed by television is that question of the relationships between time and speed. Is it possible to think fast? By giving the floor to thinkers who are considered able to think at high speed, isn't television doomed to

never have anything but *fast-thinkers*, thinkers who think faster than a speeding bullet? (1998: 28–29, emphasizes original)²

To what extent are academics expected to become Bourdieusian fast-thinkers, in synch with the demands of academic capitalism and the accelerated temporal regime of competitiveness and excellence? While many academics – as shown in previous sections – enjoy, or at least do not have significant trouble with, executing tasks quickly, even the keen supporters and admirers of speed among the respondents fulminated against any practice that resembles fast thinking. There was a general consensus that time for thinking, contemplating, deliberating and debating at one's own pace and rhythm is a necessary precondition of academic autonomy (see also Chapter 7). Many respondents admitted they have difficulties with finding and preserving 'zones of leisurely paced thinking', yet, at the same time, many academics acknowledged that research leave, sabbaticals and the periods outside of term-time provide much appreciated, quality time for pursuing research-related activities.

Some academics conceded that they have to seek quality time elsewhere, away from the mythologized 'ivory tower'; a quiet, still corner of their office or lab no longer exists. Everyday operations related to the administration of teaching and research demand time (see Glaser 2015).³ Nonetheless, rather than obsessively complaining about the 'time-thieves' that these activities are, many academics questioned the very meaning and rationale of mundane bureaucratic arrangements and the ever-changing institutional norms associated with them, e.g. monitoring research expenses, recruitment processes, meetings with unclear purposes, general concern about the lack of or the role of administrative staff, and the growing gap between business-oriented senior management and the academic body. The testimonies held a chorus of concern implying that demands for prompt and quick processing of never-ending administrative expectations could potentially freeze scholarly pursuits.

There are, however, a number of *fundamental limitations* related to the cohorts of academics I interviewed, and by extension, to the corrective argument I am offering. As stated in the first section, despite a fairly representative sample of respondents, only academics at a Russell Group university were interviewed. This limitation is rather important. The 'illusio'⁴ of the Russell Group is close to Plato's agora and the aristocratic self-image of the vocation among this group has always been different from, and achieved in contradiction to, second and third-tier universities. The situation at post-1992 universities could be – and surely is – different, and the individual experience of temporal pressures might

manifest themselves more pathologically and chronically there (see e.g. Leathwood and Read 2012). Though I interviewed seven female and thirteen male academics, only one female is a STEM subject scholar. This was partly because of the inherent gender composition of STEM subjects scholars (Kirkup et al. 2010). However, the question remains whether interviewing more female respondents from STEM disciplines would significantly alter the presented findings. Even though the results indicate some differences between STEM and non-STEM scholars and their time-experiences, they were not significant within the present sample (somewhat contrary to initial expectations).

Future study would also benefit either from refined division of disciplines under scrutiny (i.e. a comparison of two disciplines) or from focusing on one particular discipline. In this way, the differences between early-stage and senior scholars' experiences could be further illuminated. Given the fact that the vast majority of respondents in the present inquiry were highly experienced academics in top-tier jobs (professor, reader, senior lecturer), stronger comparisons between junior and senior academics' experiential modalities of acceleration can only be speculated upon. This important distinction could have a significant impact on how acceleration is experienced and dealt with. No doubt academics in top-tier jobs (with higher salaries and tenure) have more job security than an early-career academic on a short-term contract. One early-stage scholar acknowledged this:

My time-pressures come in a different way, because they come from laying out that slow-burning process of producing high-quality research published work, and laying that on the top of the everyday labour reality of being a contract researcher, and so where time becomes problematic for me is in terms of thinking about being a member of the academic precariat, being somebody who always feels he is on borrowed time rather than time to let fertile ideas take root. (Interview 1, research associate, education, male)

Job insecurity likely makes the experience of acceleration far more intense: junior scholars have much less to rely on, both psychologically and professionally. Assumedly, senior scholars, while they face the same pressures as their younger and less experienced colleagues, might also have more bargaining power, room to manoeuvre, and potential peace of mind to 'enjoy' *some* acceleration modalities. The situation is potentially different if a junior scholar has to keep abreast of not only the constant institutional demands *but also* searching for his or her next

job, which involves application procedures, moving and so forth every couple of years (on that see Müller 2014; Fochler et al. 2015).

Balint, to use him one last time, notes that there are important differences among individuals with regard to the extent to which they are able to enjoy the pleasures associated with acceleration: 'Some revel in these possibilities, get excited, slightly mad, while others are not interested, are even bored or disgusted. There are also others who timidly try but are inhibited and can never be any good at it, and still others who are contemptuous, apprehensive, or even frightened' (1959, part 1, chapter 1). Of course, Balint's psychoanalytic proposition cannot be readily and fully translated to the experience of acceleration in the academic life-world. However, he makes an important distinction between personality and biographical predisposition that may significantly determine how academics experience acceleration. It seems that rather than academic disciplines (STEM vs non-STEM subjects) or internal and external social divisions (gender, family status, professional status), different social parameters co-shape the acceleration experience. My interviews indicated that personality, biographical and psycho-developmental aspects play an important role in the perceiving, processing and negotiating of acceleration-generating pressures as well as acceleration-related pleasures.

Overall, none of the findings from the interviews refute existing research in this area or the various acceleration theories (in any event, my inquiry was *not* driven by that rationale as such and was not aimed at challenging acceleration theories). They rather contribute an additional layer to the extant analyses of the subjective experience of acceleration, both in academia and beyond. My interpretation complements, although in some ways also problematizes, the established consensus present in existing commentaries on the acceleration of the pace of academic life. These are more often than not anchored in *a priori* assumptions that acceleration provokes only negative experiences. The analysis above indicates that a negative, alienating, pathological and chronic experience of time-pressure, despite its importance and significance, can be highly differentiated and depends on subtle variables. Indeed, acceleration can be and frequently is experienced as a considerable impediment with multiple negative consequences, but it is surely not as overwhelming and endemic a phenomenon as is often assumed – at least not at the Russell Group institution where I conducted the fieldwork. The participants of the present inquiry noted that acceleration could be wrestled with, juggled and even enjoyed – in a very specific sense.

The findings challenge Rosa's overall claim that social acceleration is a totalitarian mega-force that aggressively and gluttonously consumes all human agency (2013; 2010: 61–63; more generally, see also Hassan 2012). Dörre's reading of Rosa represents an important corrective here: rather than acceleration-as-totality, Dörre draws our attention to the capitalist time regime where acceleration is distributed extremely unevenly, depending on one's societal situatedness. Again, Dörre does not challenge the major propositions of acceleration thesis, but develops an analytical distinction that maintains a degree of descriptive and explanatory caution – and potentially makes the theory of social acceleration even more consolidated and convincing. Rosa's remark on the unevenness⁵ of social acceleration can be expanded. We can say, in light of the evidence presented above, that even the *experience* of acceleration is extremely uneven. The commonly reported lack of uninterrupted time and the ordinary wrestling, coping and negotiating of individual temporal resources with regard to the time regime of contemporary academia is highly nuanced. First, it is imprecise to claim that academics lose temporal autonomy altogether, *en masse*. Second, the interviews point to individual appreciation and the will to execute tasks, duties and desires quickly *and* slowly.

Anytime we discussed the texture of the temporal experience of acceleration in this chapter we essentially mean something Tomlinson called 'sedentary speed'. He says that 'we can ... experience time-pressure, haste, hurry and rush – all of which are essentially cultural-phenomenological rather than physical descriptions – without ever stirring from our office desk' (2007a: 3). The same perspective might apply to a more positive experience of acceleration associated with the phenomenological aspects of academic work: 'seeing the light'; spotting ideas; brain-storming; the thrill of discovery; 'breakthrough'; the 'aha moment', *eureka!* These sensual attractions and satisfactions conceive an interface where academic pursuits and the conduct of research encounter the pleasures of acceleration. The acceleration-inflected impression is not entirely negative, but is associated with some constitutive features of the academic vocation.

Conclusion

In the opening quote, Divall and Shin pose an important question that has both theoretical and empirical significance when dealing with the acceleration experience. How can we theorize an acceleration experience – something which always involves movement and time, and how they are perceived by the human sensory apparatus – without acknowledging,

either directly or indirectly, that it originates in phenomenological and subjective human impression? By saying social change is accelerating, the speaker needs to possess a point of reference, a mentally processed conception of meanings, causes and possible consequences of acceleration. Relatedly, when investigating these phenomena sociologically, can we access our subjects in a different way than by probing into their biographies and habitus and by making them reflect on their past experiences with and of acceleration's pleasures and pressures? How can acceleration of the pace of (academic) life be accessed at the time when it is actually *happening*? Can we think of the value of acceleration (experience) beyond the privileged distinctions that are inherent in the analyses above? Let us conclude with speculative propositions that address these issues.

Dick Pels (2003: 179ff), tracing the informal history of the temporal preconditions for intellectual autonomy, argues for a leisure pace associated with the mundane projection of specific 'temporal delay' and the 'art of doubt' underlying academic autonomy and research conduct. He comments: 'intellectual autonomy needs a politics of time that liberates and legitimizes the art of doubt by protecting it against the threat of multiple accelerations' (Pels 2003: 196). Even though his claim is convincing, it assumes that academia is restricted *only* to the advancement and exchange of ideas, pursuit of reason and truth. Despite these being its fundamental features, there is somehow more to it. The ivory tower metaphor, being a problematic conception as we discussed in the preceding chapter, also manifests another problem. An ideal where there is no pressure to move to the next thing, nothing distracting except another compelling idea, is an inappropriate and perhaps even undesired feature of academia. What if academics, apart from debating and contemplating, actually want to *do* something? (cf. Aultman 2012: 287). This is not to say that universities should become restless agents of change or, on the contrary, slow-moving 'museums of ideas'. Indeed, academic and research/scientific associations of individuals 'want to do something' – through scholarship and research. It can be speculated that the 'reflexive stillness' and 'stammering' involved in successful scientific work, composed of 'observation, fieldwork, experimentation, reading and writing', which Pels defends, may simply be an integral path underpinning a progressive desire for quick social change.

One commentator has raised a substantial point that illuminates an important dimension of slowness – one that could be especially apt in relation to academic and scholarly activities: 'The problem may not be excessive speed so that attention cannot keep up, but excessive slowness so that attention cannot be sustained and must constantly be reapplied

in order to obtain a result' (Aultman 2012: 284). Where the majority, if not all, of the accounts tracing the negative consequences of acceleration legitimately focus predominantly on its manifestations, such as time-pressure, haste, hurriedness and rush, and both implicitly and explicitly promote slowness as a precondition for scholarly work, what if we reverse the pattern using Aultman's observation? This may be rather speculative, but would not any activity – including the academic profession – that is forcibly, politically or otherwise divested of the *possibility* of acceleration (as associated with the positive phenomenological attributes discussed above), turn into an activity of waiting and having too much redundant time at hand? To say that might be something of a heresy. Would an activity that offers no possibility of determining one's temporal autonomy – including the pursuit of tasks and duties at one's own distinctive and idiosyncratic tempo – not turn into *either* a one-dimensional and uni-linear pace that embodies excessive over-speed, full of stress and distraction, *or* into sluggishness, verging on standstill, regression, conservatism and ultimately, boredom?

6

Fast Sites: Igniting and Catapulting Knowledge

The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate a largely new and unexplored feature of the sociology of higher education: the emergence of ‘fast’ sites within academia. This chapter looks at knowledge mediators (see Osborne 2004; Meyer 2010), whose task it is to speed up the process of translating research, ideas and knowledge into tradable, possibly profitable commodities and/or services. Fast sites are expected to occupy and secure a space that offers auxiliary instruments for the smooth movement of innovative commercially oriented knowledges into their desired destinations – more often than not a marketplace. An analysis of fast sites, as the central part of this chapter, aims to 1) introduce and contextualize ‘catapult’ initiatives, offering a brief history of the principle of ‘incubation’; 2) deploy some propositions made by Tomlinson (2007a) to underscore the ‘culture of speed’ that appears to be a defining feature of these initiatives; and 3) highlight specific ambivalences associated with the desired pace of knowledge mediation.

Higher education’s affinity with commerce is hardly new. In spite of contemporary critiques of this close relationship (e.g. Nussbaum 2010), the link between academia and economic needs and business ends has been a deep-seated characteristic of the university’s mission and purpose since the dawn of the 20th century. It might be argued, however, that *the degree* to which this relationship is nowadays an imperative differs from the past (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Mirowski 2011). In this respect Robert Anderson, a historian of British universities, draws attention to the limited autonomy that academia enjoyed in the era of liberal capitalism in the 19th century:

Although the nineteenth century was the golden age of laissez-faire capitalism, no-one then suggested that universities should be

run as commercial organizations. It was seen as a virtue that, like the professions, they stood outside the system of market relations and cultivated values of a higher and permanent kind. This sort of autonomy was an aspect of classic liberalism, which saw the best protection of liberty and diversity in a pluralist civil society of self-governing institutions. Neoliberalism, which seeks to dismantle all barriers against the operation of pure market forces, has proved rather different. (2010)

Though it comes as no surprise that the university in the era of the knowledge economy is required to engage actively with markets, industries and businesses, today there are specifics expected in the scope of its activities. In comparison with the 19th century's elitist (upper-middle class, white male dominated) status and the accompanying relative autonomy of the university from industrial and instrumental rationality, today's university is expected to serve the demands of the knowledge economy, embrace business culture and market ideology, and reshuffle its institutional complexity according to models of corporate organization. Moreover, as seen earlier, universities, under conditions of the knowledge economy, are expected to be the 'horsepower to drive economic growth'. I covered these topics in Chapters 3 and 4 and, drawing on some of those analytical threads, will proceed with an investigation of particular discourses which underpin the new mission of the university.

My analysis aims to unfold specific discursive techniques that nourish, sustain and (re)feed what I call 'fast academic sites'. The central proposition of this chapter is that the modern 'will-to-accelerate' and metaphors evoking acceleration are integral to the missions and tasks knowledge mediators aim to pursue, and constitute one of their intrinsic features. However it does not necessarily mean that processes associated with knowledge mediation accelerate in some distinctive material sense. In fact, the investigation pursued in this chapter does not imply that acceleration is an over-determined socio-material instance with clearly identifiable 'deliverables'. It rather points out a particular ideological commitment to the logic of expectation attributable to the *promises* intrinsic to the various acceleration metaphors. Before making a conceptual connection between knowledge mediators¹ and the culture of speed, I will situate and contextualize those actors using specific discursive and ideological parameters integral to the trajectory of higher education policy discourse advocated since the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s.

Re-missioning academia

Business activities and the industry-academy relationship have been a great concern and an object of intervention by neoliberal governments worldwide. In the UK, a series of higher education policies and policy recommendations have been aimed explicitly at drawing academic institutions into a relationship with industry to enable the development of the knowledge economy.² The notion of technical, marketable products and skills occupies centre stage in an attempt to steer the 'new' modes of economic production and wealth creation (Bastalich 2010: 845–847). This movement is to be accomplished by the increased *commercialization* of knowledge, research and development, particularly through so-called knowledge or technology transfers. In the UK, a shift in the discourse was marked by the ideological propositions of the Tony Blair's Labour Government and was accompanied by important governmental and business policy documents as well as recommendations addressed to relevant departments,³ which amounted to important (re)framing devices for the intended development of policy.⁴

Along the lines of the hegemonic imaginary of competitiveness (Sum 2010; Chapter 4) the fundamental concern of the shift in discourse was outlining vital areas identified as foundational to the success of the knowledge economy. Academic institutions played active roles in such recalibrations. Policy's centre of gravity moved to the enhancement of entrepreneurship and the 'science base', promoting 'opportunity structures' (Robertson and Kitawaga 2011: 8) and advancing incentives, capabilities and institutional arrangements associated with 'in-between' spaces that were intended to bridge the gap between universities and industry/business. These spaces were predominantly designed for translating ideas and knowledge from their 'raw' forms into marketable, profitable products and/or services. Aside from teaching and research, universities are now expected to engage in *business*, encouraged to launch 'hothouse' programs to accelerate business start-ups and engage directly in the commodification of on-site academic research and science.

Major concerns addressed in this re-missioning discourse – which was strengthening through the first decade of the new millennium – were alleged shortcomings arising from the impression that selected academic sites and nodes were 'too slow' for the desired fast-moving knowledge economy. These include low investment in university R&D by UK firms, the limited engagement of those firms with academia, a preoccupation with specific collaborative clusters of universities and businesses associated predominantly with the aerospace, defence,

biotechnology and pharmaceuticals industries and, generally, the lack of any innovation agenda. These concerns were in turn met with an array of recommendations highlighting that universities themselves were expected to participate actively in the formation of university-industry/business links by setting up fast sites of knowledge mediation.

It was expected that tighter university-industry collaboration would yield a range of refined ideas which would lead to new commercial ventures and to promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises that could harness the capabilities of universities to develop profitable knowledges. The core issue is how to better understand and promote the innovation and growth agenda as a driving instrument of global/national/regional competitiveness in order to secure a vital knowledge economy – a theme we encountered earlier.⁵ The role that universities play in fostering this aim is critical. The new policies and funding regimes that followed have significantly altered the institutional structures of many universities, fashioning their new mission narrowly around the promotion of science and technology. A notable shift in emphasis towards STEM subjects followed, and science and technology are now expected to be the financial ‘dynamos’ of universities.

This trajectory has recently been acknowledged in *A Review of Business-University Collaboration* (Wilson 2012), which aims to cluster and conceptualize the entire ‘supply-chain landscape’ connecting business and universities. In the globally competitive knowledge economy – as the main rationale goes – there is a greater need for a talented, enterprising workforce and constant innovation in product and service development. The university, it is said, now exists in a ‘thriving culture of entrepreneurship, [and there is an increasing need] for dynamic leading-edge scientific and technological development and for world-class research that attracts investment’ (Wilson 2012: i). Under these conditions the university is becoming (or is expected to become) an integral part of a multi-dimensional, sustainable and resilient supply chain of skills and innovation to business (ibid.).

This multi-dimensional supply-chain is composed of ‘the education of highly skilled graduates, applied research in advanced technologies, bespoke collaborative degree programmes, science park development, enterprise education, support of entrepreneurs, industry-sector foundation degrees, high-level apprenticeships, collaborative research, [and] in-company upskilling of employees’ (ibid.). Apart from the training and curricula suggestions, what is evident from this list is the need for transformation and translation of the ideas, innovations and business plans of enterprise into profitable and scalable forms. Generally speaking, in

these discourses we can see a long-term, explicit determination to install a new mission into academic life, a mission which not only brings the university closer to business, but also aims to develop strong a business organizational culture and mindset *inside* academic life and in university governance in particular.⁶

Two key characteristics underpin the new mission agenda that promotes knowledge mediation. First, knowledge mediators and brokers have been expected to provide a natural habitat for *enterprise* (Armstrong 2001; du Gay 2004). Yet the notion of enterprise is notoriously unclear. Armstrong argues that 'the infusion of enterprise as a solution relies heavily on certain ill-defined "entrepreneurial" capacities to achieve the catalysis of science, capital and labour into new products, companies and industries' (2001: 526). However, at the same time, 'enterprise' is often the *post hoc* recognition of a successful venture and its internal workings remain rather mysterious. Armstrong pertinently discloses the workings of enterprise *ideology*, as opposed to enterprise as a self-standing over-determined process or phenomenon. 'Consistent with the belief that enterprise is a natural human behaviour, which will emerge spontaneously once barriers are removed, most of its provisions are of an enabling character. Business incubators, facilities, access to capital and training in business skills are not so much ways of producing enterprise as of making it welcome should it appear' (ibid.). The spirit of enterprise is therefore perhaps best viewed as a retrospective imaginary or representational modality sustaining specific desirable outcomes associated with the new university mission, rather than a clearly defined set of principles.

It was already noted in the 1997 report *The Innovation-Exploitation Barrier*, published by the House of Lords, that the problem of the UK's science and knowledge base does not lie in insufficient research output. The main difficulty lies in the inability to translate these outputs into new products, businesses and entire industries. By enhancing enterprise, it was expected that knowledge would get translated smoothly and more quickly into their intended 'destinations'. However, as du Gay notes, the spirit of enterprise is not restricted to business ventures but can be conceived as a permeable and desirable characteristic of commercial conduct. No longer does enterprise refer only to

the creation of an independent business venture or to the characteristic habit of model entrepreneurs or (successful) persons in business for themselves, rather it refers to the ways in which economic, political, social and personal vitality is considered best achieved by the organisation of particular conception of the enterprise form to all

forms of conduct – to the conduct of organizations previously seen as noncommercial, to the conduct of government and its agencies and to the conduct of individual. (2004: 38–39)

In the case of academia, enterprise has thus become a prescriptive, programmatic concept – precisely because it lacks a stable set of principles – which should enable downstreaming of the research outputs often referred to as innovations. Like Armstrong, du Gay observes that defining an internal ‘anatomy’ of enterprise beyond some variant of ideology critique remains exceptionally difficult.

Innovation thus is the second feature that has become imperative as it has developed under the umbrella of a new mission. The idea of innovation is largely associated with the mandatory need for ever-frequent novelty, *speed and rapid technical change*, and the endless production of artefacts and services that are, by default, short-lived and in constant need of updating (Bastalich 2010: 850–851). Furthermore, innovation, similarly to creativity, inculcates compulsory performativity, productiveness and valorization of the putatively new (Osborne 2003: 512; also Waxman 2012.) It becomes something that entails ‘endless repetition of permanent change under conditions of permanent imitation’ (Osborne 2003: 512). Compulsive performativity and productiveness, endless repetition of change and imitation are instances integral to the enterprise ideology. Fast knowledge mediation, translation and brokerage are at the forefront of these imperatives and occupy the sites where such principles materialize.

Thus, let us now turn to two of the specific sites where the ideology of the new university mission flourishes: ‘catapults’ and business incubators. These types of knowledge mediators extend and apply Osborne’s typology of idea-worker/organizer (differently addressed in Chapter 3; see also Meyer 2010) because their work essentially sets out to establish liminal spaces and channels that quickly propel ideas from academia to the wider economy – and back again. As we will see, one of the key declared objectives is to accelerate the development of ideas into marketable, scalable and profitable goods and services. Even though enterprise and innovation appear to be the real universals in the case of knowledge mediation, the next section argues that the culture of speed is not a mere concomitant, but rather a central feature of it.

Catapulting and incubating

At the 2009 Universities UK annual conference, David Lammy, then Minister for Higher Education and Intellectual Property at BIS, urged

vice-chancellors of British universities to 'move further and *faster* down the path ... [they] ... are already on towards greater emphasis on economic outcomes' (2009, emphasis added). Understanding this appeal almost literally, the Technology Strategy Board (TSB),⁷ a governmental organization reporting directly to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), took the initiative and started actively promoting several recommendations preoccupied with the acceleration of knowledge mediation. One of the main objectives of this initiative was simply 'accelerating innovation'. In a 2011 report *Concept to Commercialisation: A strategy for business innovation 2011–2015*, an explicit accelerative strategy is developed:

The journey of an idea from concept to market is uneven and indirect. There are many obstacles and possible entry and exit points, and support for business innovation is too often unconnected. We will work with business and others to build understanding of this journey and accelerate it, providing joined-up support which links with other help available for innovative businesses. (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 8)

It thus comes as no surprise that the TSB's proposals represent a sustained and continuous reinvention of the university mission and in particular, an enhancement of knowledge mediators' activities. Although their overall preoccupation with the university-business interface follows the discursive trajectory outlined above, the TSB's agenda features some distinctive traits relevant to our analysis. The re-missioning agenda is saturated with an explicit stress on the acceleration unparalleled by previous, more implicit attempts at change. Emblematically, the TSB uses a new, powerful metaphor to capture its strategy: Catapult.⁸

In TSB's own words, Catapult is 'a network of new technology and innovation centres, designed to transform great research rapidly into commercial success' (Technology Strategy Board 2012: 6). Moreover, as the TSB makes clear, the rhetorical aspect implying acceleration is fundamental to the concept: 'Catapult is a name that goes beyond the purely rational and literal, and expresses the energy, pace, direction and sense of purpose of the centres as they work to launch new ideas, products and services towards commercial reality' (Technology Strategy Board 2012: 6). The TSB, which declares itself a 'fast-paced initiative' (2011b: 2), specifically focuses on promoting the need for acceleration of (business) innovation: 'Together with business, research and academia we are creating a vital resource which will help to drive economic

growth by *closing the gap between concept and commercialisation* and enhancing innovation in specific technology areas for years to come' (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 3, emphasis added). These 'technology and innovation centres' should in turn:

attract work and engagement from a wide cross-section of industry ranging from multinationals to small businesses, and will have the reputation to work closely with the best universities and other technology organizations in the UK and internationally. They will also act as connectors, sharing expertise between centres and across research institutions. (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 5)

It also appears that such proclamations are not mere rhetorical and managerial rehearsals, but concrete plans. These types of activities and initiatives are attracting financial subsidies from a contemporary government that is itself saturated with and incarnated by the redemptive notion of innovation. As David Cameron acknowledged when referring to Catapult: 'We will invest over £200 million in technology and innovation centres over the next four years. These centres will be great for research, great for business – and they're going to put Britain back at the top table for innovation' (cited in Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 5). The fruits of these investments are not yet fully ripe,⁹ but the need for fast delivery of knowledge seems to deserve a significant commitment: 'Technologies evolve through different phases and need different approaches *to speed them along* – from connecting communities around embryonic ideas through to demonstrator projects to encourage wider take-up' (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 9, emphasis added). Catapult centres have attracted considerable attention with the programs (Cell Therapy, Digital, Future Cities, High Value Manufacturing, Offshore Renewable Energy, Satellite Applications, and Transport Systems) that compose its current remit. The High Value Manufacturing Centre, for example, provides integrated capabilities and embraces all forms of manufacture using metals, composites and bioprocessing. This sub-initiative, building on existing university research, aims 'to accelerate the commercialisation of new and emerging manufacturing technologies with new and existing portfolios of partner companies' (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 15) by involving collaboration between the universities of Cambridge, Strathclyde, Sheffield, Birmingham, Loughborough, Nottingham, Bristol, Manchester and Warwick. In March 2012 the commitment to this initiative was further confirmed by Vince Cable, then the UK's Business Secretary, who said: 'The network of Catapult Centres

we are launching ... will *smooth the path* between original research and its commercial applications. The first Catapult, focusing on high value manufacturing, is receiving £140m public funding over six years' (Cable 2012, emphasis added).

Another centre, Cell Therapy, focuses on cell therapies and advanced therapeutics and helps to support the commercialization of associated products. This centre, despite being relatively independent of higher education institutions, aims to enhance 'interdisciplinary approaches covering several areas including developmental and stem cell biology, gene therapy, cellular therapeutics, nanoscience, biomaterials, bioengineering and chemical biology' (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 16). The third centre covers the area of Offshore Renewable Energy, focusing on 'offshore wind, wave and tidal power' (2011a: 16). Furthermore, the TSB identified ten key 'immediate priority areas' that, according to them, potentially stimulate economic growth: complex systems; digital media/creative industries; future cities; future internet systems; photonics' resource efficiency; sensor systems; smart grids and distribution; space and transport systems and integration (2011a: 17).

Even though the wave of tightening ties between business, research and the university still has not broken, it already accounts for their continued marriage under the ideology of enterprise, which aims to 'accelerate the translation of research into profitable products and services' (Technology Strategy Board 2011a: 2–3). We can see that activities in specific disciplinary areas are couched as economically useful 'high-quality research' (Mirowski 2011: 2). The ten priority areas mentioned above are directly relevant to the 'science base' of the knowledge economy and are the main objects of the TSB's acceleration agenda. In combination with explicit speed metaphors and expressions, the idea of Catapult obviously attracts considerable government attention and funds. The commitment to speed seems to be critical – in both a material and figurative sense – to the actual mechanisms and leverages integral in Catapults, as acknowledged in Hauser's 2014 review:

In a globally competitive environment, commercialising swiftly and effectively can make the difference between being a market leader or a market follower. Catapults increase the scale, *speed* and scope of commercialisation and focus their activities on riskier investments. (2014: 15, emphasis added)

We can see that the culture of speed – where speed is perceived as both a means and an end – is deeply embedded in the new mission discourse.

In order to throw light on these mechanisms of acceleration, let us look at some cognate, but slightly more established sites of knowledge mediation: incubators.

Despite the fact that incubation activities and practices are very diverse and resist standardization, they depend upon and are characterized by a 'high level of tacit knowledge ... where fluid, *fast moving* and experimental environments both demand and produce adhocery' (Robertson and Kitawaga 2011: 35, emphasis added). Despite the relative absence of templates or single models for running and structuring these environments (Robertson and Kitawaga 2011: 13), there nevertheless are some common features that define them. As with its other metaphorical uses, the business incubator¹⁰ stands for very particular material characteristics and processes associated with a desirably calibrated environment that would potentially help nascent ideas develop into self-supporting projects. Inquiring into some historical circumstances will help us discover the nature and purpose of business incubators and illustrate, at the same time, how powerful metaphors and economic-structural conditions might co-evolve.

The very idea of incubator in this sense was first expressed accidentally by New York entrepreneur Joseph Manusco in 1959. Having bought a new, far too large estate which he aimed to rent, he soon realized it would be impossible for a single tenant to afford the entire property. He therefore divided the estate into smaller areas for lease to potential tenants, whom he planned to nurture not only by renting them office/business space but also by raising capital and providing business advice (National Business Incubation Association 2009). In that way, he hoped to turn the whole project into a money-maker. One of his early tenants actually incubated chickens and when Manusco was asked what he was doing with his building, he replied: 'I am incubating chickens'. From this it was a small leap to calling the whole venture a business incubator (Barrow 2001: 11).

Fast forward to the 1980s when, according to some, the first modern business incubator was set up in the city of Troy, New York (Barrow 2001). Troy, one of the industrial hubs of U.S. trade in the 1800s, is home to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), the first degree-granting technological university in the English-speaking world (Barrow 2001: 13). It was also the educational institution that pioneered Manusco's simple concept and further developed it by integrating it with higher education. George Low, then president of RPI, aspired to expose his students to business experience, but in a quasi-laboratory

setting where RPI could maintain a measure of control and direction. Barrow describes Low's project as follows:

The Institute began a networking programme that linked students and faculty entrepreneurs to investors. Business people came to speak about what was required to launch a business. Students were paired with businesses in their areas of technological expertise so that they could gain first-hand knowledge of how businesses function. Then students and professors began to launch their own companies and RPI's incubator grew. (2001: 13)

This was supplemented by support from Troy's city council, which expected the incubator to reinvigorate the once-booming commercial spirit of the city.

The foundational principle of the incubator – i.e. the union of academic institutions and business as a mobilizing force for regional development – was further reinforced by the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which increased the promotion of the commercialization of federally funded basic research; the second was the U.S. legal system starting to recognize and promote innovation and intellectual property rights protection (Hacket and Dilts 2004). As a result, the late 1990s witnessed the emergence of whole 'technopoles' such as Silicon Valley, where dot-com and e-business start-ups and incubation environments mushroomed and simultaneously served as pioneering models. In the 1980s, theorists of business incubation brought three approaches to the phenomenon that still have analytical traction today. Brooks (1986) claimed that incubation is an important vehicle and venue for entrepreneurship, which essentially means creating new firms and new business concepts. This approach also conceived of incubators as a means of *narrowing the gap* between a new business concept and an instantiating firm or business venture.

'Closing, narrowing, bridging the gap', a phrase which we encountered in governmental documents and Catapults, was also employed in the transactional cost economics approach, which promoted the idea that by reducing the costs of doing business a firm could gain a competitive advantage (Williamson cited in Hacket and Dilts 2004). Incubators were, according to this approach, expected to reduce the operational costs of their incubatees by providing service and space at affordable cost. This allegedly frees the incubatee to focus on the business itself. A third set of arguments claims that incubators can be a sort of training field, where entrepreneurs can develop their business ventures in a

supportive business environment (Plosila and Allen 1985) and learn to master the competitive factors linked to effectiveness within a particular industry setting (Lumpkin and Ireland 1988). These are three early theoretical strands – conceiving of incubators as business vehicles, gap closers and business educators.

An account from the business literature on incubators states that business incubation ‘embraces a wide range of institutions, all of which aim to foster the creation and development of enterprise – small or medium enterprises or corporate ventures’ (Karatas-Ozkan et al. 2005: 41). Overall, business incubators are ‘physical and organizational units [mostly] attached to universities, providing office/laboratory space, administrative services, access to library and computer facilities, consultants, inexpensive labour (impecunious students) and contacts with business angels, bankers and venture capitalists’ (Armstrong 2001: 538). Similarly, the authors of a 2004 systematic overview of business incubation research conducted in the United States came up with a simple definition: ‘A business incubator is a shared office-space facility that seeks to provide its incubatees with a strategic, value-adding intervention system of monitoring and business assistance’ (Hacket and Dilts 2004: 54). What does the process of incubating – and by extension catapulting – look like in practice?

For the purpose of exploring this process I will employ a description developed by Benson. He claims that the process of incubation is enabled, if not determined, by pre-existing capacities of the incubatee. Specifically, the psychological disposition and the adequately calibrated mindset of an entrepreneur determine the trajectory of incubation. Benson says that ‘successful business owners/entrepreneurs need to have the right mindset to operate a business. That is to say, they must have the confidence, skills and determination needed to run a business. Those factors need to be present at least to a reasonable degree at the outset’ (2009: 3). Besides accommodating people with the ‘correctly’ tuned mindset and business *élan*, incubators occupy an auxiliary environment where they fertilize and nurture promising entrepreneurs with commercially viable projects. Benson itemizes the pre-incubation process in which both the incubator and incubatee are involved. It includes 1) assessing business viability using an internal diagnostic tool; 2) providing business start-up training and coaching by a business mentor with relevant sectorial experience; 3) testing business viability by challenging incubatees’ assumptions; 4) becoming familiar with banking, financial and other professional service providers such as accountants and commercial lawyers; 5) becoming familiar with the relevant funding available from local, regional, national and commercial sources

(grant schemes); 6) assessing the incubator's own networking and linking options, including commercial and academic institutions and training events; and 7) identifying suitable locations for business and providing adequate on-site facilities (adapted from Benson 2009: 3–4).¹¹

After being vetted and fulfilling the incubator's initial expectations, the incubatee may start its operations. Benson states: 'The right combination of suitable premises, on-site support and access to support networks, plus an enterprising and entrepreneurial culture in the incubator should result in an environment that will result in a high business survival rate and high business growth rates' (2009: 5). Notably, one director of an incubator described entrepreneurial skills as 'acceleration skills', meaning 'being able to quickly communicate ideas, passion, expertise and credibility' (quoted in Robertson and Kitawaga 2011: 28). Not only is knowledge mediation infused with the desired speedy pace, and not only do business incubators foster the acceleration culture, but there is one other instance worth examining. Incubators and catapults are sustained by specific speed rhetoric that often originates from high-tech industry and enterprise ideology. I now turn to a brief overview of fast sites in Russell Group universities, focusing on speed rhetoric as a part of the broader integration of enterprise ideology in academia.

Fast sites in the Russell Group

Several universities within the Russell Group host or operate a fast site. Some of them talk mostly about incubation, others use distinctive speed rhetoric to indicate what the main currency is expected to be. The University of Birmingham, for instance, provides incubation space and offers a support programme for entrepreneurs called the BizzInn Business Incubator, which

is an initiative hosted by the University of Birmingham which has been set up to help new innovative businesses. In particular, the BizzInn will provide a number of free services to individuals or teams of entrepreneurs in the Birmingham region with technology based commercial concepts, whether or not they have yet to incorporate a company. These services will allow new ventures to validate and refine their offerings, and kick-start their operations, in a supportive environment which minimizes start-up costs. (BizzInn Business Incubator n.d.)

The University of Bristol and the University of Southampton host SETSquared Business Accelerators, which (together with the Universities

of Bath, Exeter and Surrey) are part of the SETsquared Partnership of five UK research universities. The Partnership 'supports the growth and success of new business opportunities through spin-outs, licensing and incubation. It also works with industry through research collaboration and consultancy' (SETsquared 2012). It also 'aims to accelerate the growth of innovation and technology businesses to stimulate economic growth in the region's economy' (ibid.) by providing support services and office space, offering help from experienced entrepreneurs, helping with access to funds, building businesses from university research and providing access to international markets (ibid.). The University of Cambridge hosts the Cambridge Student Social Enterprise Incubator and identifies four stages of idea translation, consisting of 'imagination', 'feasibility', 'realisation' and *acceleration* (Cambridge Incubator, n.d. emphasis added).

From this overview of available information, it is not clear exactly what acceleration and speed stand for as interpreted and used, but it can be assumed that they suggest the provision of acceleration tools and modalities concerned not with the process of idea-inception, but with idea-transformation. Speeding up is therefore concerned with ideas and knowledge-shaping activities related to the process of incubation as described above. Other universities from the Russell Group operate some form of incubator too, from small student ones (Centreprise at Cardiff), to biology, chemistry, medical and life sciences incubators (incubation spaces at Newcastle and Sheffield, MerseyBio at Liverpool, CIDS Biomedical Incubator, BioCity at Nottingham) to software and technology incubators (ISIS software incubators at Oxford), to complex incubator infrastructure and facilities at the science and innovation parks in Edinburgh (Edinburgh Research Innovation Unit, Edinburgh Technology Transfer Centre, Scottish Microelectronics Centre, Edinburgh Technopole) and Glasgow (The Technology Complex). At the same time, Imperial College London, King's College London, University of Leeds, Queen's University Belfast, UCL, University of Manchester and University of Warwick, despite itemizing a host of enterprise activities as components of their larger objectives, do not operate any business incubator at the time of writing this book.

There are also a number of knowledge mediation spaces that are not, by definition, business enterprises. However, they operate according to a logic very similar to that of catapults and incubators by translating medical research into medical uses and treatments. One example is SARTRE (Sevenside Alliance for Translational Research), a 'translational alliance' between the Universities of Cardiff and Bristol that aims to 'combine and accelerate our efforts in translational research and to provide a focal

point for interactions with external partners such as Bio-Pharmaceutical companies' (2012). Another example from the healthcare domain is the Leeds Institute for Health Science, which declares:

One of the main obstacles to transferring research into practice, particularly within health care, seems to be the presence of a gap between those who produce research and those who use it. Different ways of bridging this gap have been proposed, including employing individuals to act as 'knowledge brokers'. Their job is to create linkages and facilitate the transfer of knowledge between researchers and practitioners. In other words, they can act as a catalyst for knowledge transfer. (2012)

It can also be stressed that the National Health Service (NHS) itself increasingly resembles a business enterprise, and bio-pharma/drug companies tend to exploit this setting (Head 2010). The impact of enterprise ideology on healthcare systems is widely documented (see Numerato et al. 2011). Incidentally, in the case of the NHS, David Huges noted how the rhetoric of excellence and managerialism helped to influence the cultural adaption to commerce and business by various sites of the NHS (1996) – something we explored earlier in relation to academia.

In any case, large alliances between bio-pharma industries and the university also exist in parallel variants of knowledge commercialization and privatization. Examining the US context for instance, Mirowski (2011: 194–255) provides an exhaustive account mapping the pathologies of bio-pharma's assault on and commercial exploitation of some institutional infrastructures and scientific currents of medical, biological and chemistry research. In the UK context Simon Head noted similar trends, commenting:

Since the only major segment of the British economy that is both world-class and an intensive user of university research is the pharmaceutical industry, any UK government invitation to business 'end-users' to take a more prominent part in the evaluation of academic research amounts to an invitation to the pharmaceutical industry to tighten its hold over scientific research in the UK. (2010; also Angell 2009)

If these observations are correct, they give us an indication of the extent of commercial imperatives and their intrusion into academia, which is happening in parallel with more explicit articulations of the new mission of the university.

What is notable in an overview of fast sites' objectives, missions, aims and offers is a particular rhetoric indicating and connoting onward movement. It includes 'acceleration', 'start-up' and 'spin-out' as indicated above, but also 'ignite', 'hi-growth', 'growth hub', 'brokerage', 'drive forward' and 'grow on'. This type of movement and acceleration rhetoric is usually framed by larger discursive imaginaries related to enterprise ideology and the knowledge economy, from which this type of speed lexicon is derived (for elaborations on this see Chapter 4). The IdeaSpace Enterprise Accelerator at the University of Cambridge, for instance, neatly sums up its activities as:

identifying high-potential research- and innovation-led opportunities for early-stage business growth; supporting the accelerated development growth of new ventures, leading to financial and job growth; increasing the knowledge and skills of people engaging in key roles across the enterprise lifecycle; providing facilities, community support and networking opportunities for the region's innovators and ventures. (2012)

This type of accelerative rhetoric indicates that an incubatee will be able to operate in a competitive environment once the incubation process is successfully completed. Once a new venture's growth is adequately 'accelerated', it is assumed that it will simultaneously become competitive, possessing a comparative advantage vis-à-vis its competitors. Zilber pertinently captures this characteristic and expands on the earlier discussion of the competition and acceleration interface: 'Speed is not only a feature of objects and practices; it is a dynamic motivational force working especially as a comparative notion. In order to be fast, you should be faster than someone else, who is necessarily slower than you are. Hence, the rhetoric of speed is actually a rhetoric of competition' (2007: 155). Some incubators are even more explicit in promoting this service:

If you are an early-stage knowledge based company with high growth potential, we provide services to help to accelerate your company. (SETSquared 2012)

In sum, we might say that innovation and enterprise are core determinations, inherent in direct and indirect knowledge mediation, and assume practices that ideally feature shortening, minimizing, gap closing and eliminating 'time-lag' between various stages of knowledge

generation and transmission and their associated support schemes (such as Catapult).

There is, however, considerable difficulty in identifying the appropriate and desirable time-scale or gap between an idea and its application. Even though fast sites do not aim to provide one-size-fits-all platforms for potential entrepreneurs, given the focus of their language it appears that there is a unifying feature they aim to pursue: the faster an idea is translated not only into a product but also into an invoice, the better (Shore in Wright and Rabo 2010: 2). Therefore, fast sites are expected to operate above all as facilitators – ‘igniters’ and ‘spinners’ – of desirable translational processes. There is, however, one problem already identified by Benson, to which Armstrong also draws attention: ‘Useful as the facilities of business incubation might be, they are essentially just that – facilities. Although the fact of their existence might be sufficient at the margin to tempt those already entertaining thoughts of entrepreneurship, they contain, in themselves, no mechanism to ensure a supply of such individuals’ (Armstrong 2001: 538). Despite offering an array of services, the existence of an incubator presupposes a more or less ready-made entrepreneur, as Armstrong says. And although fast sites don’t directly provide ‘entrepreneurial mindsets’, they do, albeit unevenly, infuse the academic environment with certain assumptions related to the enterprise ideology, and even with some logic of capital accumulation.

Apart from speed as the fundamental functional modality of the capitalist logic (see Chapter 2, Marx 1973; Neary and Rikowski 2002; Harvey 2006), inspection of the fast sites in the Russell Group indicates that rhetoric plays a key role in generating acceleration culture. Using some of the propositions put forward by Tomlinson, it is possible to argue that the operational imperative of fast sites is to shorten the period of time necessary for transforming an idea/innovation into a profitable business. As we saw, something that all incubators have in common is a very specific need for what Tomlinson (along with some of the incubators discussed in this chapter) defines as ‘closure of the gap’, promotion of ‘arrival’ and an emphasis on ‘delivery’ (Tomlinson 2007a: 90ff). The ultimate and ideal-type temporal imperative for a knowledge mediator is immediacy – ideally no gap, immediate arrival and timely delivery of a commodity or service to the marketplace and, by implication, to the customer/consumer.

As we noted in Chapter 1, without being a technological determinist, Tomlinson (through a cautious reconciliation of the ubiquity and dispensability of determinism, agency, centrality and peripherality as

related to media) explores the ways in which various media (particularly what he calls telemedia) deliver immediacy to us (2007a: 97). In that he is focusing on the 'point of delivery', which is the 'interface between the experience subject and the ensemble of media technology-system-institution' (ibid.). The media in the context of the present chapter are not restricted to the telemediation machinery and gadgetry that is integrated into the present life-world, and arguably brings about a whole host of shifts in the social experience of time (Tomlinson 2007a: 94; Hassan 2009a; 2012; Keightley [ed.] 2012). Here our focus is of a slightly different analytical register. The concept of media, in our case, goes beyond ICT-related platforms and is more concerned with the very notion of knowledge media as proposed by Osborne (2004) and discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, one value of immediacy, according to Tomlinson, is the *removal of barriers* and conventions which signal a medium as an active agent or a mediator, rather than as a passive interlocutor (2007a: 100). The pace of knowledge mediation is expected to be the speediest possible, as one incubator declares:

We want your venture to succeed. This means making the most of your time with SETSquared and using our services to help develop your business idea as quickly as possible. (SETSquared 2012)

Immediacy is not only implicated in the fast sites' objectives, but also in person-to-person interaction that indicates a variant of the entrepreneurial mindset. A certain degree of quickly-established trust (underpinned by business experience) enables fast-paced proceedings and behaviour. As the then-director of SETSquared notes:

I think what is most important is that I've run a technology business, because that gives you credibility with people. Somebody comes in, they don't know anything about SETSquared, and they sit down with Dave and I, and we understand their technology, or the basics, and within minutes of them explaining we think: 'Well! You could do this, or you could do that'. So you say: 'Oh, well, you know that such-and-such is doing this ...!' And you know the challenges. And when you say: 'I've listed a company on the stock exchange', you get trust within 10 minutes, and so you can achieve so much. *It is all about acceleration*, you see. You can get trust very quickly, and the extension of that is understanding that things that are going on. (quoted in Robertson and Kitawaga 2011: 27, emphasis added)

However, the immediacy imperative implicated in the micro-world (trust) and macro-aim (achievement) of the knowledge mediation process is only partial unless another stage of the process is taken into consideration. This entails the 'arrival' of the idea at a desirable destination – be it consumer or customer. The notion of delivery in Tomlinson's view connotes immediacy in the sphere of consumption. Delivery, for him,

becomes the telos of consumption; it is the termination of the implicit social contract between the consumer and consumer capitalism, the point at which (both economic and cultural) liability ceases. We expect consumer goods to be functional, novel or amusing; to be stylish, fashionable, of good value and of good quality; we increasingly expect them to provide the 'lifestyle semiotic' function that marketing strategies so intensely focus on. (Tomlinson 2007a: 139)

The 'logic of expectation' Tomlinson identifies here can also be recognized in the case of fast sites. They offer, and are expected to deliver, ever-new products, firms, services and 'solutions' through the incubatees they accommodate and nourish. They thereby – at least partially – feed the expectations placed upon the university as the horsepower of growth in the knowledge economy. In this sense fast sites are vehicles of delivery – knowledge delivery. They are not only expected to incubate and mediate knowledge and ideas but also, by implication, secure their delivery. Unless that delivery is fully and quickly achieved, unless the ideas or knowledge reach the market and survive (i.e. are profitable) it is as if they do not exist.

We can see that the culture of speed – intrinsic to knowledge mediation – is highly compatible with the more structural and axiomatic logic of capitalism explored in Chapter 2. In relation to this, Wright and Rabo (2010: 2) note that in contemporary capitalism, new competitive frontiers lie in 'the speed with which new knowledge is incorporated into products or used to create whole new industries and spaces for capital exploitation'. In other words, we may state that the fast sites' culture of speed is a co-evolutionary and indispensable aspect of the broader parametric logic of contemporary capitalism.

Even though assessing business incubators is integral to the 'best practice' agenda, which is part of the broader governmental aspirations aimed at making 'the UK the best place in the world for university-business collaboration' (Wilson 2012: i), there is very little comprehensive evidence publicly available on incubators' performance and accomplishments. In other words, it remains open and questionable whether fast sites actually do achieve speed in some determining and substantial sense that would

go beyond a performative cultural commitment. Moreover, it appears that considerable doubt still exists about the top-down driven translation of research outcomes into commodities and services that preoccupies enterprise ideology in general, and speed merchants in particular. An academic I interviewed, who holds a senior administrative position, acknowledged the general tendency identified by the late 1990s' quote from the House of Lords, to which we referred above:

in the UK we get more citations per capita ... I am not sure if in the whole world, but I think second or first, or in the top three as a nation. Patents per capita are also very high, so we do really well in ideas, [but] we don't do very well in making money out of those ideas ... We are by far the worst of any developed nation in terms of converting ideas into wealth and that is important, yes it is ... So I actually quite agree with the recent drive to get impact. (Interview 9, professor, engineering, male)

There is, however, some evidence challenging the broad expectations invested in fast sites. Robertson and Kitawaga note that there are 'ongoing frictions between the culture of the university and the culture of the world business' (2011:33, also Chapter 4). In the case of SETsquared, Robertson and Kitawaga (2011: 33) observed that an overwhelming majority of business ventures associated with incubators are coming from *outside* the university rather than from within. This is in spite of policy objectives and attempts to leverage mechanisms intended to exploit promising ideas by turning them into commercial successes inside the university, or at least in some newly emerging spaces.

At the same time, looking at some disciplines at which these expectations are targeted, interviewed academics expressed reservations about the overall rationale of fast sites, without necessarily abandoning universal belief in the doctrines of enterprise and innovation. This finding also supports Robertson and Kitawaga's observation about 'frictions' between the culture of business and the culture of academia (2011: 33). One academic I interviewed reflected upon the condition and tension between the long-term nature of research and the constant need for self-improvement and fast application/translation of knowledge:

I spent the last two years learning new technologies and new techniques and effectively I did not publish anything, and that is a long time ... but because of the time-scale of the RAE/REF ... you can't devote two years of your life to training yourself. So in one respect

I did so out of curiosity, and as I immersed myself more into it I realized that this really is the future ... if I train myself in this I can take a leap ahead of other people's work ... so there are times when you have to stop and take a lot of time to slowly rethink or retrain things in order to make that quantum leap ahead of the crowd into something new and interesting. So on the surface it may look like scientists are constantly running forward at a phenomenal pace, but I actually wonder how much that is actually the case just because individuals take two years to slow down and stop and then jump ... and then somebody else would do that and they jump, it looks like we are constantly shoving forward, not the same person, but individuals. I actually wonder how much of speed is in something fast like scientific progress. Scientific research could actually be a series of jumps made by different people, it makes the whole thing look fast ... but individual perception is that it is actually quite slow, it takes a long time and you have to stop and think. (Interview 10, senior lecturer, medical sciences, male)

The new mission and activities of the university might also be unequally distributed throughout the spectrum of STEM disciplines. In spite – or *because* – of their absence, business activities broadly related to knowledge mediation tend to be perceived with positive expectations:

[More patenting] is the route. But I think it also depends on where you are at the university. I don't think that there is an enormous amount of money being generated from intellectual property in this building that I can think of, so I am sure that if you took a kind of more commercial IP-gaining basis of your work ... then nobody would be expecting you to be publishing papers. But I can't think of people in this bit of the university ... it is rare here ... other parts of the university might be different ... here people would still try to publish ... [rather than patent]. (Interview 11, professor, biochemistry, male)

In a similar vein, another scholar acknowledged the need for closer integration of fast sites into the broader pursuit of science:

[Business incubation] is something which some universities make a lot of and are extremely successful, particularly in the U.S., they

are very successful over there, if they are managed right it would be a fantastic idea ... that is a sign of success ... [it is] a sign that university is feeding [something back] into society, it is giving society something it wants ... that is a really good idea. (Interview 13, senior lecturer, engineering, male)

Alongside the ambivalent mix of both reservation and appreciation articulated by individual academics exists another piece of evidence challenging the expectations associated with the new university mission. In a handful of accounts that examine the limits of knowledge mediation in different national contexts, we find some observations relevant to our purposes. This evidence is not applicable to the UK context in any direct way; however, it may be indicative of a broader possible tendency and trajectory (although this is by no means binding or representative).

A study of Portuguese knowledge mediators (Marques et al. 2010) suggests that although entrepreneurial activities do help to provide information that enhances already existing technological endeavours of business actors, overall top-down enforcement of the primacy of commercial use of research essentially fails to create innovations ready for market. In the same vein, but referring to the German environment, Krücken (2003) argues that due to various political and legal confines and substantial differences between academic priorities and business expectations, new fast sites largely cease to account for effective knowledge transmitters.

The current round of knowledge mediation associated with Catapult centres may serve as an illustration of an important, often neglected cultural and historical characteristic of acceleration. The desired movement of knowledge into the economic sphere, which fast sites should accelerate, never ceases to be perceived as a progressive value and profit-securing modality – especially by policy-makers and governmental officials. But why is that so, given the ambiguity of enterprise ideology, the relative marginality of fast sites and the lack of evidence that assesses their activities? Why does that movement maintain such a strong and attractive currency?

The evidence and analysis presented indicates that rather than acceleration being tangible, material processes, what we actually see in the case of Catapults (although the possibility of actual material speed-up cannot be entirely ruled out) is a continuous *need* for acceleration that we can call a teleological ‘will-to-accelerate’, integral to the overall

process of modernization. Enterprise cultures – where nothing is ever fast *enough* – are sustained by will-to-accelerate and expected to generate high-tech or other commercially viable innovations (meaning commodities) and thereby secure a high-growth economy (meaning accumulation). We might say that dynamic entrepreneurial cultures, with their intrinsic acceleration metaphors, are dialectically related to the structural determinants of economic development strategies and socio-material conditions in the university sector or even within a given institution. But how can we actually understand and explain the growing attraction of fast sites and the metaphors and imaginaries through which the enterprise ideology is sustained?

One way of looking at the attractions of fast sites is by linking them to the notion of ‘creativity’, as explored by Tom Osborne. Although creativity as such is not morality or dogmatic doctrine in the case of fast sites, the very activities in which they are involved contain many derived doctrinal offshoots that imply creativity, particularly in relation to the notions of innovation and enterprise. These discourses, underpinned by a logic similar to that of creativity, comprise a wider assemblage associated with the ideology of ‘the cult of the new as ever-unchanging fashion, the forces of intellectual ... productivism for its own sake, the performativity of “ideas” ...’ (Osborne 2003: 522). Still, there is another way in which creativity can be linked to fast sites.

Osborne says that (the need for) a creativity explosion – and especially the semiotic clusters that underpin it – is related to the structural needs of the capitalist economy. As we saw in this chapter, the continuous desire to speed up inherent in various metaphors and imaginaries appears to be the defining feature of the new university mission. Thus, speed metaphors appear to be integral rather than contingent features of the new university mission. The examples presented in this chapter – which are not exhaustive, but rather illustrative – indicate that the logic of expectation sustained by the speed imaginary keeps playing an important role. Desired arrangements that embed enterprise ideology into the university are to be delivered by spaces and practices that tear down barriers – close gaps and eliminate time lags – and enable fast knowledge transmission. Essentially, quickly integrating ideas and knowledges into the circuits of capital – which are fast by default, as explored in Chapter 2 – remains an important, yet often implicit, imperative.

Fast sites that translate knowledges into deliverable forms receive a considerable amount of symbolic and material support from the government despite the fact that the actual acceleration of desirable processes

that go beyond cultural significance (the defining and legitimating characteristic of their existence) is difficult to acknowledge or recognize. Imaginaries and the semiosis associated with fast sites are important features related to reproductive forces in capitalist economies. They can thus be seen as specific instruments which seek to (re)define 'specific subsets of economic activities as subjects, sites, and stakes of competition and/or as objects of regulation' (Jessop 2004: 163). The commitment to sustain and expand fast sites as an inherent part of the new university mission continues. A new wave of 'social entrepreneurship' incubation at the Skoll Centre at Oxford University, and zones such as the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone and the Creative Harbour affiliated with the University of Bristol, are recent examples of this dynamic. Their scope of activity is simple and well known: they are expected to incubate and catapult ever-innovative knowledges and ideas to their desired 'destinations' – the faster, the better.

Knowledge mediation as an integral component of the new university mission manifests another characteristic cognate with those we discussed in Chapter 4. The discourse assumes that academia and knowledge production and translation are 'too slow' for a dynamic knowledge economy. Fast sites are expected to hurry not only the translation of promising knowledge but also its generation. This results in a continuous obsession with speeding up something or someone who simply resists or refuses to do so. Despite the lamentation of the acceleration experience of academic life we encountered in the existing literature, and that we explored in the previous chapter, what we see in the case of fast sites is a particular figurative attraction to, if not captivation with, acceleration and its relation to progress (indeed diverse normative conceptions of progress).

This valence can be viewed as a continuation of the modern imagination associated with speed introduced in the opening chapters. Moreover, as Herminio Martins observes, the late modern era is defined by particular preoccupations with the 'technological sublime' and 'machinehood', which tend to occupy increasingly dominant and resonant positions in the imagination underpinning science and knowledge policy. Such terminology has gained ground in the 'sciences and technologies, through vigorous long-running research programmes, refashioning, integrating or synergizing a great variety of technologies, as much in the realm of our imaginative life as of our material practices, not forgetting the key domains of law and medicine, throughout today's world, is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable surges of great concept-clusters in recent history' (2005: 165).

The semiotic use of techno-clusters which characterizes the new university mission implicitly assumes the (primarily economic) benefits of immediacy. As Tomlinson notes, this can be associated with the contemporary promise of speed integral to the multiple fast telemedia that increasingly structure our life-world and the fast circulatory economic processes of current capitalism. At the same time, in this chapter we saw how the idea and desire of effortless 'arrival' that, according to Tomlinson, defines the cultural condition of late modernity, also characterizes the new activities in the universities that some scholars are expected to engage in.

Conclusion

Closure of the gap, typical in the culture of 'machine speed', combined with cultural immediacy that implies the 'abolishing of waiting' (Tomlinson 2007a: 92), appear to be strong attractors underpinning the new university mission – especially in the case of various forms of knowledge mediation such as incubating, igniting, spinning and catapulting knowledge. The valorization of speed resides not only in its functionality as associated with the capitalist logic, but also in metaphorical and rhetorical clusters that surround such logic. In this chapter we saw how the speed imaginary infiltrates the contemporary university. The analysis exposed an important feature of speed: 'it is not something that just happens; it is [something] that is *chosen, desired ...*' (Millar and Schwarz 1998: 16, emphasis added).

In spite of the tensions and reservations, not to say doubts, that some evidence appraising the activities of fast sites evokes, we can observe that it is the chosen, desired and imagined speed that continues to maintain a strong purchase in higher education discourse. Perhaps more figurative than literal, the commitment to speed is particularly evident in the rhetoric and arrangements integral to the new university activities which were examined. Specifically, it is associated with contemporary knowledge mediation activities that convey an important dimension: the intended commercialization of knowledge and research. Overall, the analysis showed that it is not only the materialist necessity of increased velocity in the techno-capitalist system of circulation that the university is systematically navigating; speed metaphors seem to be intrinsic ingredients in assisting the process. This is indeed part of the 'talks' that have been encroaching on the university, but also of broader cultural *and* structural issues around speed, which we addressed in earlier chapters. Intellectual resistance against the anxieties related

to the accelerating pace of social life cannot simply deny the fact that the modern imaginary and thinking – for better or for worse – *opted* for speed (Kern 2003: 129; Tomlinson 2007a: 39). Acceleration continues to be a powerful cultural leitmotif of late capitalism and it is gripping the modern imagination – including that which underpins contemporary higher education policy discourse.

7

Sociology, Fast and Slow¹

Whereas the previous chapter analysed the internal logic of and the rhetoric associated with ‘fast’ university sites, this chapter looks at a ‘slow’ university site: the traditional university discipline of sociology. Here we mean a site that is not channelled directly into the new university mission, but that nevertheless may be subject to some of the imperatives promoted by neoliberal ideology. ‘Slow’ is not used here in a reactionary sense, but rather expressively and indicatively, implying specific practices and the merits connected with the conduct of sociology as a discipline, and more broadly with the very remit and idea of sociology.

Nicholas Gane noted that ‘sociology has, in general, neglected the speed of its own enterprise, along with the speed of the world it seeks to explain’ (2006: 32). This chapter takes up Gane’s invitation to address speed. It identifies *fast* sociological modalities as attempts to reinvigorate sociological conduct by introducing and establishing an array of concepts and methods aimed at ‘chasing’ speed-sociality in the form of social networking sites and large data sets generated by electronic transactions and other forms of communication. Subsequently, it makes a case for *slow* sociological analysis using different intellectual principles and registers, chiefly but not exclusively, critique. Next, it argues that it is through the exchange and interplay between these two modes that sociology reproduces and articulates itself. The second section of the chapter draws on John Holmwood’s analyses (2010; 2011a) exploring the institutional development of the contemporary university in relation to sociology’s unique characteristics and its ability to reproduce itself. In particular, it examines the temporal structure of the academic knowledge regime with which today’s sociology – and the social sciences in general – are dealing

and argues that the audit technologies which significantly co-shape, regulate and sanction sociological knowledge production not only require academics to work faster, but also construct fast academic subjects. It concludes by saying that the tempo of audit technologies might have redundant ramifications for the reproductive temporal balance and organic rhythms of sociology.

In the preceding chapters I attempted to demonstrate that UK academia is not immune to the acceleration dynamics integral to the culture and techno-dynamics of contemporary capitalism. The velocity of capitalist logic and the ideological priorities of higher education policies enter into the calibration and configuration of the contemporary university in multiple and contested ways.

We can identify still another way in which acceleration and scientific pursuit are connected. As noted earlier, the association between the commitment to speed and the idea of progress is a deep-seated and ideologically linked modernist characteristic: 'The ideological nub of progress, which appeals equally to social reformers – "progressives" by definition – as to capitalist entrepreneurs is its *impatience* with the way things are, and the intuition that the human good lies in the struggle for improvement' (Tomlinson 2007a: 22, emphasis original). Both of the variants Tomlinson identifies – reformers and entrepreneurs – have been historically integral to modern academia. Whereas in Chapter 6 we looked at the latter, here we will look more broadly at the former (a discipline where we might expect to find progressive intellectuals – 'social reformers' as well as 'entrepreneurs').

The relationship between sociology and social progress/reformation is an important, though not defining, aspect of the sociological repertoire. It could be argued that, especially in its Marxian and critical variants, social progress and/or change remains its fundamental objective. Holmwood summarizes this aspect bluntly: 'Understanding the world in order to change it is a fundamental part of the sociological sensibility' (2010: 651). The intention to understand the world in order to change it – integral to progressivism – contains a 'tacit consensus ... that [such] progress should be as swift as possible' (Tomlinson 2007a: 22). Moreover, Robert Nisbet (1980: 80) reminds us that the idea of progress has been a benign intellectual influence inseparable from the crucial motivations, impulses, desires and incentives behind the extraordinary accomplishments of scientific and scholarly advancement. The next section deals with some questions about the *temporal assumptions* that underpin some influential – and no doubt progressive, in Tomlinson and Holmwood's sense – sociological propositions.

Sociology's 'chronopolitics'

As I argued earlier, Rosa claims that acceleration of social change is not only a salient trait of the last decade or two but also a constitutive and discrete feature of modernity.² While developing this pillar of his overall theory of social acceleration he indicates, perhaps unintentionally, how certain temporal assumptions about the acceleration of social change and its ramifications may lead to articulation and development of new imaginaries, analytical apparatuses and conceptual languages intended to assist sociology in capturing social reality:

[A]ttitudes and values as well as fashions and lifestyles, social relations and obligations as well as groups, classes, or milieus, social languages as well as forms of practice and habits are said to change at ever increasing rates. This has led Appadurai to replace the symbolization of the social world as consisting of stable social aggregates which can be localized on maps with the idea of a fluid, flickering screen representing cultural flows that only punctually crystalize in 'ethno-, techno-, finan-, media- and ideoscapes'. (Rosa 2003: 7 quoting Appadurai 1990)

This aptly illustrates the problem of how the sociological imagination – and the emergence of new concepts and framing techniques – might in turn animate calls for the actualization of the rules and parameters of various categories and methods of social analysis.

Appadurai is not alone in these tendencies. Several prominent social theorists, including Ulrich Beck and his colleagues, have also proposed a considerable reinvention of the categories and concepts we use for understanding, interpreting and investigating current social reality. Beck et al. are even more explicit in their diagnoses and impulses, which aim to ambitiously re-think categories of social scientific inquiry. For them, acceleration in our compressed and 'globalizing modernity' appears to diminish duration and structures:

In the old days when Modernity was still First Modernity, acceleration signalled the coming of the apocalypse. Now acceleration (and maybe even the apocalypse) is part of our everyday life and this seems true for extra-European formations as well. Modernity, therefore, means an accelerating accumulation of experience ... [and] compressed modernity also means that it is increasingly difficult to develop horizons of experience Sociologists are used to thinking

in structures. But structure means that there exists a relative duration: no structure without time. However, with increased acceleration, in compressed modernity, there may be neither duration nor structure. (Sznajder 2010: 630)

Given the profound transformation of social structures (or even their disappearance, as Sznajder has it) in the age of globalization, there is a need – as the general argument goes – to re-think the notion of the social (Gane 2004). Beck and Sznajder, similarly to Appadurai, say that there are now ‘new realities ... arising: a new mapping of space and time, new co-ordinates for the social and the political are emerging which have to be theoretically and empirically researched and elaborated’ (2010: 386). One of the fundamental assumptions here is that we now live in a world with distinct and radically different spatio-temporal coordinates with manifold socioeconomic, political and cultural consequences – especially in comparison with the (recent) past.

Influential currents in contemporary sociology seek to develop a new grammar and vocabulary (flows, fluids, mobilities, networks, non-equilibria, interconnectivity, hybridity etc.) that would allegedly allow us to grasp what it means to live in this complex, fast-changing ‘globality’. These propositions are important because, according to some, they are at the heart of the attempt to resuscitate the enterprise of sociology and are aimed at saving it from becoming a ‘zombie discipline’, as Beck has implied (cf. Beck 2002). Typical propositions in this genre of sociological literature involve the renewal of sociology by re-defining the traditional categories used in social theory (e.g. that the nation-state and social class should be replaced by cosmopolitanism and individualism, respectively) and the embedded practices used in social research methods (e.g. survey and in-depth interview should be replaced by more dynamic methodologies or revamped using ICT). Some categories, concepts and methods are viewed as outmoded or as ‘relics’ (Goldthorpe 1991) in the context of the rapidly changing, ICT-savvy and volatile world. Gane asks, vis-à-vis these interpretations: ‘how can and should [social] theory respond to the acceleration of social life and culture? Should theory attempt to keep pace with a world that is changing faster than ever, and if so, what methods should it employ?’ (2006: 21). Considering Beck’s critique of ‘methodological nationalism’, with its supposed ‘mono-logic’ and related paradigmatic propositions about ‘cosmopolitan sociology’, Scott Lash suggests that the very speed and ephemerality of the contemporary social world leaves almost no time for reflection (1999; 2002) and that sociology simply needs

to adapt and get 'in sync'. According to him, the main qualities of information – which for him define high-speed social reality – are flow, disembeddedness, spatial compression, temporal compression and real-time relation. For that matter, critique as such needs to become 'informational', because there allegedly is nothing outside the information order, and critique needs to 'embrace its fate' and become part of the new fast global order.

We saw a similar stance in relation to speed in the democratic theories of Scheurman, Connolly and Glezos in Chapter 2 (p. 52ff), where 'slower' provenances and sites of democratic polity must be subsumed by the forces of acceleration in order to be of any use or purpose. A similar tendency can be identified when looking at recent debates in sociological theory about the issue of globalization. Many influential attempts to prompt a reinvention of sociological knowledge on the basis of a 'fast-changing world' referent take temporal assumptions for granted and, generally speaking, only look minimally at the structural and cultural context of speed the way Tomlinson, for one, does.

We can address this deficiency by raising two intertwined criticisms. First, there is the postcolonial critique that challenges imaginaries associated with sociological theories of globalization, the assumptions on which they are built and the new types of conceptual thinking they call for (e.g. Connell 2007: 49–68; Kamola 2010: 16–84). Although we cannot do justice to this body of literature here, one of the reproaches developed in this influential genre is examining the western/northern metropolitan embeddedness of the actual producers of these types of sociological knowledges. Notwithstanding Beck's call for 'dialogic' cosmopolitan thinking, the epistemological imperialism that announces the coming of a radically new era tends to manifest itself as a one-dimensional 'monologic'. By scaling up its own conceptual tools, 'globalization' pre-empts other forms of representation and imagination along with their epistemological grounds (Connell 2007: 60).

Despite the criticism and debate of the postcolonial challenge provoked by the social sciences (Bhambra 2007; Holmwood 2009; McLennan 2012; Vasilaki 2012), theories of globalization and, in particular, the change in temporality they (more often tacitly than overtly) assume may be significant to the reinvigoration of social inquiry. Connell's critique of the metropolitan origins of influential theoretical currents may be helpful here. From the temporal perspective, the metropolitan anchoring of globalization theorists such as Beck et al. is important. Their physical and symbolic embeddedness in metropolitan academic networks may affect both explicit and implicit articulations

of the quickly changing world and further formulation of paradigmatic transmutations of the sociological core. As the writers Robert Musil (1995), in his magnum opus *Man Without Qualities*, and Georg Simmel (1997) noted, the metropolis has been the central stage for not only modern socio-historical developments and western knowledge production. The experience of the metropolis is also one of social vertigo from rapid change, fed by a kaleidoscopic display of commodities and by occurrences and the diverse energies, anomalies and impulses they generate (Tomlinson 2007a: 32–39). Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 1, the ‘pulse of the metropolis’ may considerably help to shape the subjective phenomenology of speed and also, by implication, might enter into variants of intellectual and academic imaginaries – including the ones that take the image of a fast-changing world as an implied, automatic epistemic context.

Secondly, the imaginary of a fast-changing world (including some of its value underpinnings, as we can see from Sznajder’s quote above where he equates ‘acceleration’ with ‘apocalypse’) may function as a powerful – and attractive – performative device and assumption with mobilizing potential. Yet it might be ‘just’ such an individual/subjective impression that could be recast into influential sociological theory, if the right combination of institutional grounding, academic record, rhetorical appeal (sometimes bombast) and a mood of demanding/rewarding novelty is sustained. Moreover, as we said, a variety of images and the concept of a fast-changing world provoke an emergency need to react promptly and quickly. The imaginary of a fast-changing world, conceptually couched in terms such as globalization, reflexive/liquid modernity and the network society, is an influential ‘sociological collective representation’, produced and reproduced in established structures and authorized venues. Alongside its metropolitan origins, it also perhaps indicates sociology’s ‘identity anxiety’, a sign of a crisis of relevance and a crisis in its reproduction (Holmwood 2010, 2011a). To be sure, Holmwood says that sociology never actually had a stable core or a fixed frame of reference. This was partially associated with its openness to ‘new voices’. Sociology is not ‘understood as based upon timeless truths, but to be a product of historically located practices. [Sociology is a discipline] that has to be “achieved”, or continually re-invented, in new circumstances’ (Holmwood 2010: 649). The core, therefore, lies in sociology’s *sensibility* as part of the sociological imagination, and not only in its concepts, categories, arrangements and methods (ibid.). It is through this sensibility that all defining expressions and standpoints of sociology are reframed, re-thought and re-invented. Currently, there

is an emerging debate which seriously engages and reflexively reacts to some of these epochal ‘voices’ and to their propositions – including those of Beck et al. Notwithstanding the problems with the theories of globalization we have schematically glanced at, there are several ongoing attempts to ‘re-energize’ sociology with new, related methodological and conceptual devices, somewhat independently of the ‘performative effectiveness’ (Connell 2007: 50) of influential globalization theories.

In some ways the temporal tension addressed here resembles a generations-old debate that took place in the pages of the *British Journal of Sociology* (Goldthorpe 1991; 1994; Mann 1994; Mouzelis 1994; Hart 1994; Bryant 1994). John Goldthorpe then restricted sociological investigation to the examination of the present by promoting sociological empirical sensibilities capable of dealing with the ‘now’ as sociology’s inherent advantage over other social scientific disciplines. Goldthorpe extensively discussed the nature of the sociological evidence from which inferences can be made. He noted that ‘sociologists have the considerable privilege of being able to generate evidence in the present’ (1991: 225). Arguably, this attribute of sociology returns to us in the present era, when undoubtedly, in spite of the postcolonial challenge and the ‘digital divide’, large chunks of social life have been migrating to the online world (whose crucial modality is the one of immediacy, as we saw in Chapter 1). Moreover, the ‘digital revolution’ can be understood as a crucial infrastructural feature of contemporary capitalism, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the sociological enterprise, there are now attempts to take the ‘digital challenge’ seriously – especially by revamping techniques for data-collection/generation in the world of big data. It is being argued that these techniques are better equipped to deal with the present; with the ‘now’. Yet, despite the promise offered by attempts at re-energizing the field, there is a need for caution.

Sociology 2.0

Without the epochal rhetoric typical of some of the globalization writers discussed above, but still drawing on the metropolitan experience, Nicholas Gane observes:

Social relations, economic exchanges and even global events are now mediated by technologies that can operate at the speed of light: from the digital circulation of big capitalist finance through to the ‘real-time’ reporting of global news and even the individual organization of personal relationships via mobile phones or email. Indeed, it is hard to think of an aspect of human existence that has yet to be touched by the fast technologies. (2006: 20)

One of the widely discussed 'structural adjustments' reflecting these imaginations is associated with the emergence of 'new empiricism', which is part of a broader transformation toward what some call 'sociology 2.0' (Beer and Burrows 2007). These claims assume that if academic sociology is to remain important in producing evidence about, and analysing, social processes, it needs to shift its emphases and focuses.

Sociology 2.0 advocates new repertoires that include methodological innovations – especially new techniques exploiting digital technologies. One major suggestion is that a reinvigorated sociology should concentrate on new proxies for social reality such as 'data sets formed as the by-product of routine administrative processes' (Webber 2009: 169). These proxies should enable us to capture high-speed interdependencies and chase the 'myriad mobilities, switches, transactions and fluidities that *are claimed* to make up contemporary social life' (Savage and Burrows 2007: 894, emphasis added). In order to understand and explain high-speed social reality, what is needed is to increase the number of quantitative experts, including computer scientists, among sociologists (Payne 2007; Crompton 2008). Increased trans-disciplinary engagement should enable further reinforcement and foregrounding of social transactional and digital research technologies (Webber 2009) and embracing the use of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter for social investigation (see Beer and Burrows 2007). Using the temporal framework, we may say that these propositions constitute a re-synchronization manoeuvre that can align new methods of investigation with their object(s).

The point is to supplement allegedly outmoded points of reference from the 'old slow world' (first modernity) with new ones that would help us to monitor and report on the current high-speed sociality. The primary concern is to bypass traditional qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as conceptual languages, and develop a new set of methodological and terminological instruments. The principles (often digitally mediated) of classifying, tracing and sorting out are proposed as assimilation strategies that should help us capture the 'real-time world' and generate better and more relevant sociological registers and data. This new sociological agenda includes ground-breaking investigation techniques and methodologies that originate in commercial research. One of the examples discussed is Geodemography, which 'produces spatial mappings of social class by working with transactional datasets that are unprecedented in terms of their scale and complexity' (Gane 2012: 156; also Burrows and Gane 2006; Savage and Burrows 2007; Webber 2009). The need for increased mapping and visualizing of the (fast) mobilities of people and information gave rise to calls for

tracking and tracing 'mobile ideas' in 'mediascapes' (Allen-Robertson and Beer 2010). In a similar vein, there is a robust impetus for 'mobile methods' that are aimed at social scientific investigation and that follow the fast movement of (assemblies of) objects, spaces, people, ideas and information (Buscher et al. 2010).

Another recently discussed example is the use of 'social media data aggregators', software that aims to capture accumulated by-product data and facilitate their analysis (Beer 2012). From it we can see that one of the main aims of 'sociology 2.0' is to classify and sort social reality by developing new indicators, allowing the production of new sociological data. Webber notes that data of this sort will 'provide a powerful tool to understand the flows of people over space and the kind of social and spatial boundaries that may be organized around class and ethnicity, and therefore have considerable ... potential for ... [contemporary] sociology' (2009: 176). Moreover, it is advocated that given the increasing difficulty of bracketing the presence of digital and electronic media by separating them from other features in our life-world, sociology should take these developments more seriously. Roger Burrows (2012b) suggests that if the discipline is going to consider the implications of digitalization processes both as an object of inquiry and as a challenge to its established methodological practices, then innovations in sociological description will have to take the new techniques associated with 'fast' temporality more seriously than they have hitherto done.

A group of computer scientists, deploying complex algorithmic and statistical parameters, have been exploring how the micro-blogging site Twitter expresses 'the mood of the nation', the 'prevalence of flu-like symptoms', and 'election patterns'. In their study, when explaining their rationale, they developed their own case-specific variant of sociology 2.0. Reflecting on their investigation of the public sentiment expressed in the 'collective discourse that constantly streams through Twitter' they say:

Have you ever had the impression that everyone around you is stressed? Or is it just you? Answering a simple question like this can be very hard, as it would involve interviewing a large sample of people, and asking the right questions, in order to assess their levels of stress (unless you want to measure cortisol levels in faecal samples, as done in wild animal populations). The truth is that this is just one of many aspects of a population that is very difficult to measure or even detect. We often talk about macroeconomic quantities (such as the current level of inflation, or economic growth), forgetting that

these quantities always refer to the past, since it takes several months to collect, aggregate and analyse the various economic indicators. Measuring the state of a society or an economy in real time is not an easy task. It is a task that certain practitioners call 'nowcasting'. (Lansdall-Welfare et al. 2012: 26)

The authors further discussed one aspect inherent in 'nowcasting' and Twitter. Tweets, according to them, have the advantage of being 'of-the-moment, sent by impulse. They have *immediacy*; they reflect what the sender is feeling at the time, not what he or she feels looking back, a considered opinion from later' (ibid. emphasis added). As always, techniques of this kind are, by default, unable to 'track' considerable segments of the population who are off-line and/or not using social media. Also, as David Beer noted, the exploration of 'sentiment' by looking at social media cannot capture or differentiate irony or insider discourse (2012: 4.10). In fact, Lansdall-Welfare et al. are aware of these limitations and offer caveats when they reflect on the study's results. They say: 'Even if there was an increase in fear after spending cuts were announced, how do we know that this was due to the announcement? Many other factors could have caused it' (Lansdall-Welfare et al. 2012: 28).

Generally speaking, the issue of 'immediate affect' has recently preoccupied social theorists assessing the 'turn to affect' and (neo)vitalism. Some currents in this literature are theoretically advancing the idea that 'witnessing now' is a combination of structural and material forces and the 'feelings', affects, emotions, sensibilities, energies and intensities of embodied experience (Connolly 1999; Massumi 2002; Clough and Halley [eds.] 2007; Clough 2009; MacLure 2011). Dialogical engagement between computer science and these currents of social theorizing might potentially be a productive interface for re-energizing sociological inquiry, capturing relevant contemporary social realities.

The methods and approaches Lansdall-Welfare et al. developed include 'inscription devices' (Osborne et al. 2008; Beer 2012) that allow the exploration of present social actualities. By introducing their version of affect-driven sociology 2.0, Lansdall-Welfare et al. reflect on the promise of such analysis: 'social science can now enter a data-driven phase but this will require vast amounts of non-traditional data. The exploitation of big data will require the use of multiple tools, from different fields. Data management, data mining, text mining, and data visualization, all seem to be as necessary as the statistical analysis part' (2012: 28). As Lampos, one of the co-authors of the study, notes: the 'vast amount of information provides ... the social scientists or psychiatrists with the

opportunity to answer questions, which before have been considered as experimentally infeasible' (2012: 209). Even if it is not far-fetched to say the social sciences have *always* been 'data-driven' in some ways, there might be potential in this type of social inquiry.

The call for exploitation of big data sets is associated with another challenge for sociology.³ As commentators have pointed out (e.g. Savage and Burrows 2007), some important social scientific research now being done is taking place not only outside the disciplinary confines of sociology – such as in computer science – but also outside broadly traditional academic structures. A salient example is social research generated in the commercial sphere (Webber 2009; Beer 2012). In relation to commercial social research, Sam de Boise recently alerted us that: 'Moves toward aping commercial sector research place more emphasis on speed and efficiency at the expense of considering how research comes to be used' (2012: 41). The next section is not so much concerned with the question of *how* new research techniques come to be used, but rather analyses the possible limits of sociology 2.0 (see also Giardullo 2015). It also discusses some antipodes to speedy engagement with the 'now'.

Temporal pluralism of sociology

The new digital-based, analysed realm of the affect raises a number of questions. It is somehow appending itself to a new 'post-human' discourse (Haraway 1991) that suggests social 'worlds' are made, remade and 'reassembled' (Latour 2005) in many particular and distinct ways – for instance through algorithms and how they interact with human behaviour. One caveat, directly relevant to our analytical scheme, has been raised by Beer (2012). The digitalization of research practices – to an extent previously impossible – at least partially moves analytical processes of social research into computing, although this in itself may not be a new aspect of data analysis. Beer, however, observes that despite the attraction of computer-assisted research methods for assessing big data collections, we should maintain the distinctive critical faculties integral to sociological analysis. Similarly to the twenty-year-old dispute around Goldthorpe's propositions, Michael Mann and Nicky Hart defend 'slower' aspects of historically oriented 'macro-sociology' by highlighting, for instance, the importance of socio-*historical* analysis. Mann, Hart and Beer all highlight that sociology should maintain the ability to engage with historicity and the origins of the conditions that gave rise to modern social institutions, processes, structures and ideologies.

While these new methods, 'fast engagements' and innovative strategies indeed help us to 'chase the runaway world' (Gane 2001) and

identify new realms of social action, we should not dismiss the need for pause and stability in social scientific practice. In relation to this, Beer notes that when opening sociology up to the digital or 2.0 modality, the main challenge continues to be finding ways of doing *critical* social science with inscription devices not initially designed for such purposes (Beer 2012: paragraph 5.3). For our analytical purposes, the critical aspect to which Beer refers can be articulated in temporal terms. In contrast to sociology 2.0's agenda, it might be desirable to preserve slower and more diachronically-oriented components of social inquiry and sociological thinking, such as the ones to which Mann alluded 20 years ago (1994).

While useful, the shift in emphasis to new methods of inquiry, often ICT-mediated, as part of reinvigorating sociology may endanger or exclude other equally important and often complementary aspects and practices. A viable entry point into this field of tension would be the argument developed by a political theorist, Michael Saward, who makes a case for 'slow theory' (*not* along the lines of the Slow Movement). He claims that despite their usefulness and undeniable potential for generating new data registers and knowledges, the reinvigorated approaches and engagements of social inquiry, couched above as fast, 'might induce ways of *not seeing*, knowingly or otherwise' (2011: 2 emphasis original).

Employing Saward's propositions in this context, it is possible to say that fast techniques mapping ICT-mediated social reality are often necessarily and desirably detached from social reality in their attempts to classify and sort given processes. Furthermore, the focus on speed-sociality is often concerned with immediate and 'timeless applicability across diverse contexts' (2011: 6). Slow engagements, on the other hand, aim to forensically situate themselves in a particular circumscribed node of social terrain and operate in a different, slower, temporal modality. Fast engagements risk the temptation to 'construct the worlds that they are deemed to be applicable to' (*ibid.*) and often tend to neglect the natural filtering mechanisms of time and space.

John Law noted a similar problem when he said that new methods and theories could potentially produce the reality they are trying to understand (2004: 5). This may be related to a more general epistemological problem found in the dichotomy between scientific empiricism and social constructivism (Hart and McKinnon 2010). This point can be illustrated by highlighting a dilemma we encountered earlier: once conceptual construction of a fast-changing world becomes the determining subtext of sociological investigation, the techniques and methods of sociology 2.0 are deemed to be important tools for its understanding.

Saward describes the pitfalls hidden in this move: ‘The “stickiness”, plurality, and particularity of countries, localities, regions, cultures, linguistic communities, situated histories, and so on are factors to step back from, to be perceived in a facilitatively blurry fashion’ (2011: 5). Fast engagements, according to Saward, are concerned with ‘factors conditioning the scope of [an empirical/theoretical] model’s applicability’ (ibid.).

However, there may be good reason to be more positive about fast engagements than Saward is. Contrary to the somewhat common-sense perception that detachment should be part of the slow mode, he claims that detachment is the provenance of fast sociological investigation. More specifically factual detachment (a certain buffer zone or distance from the subject matter) enables speedy yet rather imprecise engagement, in Saward’s conception. Although in principle fast engagements may blur distinctive, important socioeconomic, cultural and political instances, they may generate new knowledge registers at the same time, as the example of ‘mobile methods’ clearly demonstrates (Buscher et al. 2010). Apart from different outcomes and findings determined by the pace of the method of inquiry and by the mode of engagement, there is another temporal repertoire of a different nature that arguably comprises slow conduct in sociology. An account of social reality cannot be reduced *only* to a systematic, advanced examination of the ICT-human-social interface, digital (trans)actional data or differently attached, detached or situated methods of inquiry, be they theoretical approaches or more tangible empirical methodologies.

Here again, the Goldthorpe debate is instructive. Excessive preoccupation with sociology 2.0’s techniques of investigation might end up in what Mann called ‘dataphilia’ and the reification of measures (1994: 48). It is almost banal to say that sociology’s scope, task and value lie in a considerably broader programme that needs to be at arm’s length from data-compilation strategies.

Critique and other aspects of sociological understanding somehow seem to sit uneasily with the agile sociology 2.0 – especially in its computer science and commercial variants. Let me briefly clarify the notion of the critique/critical task of sociology and elaborate on the ways in which we can think about its temporal underpinnings. Critique here is defined, in a broadly Marxian fashion, by three principles: reducing illusion, unmasking domination, and dismantling ‘real appearances’ (Sayer 2009: 770). These principles include denaturalization of social phenomena (e.g. globalization, capitalism or even, paradoxically, high-speed society), identification of human suffering, ill-being and the conceptualization of flourishing as it relates to

societal forms of organization (Sayer 2009). Moreover, the critical task of sociology sustains our ability to register, comprehend and contest inequalities and inhumanities of a structural nature (McLennan 2011: 158). In other words, this is a type of sociology that seeks to uncover the hidden and unconsidered ideas on which practices are based (Sayer 2009: 781) as well as to examine the value-formations related to complex modes of reasoning.

This 'slower' type of sociological conduct also promotes a different conception of interdisciplinarity. Whereas sociology 2.0 proposes closer engagement with computer science (as well as the natural and human sciences) by bringing 'the social' closer to those disciplines in their diverse appreciations, critical sociology broadly calls 'for a closer engagement between social science and the sustained, patient deliberation on forms of judgment and their legitimacy provided by lay ethical thought and by moral and political philosophy' (ibid.). An approach to deep ethical problems presumably requires a different temporal framework: one rooted in an articulation of foundational, normative and moral visions/arguments of a different nature than ICT-techniques, 'technologization' and the broadly reportage-oriented tasks of sociology 2.0. Arguably, the critical tasks of sociology assume a mode of long-term, tenacious processual learning, acquiring knowledge, risking hypotheses and assumptions, and developing an engaged understanding. In a more systematic sense, it might be said that various forms of social understanding assume a rather slow, but not decelerative, pace of sociological conduct.

McLennan, drawing on Runciman (1983), identifies four dimensions of sociology which combine fast and slow conduct: reportage, description, explanation and evaluation (2006: 45). Reportage 'involves compiling bare-boned inventories of people and events' (ibid.); description 'conveys and reinterprets how social situations impact upon people's experience' (ibid.); explanation 'is essentially about establishing valid causal relations' (2006: 46); and evaluation 'involves arguments as to whether a reported, explained and described state of affairs is a good thing or not' (2006: 47). Sayer, echoing McLennan's propositions to sustain all four points, proposes a productive mix of fast, reporting sociology with more descriptive, critical, slow principles: '[an] explanation requires evaluation ... [and] social science has to be critical in the strong sense ... if it is to describe and explain its objects. The goals of social scientific description and explanations *and* critical evaluation are consistent rather than at odds' (Sayer 2009: 780, emphasis added). Of course, different research problems and topics require different techniques of investigation; yet what we see in the case of reportage-oriented sociology 2.0 is

that inquiry and close engagement with the causalities and regularities in high-speed social reality can compromise other dimensions of social inquiry such as explanation and description, interpretative capacity and the critical dimension of seeking emancipatory social change (Crompton 2008: 1225).

This is not to say that sociology 2.0 suffers from a lower level of sophistication or complexity due to its fast conduct. On the contrary, one of the intrinsic *progressive* characteristics of sociology is its very sensibility to the world to which it speaks. Yet the 'actuality' of sociological knowledge has been traditionally complemented by the painstaking integration of slow modes – explanation, description, critique. Social investigation undoubtedly faces new challenges – both in theorizing and methodologies – regardless of whether or not the thesis that 'just about everything is accelerating' is as holistic and ubiquitous as is sometimes assumed. To reiterate, the point is not to propose a regressive, laggard or Luddite argument that would compulsively resist the dynamics and sensibilities of sociological imagination and the attempts to investigate the changing temporality of social structures and formations of late modernity. Rather, it is to draw attention to the reduction of sociological inquiry into repertoires and registers that seek to speak immediately to the 'right' and relevant audiences. Marc Bessin and Giovanni Gasparini captured the danger and appeal of preoccupation with reportage by differentiating the temporal horizon of immediacy and attraction inherent to journalism versus the slower temporality of social scientific research. They say, instructively: 'The discrepancy between the time needed to produce on the one hand a journal[istic] article and on the other a scientific study also raises the question of researcher's commitment, torn as he or she is between the rigour of scientific research and fascination with the journalist's power and capacity to mobilize attention' (2000: 198).

The engagement with the 'now' and its attractions, and with the temporal horizons of slower disciplinary commitments that Sayer, McLennan and Runciman discuss (to which Sociology 2.0 mobilizes attention) should not be mutually exclusive, but complementary. The temporal blueprints of fast (chasing/agile) and slow (critical/sedentary) sociology should overlap and find synthetic expression in the practical conduct of pedagogy as well as in 'exporting' activities to other disciplines and 'studies'. With exclusive emphasis on its fast features, there is a risk of excessive instrumentalization of the discipline (Holmwood 2011a). Conversely, if the slow features are over-emphasized, we risk sociological claims being inaccurate, outmoded and effectively mute in the face of dynamically changing socioeconomic realities.

However challenging this task may appear, we need to balance the two approaches of fast and slow sociology in order to have the broadest, most objective view possible and simultaneously sustain the capacity to involve sociology in social and political change.

Therefore, two broad 'speed lanes' – one of temporal engagement and one of temporal detachment – should ideally co-exist, inform and complement, rather than discriminate against each other. These approaches are associated not only with the inherent heterogeneity of sociological practice and conduct but are also detectable in the very idea of sociology, which 'has to do with the viability of notions of structured social totalities, and the possibility of making authoritative distinctions between the objects of social enquiry and the frameworks of discourse available to configure them' (McLennan 2006: 1). In a sense the *viability* of notions of structured social reality needs to be based in temporally symmetrical – fast – methods of data collection and in approaches with ample exploratory purchase that effectively assist in generating protocols that can describe the composition of a changing social reality.

Secondly, the possibility of making distinctions between the objects of social enquiry and the discursive frameworks that configure them arguably rests on asymmetrical – slower – differentiated temporal registers. In other words, sociology 2.0 with its reinvigorated rules for the sociological method and the slow-paced aspects of sociology need to cross-fertilize. Fast and slow aspects are most productive when they are maintained in constant synergistic tension and continuously revisited in critical debates. The 'dataphilia' integral to sociology 2.0 and such constitutive 'relics' as critique, explanation, description – with their temporal priorities and underpinnings – need to be maintained not as antinomies, but as attributes of sociology's temporal pluralism. This principle corresponds to Max Weber's remark about the 'unsettled' nature of sociology. Highlighting the often unsolvable intellectual and epistemic disputes, Weber criticized 'the continuous changes and bitter conflict about the apparently most elementary problems of our discipline, its methods, the formulation and validity of its concepts' (cited in Holmwood 2011a: 542). This can still be seen as the defining characteristic of sociology. Sociology *as such* may be under siege, however, due to a slightly different type of acceleration-generating pressure.

Auditing sociology

As we saw throughout the preceding chapters, academic disciplines and scientific practices are nowadays subject to endogenous and exogenous

pressures associated with capitalist culture and with the modernist imaginaries and value-bases attributable to the problem of speed. This section will argue that, at least in the case of British sociology, institutional rhythms are associated with an increasing 'bureaucracy of intellect'. The temporal economics of sociological knowledge production may have disruptive effects on the (re)productive temporal collision or 'special ferment' (Abbott 2001: 121; Holmwood 2010; 2011a) that are mycelial for the reproduction of sociological 'achievement'. This reproductive tension (sociology's temporal pluralism) could be jeopardized by an oppressive 'bad' speed intrinsic to institutional practices attributable to the imperativeness of, what I call in aggregate, 'audit technologies'. Holmwood observes that the crisis of contemporary sociology, or 'sociology's misfortune', largely does not result from the epistemological tensions around theory and method but from sociology's gradual subordination to the economics of the knowledge bureaucracy associated with broader developments and trends in the university sector discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. In the remainder of this chapter we will therefore look at the temporality of the audit technologies that are indispensable to the contemporary instructional context and the (re)production of social scientific knowledge. (cf. Bourdieu 1988).

As some authors note, sociology today is exposed to a whole range of audit technologies at different levels of individual and organizational life. As a result, sociology is increasingly folded and nested into value scales; heterogeneous concrete activities are quantified, allowing for inter-departmental/university comparisons and competition (Burrows 2012a: 14). Universities are expected nowadays to act in the national interest, to expand the production of human capital for the dynamic knowledge economy and to become more 'efficient' in the deployment of public funds. In the words of Fuller, universities are under pressure effectively to act as 'diploma mills' and 'patent factories' (2009: 16). These tendencies have been accompanied by certain managerial-driven reforms – the New Public Management – with their focus on efficiency, outputs, auditability and accountability (Hood 1991; Deem et al. 2007).

These methods and techniques of institutional governance brought new rituals and rhythms of administration and indeed, it was Max Weber who made the explicit connection between (the need for) speed and 'the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of the administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible' (1946b: 215). The rise of bureaucratic organizations and the associated complexities of administration are couched as a speed problem in Weber's conception: 'The

extraordinary increase in the speed by which ... economic and political facts are transmitted exerts a steady and sharp pressure in the direction of speeding up the tempo of administrative reaction towards various situations' (ibid.). Can Weber's words be applied to contemporary sociology's operations/working, especially considering the ever-expanding technologies of audit and the thriving managerialism that seem to define the administrative infrastructure of the contemporary university? There are a number of commentators who not only suggest this, but who also see the increased bureaucratization of sociology as aligned with the imperatives of higher education ideologies. Audit technologies that nowadays define the conditions under which universities function are perceived as the causal mechanisms behind increased workload, stress, time-pressure and so forth that academics (and social and human scientists in particular) supposedly face (e.g. Menzies and Newson 2008).

For the individual sociologist, the array of complex data sets aimed at monitoring and measuring academic practices that is now being collected is hardly news, even if it is not part of his or her everyday reality. Essentially, these metrics not only measure, but also actively define and constitute the academic practices of teaching and research. They include, *inter alia*, the National Student Survey (NSS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject and institutional reviews, the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC), UCAS entry tariffs, PhD completion rates, research income per capita, individual and group h-indices, journal impact factors and the RAE/REF (Kelly and Burrows 2012: 2).

In principle, we can identify six 'audit domains' that comprise the requirements academics are now exposed to and need to comply with: citation metrics, workload models, transparent costing data, research assessment, teaching quality assessment and university league tables (Burrows 2012a: 5; see also De Angelis and Harvie 2009). In effect, given that these techniques of monitoring determine the value of sociology (in terms of what is individually and collectively 'achieved'), their further reproduction is directly implicated. 'The enactment of value and relative worth in academic work by formal processes of academic judgment, measurement and algorithmic resource allocation has become fundamental to [its individual/collective] survival' (Kelly and Burrows 2012: 3).

Entangled in these audit domains, sociologists are expected to be preoccupied with dissemination, speed, accountability and relevance/impact, and somehow suppress the more traditional academic values and deeply rooted notions of professionalism, academic standards and collegiality (Wilson 1991: 257; Parker and Jary 1995: 327). In a number

of interviews I conducted with *social scientists*, they acknowledged that 'there is simply no time' for scholarship in the 'compressed' heavy academic traffic caused by the increase in auditing. In this sense, audit technologies presuppose a fundamental acceleration mechanism: the translation of academic conduct into measurable and quantifiable numbers:

There are commonalities in that all [audit technologies] give an emphasis to numeric representation, order and rank, all focus on the 'measurable', and all appear to have an interest in promoting competitive changes that alter number and ranks over time. The crucial thing though is that together they are now experienced 'on the ground' as a more or less ubiquitous melange of measures ... that increasingly function as an overarching data assemblage orientated to myriad forms of quantified control; as an assemblage the enactment of which invokes the sorts of affective reactions. (Burrows 2012a: 6)

Although they are not usually considered to be speeding-up mechanisms as such, audit technologies: 1) directly and indirectly originate in managerial-corporate practices such as Key Performance Indicators and accounting techniques associated with the administration and bureaucracy in large capitalist organizations where speed is a highly valued modality and necessity (Thrift 2000; 2005; Maira and Scott-Morgan 1997); and 2) are at the epicentre of the individually-experienced acceleration of academic life (e.g. Gill 2009; De Angelis and Harvie 2009; Chow et al. 2010, Chapter 5; Burrows 2012a). In this regard, Rosa aptly describes the epistemological pitfalls of the mood of 'time compression' often experienced by sociologists in the contemporary university:

it is almost self-evident that the formulation, filtering and collective weight of arguments is a time-consuming process. This is true for the world of science, where one might well argue that the speed and succession of the conferences and papers is so high and, much worse, the number of papers, books and journals published is so excessive that those who write and talk in the 'publish-or-perish' age hardly find sufficient time to develop their arguments properly, whereas those who read and listen are lost in a host of repetitive and half-baked publications and presentations. I am firmly convinced that, at least in the social sciences and the humanities, there is, at present, hardly a common deliberation about the convincing force for better arguments, but rather a non-controllable, mad run rush for more

publications, conferences and research-projects the success of which is based on network-structures rather than on argumentational force. (Rosa 2010a: 55)

The sensation and impression of acceleration stems from the sheer volume of administrative duties associated with pressures involving 'more competition to publish, more teaching, more administration combined with less personalized relationships with students' (Parker and Jary 1995: 328).

Audit technologies inflict on sociology a rhythm not driven by epistemological disputes but underpinned by a managerialist rationality and corporate culture in which speed of conduct is not only implicated in modes of operation and but also valued and fetishized (Adam 1995: 100; Chesneaux 2000: 409). Importantly, the required speed of operations is aimed at instilling new norms of conduct into the sociological workforce. In this sense, audited sociology envisages a sociologist with an internalized 'speed habitus', which by extension potentially structures and shapes his or her modes of perception and thought. As a result, actions need to be performed and organized not only according to requirements that are embodied in the reasoning of audit apparatuses, but also without delay; meaning that the turnover time of some core academic activities intensifies, as some of my interviews confirmed. As an illustration we can use a remark made by a professor of political science. Although not strictly a sociologist, she works in a department that houses both sociology and politics. She said:

We are asked to do whole range of things which the university obviously officially claims that we can do in 37.5 hours, that is I think what we are contractually obliged to work, but if I add up a list of what I have to do every week or every term or every year it is way more than that. It is not possible to do the job in that time period and we can't afford to not do any different parts of the job, we have to do all the different parts of the job. This term I am working every weekend ... they have just shortened the turnaround for assessment. It used to be three weeks for marking, one for moderating, four weeks [in total] ... now it has to be in three weeks ... so you have two weeks for marking ... but nothing has changed about what it is that we are doing. (Interview 7, professor, politics, female)

As we can see from this quote, regulatory demands for the shortening of time horizons (for marking in this case), which are now associated

with the economics of knowledge (re)production, are notable. This circumstance is also related to the fact that audit technologies link efforts, values, purposes and self-understanding to measures and comparisons of output (Ball 2012: 29). In such a regime, academics are increasingly expected to spend a considerable amount of time making themselves accountable and reporting on what they are doing, rather than doing it. Indeed, this may not only take up a lot of time – as my interviewees testify – it can be detrimental to morale and the *élan* behind inventive and progressive pursuits. This is slightly ironic given the explosion of the imperative of innovation in higher education policy discourses discussed earlier. Stephen Ball, a sociologist of education, continues:

In regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything. Last year's efforts are a benchmark for improvement – more publications, more research grants, more students. We must keep up; meet the new and ever more diverse targets that we set for ourselves in appraisal meetings; confess and confront our weaknesses; undertake appropriate and value-enhancing professional development; and take up opportunities for making ourselves more productive, delivering up a 'targeted self' or the 'shape-shifting portfolio person'. Within all of this, more and more of scholarly disposition is rendered explicit and auditable. (2012: 30)

Audit technologies engender an environment that arguably not only favours a particular kind of necessarily fast action and behaviour, but also co-produces an entrepreneurial speed-winner archetype, and by implication, its opposite, a speed-loser.

In some existing accounts (e.g. Sabelis 2007; Gill 2009; Ylijoki 2013) it is said that audit technologies develop a state or condition wherein an academic needs to constantly demonstrate his or her accountability in a 'treadmill' manner:

[The current working conditions] somehow assume that you are working on an assembly line, and that every piece takes the same amount of time, which is nonsense. (Interview 7, professor, politics, female)

The need to 'keep up' with the demands of audit technologies is ever more closely associated with the tapestry of activities and the everyday reality

of knowledge production. Reflecting on contemporary time-pressures in academic sociology one sociologist noted:

It does feel that there are many more eyes upon us ... and ... you have to keep justifying yourself. (Interview 3, lecturer, sociology, female)

This then might engender a feeling of permanent urgency or even a condition of emergency. Thrift observed that in contemporary managerial culture: 'what we are seeing ... is the gradual unfolding of an attempt to engineer new kinds of "fast" subject positions which can cope with the disciplines of permanent emergency' (Thrift 2005: 131). Similarly to managers, sociologists are now faced with audit apparatuses, infused with a preference for the short-term, and associated pressure to accept logistical reasoning and immediate expedition. Arguably, they also face remorseless pressure to be 'creative', while conforming to the rigours of the audit. They must be calculating subjects, able to withstand the exigencies of faster and faster return (Thrift 2000: 676).

A speed-winner is therefore expected to become 'an organization person, someone dedicated to a "career" with a certain progression and rewards, and someone who knows their (and others') quality rankings' (Parker and Jary 1995: 329). The reasons behind this lie not only in the tacit assumption that fast conduct is required to 'keep up' with the 'crowding of tasks'— which might be experienced in a nuanced way as we saw earlier — but because being fast, agile and dynamic is structurally inscribed, rewarded and sanctioned in the new regimes of sociological knowledge governance — for instance, in promotions. These developments take us back to Rosa's technological acceleration. If we accept that ongoing digitalization and the constant introduction and deployment of audit technologies now appear to not only significantly affect the subjective experience of time, but also considerably co-shape knowledge production itself, there is a sense in which we can talk about audit technologies as technologies of acceleration. Still, although acceleration is only implied here, it remains an important perspective and is the context in which the problem of increased auditing of academic activities can be perceived.

Speed of operation, as related to audit technologies, is reflected in the way in which sociology as discipline is administered and managed and, by implication, in the way in which sociologists internalize the swift pace of operations. Modern management, to quote Weber once again, 'rests on increasing precision, steadiness, and, above all, the speed of

operations' (1946b: 215). This interesting combination of steadiness and speed may seem contradictory at first sight; however this is exactly what is captured by the notion of velocity. Mechanical speed in manufacturing operations was famously promoted and pioneered by F.W. Taylor (see also Chapters 1 and 2). The disciplinary arrangements anchored in his time-and-motion studies of the early 20th-century factory seem to be not dissimilar from the bureaucratization of academic work. The techniques Taylor developed 'were designed to construct a mechanism for governing the conduct of industrial workers in order to improve efficiency and increase the capacity of management' (Shore 2008: 279). Arguably, the conduct of social scientists is structured by similar disciplinary principles and time allocation surveys.⁴ Audit domains, discussed above, are not neutral or politically innocent instruments designed to promote efficiency; they are disciplinary technologies aimed at instilling and regulating new norms of conduct into the sociological workforce (Shore 2008: 283; also Foucault 1977; Rose 1999).

The underpinning of 'scientific' expertise and assumed neutrality of audit and metrics play an active part in bringing sociological work into alignment with 'cultural values, social expectations, political concerns, and professional aspirations' (Rose 1999: 59). However, besides the 'disciplinary gaze' employed by 'audit observatories', which relies on indirect forms of intervention and control, there seem to be much more straightforward Taylorist administrative techniques. It appears that the auditing of academic work, including research and teaching, is much more directly and overtly imposed than subtly (and cryptically) internalized and embedded into individual modes of conduct. Reflecting on audit technologies, assessments and multiple evaluations, a sociologist I interviewed said:

It is hard to pin down the micro-level of certain things, but there is certainly the feeling of overbearing and at times oppressive managerialism; just little things that we are expected to do, and various forms of managing things that I would be fine with getting on with on my own. I don't need someone telling me how to do these things and I don't need to constantly have someone behind my back. There is a lot of that kind of stuff. I think that we used to have worse admin support that we do now, but there are still admin support things and issues we have to do, for instance we spend half a day photocopying a course pack. So the tasks could be done differently, but the main thing is just ... this kind of micro-management ... you are told to do so many things and it is time-consuming. (Interview 20, senior lecturer, sociology, male)

Coping with the temporal demands associated with audits and metrics is not, however, an optional matter. It is rather an essential, but tacit, expectation of a social scientist who, in the current climate, is treated less as a constituent member of the university and more as an employee and one of an individualized proletarian workforce (Collini 2012: 23; cf. Shore 2008: 289). Therefore, metrics assuming fast conduct are not voluntary activities, but rather constitutive criteria by which academic promotion and the prospect of securing and/or getting a job is maintained. Audit and metrics interventions also seem to operate as direct and openly-declared technologies of control. In turn they assist in the co-ordination of expected and required tasks in order to advance 'efficient' social science by making the most productive use of intellectual labour that accords with institutional objectives and standards (cf. Rose 1999: 57–60).

Hence, the problem sociology face nowadays is that the main priority to be met is compliance with audit technologies. This then may result in constant (re)production of numerical tasks, rather than providing normative support for the intellectual/scholarly aspects intrinsic to research and teaching. Those aspects appear to be, oddly enough, a secondary matter. This does not, however, mean that such is the overwhelming case in sociology, but rather that there is an attempt to couch the problem as a tendency associated with the proliferation of audits and verification rituals. In terms of the value of research, audited sociology drift towards Mode 2 sociology (Holmwood 2010; cf. Gibbons et al. 1994; cf. chapter 3) where applications – 'securitized' by metrics and audits – are ideally built into practices and conduct. As Holmwood says, in this context, 'the more likely consequence is not the flourishing of a diversity of voices, but a placing of all voices into the same register' (2010: 652). The unsettled character of sociology that should ideally encompass this diversity of voices, with different rhythms and temporal priorities, might not be fully compatible with audit technologies and the temporal requirement they entail.

In that sense, the very institutional – and external – conditions under which social sciences and sociology are reproduced are an intrinsic determinant of their internal characteristics. These conditions include critique, for example, and the differently-oriented features we have discussed that are integral to sociology's capacity 'to produce a number of co-existing and mutually exclusive (semi) paradigms which continually split and re-form in different combinations' (Holmwood 2010: 649). These paradigms can be in sharp conflict, which is only possible

if sociology *as such* is institutionally reproduced; which means, as Holmwood pertinently notes, that in a minimal sense, sociology departments will continue to provide employment (2011a: 543).

Audit technologies, as the dominant governing mechanisms taxing the organic features of knowledge production, may potentially spawn a new generation of 'employable' fast social scientists co-shaped by contemporary institutional rhythms and the associated temporal priorities. This new generation, shaped by the current climate, may learn how to 'manage rapid change' and time compression skilfully. Still, for other academics, the lack of uninterrupted time, and its fragmentation, may not only become a personal, individual predicament, but also have consequences for the way in which our discipline reproduces, in our diverse conducts, in deep engagement with the present/now, in wider 'internal' reflections on sociology's own conditions of reproduction and in the thorough maintenance of its important 'relics'. Speed-losers simply may not fit into the contemporary dynamic knowledge regime.

That said, I would argue that a substantial degree of individual temporal autonomy in sociology is desirable. To recast Holmwood's observations in the temporal terms discussed in this chapter, we can say that 'temporal pluralism', and by extension, institutionally-protected 'individual temporal sovereignty' for practitioners-sociologists, should be a condition underpinning the rhythms intrinsic to epistemological debate. These rhythms do not need to be normalized by the 'temporal hegemony' and imperatives of the audit technologies that are so present in the contemporary higher education environment.

In other words, the temporal demands associated with audit technologies can pose a problem for temporal plurality. They may, hypothetically, sideline some of sociology's fast modes of engagement. Despite the rigour and progressiveness of sociology 2.0, when deployed as the only reproductive domain in sociology, the discipline risks the reductive instrumentalization and side-lining of 'slower' modalities inherent in sociology's critical task. 'Quantified control' (Lock and Martins 2011), 'metricisation of the contemporary academy' (Burrows 2012a), 'governance by audit' and 'socialization by audit' (Shore 2008; Holmwood 2010) are not acceleration mechanisms per se, in contrast to rhetoric (Chapter 4) and some catapulting mechanisms (Chapter 6), but they are technologies that help to generate fast subjects by their priorities and rationales. These principles presuppose fast practitioners capable of 'playing' a relatively fast-paced 'game' (Burrows 2012a: 14–15) that indeed has affective implications – manifested in the experiential sense (which is unequally distributed, as we saw in Chapter 5) of an accelerating pace of academic

life. At worst, this experience – regardless of whether it is embraced or resented – can easily generate the experience of ‘busyness’ and by implication, lack of interest, apathy and quietism about broader issues that concern the larger political-economic question of knowledge production in the contemporary university. In the case of sociology, the experience seems at ‘best’ to privilege fast practitioners who are fully involved in audit technologies, with their short-term priorities and agendas.

Even worse, as Gill (2009), for instance, pointed out, academics might be, indeed *are*, doing *both*. No easy solutions are available, and for sociology it might be a particular misfortune. The iron cage of institutional rhythm – which, as we have said, is somewhat impossible to detach from the material conditions in which the academic sociology reproduces itself – compromises a more balanced and multi-paradigmatic temporal landscape, outlined in the first section of this chapter. Contemporary sociology is now in ‘danger of becoming a fast-food outlet that sells only those ideas that its managers believe will sell, that treats its [practitioners] as if they were too devious or stupid to be trusted, and that values the formal rationality of the process over the substantive rationality of the end’ (Parker and Jary 1995: 335–336). Under these conditions, ‘unmitigated rationalization and standardization could leave little space [and time] for any practices that do not fit within very narrow definitions of efficiency’ (*ibid.*). Some commentators (Holmwood 2010: 652), are rightly pessimistic. They suggest that we are already witnessing the disappearance of sociology in the UK, or at least its transformation into ‘applied social studies’ (Holmwood 2011a: 551) now placed under the dogmatic register of ‘competitiveness-talk’ and ‘excellence-talk’ (Readings 1996; Holmwood 2010; Chapter 4) and sustained by hegemonic ‘new normals’ (audit technologies) and their intrinsic temporal assumptions and preferences.

This by no means implies that varieties of sociological creativity and innovation and even forms of criticism will get lost. These instances will be (and are being) reframed under the institutional priorities that the contemporary university and sociology nowadays face. Indeed, within the contemporary academic knowledge production regime, creativity and innovation will continue to be triumphantly and heroically declared as driving imperatives. However, to paraphrase Tom Osborne (2003) and Andrew Barry (2000), a high turnover of novel types of knowledges may not necessarily imply an escalation of inventiveness and invention – which are undoubtedly time-consuming activities with complex ‘experiential infrastructures’ composed of inertia, waiting, stalling and even time-wasting (Pels 2003: 9). These temporal modalities account for

something undesirable and perhaps even unfashionable in the current situation. Inventiveness underpinned by temporal autonomy is, in opposition to the situation in creativity industries, consumerist individualism and enterprise ideology, a cult of the new as ever-unchanging fashion, and productivism for its own sake. Inventiveness has to do with 'submission to the task of getting on with doing what one does, whether that is fashioning the problem, engaging in work, developing skills or staying in one's room and banging one's head against the wall ... Who can say without trial and error? *And without time?*' (Osborne 2003: 522, emphasis added).

Audited and measured creativity, expressed as a rapid rate of production of ever more novel knowledges, may occur precisely where there is a sense that time-demanding originality and inventiveness need to be restricted (Osborne 2003: 519). Contemporary conditions for the reproduction of sociology may be unfavourable to subversive thought and may simultaneously generate Bourdieusian 'fast-thinkers' (also Chapter 5) who, when constantly working under time-pressure, offer pre-digested and pre-thought concepts that are context-reinforcing, rather than context-breaking (Unger in McLennan 2008: 199). Such 'fast-thinkers' will transmit 'received ideas' (Bourdieu 1998: 29) and 'bite-size' scholarship, rather than original thoughts that result from conditions under which one is allowed to take and self-determine one's time for thought.

What might appear as originality and innovation according to current audit criteria and parameters might simply be a step towards the instrumentalization of a sociology divested of its own epistemologically-driven temporal rhythm that engages with the 'now', but does not compromise the other, 'slower' aspects of sociological conduct. In conditions where audit technologies are proxies for quality, value and relevance, sociology's sensibilities – particularly those associated with critique – may be recast into the personae of the good reporter, an investigative journalist who bears witness to the world and who is 'an onlooker at the scene and teller of travellers' tales' (Holmwood 2011a: 551). Consequently, audit-friendly critique, fully enveloped by the current climate of sociological knowledge production, will become

a form of mystification in what Horkheimer might have been moved to describe as a new 'double eclipse' of reason. The first eclipse occurs in the promotion of instrumental knowledge against critical knowledges, and the second eclipse in the way in which critique comes to serve the instrumentalization of knowledge. (ibid.)

Conclusion

Changes in the ways of construing, documenting and acting upon the internal organizational requirements associated with audits affect sociologists and potentially transform the meaning and reality of sociological conduct (cf. Rose 1999: 60). It is not the clashing temporalities between different segments of sociology that instrumentalize it, but the embedded and required speed that permits individuals to comply with audit technologies. Ironically, this may have regressive consequences for the future of sociology. Rosa mentions certain tipping points of acceleration, such as inertia, and we are now at a potential point-of-no-return attributable to audit-driven institutional rhythms, which could be detrimental to sociology's 'unsettled' sensibilities. Audit technologies impose a prohibitive 'congestion' (cf. Barnett 2011) on sociological environments and sociological conduct, especially by taking away, or at least compromising/limiting, the energy, zeal, tenacity – and above all the time – for free thinking associated with inventive intellectual sensibilities. The institutional rhythm and its temporal priorities and demands effectively endanger the conflicting and (re)productive epistemological rhythms that underpin sociology's chronopolitics. Sociology's (re)productive rhythms are sustained by a combination of critical scholarly detachment and partisan inquiry, producing normative evaluations and cutting-edge methodological and conceptual modalities that trace contemporary societal change and generate factual descriptions. This fast-slow continuum – the chronopolitics of sociological truth, we might say – may be in jeopardy now, due to the auditing of sociological knowledge production.

Conclusion: For a Temporal Autonomy of Academia

Considering analytical threads developed throughout the book, calls for the 'blanket' slowing down of academia and the need to establish an 'ethic of slowness' might seem somewhat attractive and even desirable – especially if they are associated with the critique of neoliberal assumptions that fuel the speeding-up and dynamization of academia. Moreover, they hold relevance as a counter-position to the 'frenetic and toxic stand-still' of academia – that is an academia that needs to speed-up just to reproduce its current pathologies. Yet I conclude by arguing that calls for *general* slowness are problematic. Like the Slow Movement, many of them are based on an assumption that acceleration is overwhelmingly negative (a not-so-straightforward fact as documented in here) and they are also often automatically presented as emancipatory carriers of potential institutional change (which they hardly account for nor aspire towards). As it stands now, slowdown is either a consequence of speed-up, a functional necessity of speed-up or a reactionary drive that remain rather problematic as an emancipatory, transgressive or progressivist platform (Rosa 2010: 33–41). Ironically, reactive drives that aim to retard and debilitate the accelerated pace of systems and events seldom, if ever, succeed in achieving these results (in a significant and profound way that would go beyond lifestyle choice). Instead, as Connolly notes (2002: 142), they may locate vulnerable provenances and constituencies that have become ideal targets for the cultural forces of acceleration. Moreover, Connolly suggests that, in extreme cases, ensuing and reactive calls for slowness may provoke dangerous social currents. They may give rise to movements that potentially embrace fundamentalism, nationhood, parochialism and/or religious purity that are couched as attempts for anti-modern slowdown by a return to an imagined, often undemocratic, unity that has putatively existed sometime in the past (ibid.; see also Glezos 2012).

I think, together with Connolly, that genuine slowdown can be possible only if the global capitalist economic system collapses. However, is an ‘acceleration-less condition’ even desirable given the modernist promise of acceleration and the conveniences and comforts it delivers? Even more acutely, is slowdown even thinkable as a basis for some fundamental and structural reordering in/of society and contemporary academia? What if we look at acceleration itself? Can it be a valuable and progressive instrument, even for those who might categorically oppose the fashion in which late-modernity’s accelerated pace is currently constituted and perceived, without slipping into the ideology of slow which, at least at for the moment, resembles an individualized lifestyle choice and a reactionary culture highly dependent on the circuits of fast capital? As Berman maintains, modernity – characterized but *not* overdetermined by acceleration – has a forward momentum that is structured around ideas of progress and commitment to human and social betterment. What would it mean for academia – and some of its disciplines and their curricula – to discuss acceleration in a developmental paradigm different from the twin evolutionary trajectories of capitalism and modernity? Is a model dissociating capitalism’s speed imperatives from the dynamic rhythm of modern progress possible?

The desirable antipode to various forms of business-/audit-inflicted cultural modalities and experiences of acceleration would not benefit from calls for slowdown but rather from the advocacy and articulation of what temporal autonomy (see also McCann 2007; Goodin et al. 2011; Claassen 2012; Hassan 2012: 195ff), inclusive of acceleration as progressive and energizing social value, might mean for contemporary academia. In Chapter 5 we saw how, on the individual level, some academics are able to enjoy and maintain temporal autonomy. The point, however, might be to elevate this condition from privileged individual experience to the institutional level so that it would represent an inherent principle – indeed a possibility – of the diverse temporal operations of academia. Thus we should not call for general slowdown, but for dissociating acceleration with a capitalist temporality that is prohibitive, and possibly detrimental, as in the case of the uneasy relationship between sociology and audit technologies. This is no simple task, but to start with we can normatively suggest the following. The first step would be to surrender the philistine economism that underscores most of the present higher education policy discourse and reduces academia and knowledge production to business needs. Second, time in academia needs to be explicitly discretionary, and that is so in the maximalist sense of *explicitly* discretionary and *explicitly discretionary*

(Goodin et al. 2011). The first variant – ‘*explicitly discretionary*’ – implies the incorporation of time into public policy currents, but perhaps more into the counter-currents (such as the Campaign for Public University) as a substantial issue. The second variant – ‘*explicitly discretionary*’ – means temporal self-determination of academic actors and the *possibility* to operate dynamically/fast and leisurely/slow when one needs and desires; to have the individual and institutional right to pursue activities in one’s own frame of temporal reference. Such principles need to be institutionally and perhaps politically warranted. Importantly, discretionary temporal autonomy might involve, and probably desirably so, diverse forms of acceleration, especially those that are phenomenologically-infused and related to the promise of progress and engagement with the present.

Temporal autonomy thus conceived does not necessarily mean promotion of idleness and slow rhythms, a spare-time culture, a leisurely pace à la the Slow Movement and the books listed in Appendix 3, or a sluggish Internet connection. Rather it would be inclusive of a pace that institutions and their attendant actors would themselves determine: slow when needed and fast when convenient. That would mean an ability to ‘command time’ (Rice et al. 2006), not necessarily restricted to maintaining free time slots – such as weekends, holidays and research leaves, that many academics explicitly demanded – but inclusive of the right to individually and collectively determine temporal horizons for academic conduct and attendant practices without violating the academic tasks associated with other missions of the university (Burawoy 2011). At the same time, to reiterate, institutional temporal autonomy needs to declaratively be set against the instrumentalism of the business mindset and enterprise ideology that transmits corporate interests, ad hockery and short-termism into the tasks of academia. Institutional temporal autonomy – that would at best stretch into individual temporal autonomy for individual members of the university – would suitably complement the agenda developed by the Council for the Defence of British Universities. One of its main objectives is ‘to maintain the principle of institutional autonomy, to encourage academic self-government and to ensure that the function of managerial and administrative staff is that of facilitating teaching and research’ (2012). Articulation of the necessity of temporal self-determination might be an important and complementary dimension for reclaiming the institutional self-government of academia. If academic lives are now commonly governed by time-allocation technologies such as TRAC (see endnote 4 in Chapter 7; also Holmwood 2011d) why should

it be impossible to design individual and institution-related *time policies* that would *secure* temporal autonomy of the academic vocation? At any rate, temporal autonomy does not automatically imply slow academia: as we have seen, acceleration – be it in relation to ICT or as an enabling modality propelling research conduct – is an integral ingredient of academic life, as are slower modes of reflection and scientific work associated with the formation of knowledge claims.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview details

1. Research associate, education, male, 3/11/2011
2. Professor, history, male, 9/11/2011
3. Lecturer, sociology, female, 10/11/2011
4. Professor, engineering, male, 22/11/2011
5. Professor, human geography, female, 23/11/2011
6. Senior lecturer, history, male, 24/11/2011
7. Professor, politics, female, 25/11/2011
8. Lecturer, chemistry, male, 21/02/2012
9. Professor, engineering, male, 22/02/2012
10. Senior lecturer, medical sciences, male, 23/02/2012
11. Professor, biochemistry, male, 5/03/2012
12. Reader, engineering, female, 14/03/2012
13. Senior lecturer, engineering, male, 15/03/2012
14. Professor, biochemistry, male, 20/03/2012
15. Reader, biological sciences, male, 21/03/2012
16. Professor, experimental psychology, male, 23/03/2012
17. Senior lecturer, law, female, 24/04/2012
18. Reader, classics, female, 3/05/2012
19. Reader, policy studies, female, 8/05/2012
20. Senior lecturer, sociology, male, 20/05/2012

Appendix 2: Interview themes

It has been said that time is one of the most important resources for academics – do you have enough of it?

How specifically do you experience the ongoing transformation of university in relation to your different ‘times’ – time for research, teaching, administration, family, hobbies, private life?

It has been said that we now live in an era that ‘just about everything is accelerating’ – do you experience this in your academic professional life? If so, how?

Would you say that your academic career suffers from not having enough time? Do you feel alienated in relation to time? Do you have ‘time to think’?

Can you keep pace with the tempo in which your discipline evolves?

Are information and communication technologies helpful or constraining in relation to your time management?

Are there any institutional arrangements that enhance your temporal possibilities?

Could acceleration deliver convenience, comfort pleasure? Could it be enabling and energizing? If so, in what ways?

Is there a need for slowdown in the academy?

Appendix 3: The London Review bookshop

Slow down! A reader's guide to taking it easy (adopted from *London Review of Books* Volume 31, Number 22, Page 26).

1.

Idle thoughts of an idle fellow by Jerome K. Jerome
(originally published 1886)
2004, Snowbooks, London

Jerome's Idle thoughts was first published in 1886, three years before his 'slow travel' masterpiece Three men in a boat. A collection of short essays on a variety of subjects, it shares the later book's languid humor, and helped establish its author as the leading English comic writer on time. 'What readers ask now-a-days in a book', he writes in his preface, 'is that it should improve, instruct and elevate. This book wouldn't elevate a cow. I cannot conscientiously recommend it for any purpose whatsoever. All I can suggest is that when you get tired of reading "the best hundred books", you my take this up for half an hour. It will make a change'.

2.

La saggezza della lumaca (The wisdom of the snail) by David Ridge
2009, Fefe Editore, Rome

David Ridge's collection of snail proverbs found, adapted and invented, celebrates the (mainly) humble virtues of the snail – as food, as exemplum, and as symbol of the new politics of slowness. All proverbs are presented in English, Italian, Spanish, French and German, and are accompanied by Gianna Gelmetti's charming illustrations.

3.

In praise of slow by Carl Honoré
2004, Orion, London

Carl Honoré meanders entertainingly through the informal association of groups and individuals that make up the Slow Movement, from Japan's Sloth Club to the more than 60 Italian municipalities that have declared themselves to be Slow Cities. Honoré confesses himself to have been a 'speedaholic', and this is a journey of self-transformation as much as one of discovery: the trick he argues, is to learn to distinguish those things which ought to be fast from those which are better, more effective and more fulfilling when done slowly.

4.

The art of siesta by Thierry Paquot
2005, Marion Boyars, London

Philosopher Thierry Paquot's The art of siesta begins with a rallying cry for 'men and women of all ages, of every latitude and time-zone, of every profession' to 'assert your individuality and resist planetary time, satellite time, totalitarian time!' Point made, Paquot broadens his polemic into an appositely meandering justification and defence of somnolent diurnal hours, drawing examples of great siestas from the visual arts, literature, and even social anthropology. The volume also includes an appendix 'by way of not concluding' consisting of remembered, especially good

siestas, and the charming admission that 'I don't remember my first siesta et al.' Through such diversions The art of siesta ambushes its reader with the serious and paradoxical idea that the siesta can be a 'strategy for resistance'; that the supine are, despite appearances, fighting the good fight against evils of 'global time', with the 'elective siesta' as their tool.

5.

In praise of idleness by Bertrand Russell
(originally published 1935)
2004, Routledge, London

Russell's utopian vision of a world in which the working day is just four hours long has, sadly, yet to be realised. Increased leisure time would, he believes, promote tolerance, increase general happiness, and put an end to war. 'Good nature', he writes, 'is of all moral qualities, the one that the world needs most, and good nature is the result of ease and security, not a life of arduous struggle'. Also included in this leisurely section, first published in 1935, are Russell's defence of 'useless' knowledge, and essays of fascism, communism and socialism.

6.

How to be idle by Tom Hodgkinson
2005, Penguin, London

Idler editor Tom Hodgkinson takes the reader on an engaging meander through the literature of laziness, from the Taoist classics to the contemporary sick note. In his preface he writes: 'Doing nothing is hard work, as Oscar Wilde pointed out. There are always so many people around trying to make you do things. This is why I have tried to create a kind of canon of idle writing, from the philosophy, fiction, poetry and history of the last three thousand years, to give us idlers the mental ammunition to fight against work. The sheer number of great idlers in history proves also that we are not alone'.

7.

Oblomov by Ivan Goncharov
(originally published 1859)
1992, Everyman, London

One of the novel's polemical proposals is that squandering and sleeping are better, in many cases, than what we call work and achievement. In which cases? The novelist Mikhail Shishkin says in an afterword that this is 'the Russian paradox: if you want to live a worthy life, you'd best not get off the sofa at all'. Oblomov, Shishkin says, is a 'vital, dear and unlucky man' and morally much to be preferred, the implication is, to all those who preach at him, pass him by, and rip him off. Schwartz, similarly, in her translator's note, speaks of Oblomov's 'shining soul' and his 'endearing foibles and rationalisations'. The spirit of these remarks catches something important. It is better to sleep than to work if the work is ignoble; better to be a genial pampered loafer than an ugly crook.

8.

Homer's Odyssey by Simon Armitage
2007, Faber and Faber, London

'As you set out for Ithaka', wrote Cavafy, 'hope your road is a long one'. It took Odysseus ten years to make 650 mile journey from Troy to Ithaka, an impressively

snail-like 300 yards or so a day, although his journey would have been considerably shorter had he not spent seven of those years doing nothing at all on the island of Calypso. Simon Armitage's modern version of *Odyssey* recasts Homer's epic of slow travel as a series of dramatic dialogues and was commissioned by BBC Radio 4 for broadcast in 2004.

9.

Autonauts of cosmoroute: a timeless voyage from Paris to Marseille by Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop
(originally published 1983)
2007, Archipelago, New York

In May 1982 the experimental novelist Julio Cortázar and his wife set out on a very slow and very strange journey – strange because it was so intensely banal. Their project was to drive from Paris to Marseille without leaving the motorway. It was a journey they had made many times before, typically taking about ten hours, but on this occasion ... the trip was to last for more than a month. Much of the fun here – for Cortázar and Dunlop, as well as for the reader – comes from the mock-seriousness with which they treat the expedition, making topographical studies of each service station, and compiling meticulous lists of provisions for the journey. 'Anyone who doesn't read Cortázar is doomed', Pablo Neruda once wrote. 'Not to read him is a serious invisible disease, which in time can have terrible consequences. Something similar to a man who has never tasted peaches. He would quietly become sadder ... and, probably, little by little, he would lose his hair.'

10.

Downstream by Tom Fort
2009, Arrow, London

'There should be a word for someone who takes a particularly intense pleasure in rivers', writes Tom Fort in *Downstream*. Fort's own investigation of the fluvial takes the form of a journey along the Trent, the rather scruffy and unloved river that meanders for 170 miles through the heart of England. Floating downstream in his 15-foot punt, Fort provides as much as history of the English Midlands as a description of the river itself. In the *Observer*, Ian Beeton called it a 'pleasing, stubbornly unfashionable conceit in an age in which too much goes fast and in a straight line'.

11.

An apology for idlers by Robert Louis Stevenson
(originally published 1877)
2009, Penguin, London

This selection of essays by Stevenson begins with 'An apology for idlers', a manifesto against work ethic and in favour of the simple pleasure of loafing: 'Extreme busyness, whether at school, or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their

faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about the with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they cannot be idle, their nature is not generous enough'.

12.

Slow food: the case for taste by Carlo Petrini
2004, Colombia University Press, New York

Italian food writer Carlo Petrini first came to prominence in 1986, when he and a group of fellow enthusiasts for Italy's culinary traditions protested against the building of a McDonald's restaurant close to Rome's Spanish Steps, armed with bowls of delicious penne. Their demonstration led to the foundation of the Slow Food Movement, a global network dedicated to preserving the local in food production and preparation. Petrini concludes this presentation of the movement's values and ideas with a passionate plea: 'In a world that appears ineluctably condemned to the standardization of all products and the flattening out of all flavours, a world whose resources have been harnessed to interests and profits of a few, Slow Food sees its international vocation as a proposal for an alternative model of development ... Putting a premium on, and building up, local resources, with their extraordinary variety, making local products known and appreciated throughout a community of attentive and sensitive consumers, means offering the world the hope of a future different from the polluted and tasteless one that the lords of the earth have programmed for all of us'.

Notes

Prelims

1. See Bornmann & Mutz 2014.

Introduction

1. Peter Higgs is a 2013 Physics Nobel laureate, which he received for the discovery of the elementary particle labelled the 'Higgs boson' (see Wiki-entry 'Higgs boson', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higgs_boson).
2. Although the preferred term of the book is 'academia', other terms such as 'the university', 'the academy' and 'higher education' are used interchangeably throughout this book. Academia is then understood as the major societal site of knowledge production and society's locus of intellectual gravity (see Lock and Lorenz 2007).
3. Technically speaking, speed and acceleration (and velocity) might have slightly different denotations (especially in physics, see Sokal and Bricmont 1998: 169–171). Noting the difference, Beck and Crosthwaite (2007: 24) also add to this register something they call *speed-effect*: '[s]peed, of course, denotes the rate of motion of an object, while velocity – a vector quantity – is speed in a particular direction, and acceleration, the rate of change of velocity with respect to time. The speed-effect most palpably felt is the immediate impact of speed (and, in particular, of relatively high speed) upon the bodies and minds of individuals subjected to it. Any cultural or political response to speed must, therefore, take into account the somatic experiences it provokes.'

This book nonetheless uses the terms either interchangeably or together. This follows from what Tomlinson observed: 'one might say that the concept of speed points towards its increase' (2007a: 2). In physics, speed is a movement in time (for an interesting conceptualization of an 'ontology of speed' see Glezos 2012: 19–26), yet this book, developing more sociological, cultural and phenomenological readings, understands speed through the perspective of social and human experience of time and through cultural meanings attached to it.

4. The book's analysis focuses on the UK and draws on a modest dataset that comprises twenty interviews (see Appendices 1 and 2) and selected of publicly available documents, statements, websites, and speeches framing higher education (policy) discourse in the UK (see Bibliographical Supplement, p. 230). It might be objected that the dataset assessed is rather limited in scope and robustness. Nonetheless, it is still hoped that the 'snapshot' of evidence I deploy – and the analytical and critical inferences made thereupon – will indicate general tendencies that concern higher education systems as such, as a social field (for a similar approach see Lock & Lorenz 2007: 604).

1 Thematizing Acceleration

1. By contrast, Judy Wajcman considers Simmel as ‘the first theorist of the acceleration society’ (2015: 38).
2. See Bauman (2000); Adam (1990; 1995); Nowotny (1994); Ritzer (2015); Thrift and May [eds] (2001); Peck (2002); Peck and Theodore (2010); Urry (2003; 2007); Harvey (1989; 2006).
3. In this relation William Connolly says: ‘It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Virilio to exploration of the effects of speed upon the late-modern condition. Everybody who engages the issue is indebted to him, even when they disagree with him profoundly’ (2002: 177).
4. Vladimir Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP) was famously inspired by FW Taylor’s propositions (1911) targeted at the speeding-up of production (for details see Chapter 2; Gramsci 1971; Noys 2013); Soviet economies in Stalinist and post-Stalinist eras were heavily committed to a continual increase in productivity and efficiency (personified in the notorious ‘Hero of Socialist Labour’ Stakhanov, superproductive figure of ‘udarnik’ (strike labourer) and the ideology of to-be-surmounted ‘5 year plans’). Not to mention the Soviet economies’ commitment to the idea of progress and to ‘over-competing’ the ‘imperialist’ capitalist economies by implementing presumably faster industrial and agrarian technologies.
5. For an extended critical review of Rosa’s book see Vostal (2014). Some of the points I advance and elaborate upon here were discussed in the review, however with very different focus and emphases.
6. The rationale underpinning this explanation was extended by Judy Wajcman (2015). Stressing the misconceived, yet widespread conception advocating that fast digital technologies enslave us and our time experience, she emphasizes the ‘coevolution of new technologies and temporal rhythms’ (2015: 4), i.e. that technologies cannot be attributed solely or causally to freeing-up individual time. From STS perspective and foregrounding *the use* of fast digital technologies she further notes that ‘... the way we choose to integrate such new activities and artifacts in our everyday lives depends upon the individual biographies and collective histories of both ourselves and machines’ (2015: 34). Technologically-related shifts co-determining time experience are very much related to *how* technologies are used, by *whom* and under *what* circumstances.
7. Rosa’s three pillars, as well as his overall thesis that postulates acceleration as a defining feature of modernity, were somewhat prefigured in a ground-breaking study published in 1966 by the underrated Czech(oslovakian) sociologist Radovan Richta et al. under the title *Civilisation at the Crossroads*.
8. Such a dichotomy has been to some extent challenged by Actor-Network Theory.

2 Continuity and Change in the Temporal Dynamics of Capitalism

1. Elaborated also in his book *Speeding-up Fast Capitalism* (2004).
2. http://www.adidas-group.com/media/filer_public/10/29/10294ae3-695b-45a0-a83a-85446af29dbaf/press_release_adidas_group_strategy_2020_en.pdf

3. In self-help literature such attitudes and mindsets have recently been discussed under the label of ‘high-productivity ninja’ (see Allcott 2012; Vostal 2013).
4. This clashes with the proliferating popular discourse criticising the allegedly ubiquitous social speed and stressing the essential need for and virtues of slowing down, leisure, inaction and new forms – in Oscar Wilde’s words, of ‘the exquisite art of idleness’ (see Schnabel 2014; Honoré 2014).

3 Vehicularity: The Idea of the Knowledge Economy

1. Sometimes referred to as the knowledge-based economy, or the knowledge society.
2. The use of the term imaginary alludes to definition of Sum and Jessop (2013: 27): ‘Whereas “institution” belongs to a family of terms that identify mechanisms implicated in regularizing expectations and conduct within and across different social spheres, despite tensions and crisis tendencies, the “imaginary” is one of a family of terms that denote semiotic systems that shape lived experience in a complex world. In short, institutions and imaginaries can be studied as sets of mechanisms that contribute crucially to the always problematic, provisional, partial and unstable reproduction–regulation of the capital relation (and much else besides). Bringing them together productively requires that both institutions and imaginaries are “put in their place”, that is, located in wider sets of semiotic and structural relations and their articulation – with all due regard for the possibilities of contradiction, conflict and crisis.’
3. Although the literature on the knowledge economy and the assessments found therein are voluminous, and given that this text does not aim to analyse them, the knowledge economy is a very specific extension of this long-lasting debate, which is presently being supplemented by a more ‘reflexive’ and modifying discourse, by the practice of ‘knowledge management’ and by another grand idea, the ‘creative economy’ and ‘mass creativity’ as driving forces of future capitalism (Howkins 2002; Florida 2003; Leadbeater 2009). Nevertheless, these new discussions continue to be undergirded by the established concept that knowledge and information and subsequent research, innovation and education are the most important forces driving national and global economies.
4. For this purpose, Jessop’s essay (2008a) will loosely serve to represent the critical current.
5. Blogging, social networking, new sites such as the ‘Faculty of 1000’ and projects such as ‘Alt-Metrics’ contribute to fast new evaluation techniques and modalities in an interesting – although rather marginal – way. The pace of the ‘review’ process via sites such as Twitter, ‘fast feedback’ from discussion sections below publications on the Internet and new methods of metrics seems to be getting ‘ahead of the sheer time needed to think and get in the lab and work’ (in Mandavilli 2011). Nonetheless, the idea of an open, online peer-review process is hardly new. ‘Since Internet usage began to swell in the 1990s, enthusiasts have been arguing that online commenting could and should replace the traditional process of pre-publication peer review that journals carry out to decide whether a paper is worth publishing’ (Mandavilli 2011). These attempts remain

rather secondary and the ‘commentary free-for-all as the only arbiter of quality’ (ibid.) enabled by ICT will most likely remain in the shadow of the established peer-review process.

6. The idea of the knowledge economy still remains powerful, especially in the way that knowledge, enterprise and innovation continue to be key drivers of contemporary economies (see for instance Higgs et al. 2008; US Chamber of Commerce 2011). National and regional economies are understood accordingly and serve as bases and blueprints for higher education policies. However, the *global* political economy of education and learning contains counter-tendencies (see Brown et al. 2011) that may significantly challenge the promise of the seemingly unshakeable discourse I have tried to describe in this chapter. Furthermore it is questionable whether the knowledge economy, sometimes referred to as a weightless economy, is as weightless as implied. Examining ‘cloud computing’, Cubitt et al. (2011), for instance, point out that ‘IT manufacture and use is responsible for 2 percent of global carbon emissions – the same amount as the airline industry – and is heading for 3 percent by 2020, when it will be responsible for the same amount of carbon as the UK produced in 2008’ (Cubitt et al 2011: 154, quoting Bocatelli 2006). Referring to Google as the pioneer of the knowledge economy or the ‘weightless economy’ the authors also note that ‘each Google search generate[s] between 1 and 10 grams of CO₂’ (Cubitt et al 2011: 152).

4 Performativity: Competitiveness and Excellence

1. In a similar vein, but with different emphases, Moretti and Pestre (2015) analysed the ‘bankspeak’ of the World Bank.
2. See McGettigan 2011, Robertson 2012 and in relation to other producers of knowledge such as think-tanks, Arnoldi 2007b.
3. See also Müller 2014.
4. This might be objectionable. The 2014 suicide of Stefan Grim of Imperial College London is a worrying sign of a coming shift.

5 Acceleration in the Academic Life-World

1. In 2014 *The Guardian's* online initiative, the Higher Education Network, launched a blog focusing on mental health issues in academia and the intensification of academic work-life resulting from an increasing workload and the overall culture of neoliberal academia (see Guardian 2015) <http://www.theguardian.com/education/series/mentalhealth-a-university-crisis>.
2. A rather different, psychologically-informed take on thinking fast and slow was offered by Daniel Kahneman (2011).
3. See also Graeber 2015 on the irrationality of bureaucracy.
4. Illusio is a term used by Pierre Bourdieu for capturing a ‘game’ played according to shared set of beliefs, norms and assumptions. Through this game a given social terrain – or ‘field’ – reproduces itself. Thus the game, however critical and reflexive one might be about it, gets real as the participants/players are convinced of its importance.

5. Not all social spheres are affected by its forces, yet even standstill and slow-down can be integrated into the overall narrative of acceleration and accordingly explained.

6 Fast Sites: Igniting and Catapulting Knowledge

1. The notion of knowledge mediators was differently examined by Vostal and Robertson (2012). Some illustrative examples as well as contextual components used in the following sections remotely draw on Vostal and Robertson's discussion, however the present analysis employs different corpus of evidence and the overall structure of the argument is altogether different in its emphasis and focus.
2. It appears that the development of business/industry-university links is a further extension of a specific trajectory which can be traced back to the early 1980s (in the UK). The institutional and personal implications of Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal reforms for both the academy and business were eloquently and intriguingly captured in David Lodge's 'campus novel', *Nice Work*, from 1988.
3. Particularly DTI (1998); Lambert Review (2003); BIS (2009); Hauser (2010).
4. Some commentators trace the origins of such discourse to Thatcher's era (see Head 2010).
5. Innovation, enterprise and economic growth are the key principles of 'smart specialization strategy', heavily promoted by research funding policy developed by the European Commission (see <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research-topic/smart-specialisation>).
6. The role of private management consultancy in this process, i.e. how ideas 'travel' not *from* the university environment but *to* university structures, was examined by Serrano-Velarde and Kücken (2012).
7. Presently (2015) called *Innovate UK*.
8. It might appear odd that in today's digital, techno-, nano- etc. knowledge economy – characterized by high-tech metaphors and buzzwords – a weapon of medieval warfare (that as a practical matter was probably very slow) was selected to represent and steer dynamic university-industry/business collaboration and inspire economic growth. Furthermore, in contemporary usage, 'catapult' is also (and probably in this context primarily) used as a verb meaning to launch (something into the air) quickly.
9. The first (slightly triumphalist) review of Catapult centres emerged in 2014. See Hauser (2014).
10. The idea of incubation derives from the Latin *incubare*, meaning 'to lie upon'. It literally refers to the hatching process of egg-laying animals (often poultry). Through brooding and keeping their eggs the right temperature they develop the embryo of life within the egg. In the case of human beings, incubators are artificial apparatuses that maintain the right environment for prematurely-born and ill infants. Devices of similar principle are used in the biological sciences to maintain cell and microbiological cultures. In medicine an incubation period is used to describe the time between the exposure to infection or chemical source and the moment when symptoms emerge. Metaphorical uses are found in psychology (creativity-stage;

dream-planting) and some religious practices (long-stay or sleep in a sacred place in order to experience something divine). However, the widest use of the word as a metaphor is arguably in connection with the word business.

11. Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Callon 1986; Law and Hassard [eds.] 1999; Latour 2005) might be of some relevance here. The ingredients of the successful incubator Benson describes could be given an explicit ANT reading. Although Benson stresses cognitive and 'psycho' features, from an ANT perspective, it is the combined assemblage of socio-technical elements that matters, and the 'mind-set' factor itself might be the result of an effective operational technology. Entrepreneurs have to be trained and incentivized to think that way. This only works in certain sorts of motivational environments (such as hot-desking, open plan, 'lab' spirit of collaboration and weekly meetings). The resulting 'sociation' blends together external drivers (i.e. the knowledge economy and competitiveness) with internal knowledge mediation concepts and incubation techniques.

7 Sociology, Fast and Slow

1. The fast-slow dichotomy and the title of this chapter allude to Kahneman's (2011) distinction.
2. Rosa is indeed not the first theorist who drew attention to the acceleration of change and its implications for social theorizing and understanding social reality. In his classical study, C.W. Mills asks: 'In what period have so many men [and women] been so totally exposed at so fast a pace to such earthquakes of change?' (1959: 4).
3. Extensively discussed in recent years. See for instance Tinati et al. (2014); Giardullo (2015). Entire journals such as *Big Data & Society* are dedicated to this theme; research centres such as *Cambridge Big Data* are clustered around the big data issue.
4. Time allocation surveys are part of the so-called Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC), which is a 'mechanism developed to assign the full economic costs of research, including its indirect costs, such as estates and previously unfunded staff time, by asking staff to assign their time to different activities. It was designed to enable indirect costs to be identified and allocated either to teaching or to research, and to the administration associated with each activity' (Holmwood 2011d).

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