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Of Slowness in the Age of Speed

Guest Editor's Foreword

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Introduction

Nowadays, when we are trying to understand the social reality that surrounds us, we turn to the slowness–speed dichotomy more and more. This dichotomy is becoming the most important one in our experience of the reality instead of social structures and relations that are somewhat constant in time. It is a basic experience that the bases of our world change more than once, even within one generation, and the generation gaps are becoming shorter and more confused. It does not take an in-depth analysis to realize that we do not read, write, learn, buy, communicate, have fun, and so forth as we did ten years ago. And we suspect that the actual situation is about to change soon. This is not a new situation. The basic premise of the European culture is the belief in progress.

The time concept behind this belief is a future orientation. The progress myth teaches us that the reason we live for is always somewhere in the future, that is what we must reach, that is what we need to mobilize all our resources for.

The experience of progress, of change often goes together with two other experiences. One is the experience of crisis, of which Durkheim said in his work entitled 'Suicide' that together with the phenomenon of anomie it becomes the constant and normal state of society (Durkheim 2005, 216). This thought is expanded by Ulrich Beck, who uses the expression 'risk society' to describe our future-oriented, quickly changing, and unpredictable society (Beck 2003). The other experience that comes with the experience of change is acceleration, the experience of speed. The presence and reality altering the quality of speed has been brought to attention by others too: in 1909, F. T. Marinetti says in The Futurist Manifesto published in *Le Figaro*: 'We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed.' Even so, at the beginning of the 20th century, it was unthinkable how much of a fundamental conversion factor the experience of speed will become, how deeply ingrained in

our lives it will be. Speed is becoming a social-philosophical category instead of an aesthetical one with which we can grasp the reality of our era.

This study, however, does not focus on speed but on slowness, to be more precise, on the possibilities of slowing down in the era of acceleration. In order not to exceed the boundaries of this study, we will be focusing on the problematic of digital literacy and our question is whether why and how should we include slowness in our digital literacy? Should it be part of it at all?

Obviously, we cannot understand slowness without speed. They are co-relative, co-dependable concepts, each meaningless without the other and each understandable through the other. Speed exists where slowness is relative to it and vice versa. Thus, I will first speak of speed as a phenomenon that characterizes more and more our daily lives. This relation allows us to speak of our age as the 'age of speed'. Further, I will expound on this expression.

The age of speed

It is not a coincidence that *Age of Speed* is the name of a 3D on-line car-racing game in which one competes with very fast future cars. The only goal here is to drive as fast as one can to win first place and to move on to the next level.

Speed racing perfectly symbolizes the state where speed is above all other values. Comfortably reaching any destination: in the beginning, car travel was a symbol of freedom of movement. A racing car, on the other hand, does not have a destination and the scenes that we pass are not of any interest. The only important thing in car racing is the space that needs to be crossed quickly, and thus the single most important thing is speed.

Nowadays, car racing is neither the only nor the isolated instance where speed is the determining factor. Speed is becoming omnipresent along with the experience of instantaneusness. We are 'set' to speed. Speed has become the main factor in our work, in sports, entertainment, mechanical areas, communication, and in war strategies. If we mean to update something, we speed it up. That is how fast food and speed-reading are part of our lives and also why a gym in New York offers speed yoga.

German sociologist Rosa defines three categories regarding the tempo of modern social life in her book entitled 'Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity' (Rosa 2015). She highlights technological acceleration, which applies to the fields of transport, communication, and production, the acceleration of social change which presents in cultural knowledge, social institutions, and personal relations, and also speaks of the acceleration in the pace of life.

This social situation is foreseen by Paul Virilio, who – reacting to the ongoing changes in politics, strategics, and urbanization – recommends the introduction

of dromology (the science of speed) in the seventies (Virilio 1986). Dromology interprets reality in the context of speed. Virilio underlines that in our age ‘space’ and ‘area’ are more and more replaced by the time factor, that is to say, the relation between them, which is speed/velocity. Speed in itself is unconceivable; it is not an independent phenomenon but more like a relation between phenomena. It is also interpretable as the compression of space, the reduction of spatial dimensions. Rüdiger Safranski names the disappearance of distance the fundamental trait of the globalized world (Safranski 2006).

Another characteristic of the age of speed is also noted by Virilio through the title of his book: ‘The Information Bomb’ (Virilio 2000). The expression itself was created by Albert Einstein, who said that the information bomb, along with the demographic and atomic bomb, is one of the three great dangers of the future. Noting the production and consumption of information in our days, we can accept the fact that this bomb has already exploded. Not coincidentally, sociologists and researchers use the expression Big Data to describe our current situation, which means that the quantity of data can only be expressed in exabytes. Big Data refers to the amount of data produced in one day worldwide, which doubles every 18 months. We are coming to realize the possible benefits that this amount of information can provide to companies and customers if structured and analysed, but we can also see the dangers of it (Boyd and Crawford 2012).

The myth of progress – as I mentioned before – is the defining myth of our society. The experience of change brings along the experience of acceleration, of speed also. Acceleration and speed carry possibilities, but they also carry dangers, the realization of which has given a new value to slowness, deceleration. What dangers are there exactly?

Great speed can cause physical and mental illness. The name of the physical illness it can cause is kinetosis, or motion sickness. It is called motion sickness because it is brought on by motion, any kind of motion, car, bus, ship, plane, or even by virtual reality or movies. It is caused by the conflicting information of the seen and perceived motion, in other words, the brain cannot correlate the information about the motion as provided by the eyes and the inner ear. The psychological illness caused by the modern, fast-paced lifestyle they call hurry sickness. Hurry sickness is the state of a person under stress who is always in a hurry and is unable to unwind. It presents with permanent fatigue and exhaustion.

In our age, the brain is flooded with information that it needs to process. This leads to us paying attention to more than one thing at a time, to perform parallel tasks with great speed, in other words: to multitasking. It is already known that multitasking per se is not possible, the brain can only focus on one thing at a time; thus, multitasking only means quickly switching from one task to the other. This process is an energy drainer which in the long run makes us less effective. Neurological studies have also proved that by multitasking not only effectiveness

decreases but also the ability to concentrate, and it is correlated with stress and also with a dependence on new stimuli. That leads the brain to crave for new and new stimuli and to neglect tasks that require longer mental input. Some studies have also shown the thinning of the limbic cortex, which is the part of the brain responsible for thinking (Loh and Kanai 2014).

The altering effect of speed is present not only on a physical and psychic level but also on a more general, though scientifically less verifiable, phenomenological level. It is noted again by Virilio that acceleration changes the situation of a person within the world and also the perception of self of the said person. Virilio says that the new telecommunication techniques destroy physical distances and alter forevermore the perception of reality and the social and political structures that were dependent on it. Real-time technologies destroy the present, they distantiate the present from its 'here and now,' and what takes shape as a result is far removed from the actual presence of the world. If information can be communicated in an instant from whatever distance, then the concepts of near, far, horizon, and distance have no meaning anymore. There is no more delay between event and reaction, and thus the interval needed for critical thinking and conclusion is also lost. Humans have already reached the speed which exceeds their ability to comprehend information. The acceleration of perception causes chaotic perception, which leads to information deterioration in communication. Virilio calls this process the de-realization of reality, which changes the place of humans in the world (Virilio 1992, 90).

Due to the dangers of speed becoming more and more widely known, slowness is rediscovered by many. There are movements like the slow life, slow cities, slow food, or slow design that call slowness, leisureliness the leading principle of activities. The concept is not simply an overturn. The need for speed is so deeply ingrained in our attitudes toward things that changing it is very difficult. Isolated changes cannot change general tendencies. To present this difficulty, I will raise the question of deceleration, of slowness in regards to digital literacy related to an area that has been primarily defined by speed.

Digital literacy and slowness

The pairing in the title seems unlikely: why would one need slower Internet or computer? Why the question at all? The need for acceleration and speed is so deeply ingrained in our society that all requests for deceleration seem anachronistic.

At the same time, it is not a coincidence that instead of the expression 'computer or Internet usage' I use the more general term digital literacy. Literacy is a much wider term than ability or even knowledge. Literacy means a certain permanence because it involves the knowledge of basic things, a type of normative knowledge that encompasses all things that need knowing, so to say.

In the past years, literature regarding learning has emphasized more and more the need for critical and self-reliant use of the technologies of the information society. Expectations have synthesized in many concepts which show a rather confusing system (Lankshear and Knobel 2008). There are discourses about information and electronic literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, and digital literacy, of course. In regards to my study, it is more convenient to use the digital literacy term because the 'digital' clearly signals my intention to dissert on the literacy and communication relating to IC technologies.

In Martin's interpretation, digital literacy means the collective of abilities, orientations, and consciousness that allows us to use digital tools and institutions to appropriately identify, reach, integrate, synthesize digital sources as well as to realize and evaluate new knowledge and to communicate (Martin 2006). This description shows that digital literacy is advantageous in gaining knowledge as well as in participating in the information culture. At the same time, there is an unspoken presumption in the description. The appropriate usage, the effectiveness primarily means speed, as in the quicker access to and process of information in quantity and quality alike and the speedier communication.

Let us take a computer for an example. The computer, just as the mobile phone or the Internet, can be interpreted as accelerator equipment. The computer quickens the search for information, but also the systematization and process of information. A search engine is much faster in attaining information than pouring through index-cards or shelves of books. Editing a text in a word editor is incomparably quicker than doing it on a typewriter. Speed, in this regard, is a gain as it liberates us from a set of redundant and unnecessary operations. But we see more and more the drawbacks of this speed. Optimizing and cutting operations carries the risk of cutting bits of information, relevant contexts might be left out, which damages the quality of the received and processed information. On certain fields, the advantages and disadvantages occur at the same time. I will discuss two of these fields from the scientific research area.

We do not need to detail the impact of electronic texts upon reading and writing cultures. Authors of the 'secondary literacy' (Crystal 2001) spoke of a new linguistic phenomenon, the 'netspeak,' which has a different system and grammar than traditional linguistics. The appearance of electronic texts has eased research work since it is much easier to find a great amount of texts, but at the same time the drawbacks of this quick access are felt: we try to read the electronic texts quickly, skipping, and superficially to filter the essentials and move on to the next text. We try to eliminate this problem by printing out texts that we wish to peruse more deeply. We actually try to decelerate ourselves by printing out texts because printed texts can be held, highlighted with markers, and notes can be made on the sides; in other words, they can be studied in depth.

The same applies to digital archives: compared to traditional libraries, in digital libraries we get to be at the source within seconds, so we move on quickly. A traditional library commands a slower pace, requires physical and mental presence. In the library, our focus is on the books, and we are absorbed by reading, the books leading to other books, and thus gaining more knowledge.

Due to digital literacy, we all learn to use electronic texts and digital archives. This way, we actually speed up our encounters with texts in a qualitative and quantitative meaning as well. This acceleration, however, has dangers. The speed with which we manage texts conflicts first and foremost with our speed of thought. Our thinking speed is actually much slower than our ability to access texts, and the brain cannot take up the pace. The text-processing capability is slower, the critical thinking requires slow processing and ‘critical distance,’ as Virilio uses the concept (Virilio 1991). The fragmented, multitasking, and shifting focus cannot immerse in a topic because the speed of acquiring is inversely correlated with in-depth analysis and the ability to track surroundings. And to fulfil our need for information stimuli we always choose the many small tasks instead of a singular great one.

Word processing programmes have a linguistic effect (Balázs 2009). Computer-facilitated writing favours over-writing, which increases the occurrence of ‘spoken language’ and phatic elements that carry little meaning. Second, electronic texts have less cohesion. If texts are created without a word-processing programme, the ability to plan and execute correct sentences gains greater importance because rewriting is time-consuming. Using a computer, these abilities lose importance because rewriting and correcting is a quick process.

These are only a few of the speed problems related to digital literacy, but they already point us to notice the tendency that will have negative outcomes. These all signal that the question of deceleration is valid.

Of the possibilities of deceleration

Nowadays, we have come to realize the negative effects of speed in many areas of everyday life. Back in the days when people tried to slow down the attack on a fortress, they made a moat around it. We are encountering this effort on the area of eating, design, and many areas of everyday life. CEOs in overdrive create programmes to unwind, which they administer in quick and targeted trainings. There are new bestseller books on deceleration as Carl Honore’s ‘In Praise of Slow’ (2004) and ‘The Art of Stillness’ by Pico Iyer (2014). These books proclaim the art of selection and a qualitative life, and the ideas formulated in these works are advertised in TV shows and quick interviews. But constructing moat becomes inconceivable if we try to apply it on a field that requires progress and speed to exist. Until digital literacy inherently means accommodating newer and newer

organizer, planner, editor, and processor programmes and until communicating platforms are expanding and becoming more complex, the introduction of deceleration is increasingly difficult in digital literacy.

It is also hard to define what slowness would mean in the field of digital literacy. Not a slower computer or Internet, for sure. Though handling vast amount of information has become easier by the use of digital technological tools, speed has become an obstacle in the area of processing and learning information, leading to fragmentation and superficiality. That would mean that factors impeding processing must be moderated if not eliminated.

The great obstacle in this change is innovation itself. This is also highlighted by Hans Jonas in regards to the essence of modern technology. He emphasizes two basic features of modern technology. One is the compulsivity of application, which means that possibilities developed on a small scale are applied on a crescent scale until the application becomes a necessity. Another is the irreplaceable nature of technology. Once technology enters an area of our lives, it slowly becomes irreplaceable (Jonas 1985). Unlike in fashion, in technology there is no going back to an earlier stage. In technology, an old invention will never be a new invention again. That constitutes a problem because we expect technical novelties to know more and to be faster. And high-speed tools are subject to the first law of dromology, which states that greater speed will eliminate lesser ones. Following this law, technological tools with greater speed will soon supersede those which are slower, and by being applied on a growing scale they will become irreplaceable.

After describing these correlations, it almost seems that in the age of speed deceleration or the introduction of any kind of slowness is impossible, and yet the main obstacle in the way of endless acceleration is the human itself bound by its physical and psychological limitations. This factor will probably become a decelerating factor holding back the overdrive of speed. Seems that we are living in a transition period, where the natural balance between technical possibilities and the user has not yet set in.

Virilio has an idea regarding the symbolics of this field. He says that next to the hall of Machines we should put a Hall of Accidents, where the Hall of Machines would commemorate the great technical achievements of humankind, whereas the Hall of Accidents would take stock of the negative effects of those achievements (Virilio and Lotringer 1983, 31). All technical innovations bring along a new type of accident. The invention of the ship brought shipwrecking, trains brought on derailments, and electricity brings electric shock. The point of such a Hall would be to highlight and draw attention to the degree we, the inventors and makers of these technological tools, do not govern our own inventions. They are affecting us, they change our lives oftentimes in a negative way. How effective this would be is hard to say, after all, as Virilio says: 'We cannot institutionalize slowness, it is not within the competence of authority' (Virilio 1992).

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Theoretical discussions



Slow-Tuning Digital Culture

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Abstract. In the first part of this article, an overview of the cultural characteristics of digital culture will be given, which will then be applied to my theoretical model; I will henceforth refer to as the dual circle of digital culture. Following this, one of the key attributes of digital culture, speed/slowness will be discussed. By exploring escapist attitudes with the help of the slow movement and games, the cultural value of slowness will be established in the context of the changing landscape of digital culture.

Keywords: digital culture, dual circle of digital culture, slow, games

Accelerating changes

New technologies are spreading at an ever increasing pace. Looking at how many years it takes in 80% of the world's countries for a given technology to spread (a functional system to be built up), it can be seen that it took the railway 125 years to become used globally, while the same process only took 100 years in the case of the telephone, and less than 75 years in the case of the radio. Assuming an ever accelerating rate of penetration, the use of personal computers spread over a period of about 25 years, while the same figure for the use of mobile phones is approximately 20 years (Datta 2011). The spread of mobile Internet is anticipated to take place even faster, but only preliminary estimates are available at this point.¹

The ever more increasing speed of the market saturation achieved by technologies is shown in an analysis by Michael DeGusta (DeGusta 2012). Using four source groups (ITU, Pew, United States Statistical Office, and the Wall Street Journal), DeGusta studied the spread of various technologies in the past few decades in the case of the United States. His most important finding was that three phases of a technology's spread can be distinguished: one from the launch to 10% saturation, another between 10% and 40% saturation, and the last one from 40% to 75%. The spread of landline phones and electricity took off at a

¹ See, for example, the report by GSMA: http://www.gsmapobileeconomy.com/GSMA_ME_Report_2014_R2_WEB.pdf

very slow pace (10 percent market saturation was achieved in 25 and 30 years, respectively), while mobiles moved faster, producing the same saturation in just two and a half years. Of course, the cost and time of building up a technology's infrastructure, as well as the size of the investment are key factors; however, these categories do not apply to tablets. It is interesting to note that televisions achieved 10% saturation over about 11 years, while this took smart phones eight years only. When considering the second phase (10–40%), a rearrangement can be observed among technologies. The spread of electricity showed acceleration in this phase, as it reached 30% saturation within the scope of only 15 years. An acceleration can be seen in the case of televisions and smart phones, too: both achieved this rate of increase within two to three years. Televisions achieved 75% penetration from 40% in five years. As the penetration of smart phones and tablets has not yet achieved this level, no comparison can be made with these. The speeding up of the spread of televisions is spectacular; the same rate of acceleration cannot be said for personal computers, although there is some acceleration here too (PCs achieved 10% in nine years, 40% in 14 years and 75% in 13 years). Based on currently available data, tablets and smart phones seem to be following an accelerating path, but this can only be stated with certainty in ten years' time.

I wish to highlight an important aspect of the ever increasing spread of technologies: this spread is faster than what would correspond to the previously measured rate of knowledge transfer from one biological generation to the next. Parents have neither the knowledge nor the practical experience to enable them to pass a model on to young people.

Digital culture has undergone large-scale quality and quantity changes in the last fifteen years. Instead of a 'computer by-product,' a living, thriving, and expanding social phenomenon (one in interaction with traditional culture) evolved (Rab 2004), primarily as a result of the penetrating changes of the information society. Although this process began almost fifty years ago, a development boom in digital culture was triggered by and has been continuously fuelled by the fast-paced spread of broadband Internet and digital imaging tools.

Today's digital world has numerous new attributes. None of these are technologically driven, but rather the result of cultural change. The digital world is defined by a two-way interaction: technological changes are primarily induced by cultural changes, which then also exert an impact on culture. The characteristics to be listed on the following pages are more in-depth changes, independent of concrete technological devices; however, specific technological equipment (or a group of them) becoming popular and increasingly widespread might alter the rate of the changes discussed below; an example for this is the most important changes nowadays, i.e. the breakthrough of smart phones and the revolution of wireless, 'omnipresent' Internet access. These changes are not isolated from one

another, but they interact with each other time and again, influence, enhance, and curb one another. Most typically, they exist simultaneously, amplifying each other's influences; here we can highlight, for example, the close relationship that interactivity and interconnectivity have with multitasking, but the phenomenon of the crisis of identity can also be linked with an increase in uncertainty.

The appearance of digital culture was not the first communication revolution in the history of mankind. When Johannes Gutenberg printed the Bible in 1454, he also launched a communication revolution (Harnad 1991). In contrast to the changeable nature of oral communication, the printed text, as reproduced unchanged, introduced a rational and reliable communication channel that was easy to follow. Communication through printed texts allowed people to see the world in a more analytical, rational, and organized way. The dominance of the printed word was first dented in the 1950s, when television started to spread. And now the spread of digital culture, and within that the spread of digital media in particular, have put a definite end to the 450-year hegemony of the printed word: digital literacy and digital culture in general require new skills and approaches and a different way of comprehension. Kovarik talks about more communication revolutions: first, the revolution of printing, then the visual revolution (triggered by photography), the electronic revolution (radios and then televisions playing the key role), and finally the digital revolution (computers and networks) (Kovarik 2011). In my opinion, the revolution of knowledge acquisition and sharing is about to begin, its driving force being smart phones and the mobile Internet.

Characteristics of digital culture

In the past fifteen years, I have been studying the different characteristics of digital culture. As they do not form an integral part of my article's main line of reasoning, below, I will only provide a short description of these characteristics.

Oral literacy: digital literacy is far closer to oral communication what preceded the revolution of printing than it is to the written communication that emerged after the appearance of printing. In a digital environment, the boundary between the written and the spoken word is blurred (Ong 2010, Szécsi 1998).

Distancing from the source: digital forms can become independent from their traditional (prime) source, which is why digital information gaining ground creates fear and doubt in many people, and indeed there are new opportunities of abuse in a digital world: the authenticity of a text, of an image, or of a film extract cannot be ascertained at first glance.

Permanence: everything we do in our digital environment leaves a trace. The time and date of opening a file is stored just like the love poems we type in; when viewing an average website, the amount of information that leaves our

computers is virtually the same as that arriving on it. In the information society, it is not retaining information but deletion and the right to forget that constitute the real challenge.

Copiability: digital information is easy to copy, and once joined into a network the opportunities for this are infinite. This phenomenon generated new ways of distribution and spreading, which turned the contents industry upside down.

Instantaneousness: in a digital world, we can share our experiences, send and read our emails instantly. IM and chat culture create the impression of non-stop contact, not to mention that news about events that are taking place in other corners of the world can be instantly accessed, through several communication channels, etc.

Interactivity and interconnectivity: these are two key terms when we talk about the digital world (and digital society). Everything is interactive in a digital environment, even television use, and it is natural to us that any cultural object can be altered. Interconnectivity (a gift to humanity by the electronic devices of the information society) creates the opportunity for constant access and contact, which has an impact on many traditional cultural patterns, from our personal space to our work culture.

Perception and experience: the mentality of the users of digital culture has undergone vast changes in the last ten years; they have learnt that perception can be digitally manipulated. It is now generally known that the world we perceive can be digitally generated. Moreover, for the first time in human culture, it is suggested that our perception of virtual and non-virtual reality might be essentially the same. This lack of distinction is strengthened by the trend that technologies originally used in the entertainment industry are also used in other industries, and also by projecting a virtual environment onto the real world (augmented reality, LBS technologies).² Thanks to the virtual worlds of the future, the real world that surrounds us will blend together with our digital environment.

Identity: in every culture, individuals play many roles during their lifetime, assuming many identities. The number of these roles and the speed at which they replace one another do not only depend on the individuals but also on their cultural disposition and the influence of their environment. A new factor emerged in the information society: a set of human identities largely impacted by technological circumstances, i.e. network identity. As a result of computers, visualization technologies, and mainly digital identification, we can be somewhere without being physically present; others can assume our identity without looking

2 Augmented reality refers to an extended reality, in which a virtual 'layer' – usually providing additional information – can be visualized with the help of technological devices (e.g. special glasses, mobile phones, etc.). LBS stands for location-based technology and constitutes technologies aimed at providing relevant information and services of interest to users at a given time and place based on identifying the users' location.

like us, without even having the same sex; and what is even more alarming is that in the meantime these people retain their own personality. Our virtual identity is faced with a dual burden: it is crucially important, yet it can be separated from its rightful owner.

Insecurity: the issue of information society being a risk society has been emphasized by many. However, it is a misleading approach since people in medieval times were exposed to the same degree of risk – or perhaps much greater – due to the changeable social structure, healthcare, and the natural environment they lived in, which they could not control or have any influence over. In the case of the natural peoples, this lack of control reached such a level that magic and religious rites were used as a means of trying to control and influence their environment.

Speed and virtuality: every new technology serves the purpose of increasing speed. The very first trend was to increase the speed of changing one's physical location, but nowadays the ultimate objective is to increase the speed of information exchange. This acceleration can be felt in our everyday lives. The speed of modern technologies exceeds the natural speed of the human, biological organisms, which is difficult to grasp and creates tension that needs to be dealt with; it must be addressed both by individuals and communities. In a digital environment, there is a distance between users and the sources of information and objects. Hence, we feel distanced from palpable reality, and the role of trust and reliability has assumed greater importance. Perhaps the biggest cultural switch-over is taking place in people's appreciation for 'real' and virtual cultural objects. In other words, are virtual cultural objects regarded as valuable by people living in a given culture? The seemingly non-palpable nature of digital cultural objects and patterns might easily lead to weightlessness. Nevertheless, in the coming decades, people will most likely accept that digital actions, digital words, and digital objects are real acts, real words, and real objects in every respect.

Multitasking: in practice, multitasking means that several tasks are (can be) managed simultaneously. Typical examples for this are media consumption and entertainment (Székely 2014). Intertwining, simultaneous activities divide our attention, and thus certain elements can be easily pushed to the background. The opportunity of continuous online presence enables us to manage several interactions in parallel communication spaces, as a result of which the 'blending together' of personal, group, and mass communication is bound to happen. Similarly to background media consumption, we can talk about the appearance of background communication too, which makes it possible for users to be simultaneously present in different communication spaces, thanks to broadband connection. There are two sides to how multitasking is viewed. On the one hand, it is doubtlessly a strongly present and indelible phenomenon, which is used to different extents and at different levels of success by any individual, community,

or, for example, business. On the other hand, multitasking definitely disperses attention, frequently producing quasi-entertainment, quasi-work processes, quasi-recreation, and quasi-connections.

Using microtime: in my opinion, this characteristic of digital culture has been assuming increasing importance since smart phones (and tablets) became widespread. This technology enables instant availability (it was mostly necessary so that incoming calls would not destroy running processes, such as reading and gaming, for example). One of the important attributes of mobile games is that there is virtually no loading time or, if it is interrupted, the process resumes in 1-2 seconds. Besides gaming, in my view, online chat plays a crucial role in spending microtime. Smart phones display incoming messages, so users do not have to constantly watch and wait. It can be seen if someone writes us a message, so we can quickly reply while walking or while the traffic light is red. In another time fragment, we can glance at the screen again, check and reply, etc. The use of microtime increasingly reduces the chance of being bored, while also teaching users how to focus their attention in short time spans (too). Thus, we have the great ‘rival’ of multitasking: when spending microtime, we do not manage simultaneous activities but quickly interrupted, consecutive, and alternating processes. This trend can potentially lead to the weakening of long-term concentration.

The dual circle of digital culture

In the last decade, I have been researching various phenomena linked to digital culture. In the previous section, I provided a brief description of each one of the main characteristics of digital culture, and over the years I found that these 14 characteristics can be arranged into a complex system comprising dynamic dichotomies that reinforce each other. Situations that arise in the context of digital culture result from the mutual interaction and attributes of these elements.

In order to visually represent this system, I first established axes between the above mentioned characteristics and created two circles. One circle contains the characteristics of one of the axes, while the other one those of the other axis. Since the dichotomies contained in the two circles complement and provide an explanation for each other, I drew a dual circle, in which the position of each element is carefully designed in relation to its pair in the dichotomy as well as to the other elements.

I named this model the dual circle of digital culture (*Graph 1*). The characteristics are arranged in dichotomies: Interactivity – Interconnectivity; Multitasking – Using microtime; Orality literacy – Distancing from the source; Identity – Insecurity; Perception – Experience; Copiability – Virtuality; Permanence – Instantaneousness.



Source: author's proposal

Graph 1. The dual circle of digital culture

Oral literacy and distancing from the source form a dichotomy intended to occupy a position on the other side of the circle, relative to instantaneousness and permanence. In a 3D representation, the two circles would not run side by side but above each other; however, in a 2D representation, such an arrangement could not be read. The categories of multitasking and using microtime have a similar effect, but their *modi operandi* are each other's opposite, while the fragmentation of time affects perception and virtuality.

The dual circle of digital culture is a system of interpretation. Its primary objective is to represent the multi-layered and complex nature of the operation of digital culture, but it is suitable to be used for future framework system analyses. It is possible and worth further exploring the elements of the dual circle of digital culture. It is not only the elements of the dual circle that form complementary pairs (dichotomies), but some of the notions themselves are ambiguous. One such notion is speed, since one of the highly important and typical characteristics of today's digital culture is slowing down and slowness, as well as its extreme endpoint: breaking out of the information society.

Go slower, live longer

The Slow Movement started in Italy in 1986, occasioned by the opening of a new McDonald's restaurant. Carlo Petrini organized a demonstration protesting against all the seemingly convincing advantages of fast food restaurants, focusing on the quality of the food, the importance of the culture of eating, and the role of enjoying life. The word 'slow' was originally not intended to suggest slowing down our pace of life, but it was rather used as an opposite to fast food. The slogan soon spread from making and eating food to other areas, such as travelling, raising children, reading, and – more recently – to Internet consumption. It has also become widespread in the world of work, emphasizing the value of quality work, time spent, and concentration as opposed to the rushed multitasking type of work. It did not take long before the word 'slow' entered the area of urban design: Cittaslow refers to an urban design philosophy built around and supporting the importance of people and the value of time spent in cities, suggesting that urban time should slow down and assume a human scale. This trend started in 1999, and in 2010 the Hungarian town of Hódmezővásárhely became such a 'slow town'.³

The slow movement, or rather slogan, is not a complete system of actual techniques, rules, and processes but much rather the expression of a feeling and an approach. Similarly to other hype-type notions, slow also lends itself to being combined with other words to attribute deeper meaning to it (slow housing, slow money, etc.). Taking a more superficial approach, the slow movement does not seem to be much different from a simple principle of organizing our lives: spend more time on important things, spend more time on yourself, enjoying life, and trying to exclude less important things from your life. Simplified, these slogans and descriptions can be summed up as follows: time is valuable, so try to do less but live/do/plan better. It is important to note here that besides time management and planning other crucial slogans of the Slow Movement there are sincerity and community (establishing relationships).

However, taking a more in-depth approach, the slow mentality is a (social) response springing from people's need to reclaim control over their own lives and reduce the burden of stress. Therefore, the Slow Movement, understandably, mainly appears in the context of the workplace. Yet, the workplace is typically the environment where average employees have little opportunity to create their own rules and pace, so – either because of teamwork or because of the rules and regulations, routines, and tasks of the workplaces – slow continues to be an internal organizing principle and a dream that might come true one day. The above described nature of the information society (several simultaneous identities, a myriad of online and offline impulses, multiple tasks to be done at the same time) by definition makes any slow ambitions impossible to implement,

3 <http://www.cittaslow.org>

except when individuals are willing to pay any price to observe the new rules of slow, and in cases when slow plans do not induce radical changes but rather involve fine-tuning.

In my view, the recent extensions of the Slow Movement (e.g. slow Internet) are catchy buzz words merely able to draw attention (for those interested) to living life in a more planned way. Available online articles on the subject are not more than life coaching advice provided by some clever individuals with a tendency to write what they try to sell as general truths and rules. The slow food and slow city movements were more concrete and exerted greater influence, and they focused more attention on the social impact and the social character of slow. Nevertheless, they can be interpreted as anti-globalization cultural phenomena rather than a reaction against digital culture.

Breaking out

As can be seen above, the tensions created by the information society brought with them a need for more and more people to slow down and have more control over their lives. Some people are not content with simply reorganizing their lives but choose to completely break out of the constraints of the information society. In the following section, two ways of this will be discussed: in one of them, the means of breaking out is digital culture itself (computer games), while in the other case the final objective is complete disengagement, i.e. going offline.

Computer games as a means of escape

In my primary research, I studied the world of computer games and gamers: computer games are one of the most spectacular and impactful areas of exploring and being immersed in digital culture. One of the objectives of my research was to find out as much about players as possible. I conducted an online questionnaire (exploratory research, with a sample of 147 persons) asking them about their motivations and attitudes. After performing a factor analysis of the data, I established five types of players.

For the first type of player, there were three key variables: it is important for them to wander in the virtual world exploring locations, non-game characters and areas not yet discovered by others, as well as to get to know other players. A clear picture can be formed of a player, who is a curious discoverer immersing themselves in the digital world and playing computer games for the sake of playing. I named this type 'the adventurer' since the word encapsulates the characteristics of this type and it can be associated with one of the most popular hero types of fantasy novels (adventurers), who are outstanding heroes freely

roaming in their world, having superhuman abilities, and rising above everyday rules while predominantly acting for the benefit of society.

The second type of player has the following three key variables: for him or her, it is important to defeat other players, to compete with them, and to get to know other players. This type places emphasis on his or her relationship with other game characters and fundamentally regards the game as a challenge and rivalry. I call this type ‘the gladiator,’ alluding to the fact that they are fighters who do not fight just for themselves but also to win the attention of others.

The third type of player is the kind who often chats online and frequently engages in long, serious conversations with his or her online acquaintances; moreover, he or she establishes living relationships with online acquaintances who have also provided help in solving non-game-related problems. So, this player builds relationships, and enjoys doing so. I named this type ‘the bard’ since during their games these players concentrate mainly on their relationships with others and they also excel in problem-solving. Thanks to their relationships, they are both the entertainers and the entertained.

The fourth type of player often plays just for the sake of relaxation, and they enjoy playing role games with their characters – this type is a genuine lover of games. I call this type ‘the magus,’ who lets him- or herself be enchanted for mere entertainment, adapting to the world he or she is in, while playfully changing identities within a given game. The word ‘magician’ better describes this free type of player playing tricks, but the word ‘magus’ fits in better with the terminology of role-play games, and thus the names given to the different player types are more unified (as they are frequently used terms in computer games too).

The fifth type of player uses online games merely as a means of distracting his or her attention from other things. An escapist attitude can be detected here, although only in a blurred form: games are a means of breaking out of everyday reality (but not necessarily to escape from problems!), and looking for a world governed by other than the mundane, customary and old rules of everyday life. I have named this type ‘the ranger’ since in fantasy literature rangers are the characters and heroes who, having become sated with the life of their city or community, wander alone, generally in nature, enjoying their solitude and their own rules of living their lives.

For some of the players, games serve as a means of escaping, hiding away from or breaking out of the real (and the digital) world. When assessing the types of players, it can be ascertained that every player has a primary approach and basic expectations of games, but their attitudes might change depending on their mood, the virtual world of the given game, and the other players. These changes might occur for longer and shorter periods, and it is crucially important what the players are looking for in playing games at a given point or period in their lives.

The other way of breaking out of the information society is to curtail or ban the various tools of digital culture. This attitude can not only be seen in the Slow Movement but also in various ideas and stages of raising children. The restrictions are usually time-related (e.g. the child is only allowed a certain amount of Internet time per day). These restrictions are as inefficient as the limitations imposed on watching television about three decades ago – virtually none. While in the area of raising children restrictions might serve the purpose of learning self-discipline since the limits must be learnt. However, a similar (self-)denial of digital tools produces little results. We can distinguish between complete and partial breakthrough (I use a computer, but I have not got Facebook or I have not got a smart phone to stop myself from constantly messing with it). A paradise for those wishing to break out of the information society is Green Bank, West Virginia (United States of America), where the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope can be found. In order to ensure the telescope's smooth operation, all other transmissions are banned in the area, including radios and mobile phones. The small town has a population of only 143, with most of them suffering from oversensitivity to electromagnetic radiation and have found a safe haven there.⁴ Of course, Green Bank is an extreme example since people, as cultural beings, should not use such 'self-mutilating' measures to create a liveable environment for themselves, but instead they should exploit and implement larger-scale cultural changes.

Cultural games

A good example for dual games in digital culture is chat culture. At first glance, the situation is simple: I am sitting at my computer, and if a chat message comes in, I will or will not reply. The spread of smart phones brought about the triumph of chat culture, since the IM services (supplemented with making phone calls and sending files) basically changed the communication practices that had been used for generations in the past. Instead of making a phone call or sending text messages, communication is now typically done on Viber, Skype, Snapchat, or Facebook Messenger. We are enjoying the benefits of non-stop availability, virtually free of charge, and it is possible to customize our communication practices. At the same time, non-stop availability comes with a price: if we do not reply instantly to a message (it is interesting that the common 'solution' here is not to switch over to another channel, e.g. make a phone call), the sender of the message will launch a barrage of further messages or will feel personally insulted as our 'failure' to reply is perceived by him or her as being ignored. It is especially true for messages with a return receipt confirmation, as in this case the sender can see that the addressee has actually seen the message – i.e. he

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Bank,_West_Virginia

or she was in close proximity of the device. Although it is understandable that sometimes the receiver of a message has no time to reply or the circumstances make it impossible, etc., the expectation to reply and the feeling of resentment are virtually guaranteed. Both the effect and counter-effect of this phenomenon are well known: the effect is that there are people who will grab a keyboard in any moment and situation to provide instant reply to incoming messages, even if it means neglecting the real-life situation they are in (a lesson, personal conversation, watching TV with others); its counter-effect is a gigantic 'game' in which the participants do everything they can to see their messages but want to make sure it is not known to the other party – in this way, he or she can gain some time to reply or to make a decision.

It is my personal opinion that digital culture has just started to exert a far-reaching impact on our lives. It is my contention that digital culture will bring about radical cultural, economic, and even biological changes in the next ten years in our lives, unprecedented – at this speed – in the cultural history of mankind. This process might be extremely fast; nevertheless, it is a process: a process that is bound to be accompanied by a great deal of self-cleansing, refining, and reinterpretation. In the past five years, several examples have shown these changes taking place; for example, we can see a culture of using phones in community spaces gradually forming (even though not everybody observes this), while the rules of e-mail, chat, and IM culture are being increasingly fine-tuned. As a result, the – real and self-generated – stress suffered by users is significantly reduced.

Culture is a means which in this case will lead to the release of all kinds of stress created by high speed and instantaneousness. The Slow Movement is the movement of planning and design. It is a preliminary sign of the future normalization of the excessive need for speed in today's digital culture, which in the future will not be a source of stress to be avoided but an opportunity to be successfully exploited. A productive response to today's acceleration is not to break out of the information society and make repeated efforts to curb or stop the on-going processes, but instead to harmoniously integrate it into our own lives. Only this way will an (often demonized) source of tension become a potential means to increase our quality of life.

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On the Philosophy of Slow Technology

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Abstract. Technology is a driving force in development as well as is the answer to challenges for development. In evaluating technology, there is usually a strong focus on functionality, efficiency in relation to some given task or problem, where the issue of usability is central. Slow Technology as an agenda for design and technology development is in one way the opposite of this, saying things could be different. Instead of looking for efficiency with respect to solving some task, we could look for slowness in use, turning things upside down. One way to understand the notion of slow technology is that it suggests a turn in the technology perspective. We do not put the main focus on what technology can be used for but on what it means to use it, to master it, how it expresses itself in use. Slow technology focuses on *envelopment* rather than development, the term now used in a lightly different meaning than in military tactics theory or data envelopment analysis. It is a matter of envelopment for deep understanding rather than fast development for use. If we usually think of technology in terms of techniques and methods we use to reach certain objectives, to do certain things, technology envelopment turns technology into a technical and methodological locale we encircle exploring, mapping out an expressional landscape.

Keywords: slow technology, philosophy of technology, design critique, critical design

Introduction

Technology is deeply connected with development. It means solution to given problems as well as inventions that open up for new ways of thinking and new ways of living. Technology constantly redefines basic concepts, opens up for new perspectives, and changes the ways of working as well as gives new meanings to work. It redefines issues of communication and provides new tools for art as well as for supporting and redefining the machinery of war. Technology is a driving force in development as well as the answer to challenges for development. In evaluating technology, there is a strong focus on functionality, efficiency in

relation to some given task or problem. The issue of usability is central; the success of technology lies in its use.

Slow Technology as an agenda, or programme, if you like, for design and technology development is in one way the opposite of this, saying things could be different. Instead of looking for efficiency with respect to solving some task, we could look for slowness in use, turning things upside down.

Hallnäs and Redström (2001, 167) introduced the idea of slow technology in the following way:

Now, technology can also be slow in various ways as it takes time to: i) learn how it works, ii) understand why it works the way it works, iii) apply it, iv) see what it is, v) find out the consequences of using it. (...) Slow technology is technology that is slow in various degrees in respect to i–v. What is important to note here is that the distinction between fast and slow technology is not a distinction in terms of time perception; it is a metaphorical distinction that has to do with time presence. When we use a thing as an efficient tool, time disappears, i.e. we get things done. Accepting an invitation for reflection inherent in the design means, on the other hand, that time will appear, i.e. we open up for time presence.

Counterexamples to design for usability was one source of inspiration, while another was turning around a bit the idea of ubiquitous calm technology (Weiser and Brown 1996). In some sense, if we look around, we can see the world is full of examples of slow technology as this notion is defined above. Just take modern computational technology and nuclear technology. It is clear that (i)–(v) are conditions true in both cases. But here we strive hard to hide the ‘slowness’ inherent in technology. It is not slow technology by choice. It is still very, very much a matter of superiority, efficiency, and functionality. Just think what we can do and have done using this technology; from changing the notion of social communication to introducing nuclear meltdown. All the same, it is still a mysterious technology, very slow in nature, if we only shift the focus from abstract functionality and efficiency to the expressions of technology in use.

So one way to understand the notion of slow technology is that it suggests a turn in the technology perspective. We do not put the main focus on what technology can be used for but on what it means to use it, to master it, how it expresses itself in use.

This turn from functionality to expressiveness does, of course, not mean that we neglect function which would turn technology altogether into mystical machinery for nothing. The idea is rather to bracket functionality a bit as we focus on the way in which technology expresses itself in use.

Yes, nuclear power is a tool for energy production, but what about the ways in which this is done? It is with this question we are on the road to a slow perspective on technology. A nuclear meltdown is not only a breakdown in functionality, but it is moreover something very ugly with respect to the expressions of use.

So, here is a slow technology perspective on energy production. How does it express itself in use? What does it mean to master the technology involved in the production system?

We look for what is inherent in the art of using the system. We are not looking for proofs of correctness of implementation or for reasonable levels of probability of functionality breakdown, but we are looking for an aesthetics of use. It is a different view that might look a bit strange from a present-day engineering perspective, not to say bizarre, but if we turn the mirror around and try to apply a modern engineering perspective on the art of playing the violin we find something equally strange.

What could then slow technology mean with respect to the development and construction of system for energy production? It is techniques, methods, and processes we use for the development of energy production systems, but it is all about focus on energy production as an art of use. What does it mean to master the techniques and the methods? What does it mean to master the system as an instrument of energy production?

It is here that mastering the technology of nuclear power, as we know it today, in some sense could metaphorically be compared with using an instrument where you feel strongly that there is no way in which you can fully master it. No matter for how long and how much you practise the art of playing on the given instrument, you still cannot make music with it. But dwelling on these issues turns the development of nuclear technology into slow technology; it will take time to learn how it works, understand why it works the way it works, apply it, see what is it, and find out the consequences of using it. Nuclear technology as slow technology is in this sense somewhat the opposite of writing off technology, declaring it to be an invocation of the devil itself. It is quite possible that there will be no new ‘slow’ power plants built, but the technology will be around as something for us to dwell on and reflect on.

Technology envelopment

What is the point of this? A natural ‘linear’ way of thinking about the technical development is to say that given certain functionality in principle we try to find ways of expressing it concretely in an actually functioning system. Another way would be trying to discover or rediscover and redefine functionality by dwelling on the expressions of technology. This latter perspective is what characterizes slow technology development, taking the – somewhat self-evident – truth that function resides in the expression of things to its limits (Hallnäs and Redström 2002). In practice, a real breakthrough works by going back and forth between these two opposite perspectives, often bouncing back as the limits come into sight.

If slow technology is a perspective, a way of dwelling on technology, what does it mean in terms of technology ‘development’? How do we start? What is the fundamental driving force for slow technology ‘development’? Is ‘slow technology’ as technology just complex and mysterious technology?

The history of computational technology as well as the history of nuclear technology is interesting when reflecting on these matters – on the one hand, with respect to military applications as a driving force in fast technology development and, on the other hand, with respect to connections with foundational problems in mathematical logic and the development of modern physics respectively. These connections to deep issues in mathematics and physics open up for a more slow and reflective development. The art of programming and aesthetical aspects of programming language development are typical examples of this. But these attempts are faced with great difficulties as they are confronted with the challenges of bare functionality and efficiency; just think of the distinction between software engineering and the idea of programming as art.

Slow technology focuses on envelopment rather than development, the term now used in a lightly different meaning than in military tactics theory or data envelopment analysis. It is a matter of envelopment for deep understanding rather than fast development for use. There is a dilemma here that concerns both ends of the spectrum. Fast development is the obvious track in many cases where there is an urgent problem – just think of the urge for vaccines – but at a cost of not full envelopment of the technology, while slow envelopment, on the other hand, is a natural choice if we want to master a technology with deep understanding and full artistic skills, but in this case there is a question of where to start.

The start for technology development is positioned somewhere between a given problem, a challenge in search for a solution, and an insight opening up for possible applications. Technology envelopment can then be seen as a process of turning the functional perspective of this starting point into a search for mastering the technology as means of expressions, as means of expressing.

Although the development of the atomic bomb was for sure a process of fast technology development, there is a scary aspect of slow technology envelopment inherent in the process that goes back to the rise of modern physics. In the hand of politicians, the atomic bomb became an instrument for expressing surrender as the only option left. So it is certainly a matter of mastering the expression of certain aspects of physics. When Robert Oppenheimer cited Bhagavad-Gita – ‘I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.’¹ Oppenheimer’s reflection on the testing of the atomic bomb in the New Mexico deserts could be understood as a reflection on the functional consequences of the development of the bomb, but also as a reflection on the specific expressions of total destruction inherent in what was

1 Wikipedia, (2015) ‘J. Robert Oppenheimer’ – available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._Robert_Oppenheimer (last visit on 8 July 2015).

created at the Los Alamos laboratories (Rhodes 1986). This example of the atomic bomb also shows that the distinction between ‘fast’ and ‘slow’ technology has in principle nothing to do with a distinction between moral values of technological perspectives. The art of torture is another very convincing example of this.

If ‘function’ refers to what a thing does as we use it, ‘expression’ then refers to what the thing displays as we use it. So, looking at technology as means of expressions is to say that we look for the ways in which a certain technology under development will display, express the functionality of its applications.

Why is it that an overall focus on this perspective, the envelopment bracketing or enveloping functionality, should lead to a reflective, slow technology?

If we usually think of technology in terms of techniques and methods we use to reach certain objectives, to do certain things, technology envelopment turns technology into a technical and methodological locale we encircle exploring, mapping out an expressional landscape. If it is a non-trivial technology, it takes time exploring the given expressional locale, learn how it works, understand why it works the way it works, apply it (that is bring performances back), see what it is, and find out the consequences of using it (that is explore its expressional power).

The graphical user interface we meet in modern personal computers – whether it is a laptop, a modern mobile phone, a tablet, or another type of computational device with a modern user interface – is a typical example of ‘fast’ technology. It hides the complexity of the computational machinery (Landin 2009), offering techniques and methods for efficiency and usability. We have next to no contact at all with what is going on in the actual execution of programmes as we navigate in the world of the desktop metaphors. Slow user interfaces based on turning computational technology into a technical and methodological locale mapping out its expressional landscape would be something quite different.

Techniques and methods for the construction and execution of programmes is the core of computational technology: programming languages and systems for programming, and computational devices for the execution of programmes. A user interface is a typical ‘thing’ that displays this technology in use, i.e. is a typical expression of computational technology in use, and so it is a given programmatic theme for explorations of and reflections on the locale of computational technology. The same goes for programming languages.

If, for a moment, we bracket the functionality, efficiency, and usability aspects of the user interface and focus on the expression as such, there are many foundational issues to further explore. A user interface is by definition an interface for handling input and output to computational processes, to start programme executions, and to display output.

So what does it mean to start a programme execution and what does it mean to display the output of computational processes?

We connect the ‘computer’ – in a very general sense, a type of machinery capable of algorithmic computing – to an input device of some sort and an output device of some sort, and by programming provide computational meaning to these connections.

Now the envelopment of this locale has its focus not on a search for applications but on an open-ended exploration of this idea of the interface as something that expresses computational technology in use. This is something we find at the crossroads of basic design research, new media art, and explorative engineering research, but in general it is a way of dwelling on the expressions of computational technology – there is certainly a zen-perspective of slow technology here. Recently, work has been done by several researchers in further developing and exploring slow technology as a design agenda for interaction design (see, for example, Odom et al. 2012).

The dividing line between the digital and the analogue is an issue that offers a specific opening for explorations. If we leave input and output devices based on digital precision, such as the computer screen and the keyboard, for other types of displays there are all sorts of slow directions to explore. One such direction is to replace digital precision with textile imprecision. Instead of trying to mimic the traditional computational devices in textile constructions, we take the inherent imprecision as a starting point and open up for interface slowness and complexity. Assume we use the movement in fabric – induced by fans – as the foundation for a computer display (Hallnäs et al. 2001), or a carpet as input device. Very trivial means of communication are, of course, easy enough to handle – such as on–off –, but once we enter into the regions of more subtle things, the communication becomes much slower and more complex. It might take us years of intense studies to understand one single message that the fabric in motion tells us. To master the art of using, reading the interface is a real challenge and involves concentration, patience, reflection, and lots of very intense practice. Why would we do that? Well, to learn more, to understand more, and above all to display envelopment of computational technology as a way of critical reflection.

Craft is in many ways a form of technology envelopment and it is interesting to see new forms of crafts emerging in an answer to challenges as to master new technology as means of expression (see, for example, Buechley and Perner-Wilson 2012).

Questions

Transportation technology is a complex of technologies where the notion ‘fast’ has a very special meaning. The transportation of the future might mean more of public transport and less negative environmental impact, but, above all, faster

transportation. Slow transportation technology would bracket this perspective and open up for different issues focusing on the expressions of technology for transportation.

One way to encircle this technology would be by asking questions and exploring typical expressions of modern transportation technology, expressions that somehow define it, to revisit inventions of technology expressions by asking philosophical questions, to propose conceptual designs that challenge our 'normal' understanding – the norm critical stance –, or to actually introduce new designs all the way through redefining these expressions in slow terms.

What is a car? Is it a way to display technology for freedom in transportation or the canonical expression of a coming carbon dioxide disaster?

Closing in on the car as displaying technology for freedom in transportation, we can try to make a slow mystery of everything that builds up this expression. Just to open the door of the car, not to mention starting the car – which today is not just a matter of starting an engine, but to start up a whole system of communicating devices –, are mysteries to reflect on in themselves. To unfold these expressions – of opening the door and starting the car –, we could try by examples to open up the true complexity involved and introduce work to be done for the freedom in transportation that the car offers. The door might be a mystery we need to understand and starting the car might be an art to be mastered. Of course, when the modern car key or the starting machinery of the car breaks down, we realize for sure the complexity involved, but we know how to solve it in a 'fast' manner by picking up the mobile phone and call for help.

If we, on the other hand, see the car as an expression of a coming environmental disaster, then we could, for example, relate the car to foundational symbols of evil in a systematic theology of sustainability. In this case, we cover the technology with theological reflections. Opening the car becomes an act of distrust and starting it an act of not caring. Slow technology will in this case build an envelopment of resistance and refutation.

What is car driving as an expression of transportation technology? This is an interesting question as it involves the art of driving and is something that we have turned into a sport – motor sport. Sport and art that are focused on mastering certain technologies are directly, or indirectly, good examples of technology envelopment. In the case of motor sport, there is a great variety of challenges in mastering the art of driving from the utmost speed in F1 races to more slow forms of extreme concentration in motorbike trial. The relation between motor sport and the development of cars for personal and public use is an interesting example of the relation between technology envelopment and technology development.

What is a train? Is it a way to display transportation technology for sound environmental caring or a cold expression of total technology alienation? The idea of environmental caring is fairly abstract in relation to actual travelling, and

thus it introduces an element of trust (cf. Landin 2009) as a central expressional component. This element of trust is something we can strengthen by making acts of caring into basic expressions of the train as transportation technology. Slow technology is in this case a sort of methodological abstraction that hides the technology in a thick cover of faith.

What is travelling by train as an expression of transportation technology? The expressions of travelling by train relates to things like being a passenger, doing something else, working while travelling, waiting, the engine-driver as an abstraction, and so on. The idea of the train as expressing transportation technology for sound environmental caring turns travelling into acts of caring. Entering the train becomes an act of caring; as we sit down in the train, we express trust in this transportation technology. In what ways could that influence the design of a train? How will it affect the ways in which we act as passengers?

Now we could continue this by asking similar questions in relation to other types of transportation technology: What is an airplane? What is travelling by airplane as an expression of transportation technology? What is a bicycle? What is cycling as an expression of transportation technology? And so on.

As a methodological exercise, asking these types of questions in a systematic manner is one way to introduce slow technology as a reflective technology envelopment perspective.

Ways of living

At present, there is a vibrant discussion on the fruits of the second machine age, i.e. ideas about the robots taking over (Foreign Affairs 2015). As a programmatic promise for the future, it is technology under development. In such a context, envelopment naturally depends on mapping out the borders of a technology yet to come. A method of doing this is to search for strong examples of counter-functionality, that is to develop examples of counter-functionality in dialogue with technology development. What is it that we, in general terms, want the robots to do? What is the general machine functionality under development all about? Slow technology for artificial intelligence would typically involve further explorations of such issues as lying machines, idle machines, disobedient machines, sad machine, machine strike actions, machine conspiracy, and so on.

Besides positioning slow technology with reference to the duality in between technology development and technology envelopment, it is a vision of technology for new forms of reflective ways of living, the longing for slowing things down, i.e. a perspective within the 'slow'-movement. This strongly relates slow technology as a design programme to the ideas of focal things (Borgmann 1995; Verbeek and Kockelkoren 1998) and design programmes for sustainable technology.

The fact that technology defines forms of living is clear to everyone in daily life. One very obvious example today is the way in which communication and computation technology defines forms of living. Even if this concerns, to a rather large degree, entertainment and social media, it is all about fast and ubiquitous technology – everywhere, any time, now, and instantaneously. We meet these expressions of modern communication and computation technology everywhere and all the time. Slow technology for communication and computation as a visionary design programme would call for counteraction in relation to the fast technology that rules today. The obvious thing would be to introduce design thinking that opens up for the mysteries and complexity involved in the technology that provides the foundation for the present fast applications and expressions. Applications would then be instruments for artistic skilful use rather than for everyday usability. This would, of course, turn communication using this type of technology into something similar to sports and art practice. The true hackers, and others that master the art of programming and talking to the machine, are in some sense already there.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, I will list the four main aspects of slow technology that, in one way or another, have been discussed above.

Slow technology is a general programme for critical design. This is a programme for design as counterexamples and counteractions to the agenda and ideology of usability. Here we strive to introduce design that opens up for reflection and provide time for reflection through intrinsic slowness. The critical aspect mainly concerns the forgetfulness of reflective aesthetics in the agenda and practice of usability, but the role of counterexamples is also to open up a wider perspective of design rationale in more general terms.

Slow technology is a reflective form of technology envelopment. As discussed at some length above, slow technology aims at introducing a reflective perspective of technology ‘development’ by mirroring development in the idea of envelopment, where the expressions of technology is the focal issue.

Slow technology introduces a redefinition of the notion of sustainable technology development. In the report of the Brundtland Commission, the notion of ‘sustainable development’ is defined as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987).

Yes, we understand the general idea behind this, but taking the definition literally and following the precautionary principle there would be a deadlock in development since it is not very easy to know about the ‘own needs’ of

future generations, or we would have to accept that sustainable development is development that tends to infinity. In both cases, the issue is that we have to take care in development work, we have to be careful. This is not a technical matter but a matter of theology, a theology that has to explain the faiths and beliefs of sustainability to make caring understandable.

Slow technology introduces caring in technology development from a slightly different perspective. As we reflect on the expressions of technology in use, putting functionality somewhat in the background, we care about the way in which technology expresses itself in use. There is perhaps a difference here between theology and philosophy if you like.

Slow technology is a design aesthetics perspective. In very general terms, slow technology, as a perspective on technology development, can be seen as a methodological programme in design aesthetics. The notion of ‘design aesthetics’ then refers to an aesthetics of design from the perspective of designing, i.e. an expressional logic guiding the design process.

Slow technology has, as a critical perspective, nothing in particular to do with technology scepticism or pessimism. It is just a programme for reflection and exploration, trying to open up for questions that a fast technology development driven by urgent needs, political and ideological dreams, and commercial product thinking forgets to ask.

It is natural to consider in what ways slow technology relates to a post-modernistic critique of modernity and to Heidegger’s philosophy of technology (Heidegger 1954). As a programme for a more reflective design of technological things, it certainly crosses some of the issues discussed by Heidegger, and it could well be that slow technology can be further developed along the lines of a critique of modernity. But as a methodological approach to critical design and design aesthetics, it can be viewed equally well as an instrument for defending modernity and the canons of the enlightenment. It is like an annoying younger sibling, always in opposition to all kinds of authorities and popular ideas.

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Studies



‘We Should Give It Some Time.’

Case Study on the Time Horizon of an Ecological Lifestyle-Community

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Abstract. The eco-village dwellers’ aim is to establish human settlements that fit into the natural environment and cause the least possible harm: to do so, they apply such technologies, social, economic, and community-organizing methods that allow them to form a long-term viable and sustainable human community which can use natural resources efficiently. The people living here are trying to use less and less non-renewable energy, and so households have less technological equipment. ‘One-button’ operating elements of the modern household conveniences, such as hot water, heat, clean clothes, or food, quickly made require more energy and mainly more time in these homes. The same is true for typical eco-village farming, where the work done with human and animal power is also much more time-consuming than if it were done with modern machinery. However, this is not the life of people who live in socio-economic marginality and endure all this out of necessity, but a consciously chosen way of life which is rooted in the eco-villagers’ ecologically-oriented worldview. These people fit into the range of initiatives which relate to time differently than does the mainstream society; they choose and acknowledge the value of the slowness of a natural and traditional way of life over the demand for speed in the modern world. In this study, I analyse the use of time in the eco-village way of life, the ideological roots of a slow-paced, time-consuming lifestyle, and I show what practice this world view generates and how it affects everyday life.

Keywords: eco-villages, voluntary simplicity, slow-paced and time-consuming lifestyle

Introduction

A few years ago I had breakfast with my host in an eco-community examined by me at that time. We had a leisurely breakfast in the cool kitchen, planning the day and talking. My host was talking about the methodology of ecological

forest management, and somehow we went on to the community's way of life and its evolution. After a while, the two narratives, shaping the forest and the community's lifestyle, converged. 'We should give it some time,' he said, meaning that the natural process of forestation and the organic development of a community are slow, but so much better than forced tree planting/community development.

The eco-village dwellers' aim is to establish human settlements that fit into the natural environment and cause the least possible harm: to do so, they apply such technologies, social, economic, and community-organizing methods that allow them to form a long-term, viable, and sustainable human community which can use natural resources efficiently.

I myself, as a cultural anthropologist, have been researching eco-villages since 2008, putting an emphasis on their socio-cultural dimensions, which is mainly due to my scientific orientation. My analyses are based on empirical material, which has been made up of interviews, the participant observation common in cultural anthropology, and the continuous collection of written primary sources. In this study, I analyse the use of time in the eco-village way of life, the ideological roots of a slow-paced, time-consuming lifestyle, and I show what practice this world view generates and how it affects everyday life.

Eco-villages, field of research

To understand the rest of this study, I find it necessary to provide a short presentation of the concept and history of eco-villages (Farkas 2015a). The overall objective of the eco-village dwellers is to create a settlement that fits into its natural environment in the most efficient way without the least possible damage. To achieve this, they engage in chemical-free farming, trying to apply environmentally friendly technologies and using renewable energy sources in construction, waste management, and wastewater treatment. Their aim is to maintain a local livelihood, trade, and recreation, to achieve greater autonomy and self-sufficiency, and to establish a community based on close relationships and co-operation. Most eco-villages are known as intentional communities, that is, village communities created through conscious effort by smaller or larger groups.¹

The use of the eco-village concept became commonplace in the 1990s, but the first eco-village initiatives had already appeared in the 1970s in Western

1 See Gilman and Gilman (1991), Taylor (2000), Svensson (2002). The international movement's own definition can be read on the following website: <http://gen.ecovillage.org/ecovillages/whatisanecovillage.html>. For the summary of definitions of Hungarian eco-villages, see: Béla Borsos's dissertation (Borsos 2007, 22–26). Most of the definitions are not the syntheses of existing eco-villages, but objectives and directions – the definition-makers themselves call attention to this.

Europe and the United States. In 1994, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), an international network, was established (Farkas 2015a).

The Hungarian eco-village movement started in the early 1990s, but by then their founders had already been well aware of the foreign models. People who move to eco-villages in Hungary are primarily middle-class, urban intellectuals, who do not move for economic reasons but to lead a better life in the moral, cultural, or ideological sense. When characterizing them, we can say that they have a longing for another place, they are critical about urban life, and they form a kind of counter-world. Looking at their motivation, they can be distinguished from other types of migration to villages by their need to create a lifestyle different from the mainstream based on an ecological commitment, and this need is not only manifested in their relationship to the environment, but it also permeates individual and community life in all aspects. In terms of their goals, they are different from other phenomena of moving to a village in undertaking a role model: many of them aiming not only at achieving a socio-economically and environmentally sustainable way of life but to transfer the experience and the model (Farkas 2015a).

The Hungarian eco-village movement is kept together by the *Magyar Élőfalv Hálózat* (MÉH – Hungarian Living Village Network), the members of which in 2014 were as follows:² Galgahévíz eco-village, Gömörszőlős, Gyűrűfű, Krishna Valley (Somogyvámos), MAGfalva (Monor), Máriahalom Biovillage, Nagyszékelyi KÖRTE, Ormánság Foundation (Drávafok-Markóc), Szeri Ökotanyák Association (SZÖSZ, Ópusztaszer and its vicinity), Natural Lifestyle Foundation (TEA, Agostyán), and Visnyeszéplak. About 500 people live in villages that belong to the Hungarian movement.

Due to the diversity of the Hungarian eco-village-range, it is very difficult to formulate generalizations about them. For this reason, I have chosen to present only one eco-community through which to show the eco-village's time management and possible ways to interpret it.

The community presented here does not form an individual eco-village: its members moved to Nagyszékely, a cul-de-sac village in Tolna County, where they have occupied one of the streets. This process of moving in began in 2003, and the moving in and out is still going on. The community gave itself the name KÖRTE, which is a Hungarian acronym meaning conscious co-operation tuned to community self-sufficiency. According to their definition, 'It's our common dream to create a natural way of life in a well-functioning, friendly village and take steps towards community self-sufficiency.'³ In the main period of the study, the group analysis consisted of 8 households, their adult members being in their thirties, and the children between a few months and 14 years old. The composition of

2 According to their website, see: www.elofaluhalozat.hu.

3 <http://elofaluhalozat.hu/nagyszekely.php>.

the community has undergone considerable change in the last two years: since the early period of my research, several of the families I examined have moved from here (3 households) or are about to move (1 household). This article starts from the examination of the group at a stable period; it describes the time when I could study a relatively well-defined group's life in detail: they are those who are involved in the eco-village discourse and who organized themselves as a community along the lines of permaculture (see below). The study thus focuses on them in the 'golden age' (2009–2012) as well as in the present, when only part of the initial group lives in the village.

The group is one of the bases of the Hungarian permaculture movement: they stand out from the rest of the domestic permaculture initiatives by living together in a close-knit community in one village. The word permaculture is derived from the combination of the English words *permanent agriculture*; its inventor is the Australian Bill Mollison, who defined the principles of this organic farming method in the 1970s (Mollison and Holgrem 1978). As there is no room here for a detailed description of the history of the movement,⁴ I list only the outstanding elements necessary in order to understand the life of this group. These are the following: imitating natural ecological processes in the human habitat and in the process of satisfying their needs; drastically reducing consumption; energy-saving and recycling; creating systems for self-sufficiency (garden, food, energy, community, etc.); covering their own needs with their own resources as much as possible; all components of the system performing many roles and all important functions being supported by several elements; preferring and strengthening mutually beneficial relations and symbiotic relationships; diversity; a focus not on one's own welfare but on the well-being of all living things, where the land is looked at as a whole (Baji 2011; Gosztonyi 2013; Pasztor 2013). Their notion is that these aforementioned principles generate such practice that serves as preparation for a future with ecological sustainability. These principles are decisive for the whole way of life, as a young woman put it: 'permaculture is *not just scratching in the garden*, but much more than that: it is a lifestyle, a worldview which requires the existence of the community' (KE, 2009).⁵

The life of the community members is greatly affected and diversified when we look at their marital status. Among them, we find a single young man who lives in extremely austere conditions in a wine-press building without any infrastructure; a single mother with her school-age children; families with small children and a young childless couple. Some of the school-age children study at

4 See the website of the Hungarian Permaculture Movement: <http://www.permakultura.hu/index.php> (last retrieval: 2015.01.22.). There are several articles of social science on permaculture; see, for example: Veteto and Locker 2008.

5 At the end of the quotes from my conversation partners, I indicate the initials and the date of the interview or conversation.

the local school, in lower primary classes, while the upper primary students and high school students go to a nearby settlement. The way of life of the families living here is also affected by the income of the family members, by their tastes, and 'ideological rigour'; that is, how much they stick to ecological principles and to the principle of self-sufficiency.

Households that form this community are diverse not only in terms of structure, but also in their ways of making a living. In line with ecological principles, the members of the group try to have jobs which do not require commuting. Among those who are successful in this intention we can find an IT specialist working from home, and an employee of the local authorities: a young woman worked at the local government office before her children were born, now the benefit she receives after her children is part of the family's income. This woman's husband, while working in the public works programme, makes extra money by doing odd jobs. Previously, they had supplemented their income by selling their products, but this is not so significant any more. Another man also takes odd jobs in the village (from agricultural work to building a tile-stove), which provides the main income for his family: additional revenue comes from selling their co-produced products (honey, fruit, and vegetables). The single man also has some income from odd jobs, but he is very active in work exchange relations, such as working for meals. There is also a family where the main income is child support, and there is another household which, in addition to maternity leave, lives on their savings. Others have been unable to realize the idea of working within the village; they (two of them) spend part of the week away from the village. The members of the group typically live on low incomes, which can be achieved by producing a significant part of their consumption by themselves: vegetables, fruits, and cereals, in some families also milk and eggs (mostly the three families who have lived here the longest). An inherent part of their livelihood is the cut in consumption, which comes from the principle of so-called voluntary simplicity, which means being satisfied with modest circumstances – they try to buy fewer things that are considered unnecessary.

All the community members have their own vegetable garden and fruit trees, most of them have land for cereals, and some of them have a small piece of woodland as well. The gardens around the houses are separately cultivated by each family, but – due to the structure of the street – there are garden areas in the street belonging to the plots where they sometimes work together. Cereals (wheat, barley, millet, oats, and triticale) have also been produced co-operatively. Working together, however, does not mean they are a land-community: the lands are privately owned, and those who agreed on joint production grew wheat on one member's land, millet on another's land, and barley on the third one's land. The arrangement as to working together in a given year was based on needs, joint discussions – and, of course, previous experience. Only a few members are

involved in animal husbandry: three families keep or used to keep poultry, two families had goats, and one family has cattle at the time of writing.

Since they believe that modern technology has a damaging effect on the environment and health, in addition to which they anticipate that related devices will become redundant due to the anticipated energy crisis, most of the households use far fewer advanced technological tools than would an average Hungarian household. The organic farming method, the permaculture preferred by the community, basically means working with a few tools, most of which are mechanical, and instead of motorized equipment (mower, mechanical hoe) they use hoes, scythes, hand watering and other hand tools. Cereal fields are exceptions to this. The community asks a local farmer to plough the land with his tractor. They used to try to plough with a horse, but it took so much energy and time that it exceeded their capacity. The same is true for harvesting and threshing: threshing with a mechanical threshing machine was carried out once, but abandoned after a single attempt. It is mostly sowing that is done manually, as well as mowing and the cultivation of vegetable gardens and orchards.

Eco-villages try to develop their own infrastructures, energy and resource systems (water, electricity, heating, architecture) for their natural way of life and autonomy. This is most feasible where the settlement has been created by the residents (Gyűrűfű, Krishna Valley, Galgahévíz eco-village). In Nagyszékely, the infrastructure was given, the village has running water, electricity as well as gas (although this last is not used by everyone; none of the members of the community use gas for heating, and some people do not even use it for cooking). The houses were not built by them either; they bought old, long farmhouses made from earth and transformed them according to their needs and opportunities (e.g.: they removed the lino flooring and the concrete base underneath, replaced the flush toilet with a compost toilet, built a stove and oven, etc.). Households also try to use as little non-renewable energy as possible, and practise the principle of recycling as much as they can. For instance, they water the garden with the bath water or the water for washing up, which is used very carefully and heated on a wood-burning stove. Worn-out garments will serve as work clothes and then cloths, and finally string to tie the tomatoes with, and so on. Water is much treasured, so it is treated very carefully (instead of flush toilets, they have compost toilets; instead of a bathtub, they have a shower or a washbasin) and recycled, for example for watering. The houses have electricity and electric appliances are used, but generally less than an average Hungarian household would. The water is heated with wood (in the summer, they use outdoor showers), which also provides heating. As a rule, a broom is used to clean the house rather than a vacuum cleaner, although occasionally a vacuum cleaner is used. People here have tried washing clothes by hand, but it required too much time and energy, especially when the clothes were used in the garden, so the idea was given up.

Freezers are not used at all as they are seen to waste energy, and only half of the households have a fridge, other forms of storage being chosen instead (cellar, stacking, drying, jam-making, etc.). There are no TV sets, films are occasionally watched on a computer, but the preference is for reading, board games, and other similar activities. Computers and mobile phones are used, as these people are not seeking to achieve an absolute pre-modern way of life, but in the spirit of voluntary simplicity and recycling they do not have the newest, trendiest phones, computers, and clothes, and try to use everything for as long as they can. Some households have experimented with a hand-operated grain mill, others use electrical grain mills, but occasionally they buy flour from a nearby producer or in a shop. Meal oil is also purchased from a nearby oil mill, on which occasions one person collects orders from the rest and then goes and gets the whole amount. A significant part of their food intake is ensured through their own harvests, but shop products can be found in the households as well. Every process of food production is carried out by the households (Farkas 2015b). Chemicals are not used for farming at all; in the household, some are used here and there, but organic agents are used instead, which are either produced by the households themselves or bought in stores selling organic products on behalf of the whole community. Two households have a car; having rather poor public transport, they make good use of the cars together: if a person is travelling somewhere, he/she will offer a lift or will run errands (for instance, do the shopping) for the others. Members of the group have this transport connection not only within their community, but also – by using a mailing list – they can join the carpool network operated in the village.

These items can be listed at great length, but due to the size limitations of this study I will now start elaborating on the question of time use.

It can be said of the workflows listed above (agriculture, housework) that they take up more time and effort than if they were performed by machines. In the houses, heating is not operated by a switch but through hard work (felling trees) and planning (starting heating in time); the water must be heated for a bath, for lunch the raw materials should be collected from the farm, etc. Work would take up less time if the garden were dug with a cultivator, the lawn mowed by a lawn mower, weeds treated with weed-killers, and pests sprayed with a motorized sprayer. A food-mixer would be also much faster, processing store-bought, clean vegetables rather than going out into the garden, and then washing and cutting the carrots by hand. Or it would be much easier to buy breakfast at the shop than getting up early in the morning, making and baking dough, or perhaps before all this grinding the home-grown wheat with a hand grain mill (cocoa and sugar, in this case, are from a shop). The reason that the people here lead a time- and energy-consuming lifestyle can be found in their world-view and their image of the future.

Crisis and risk

One of the motivations behind the organization of eco-villages is the interpretation of the world's current processes as self-destructive and unsustainable, and consequently a vision of a complex, ecological, social, economic, and moral/spiritual fall. This vision is closely related to changes in present-day risk-perception, which is, briefly, that while modernity was characterized by the trust in science and technology and technological optimism, and the key values of the welfare society were based on this security, a significant turnaround took place when issues such as nuclear energy, chemicals, and ecology-related hazards began to appear. Postmodernity brought new kinds of risks, and – among other things – it is mainly science and technology that cause these new risks: the lack of transparent risks, the consequences of new kind of technologies, and also the innovation dynamics of science that has become chaotic and out of control (Szijártó 2008, 37–38; Castells 2006, 227–228). These processes, hand in hand with the global capitalist economic system, will eventually lead the world to a fall, by destroying the natural environment and resources and by unequal distribution and social injustice (e.g. Hajnal 2006; Kiss 2006; Takács-Sánta 2009; Beck 2003; Douglas 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; Szijártó 2000, 2008). In autumn 2008, the recession only confirmed the predictions of a crisis and radically increased the interest in eco-villages in Hungary.

The response of the eco-villages to these uncertainties and risk perception is a radically new kind of life experiment, an alternative risk management with the eco-village concept and its lifestyle elements and idea of community. The key element of their way of life is the pursuit of self-sufficiency, reasons for which are many, all of them closely linked to the issue of safety and risk. Taking the example of nutrition, according to the eco-villagers, manually produced food, on the one hand, makes them independent from industrial agriculture, from the food industry and mercantile trade of which possible collapse would leave people without food supply, while, on the other hand, their own production is considered medically safe and 'clean,' and it provides a risk-free food (see Farkas 2015b.).⁶

Their response to the crisis image defines itself against the current discourse of power and the majority population.⁷ Thus, among other things, they criticize

6 Eco-village life therefore partly means preparation for this projected crisis. I am quick to emphasize that this does not mean that eco-village dwellers are constantly afraid of the future! The love and preservation of nature, the desire to live in harmony with nature, rural life, and living in the community are equally important motivations for them. But they regard their lives as an attempt to consider how to become as independent as possible, how to be independent of the infrastructure and other networks. At the same time, they themselves are aware that their current way of life cannot be considered self-sufficient, so it is more accurate to say that an experimentation on self-sufficiency is going on.

7 Barbara Kisdi in her research on home birth in Hungary had similar results regarding the relations of the actors of urban lifestyle movements to current discourses of power and the majority population (Kisdi 2013).

and reject the attitude of modern consumer societies, and the 'here and now and immediately' perception of time. They believe that these things are largely responsible for the exploitation of resources, ecological disaster, and also for what they see to be a social crisis. The development of modern technology and the very devices that help us in our daily lives are also important actors in these processes, but the free time gained with them and the increased consumption during that free time enhances this effect even further. The picture of this fast world in this context – as opposed to the development of modernist pictures – symbolizes an accelerating decline where the present eats up not only the past but the future as well. The eco-village dwellers, and by extension the members of the community under examination here, are consciously turning to a different use of time in which slow processes are given the main roles.

Permaculture is specifically a system of slow processes because it tries to copy natural processes, thereby attaining the rhythms of nature. The general idea of permaculture is that 'nature knows better,' and if we allow it to work we do not interfere with natural processes, as added to which people's lives can also take on a more natural and slower rhythm. A significant part of permaculture farming is observing and understanding these processes, which is quite a slow process itself. And since the core of this way of life is farming, individuals absorb this slower pace into their lifestyle. Although it is slower, it does not involve fewer activities; on the contrary, the use of mechanical implements, as we have seen earlier, makes part of a longer and more arduous workflow. This means that members of this community are always active, especially from spring to autumn, the most important time period for agricultural and horticultural work.

This is also the case because activities are not confined to producing food for the day and maintaining their own lives: they think highly of education as well. As they are active participants in the Hungarian eco-village movement, of permaculture, vegetable gene bank and landrace fruit cultivation, and hold trainings, seminars and open days, publishing, and hosting volunteers, they are almost always busy with something.

The rhythm of life is greatly influenced by the rhythm of nature, the active period in agriculture from spring to autumn is followed by a calmer period; the schedule of the days depends on the urgency of the work to be done, the children's school attendance or even the heat or a combination of many more factors. Winter is more suitable for indoor jobs, such as working on the computer (publication, replying to letters of enquiry, explaining a forum topic). Nevertheless, we cannot state that the community operates within the time concept of either rural or urban, industrial or agricultural societies. This is because, on the one hand, these separations can hardly be considered valid in today's urbanized world. On the other hand, all the residents here have moved from urban environments, and alongside this rural lifestyle they have maintained their urban, intellectual way of life and cannot and

do not want to get rid of that. Thus, they simultaneously follow the task-oriented time concept typical of agrarian societies and the ‘urban’ time concept which is adapted to industrial work (see Thompson, 1990). As one of the couples put it:

P.: Getting up very early absolutely goes against city life, especially the intellectual lifestyle. This requires finishing at nine o’clock in the evening. There is no TV, no phone, no letter writing, no reading, but snoozing, and when the cock crows, you can go mowing. This is a different type of rhythm. K.: I, too, feel that the close engagement with the soil, to see how the crops grow, what processes there are, and being closer to the Earth is a sort of a ‘round’ life, so life is more complete. But if I do only this, it does not give me this sense of completeness. I also have to do other things that are different, intellectual (H. P. and H. K. 2014).

And because in the village social life is fairly active, some of the residents get together regularly to play cards, chess, and play music; so, ‘in no time we got busier here in the village than in Budapest’ (H. P. 2014). The latter statement refers to the fact that more time is devoted to entertainment and building social relationships, leading to a busier timetable with activities over and above to daily work.

‘We also exchange time’

When presenting the crisis picture, I mentioned that in the response of the eco-villagers not only their attempts to reform their lifestyle but also the way in which they regard the community is of great importance. I have already presented the concept and operation of the eco-village community and the given group in my previous studies (see Farkas 2012, 2014); so, here I will only point out and interpret the time factors of this concept.

The fact that members of the group are not living in different parts of the country, have not remained in their own environment, or continued that way of life (there are a number of examples of this around the country), but have chosen to live in proximity to each other indicates that they really value co-operation and community. Community life, in their case, is expressed through agricultural work carried out jointly, co-operation in everyday life, and community gatherings (holidays, shared leisure-time activities and dinners, etc.). All these require scheduling, adaptation, and harmonizing one’s timetable with those of the others. The joint cultivation of cereal fields, pitting cherries together, the order in which wells are cleaned, attending to the community orchard, making and delivering the *komatál* (Hungarian word for a selection of food) for mothers who have just had a baby, or even organizing celebrations and entertainments all require close co-operation and time planning.⁸ For organizing all of these, the continuous

8 The potential problems helped in learning conflict management, which was considered specifically important for the operation of the group.

interaction of the group members is needed.⁹ There are some activities that offer relatively few alternatives, so the harmonizing of time schedules can only be a short process (the picked cherries, for example, must be processed quickly before they go bad, the crop must be harvested in time), and there are some that offer longer consultation (a dinner together). In monitoring these balancing processes, the researcher is provided with a number of opportunities for valuable observations.¹⁰ Take, for example, joint voluntary work. There are work processes which could be carried out either by one person or a family, but they try to turn them into community activities as they are considered to be important for community building. Joint voluntary work is more than working together: it is also giving one's time for the community. The obstacle against this joint work is often the fact that when balancing between community work and one's own tasks the latter is usually chosen. Cherries can be pitted alone, but if you want to turn it into a communal task you must give up some freedom: you will not be doing the work when you have time but when everyone is available; it requires organization and the crop must be transferred to a specific location, all of which are time-consuming tasks.

The individual also has a role in deciding which argument is ultimately stronger (participating in common work rather than undertaking something else), but during my long fieldwork I have been able to observe changing dynamics in community activities and time use. There have been periods when the members of the group met weekly, held meetings, or had dinner together and played music, etc. In other periods, community occasions that involved everybody disappeared completely, while encounters and the number of joint activities were reduced to the individual level.

The group examined in this study is very active, not only in joint voluntary work but also in exchange relationships. The subjects of the exchange can equally be crops, tools, and workforce. We know from the ethnographic literature that exchange in peasant culture had unwritten but very strict rules which evolved

9 One exception, of course, is if someone does not want to participate in something – because not all members of the group are involved in each activity. It depends on how much importance, time, and capacity are attached to the event. The community in this sense is not homogeneous and does not act collectively: at one time, two families enjoyed making music together, while others loved playing board games.

10 Rau and Edmondson's study from 2014 has a key message: in studying sustainability and time use, a methodological renewal is necessary, and ethnography may have an important role in this: 'A major advantage of using ethnographic methods in sustainability studies – at least in principle – is that these techniques are intended to trace attitudes and habits which may be too profoundly taken for granted to be easily verbalised by the people who hold them' (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 11). They believe that long-term monitoring is also useful because it can help in observing the change instead of having only a snapshot, which, according to them, is the disadvantage of quantitative research. Thus, in addition to the already established quantitative methods, qualitative methods are considered to be important as well, something with which, as a cultural anthropologist, I agree.

over generations and were passed on in the process of passing down a tradition within and between generations as well (see Fél and Hofer 2000; Szabó 1979; Szilágyi 2000). For intentional communities, there is no such ready-made, standard system available; they need to create one for themselves. Elsewhere (Farkas 2015b), I have already mentioned the example when one of the members tried to figure out the exchange value of home-made muesli. In this calculation process, the emphasis was on the time that was ‘put into’ the muesli. As another young woman also said: ‘We also exchange time’ (P. G. 2014). That is, time works as a base for exchange and acquires its value through lengthy deliberation, weighing time factors and circumstances.¹¹ It is also possible that as a result of this calculation something else is given up: in the aforementioned example, after some attempts, it turned out that when cultivating the land together with animal and human power (horse-drawn plough, hand-threshing) the invested time and energy was not recoverable and it put by far too heavy a burden on the other processes of farming as well as on the tolerance of the community, so they gave up the idea. Another favourite example of mine is a mother who experimented with washing clothes by hand and involved her two children in the work by giving them the task of trampling on the clothes in the tub. However, the initial fascination lost its magic after a while, and the young woman concluded that it was more important for her to have some free time and recreation than rigorously putting principles into practice. I recount these two stories because both are excellent examples of showing that the community does not follow principles at all costs. It has experienced the destructive effects of following principles fanatically, and so judges that it is especially important to lead a pleasant way of life with which they can be satisfied.¹²

‘Future tense’

Opting for energy- and time-consuming work processes and strategies seems to reflect the rethinking of perception of convenience. As Vannini and Taggart put it in their own research: ‘Off-gridders’ practices present us with a somewhat counter-hegemonic idea of convenience which emphasizes the importance of

11 Taking this example: the exchange-value of 1 kilogram home-made muesli to courgettes is affected by the production difficulties of the two things (seed flaking with hand flake-making machine, fruit drying), the availability of the raw materials (there was a courgette-dumping in the gardens at that time), and many other factors.

12 Vannini and Taggart report a similar attitude in their own field: ‘Time and effort are critical factors too. While localization and sustainability are important, so is the enjoyment of life’s simple pleasures—which explains why the typical mood at the Prairie Crocus Farm is more filled with easy-go-lucky contentment than tireless industriousness or hardline environmental ideology’ (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 7).

food that is local, self-produced, sustainably-cooked and sustainably disposed of' (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 319).

Looking at the main characteristics of modernization and globalization, we can say that the way of life I examine here is extremely alien to the modern world. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, more and more infrastructures are created in order to provide consumers with energy and speed; user-friendly technologies become more sophisticated and increasingly facilitate communication and mobility; comfort and cleanliness are of central importance today. In contrast to this, the Nagyszékely eco-community life can be called at least strange. The symbol of the consumer society's comfort is the frozen ready-made meal, as it is always available (in your own freezer or in the shop that is always open), its packaging is convenient (not dirty, not muddy, you do not have to work with it), and it can be prepared extremely quickly thanks to the microwave oven or the deep-fat fryer. It is convenient and time-efficient. In comparison, this community (and other similar groups) are questioning the mainstream interpretation of convenience and saying that – to remain with the diet example – locally-grown food and self-harvested energy are possible solutions to much larger problems such as the question of sustainability. Moreover, small-scale, diversified, localized production is also a way of reintroducing a level of humanness into the cycle of food growth. We can agree with Vannini and Taggart on that: 'Off-grid food production and consumption reclaim sense of place by reinventing convenience as suitability, simplicity, unhurriedness, harmoniousness and proximity' (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 7).

It can therefore be said that two key factors seem to be emerging in the community's relations with time: the special relationship with comfort and future-orientation.

'While the term "sustainability" remains highly contested with regard to its definition and meanings, commentators would probably agree that *time* forms one of its central dimensions' (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 1). The authors cited here show in their study that the majority of sustainability definitions include the need to look far ahead, for the long-term thinking of the corresponding actions. That is, time and attitude to time are essential elements of sustainability discourses (as well). Associated socio-ecological research examines issues such as the discrepancy between natural and social processes and its impact on society; consumption, time use, and sustainability (Rau 2015; Vannini and Taggart 2014); energy consumption and society, a subject in which – according to experience – an analysis of the relation between transport, time, and sustainability is very popular (see Peters 2005; Osbaldiston 2013; Mattioli, Shove, and Torrita, 2014). And numerous studies (e.g. Edmondson and Rau 2008) explore the way in which different cultures relate to time, and how this relation affects attitudes and behaviours regarding the environment. Among them, many studies have shown that people's interest in the social and ecological behaviour of the past, like their

engagement towards the region's cultural heritage, can formulate future-oriented, sustainability-promoting behaviours (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 1–2).

The authors – in agreement with other writers – believe that sustainability requires a fundamental shift in time culture (Rau and Edmondson 2014, 2), which is not really compatible with the current mainstream use of time, where speed and the increasing consumption of the latest products as soon as possible is a natural thing. At the same time, there are numerous movements that lay their ideological foundation and practice on the alternative use of time. These include the slow-movements (slow food, slow city), and I believe alternative lifestyle movements also belong here.

Manuel Castells, in one of his works on environmental movements (Castells 2006, 213–240), believes that in the networked society control over time (in addition to space) is at stake, and in response to this a new kind of temporality is emerging. Castells distinguishes three kinds of time: horological time, timeless time, and glacial time. According to him, environmental movements are characterized by their enforcement of the glacial time perspective into our perception of time. Glacial time means that the relationship between man and nature covers a long period of time, it involves the remote past and the indefinite future, and because – according to ecological thinking – there are interactions between all forms of matter, so the fundamental disruption of the balance can upset the delicate ecological balance and can lead to a disaster. A realization comes about that our world's units are not the individuals and not even the historical existence of human communities, which is why we need to change our way of thinking, or, more precisely, we need to change our concepts about time and we have to adapt to this extended time concept (Castells 2006, 229–231). Our lives, therefore, are designed not only for ourselves, but also for our descendants and many future generations coming after us. Castells calls this old-fashioned concern for our descendants, and indeed it is the basis of the sustainable-development time approach. He adds that the need to preserve nature and the respect for indigenous cultures (and, I think, peasant cultures) extends this concern backwards as well (Castells 2006, 231). As we could see earlier, the eco-village dwellers, and so the members of the community examined by me here, are consciously turning to a different use of time in which their concern for the future and for preserving the legacy of the past has an important role (see also Irvine 2014).

In this use of time, slow processes are given the main role. However, the eco-village movement cannot be called a slow-living movement: rather it falls into the initiatives of so-called simple life/simple living or voluntary simplicity, because beside many similarities the two types of movements show several differences. Parkins and Craig emphasize in their comparative work that followers of the simple life appreciate hard work, thrift, and anti-modernity, and they prefer a rural to an urban life. In slow movements, we cannot find this kind of thriftiness and ascetic

trait: for example, material pleasures are in the focus of the slow-food movement, and the slow city in particular welcomes the joy of urban living. The joy of everyday life here and now is the centre of all slow-movements. They do not really look into an idyllic, nostalgic past, and unlike simple living, which distances itself from contemporary culture, they do not seek a golden age. Slow-living – according to Parkins and Craig – remains in the present: ‘So without wanting to overstate differences which may interrelate closely in some people’s daily life, the adjective “slow” rather than “simple” to qualify “living” may signal a greater degree of imbrication in contemporary everyday life, given that slowness can only be judged in relation to speed, while simple living may signal a greater disengagement from, even an outright rejection of, contemporary culture’ (Parkins and Craig 2006, 3).¹³

Conclusion

In simple living movements, time is also of central importance, but I believe that the future occupies the major role in their time orientation. This statement is certainly true of the eco-village lifestyle: they have a special vision of the future, which motivates them to move out of the city and reform their way of life, and this vision determines their present behaviour and their life today. This vision, however, turns them partly towards the past, which means learning certain pre-modern techniques, cultivating and breeding old landrace plants and livestock, and so on.¹⁴ Local culture and cultural heritage, values of the past hold a real value for them, and they discover, learn, and use these.

13 It should be noted, however, that such separation is, on the one hand, only a generalization (as typologies naturally are) and not valid for every movement. On the other hand, since 2006, when the book was published, a number of changes have taken place in the slow-movements as well. Valeria Siniscalchi, in her study from 2013, presented the changes in the subject and method of slow-food by showing the changes of the emphasis of the important values of the movement, of the so-called *Good–Clean–Fair* triad. At the beginning, the movement concentrated on leisurely consumption of quality food, i.e. primarily on the interest of consumers (*Good*), and then the environmental context came to the foreground, that is the concern about the production of the food raw materials that are ‘clean’ in an environment-conscious sense, and the circumstances of preparation and transportation of the food (*Clean*), and finally more and more attention was paid to the producers and makers, their working conditions and livelihoods, and social justice (*Fair*). So, today, the Slow Food is not just about enjoying nice food and drinks here and now but also about having the kind of future-orientation which is the key element of the sustainability discourse. The Slow Food Movement – being the best known and perhaps the largest of such movements – now has a significant body of scientific literature; among the latest ones, we can find Siniscalchi’s (2013) and Grasseni’s (2014) excellent works.

14 However, the kind of strong and unconditional mythical-nostalgic looking into the past, which is reflected in a significant proportion of the Hungarian traditionalist groups, is not typical of this group under examination. To have just one small example: it is important for them to try to grow drought-tolerant plants that are unknown in Hungary, while the most radical traditionalists dislike such ‘non-authentic’ plants.

Forward-looking orientation has an important role in current decision-making and social actions. Sociological research has shown that there is a positive relationship between the vision of the future and the ability to postpone the meeting of present needs (e.g. Bergmann 1990, 123); giving up things in the present is in fact an important step for the future (for economic and social progress, advancement). In the eco-village context, voluntary simplicity is realized in a similar way; it stems from the vision of the future and is carried out for the future. This future orientation is different in that it not only focuses on individuals and their offspring, but also – as is the case with social reformers in general – considers the broader horizon. On the one hand, it acts on behalf of the local community (see the eco-village definitions: their target is long-term sustainability for the community) and, on the other hand, for the survival of the Earth, nature, and humanity.¹⁵ This is the central component of the time orientation of the members; it is the centre of their social value system to which individuals adapt their own time orientation (Bergmann 1990, 132).

For sociological researchers of time, the fact is not unknown that within the society there may be groups whose objectives are not shared by other groups of society. These groups ‘hold on to their value-codex, so the time-image governing them can significantly differ from the dominant culture’ (Bergman 1990, 134). The radically different vision of future and horizon is a feature of social reform. An alternative vision of the future which differs from the mainstream idea is the drive of social change provided that this vision (at some point in the future) is viable. For this, it must survive even if this change is delayed or meets with resistance (Bergmann 1990, 168). According to Richard Noyes, who deals with the relationship between social reformers and time, social reformers have broader horizons than their peers, and so what he calls *temporal discalibration* occurs, which is the major obstacle to the realization of their plans. Utopian proposals reaching out to the far future remain ‘unrealistic’ until they become part of the narrower time horizon of society as time goes by, and only then, in the midst of changed conditions will they seem ‘feasible’ (Noyes 1980, 67 – qtd by Bergmann 1990, 168).

I think, eco-village dwellers can be regarded as some kind of reformers who are envisioning a critical future not accepted by the majority of society, who may not even be aware of such (although this is hardly imaginable given the development of the communication channels), by broadening the present and development-oriented time horizon of modernity. The eco-villages are preparing for this crisis-future, and this is why the majority population regards them as whimsical, fugitives from society, etc. The problem raised by Henrike Rau and Ricca Edmondson is

15 This way of thinking leads to a special, expanded community perception, which includes not just human beings but other creatures living in that ecosystem, and even the entire flora and fauna of the Earth when thinking globally, in principles with ecological foundation, for the concept of the extended community (e.g. Kasper 2008).

also relevant for the group in our study: they put the question in connection with extensibility of time-perception needed for sustainable implementation: 'Can people be expected to adopt time-use patterns that almost immediately consign them to the margins of most developed societies?' (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 5). The eco-village way of life is such an alternative lifestyle experiment for it is attractive to a relatively few people and sets its followers in a kind of marginality.¹⁶ The number of those who can accomplish this lifestyle (instead of just having the intention) is even smaller.¹⁷ Their influence cannot be measured; at most, I can give my impressions: some of the 'mobile' elements of this way of life, elements that can be learnt and performed elsewhere, take root in other places, be it a permaculture farm near Kecskemét or an urban community garden in Budapest.

In their recent research, a couple named Kapitány list a number of key components on alternative life strategies found in Hungary that are also characteristic of the people living here: criticism of modernization, re-interpretation of human relations, work and community, a vision of the collapse of civilization, searching for correlations, taking responsibility, etc. (Kapitány and Kapitány 2014a, 2014b). The research also indicates that it is about the value system and vision of the future not only of a narrow circle, a handful of eco-village dwellers, but about the fact that they regard a radical life change as an appropriate answer to these questions.

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16 Think of the fact that public thinking identifies the mud house and the outdoor toilets specifically with backwardness and poverty.

17 It has many possible obstacles: they can not buy a house (because they are young people with no sufficient savings or because they can not sell their existing house or flat); family reasons (they do not want to move far away from their parents/children, relatives; talking about couples, this way of life is appealing to only one of them); they can not find a way to make a living in the eco-village; no suitable schools nearby for the kids, etc.

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Perceptions of Time in the Sustainability Movement: The Value of Slow for Sustainable Futures

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Abstract. The value of slow in the fast society can easily be associated with downshifting and voluntary simplicity – lifestyles that value more spiritual and emotional well-being rather than material accumulation. The literature on these topics is extensive, from religious studies of asceticism and humble simplicity, to the sociology of consumption. Nevertheless, a new approach to the value of time in living simply is needed in our more recent context of the 2008 crisis. After the Occupy movement of 2011 has been criticized for not being able to offer solutions to the problems they were challenging, the social movement for sustainability has become more and more visible. This movement is actively creating systemic alternatives, testing new social and economic models, redefining their relationship to money and material goods, imagining and sometimes enacting possible futures that go beyond the tensions of the crisis. In this article, I explore how members of the sustainability movement in Europe perceive time and how they interpret, feel, or imagine the value of slow. As I use the unstructured interview starting from a single question, the narratives that the respondents elaborate are complex and diverse, yet they recount a dual value of time: on the one hand, time can only be defined as slow or fast when it is related to external objects; on the other hand, time can be experienced as pressure or as expansion, depending on where the respondent perceives their locus of control. I use these accounts in an analysis that discusses the value of slow time for concrete utopias that re-enchant the world and for stimulating hope in alternative futures.

Keywords: time, slow, concrete utopia, futures, hope

Introduction

In this article, I explore the value of time, in particular the value of slow time, as a social construction and as a political process. In the context of the global crisis, I explore how the emerging and growing social movement for sustainability builds

its visions and actions on temporal experiences. It is not my intent to define and debate what sustainability means. Or rather, my intent is to see to what extent our cultural, political, and economic understandings of time affect our societal capacity to build a sustainable world. For a start, though, I do understand sustainability as that complex cultural behaviour that can be continued indefinitely on at least three dimensions: environment, economy, and society. Moreover, drawing from my informants for this study, I understand sustainability as a future that can be built for next generations in the current critical status quo that experiences a deep crisis of natural resources, fossil fuel, energy, politics, and social values.

The paper starts by outlining the context of the research, the social movement for sustainability. It then continues with interdisciplinary accounts of time, as I describe various interpretations of time and politics, time and lifestyle choices, and time in utopian thinking. The last part of the paper describes and analyses the current study: a qualitative research based on unstructured interviews that have explored the value of time as pressure and as expansion and its both individual and social transformation into slow time, which has deep implications for creating new cultures, for promoting persistence as a sustainable attitude towards the future and for acknowledging time as a multiple non-linear dimension.

Context: the social movement for sustainability

As a form of group action, social movements vary impressively in size, form, and scope, but they all share a common denominator: change. Social movements can be progressive or regressive, can be rooted in leftist, rightist, or centre ideologies, they can even be post-ideological, they can look to the future or reminisce on the past (Cross and Snow 2012). The social movements in the United States of America in their post-World War II era were regarded as deviant (Buechler 1993 – qtd by Zugman 2003) since political action and protest were interpreted as an abnormal reaction towards politics. Later on, in the 60s and 70s, social movements have been interpreted as extensions of political systems through mobilizing resources based on rational choices (Buechler 1993 – qtd by Zugman 2003). The theory of new social movements first came out in the 80s, circumscribing those movements that work towards a change for post-material values such as alternative lifestyles, meaning, and identity (Laclau and Mouffe 1988 – qtd by Zugman 2003). The more recent wave of social movements, such as the Arab Spring, Occupy, and Indignados, have somewhat returned to the reactionary model of street protests and they were able to bring deep social and political problems to the fore. Nevertheless, these movements have been criticized for not being able to go beyond reaction, for not being able to offer solutions or models for change. The social movement for sustainability builds

on the experience of Occupy and Indignados and on the environmentalist social movement of the 70s. As it is a complex combination of initiatives of change that became more and more active in the context of the global crisis that started in 2008, the movement for sustainability can be interpreted as belonging to the new wave of social movements. The values that sustainability brings into the public discussion are post-material, even post-economic growth, post-carbon, post-oil, and focused on co-operation rather than on competition, on sharing, rather than on accumulating.

The context that allowed for this movement to emerge and to converge from a large number of initiatives is the global crisis that manifested in its financial form in 2008. The practitioners in the sustainability movement are aware of systemic problems that are larger and older than the financial crisis of 2007-2008. Topics such as peak oil (the maximum amount of oil exploitable by mankind), global warming, deep and sometimes irreversible perturbation of ecological systems, unsustainable and aggravating social inequality are part of an apocalyptic imaginary (Fallon and Douthwaite 2010) that, throughout the decades, has stimulated various responses. The perceptions of and reactions to the crisis and the public discourses on the crisis have drawn activist, academic, and media attention. For instance, a recent research from the London School of Economics and Political Science reviews media discourses and academic analyses available on discourses and perceptions of the crisis in Europe (Murray Leach 2014). According to this transnational study, the crisis is portrayed as an abstract given, a 'supernatural phenomenon'. The crisis is an economic, technical error. Such accounts rule out agency, causes, or possible solutions to overcome the crisis. Furthermore, in the European context, the European Union and other ruling apparatuses are represented as 'others,' as foreign entities that are responsible and blameworthy for the suffering generated by the crisis. In this sense, the media and the technocratic discourse of the crisis seldom bring into focus values such as solidarity and co-operation. As a result, the mainstream discourses of the crisis are technical, as media covers almost exclusively elite discourses of the crisis, those that belong to economic experts. The European crisis is not perceived as an arena for European citizens, rather it is a bureaucratic machine deeply challenged to explore technical, top-down virtual solutions.

In this deep divide between technocratic politics and citizenship, the grassroots social movement for sustainability is slowly defining itself as different from previous waves of social movements seeking to promote change. If these previous movements were reactionary and based on protest, the social movement for sustainability relies on an attitude toward change based not on reaction but on creation, not on criticism but on solutions. This is consistent with a longitudinal research done by Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson in the United States between 1987 and 2000 (Ray and Anderson 2001) and later on replicated in the UK,

Germany, and Japan with consistent results. The authors have surveyed the adult population of the US in order to assess and learn more about their social and political values. Instead of using standard social values surveys, Ray has constructed a new questionnaire that allowed for social phenomena unobserved until then to emerge. The research has shown that, at the time of the study, around a quarter of the American adult population did not identify with any political ideology from left to right, were highly concerned with sustainability, felt increased responsibility for nature, and adopted a holistic approach toward the environment. Since the lifestyles, aspirations, consumption choices, ethics, and daily practices of these individuals seem to lead to a new civic, political, and economic culture, Ray has coined the term 'cultural creatives' to describe the phenomenon. As the research shows, these individuals and groups, through not identifying with the mainstream ways of doing politics and economy, contribute to the creation of new cultures, of alternative lifestyles, alternative economic models, and alternative ways of living in communities. Consistently with these results, Ray and Anderson estimated that there were 80 to 90 million cultural creatives in Europe as of year 2000.

Once these new lifestyles converged in social movements and in initiatives of change, the cultural creatives became more visible, more present in the public sphere. Such is the case with the recently increased interest in permaculture throughout Europe. Based on a holistic approach to revive the depleted soils of Australia in the 70s, in order to restore biodiversity and to regain the capacity of producing food, permaculture is now promoted by various initiatives of change as a strong model to generate sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods. Permaculture stands for permanent agriculture, which implies a shift of values and attitudes toward the environment, since it takes a step away from the seasonal rhythm of agriculture. It also stands for permanent culture as a set of values, norms, ideas, rules, and behaviours that allow for a sustainable permanent presence of mankind in natural systems. Another movement for change toward sustainability is Transition Towns. Initiated sometimes in the late 90s in the United Kingdom, Transition Towns promotes a set of practices and values necessary for transforming urban environments in sustainable and resilient cities and towns. The main message of this movement is that, when systemic collapse happens (for Transition Towns, collapse is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when), urban populations, currently on the rise, should have the capacity to survive, to rebuild economies and communities and, possibly, even thrive. The built surfaces of cities are a heritage of the growth- and oil-based civilization that need to be included in any plans and models for building sustainability and resilience to the crisis.

To these two main currents in the social movement for sustainability, we can add various modes of living that rely on redefinitions of people's relationship to material culture. The cultures of do-it-yourself and of reduce-reuse-recycle,

of voluntary simplicity and of downshifting, of gift-based and circular, local economies, of co-operatives and horizontal associations are parts of the growing trend of redefining the meaning of consumption and growth. New attitudes toward money allow for local currencies to be invented and used in economic micro- and mezzo-systems or for circular, local, participatory or gift economy models to be adopted and tested as possible solutions to the technical-financial crisis in profit-based neoliberalism. As cultural creatives and the social movement for sustainability have or tend to have holistic approaches, a change in one variable (money, consumption, leisure, etc.) brings along the necessity to reorganize the whole system. This is how new models of social organization or community organization have come into play. The Occupy movement brought to the general audience the value of consensus and participatory democracy. But these two models of decision-making can be complemented by consent, as it is practised in the viable systems model and in sociocracy. More recently, social innovators discuss about holocracy and rhizomic, non-hierarchical organizational models.

All these factors are tested and combined in order to explore the current capacity of the western world – if not globally – to go beyond the crisis and to imagine and stage sustainable futures. As the hegemonic system that the movement for sustainability seeks and builds alternatives to is deeply rooted and culturally constructed throughout centuries, the work of the sustainability movement is complex and highly challenged. In this sense, the current study takes a closer look at the value of time in the social movement for sustainability, exploring how time is perceived and used by individuals and groups that are actively involved in social innovation. In the next sections, I discuss the value of time in several perspectives: politics, lifestyles, and utopian thinking.

Interdisciplinary perspectives of time

Time and politics

I start my exploration of the value of time in the social movement for sustainability from the premise that the social construction of time is a political process (Verdery 1996). That time is socially constructed and relative to cultural contexts is a recurrent topic in anthropology and ethnography. Still, Verdery argues there is very little attention given to the political context of how time is constructed and determined culturally. In this sense, the construction of time as a political process brings to the fore aspects of power and determination. Conflicts and competition characterize any political context in which social actors create and impose new temporal disciplines over other social actors that are subjected to these transformations (Verdery 1996). Verdery's analysis focuses on a political

regime, the communism in Ceaușescu's Romania in the 80s, which created struggles over time in various forms. Through policies that regulated time and informal but equally powerful solutions to systemic problems – from working hours to be spent in the state production co-operatives or in factories, to the rationalization of food for which people queued in long lines as early as 4 in the morning in front of state shops – the political regime of Romania in the 80s created a temporal order in which state was the main deciding agent. Verdery names this process 'etatization'. Her analysis goes beyond the instruments through which cultures generally seize time – rituals, calendars, and schedules –, and focuses on the cultural and political body. Indeed, her ethnography of time in Ceaușescu's era shows how people were less able to pursue their own interests and activities because they had to be physically present somewhere else, even if that meant they would not be productive. For instance, Verdery accounts for a young villager who had to commute to work on a daily basis from the countryside to the factory. The commute would last for around one hour one way, by train. Sometimes, he would be sent back home due to electricity failure in the factory, or he would work very few hours during the workday schedule, and sometimes he would work extra hours. The physical presence in these temporal activities allows for little negotiations. Since time was not used in such an instance by the will of the individual, the state has taken over, has 'etatized' the value of time.

An interesting aspect in the western world is that the criticism towards how communism affected temporal autonomy holds valid for the capitalist consumer society, by and large. As Shippen argues, capitalism controls and dominates temporal necessities through determining how much time is necessary to be invested in working hours, in order to generate an income that can support livelihood in the market society (Shippen 2014). In other words, capitalism creates a regime of dominance over time that is not transparent. Working to make ends meet is part of life in capitalism; it is how the world works (Shippen 2014). This leads to a deep de-politicization of time, as negotiating time constraints is an individual challenge, highly visible in the self-help and self-development culture of finding your own work–family balance. Shippen observes that this is an effect of liberalism, which suggests that time belongs to individuals that rationally choose how to use it, disregarding the political and economic context in which time usage needs to be assessed. Even more so, rationalization in the market economy has facilitated the replacement of traditional thinking and emotions with efficiency and reason. In this sense, time is commodified; it becomes a good that can be sold. Indeed, 'time is money'. The capitalist logic that reinforces the usage of time in order to generate profit and economic growth renders the individual time of 'doing nothing' almost non-negotiable. Shippen accounts for how McDonald's rhythm and logic for making profit is incompatible with various cultural experiences of time, such as that of a couple of Korean

McDonald's patrons who, in their elder age, would enjoy coffee for long hours over the rush of fast food (Shippen 2014). Some years earlier, Ritzer observed this phenomenon manifesting at large and analysed it in 'The McDonalidization of Society' (Ritzer 2008). In this influential book, Ritzer discusses how the attributes of McDonald's restaurants have grown to actually describe society as a whole. Through convenience and affordability, the consumption of fast food has created a culture of fast living, of measuring time usage against comfort and money in linear ways of thinking and experiencing the world. In this sense, time is, if not etatized, then colonized by the capitalist regime.

To some extent, the experience of etatized, colonized, or commodified time in communism and capitalism can be interpreted as generated by or belonging to political regimes of anxiety. If research on the value of time argues that time is much too less regarded in its political context or as a political process, time is also much too less explored as a political affect. As the Institute for Precarious Consciousness elaborated in 2014 in a zine essay that received high general and specialized attention, the dominant reactive affect in capitalism is anxiety (Institute for Precarious Consciousness 2014). Through intricate forms of systemic control over individual autonomy, capitalism generates and maintains a regime of anxiety that depoliticizes time. Similar to Shippen's observation, the essay argues that the only political sphere in which individuals struggle to regain control is their own body, through 'micro-management': anger management, time management, parental management, gaming, or self-branding.

These critical accounts of uses of time in communism and capitalism point in a coherent manner to how time is politically constructed. In the following section, I bring into discussion two social movements that contributed and still contribute to the re-appropriation of time by individuals, withholding a strong political value: downshifting and voluntary simplicity.

Time and alternative lifestyles

Throughout the last thirty years, at the least, capitalist and consumer societies have been the stage for a particular form of temporal disengagement: downshifting. As Etzioni analyses, the forms of downshifting in the 80s and 90s implied reducing consumption in order to appear as more simple, reducing income in order to pursue individual goals that are less materialistic, and adjusting all levels of life to more simple patterns, in a holistic ethical attitude towards voluntary simplicity (Etzioni 1998). Although Etzioni's analysis has been influential, it is still narrowed to observing downshifters who have previously been well off. In other words, Etzioni's taxonomy of voluntary simplicity covers only part of the phenomenon, which occurred among high-paid, high-earning career- or business-oriented individuals. As Hamilton and Mail show, downshifting and practising voluntary

simplicity appears throughout the social-economic income-based spectrum, from well-off people, to blue-collar and low-income individuals and households (Hamilton 2003; Hamilton and Mail 2003). As research in the 90s and 2000s in the USA, Australia, and UK consistently show, the consumer society has had a strong toll on well-being and happiness (Hamilton 2003; Hamilton and Mail 2003). What the Institute for Precarious Consciousness identifies as a political regime of anxiety has been experienced throughout the last decades at a very intimate level by individuals and families in the global North. The pressure to perform, to self-brand, to earn money, and to become a profitable social actor has had its toll on how people spent their time. As previously discussed, time has been colonized by societal values that pursue profit and material success, to the expense of family, leisure, or personal time. This competitive environment has generated the pressure for 'quality time': although short hours are spent with the spouse or the children, these hours 'must' be of high quality. The anxiety oftentimes failing to obtain emotional quality under the pressures of material performance has been the main motivation to pursue voluntary simplicity. Nevertheless, once engaged in reducing working hours and income, downshifters have begun to develop a political consciousness and a critical attitude towards consumption, even alternative forms of civic engagement through reducing or reinventing consumption (Nelson et al. 2007). Such is the case with cultural creatives, who, as previously discussed, have later on formed the mass of the social innovation movement for sustainability. As a type of new social movement oriented towards obtaining and redefining meaning and identity, the movement for sustainability is characterized by voluntary simplicity, strong political consciousness, and ethical attitude towards consumption. In this sense, downshifting and voluntary simplicity appear to be life choices that bring meaning. Nevertheless, as Levy shows, leisure and family time are insufficient to provide meaning for downshifters, as these times are less structured (Levy 2005). In order to generate meaning and emotional well-being, downshifters need to engage in a particular type of work dedicated to achieving goods and results beyond the material (Levy 2005). Indeed, Thoreau's imaginary of voluntary simplicity in a hut in the woods is a utopian form of seizing time that disregards socialization and politics. In this sense, I further discuss the value of time in concrete utopias – contexts and dimensions that bring meaning to voluntary simplicity in the context of sustainability.

Time in utopian thinking

Although utopianism and utopian thinking have been largely dismissed during the twentieth century, the emergent movement for sustainability in the context of the global crisis is the perfect social, political, and economic context to explore, once more, utopian possibilities. Utopian thinking, after its quite long intellectual

history in the West, has received a twofold value in capitalism. First, in his book 'The Open Society and Its Enemies,' Karl Popper has criticized utopian movements as dangerous to liberalism, while Francis Fukuyama, while imagining 'The End of History and the Last Man,' rendered utopia irrelevant for liberalism (Weeks 2011). Popper's critique of utopian thinking relied on the emotional threat that utopianism brought to the rational-choice-based liberalism: if those who made their choices based on reasoned arguments were impartial and objective, the passionate utopianists would be individuals driven by emotions, by affects close to hysteria. In this sense, Popper warned of the importance of safeguarding rational thinking if liberalism were to survive the threats of the Cold War and of communism. Forty years later, Fukuyama wrote the influential essay in which he declared the triumph of liberalism based on reason and rational choices, thus casting the shadow of irrelevance over utopian thinking. Nevertheless, twenty years after Fukuyama's end of history, liberalism and the capitalist model entered a deep crisis, doubting whether capitalism is indeed the end of history. Some of the global social movements that reacted against the hegemony of capitalism have been criticized as not bringing forth a solution to the systemic dysfunction of neoliberal markets and societies. Still, the emergent movement for sustainability, through its power to create new cultures, brings again utopia under focus, both as an interesting intellectual exercise and as a concrete design in response to the challenges of the crisis. Utopian thinking as a diversity of glimpses into the future, of incitements towards imagining alternatives, takes the movement for sustainability beyond what Pierre Bourdieu has called economic fatalism: the belief that the world can not be in any way different from the way it is (Bourdieu 1998). Indeed, utopian thinking repositions the social agents in relation to time and to politics. First, it alters the connection to the present, thus generating the experience of estrangement. Utopian thinking creates an otherness that liberates from the configurations of the present time. It activates political awareness and criticism, and political will. The individual is thus desubjectified, they sense the taste of political desire. Time is no longer a constraint, it is a liberating dimension that opens up possibilities. Indeed, while altering the relationship to the present, utopian thinking shifts our relationship to the future. The future, as Bloch's concept of the Real-Possible entails, is the unfolding of the present's possibilities. Utopia has, in this context, a function of provocation, it challenges the present to unfold into alternative futures (Weeks 2011). Thus, utopian thinking provides inspirational models, it generates hope. The fatalism of the political regimes of anxiety that etatize, colonize, or commodify time is replaced by hope, an affect that redefines our relationship to history, to the present, and to futurity. Once hope is experienced, utopia becomes more than an intellectual possibility. Utopian thinking transforms into performance, through which utopia becomes an empirical reality. Writing at the same time with Popper's criticism of utopia

as a threat to liberalism, Ernst Bloch developed on the value of concrete utopias in his three volumes of 'The Principle of Hope' (Bloch 1985 – qtd by Weeks 2011). Concrete utopia is a utopian form that negates and disinvests the current political status quo, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, it presents itself as an affirmation, as a provocation towards alternatives. In this sense, utopia becomes concrete, not merely an intellectual imagination, because it creates the opportunity for conscious participation in the creation of history, culture, and society. Concrete utopias offer the possibility of increased participation in the current system, through the imagination of something else (Foucault, 1977 – qtd by Weeks 2011).

The present study

With this conceptual map in mind, I explore the value of slow time in the movement for sustainability as both political and personal, as concrete and utopian, as othering and empowering, and as performance and stillness. How is time perceived thus by individuals and groups in the sustainability movement? How is it used? What does slow mean in the sustainability movement? How do individuals negotiate time? What is the political desire that the usage of time elicits in the movement for sustainability?

In order to answer to these questions, I have used a qualitative research methodology based on unstructured interviews: three individual interviews via e-mail and one group interview with eight participants, face to face. The participants are activists, practitioners, and stakeholders from the sustainability movement in Europe, from seven countries: Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal, UK, the Republic of Ireland, and Romania. While e-mail interviewing allowed the participants to reflect and to elaborate on their answers, group interviewing facilitated the interaction between participants and the building of responses into a snowball process that explored the value of slow and of time in depth. Aiming at drawing the most from the experience of the participants, I have decided to use unstructured interviews that started with two trigger questions: 'What is the value of slow for you?' and 'What is your perception of time?'. The advantage of venturing in the realm of an unstructured method is that the data thus collected provides an emic perspective on the topic. Even though there was an increased risk to collect inconsistent data, the direct experience of the respondents revealed common patterns in their accounts of temporal experiences. Even though we started from just one question that I input, the temporal dimensions that the participants explored freely, either individually or together, emerged in patterns that I further analyse.

I chose to explore the value of slow in the fast society as constructed and experienced by activists and practitioners in the sustainability movement as

an attempt to bridge two distinct worlds: the academic community and the practitioners' community. This small study belongs to a larger personal and political project to explore and develop ways scientists and researchers, on the one hand, and practitioners, on the other, can inform and support one another in promoting sustainable lifestyles and economic models in Europe. The criticism that academia is working isolated from the larger society while it is also compelled – lately – to follow neoliberal efficiency models is not new in the history and the present of science. Non-formal and unstructured conversations with sustainability activists and practitioners revealed the necessity of incorporating in research the experiences of spirituality and the dynamics of emotions in the work towards sustainability, both as research topics and as elements of better research designs. Throughout my ethnographic experience based on action research in the sustainability movement, I have observed the quite great extent to which sustainability activists and practitioners are interested and sometimes even in need of reorienting social, anthropological, economic, and psychological research from the predominant quantitative approach towards qualitative methodologies. Qualitative methods are perceived by this demographic group as more human and less technical, more in depth and less descriptive, more complex and diverse in searching solutions to the current crisis in quite relevant social models for the change towards sustainability (Fofiu and Dobos 2015).

Data analysis

The value of temporal experiences for sustainability

A strong pattern that emerged through the conversations was that the relationship with the notion of time is an ongoing process that constantly repositions the respondents, through experiences of learning and deep understanding. The main story that the respondents share starts from the intimate perception of time in the current global crisis as too pressuring. At some point in their time, for some, quite recent, for others, dating a few years back (from the 2000s to 2011-2012), my respondents experienced such a deep emotional pressure to perform against time that they either made decisions towards slowing down or are currently in the process of downshifting. Becoming a sustainability activist or practitioner entails life-changing decisions and long-term processes of personality development, as sustainability activism develops holistic thinking. Each informant was, at the time of these interviews, in a different personal stage of envisioning and practising sustainability.

Time is experienced as pressure in the neoliberal mainstream culture due to several aspects. First, time is perceived as acceleration. More 'things happen at

the same time, and it is a constant challenge to keep up the rhythm' (M. W.). In the artificial environment of the city, time is a pressure because people are expected to perform. Not performing, not doing anything can be subject of intense criticism from those around, who can observe when someone falls out of rhythm. This brings along the feeling of agitation: the simultaneity of events and processes defocuses the mind, 'it is hard to choose what to focus on' (M. W.). This also elicits the fear of losing the opportunity of doing one activity or participating in one process or event in case one chooses to focus on another activity, process, or event. This simultaneity generates superficiality and the sensation of living at high speed. As one of the respondents described their temporal experience in the world, the fast society is built on the glorification of busyness, of not allowing ourselves almost any time, except the time to work: 'the world is already a too much agitated place, it doesn't need more agitation. In a culture where being busy is glorified, this is the right time to slow down, to live more simply, in a more conscious way and loving ourselves more dearly' (F. S.). Another respondent described this society as a *karoshi* society, a society in which we kill ourselves through overwork and that is killing itself through unsustainability (A. G.).

These temporal experiences are the source of feeling the need to change. Each of the respondents was on their own subjective experience of changing how they related to time. As it emerged through the interviews, slowing down or learning new ways to negotiate time is an intimate experience, it comes with deep personal understandings. The topics that emerged as responses to the pressure of time revolved around the perception of time as expansion, not as pressure. Some of the respondents told how they understood this value of time through the need to pursue personal degrowth, as opposed to personal growth. In the culture of self-help and personal branding, personal growth and development are dependent on doing more, not on doing less. In this sense, the personal ethics of degrowing lead the way towards mindfulness and meditation. Part of my respondents shared their experience of meditation and mindfulness as techniques or even 'places' in which time in itself does not move: 'when I am alone and I close my eyes, I don't feel time' (A. P.). Meditation as a conscious technique of slowing down or even stopping the flow of time proved to be a highly efficient way of acknowledging agitation, as was the case with F. S. In this situation, becoming aware of agitation and practising meditation are not necessarily in a chronological order, rather they are mutually informative. What some of my respondents accounted for was that the chance to slow down allowed for passive observation to take the place of the struggle to do as much as possible in as little time as possible. As D. P. develops:

I am convinced we need a daily mindfulness practice, essential to be effective agents of change and slow us down. Permaculture design emphasizes the need to slow down and observe. Otto Scharmer's Theory U process for innovation also starts with slowing down, observing and tapping into source before taking action.

Too often we jump into doing with too narrow a perspective when we need to slow down, zoom out, and see from the widest perspective what we need to do.

In the case of this respondent, mindfulness and observation have become, through practice, conscious acts of experiencing time. This awareness has two main effects regarding the value of slow. First, it stimulates the political desire, and then it transforms individuals in consciously active social and political agents.

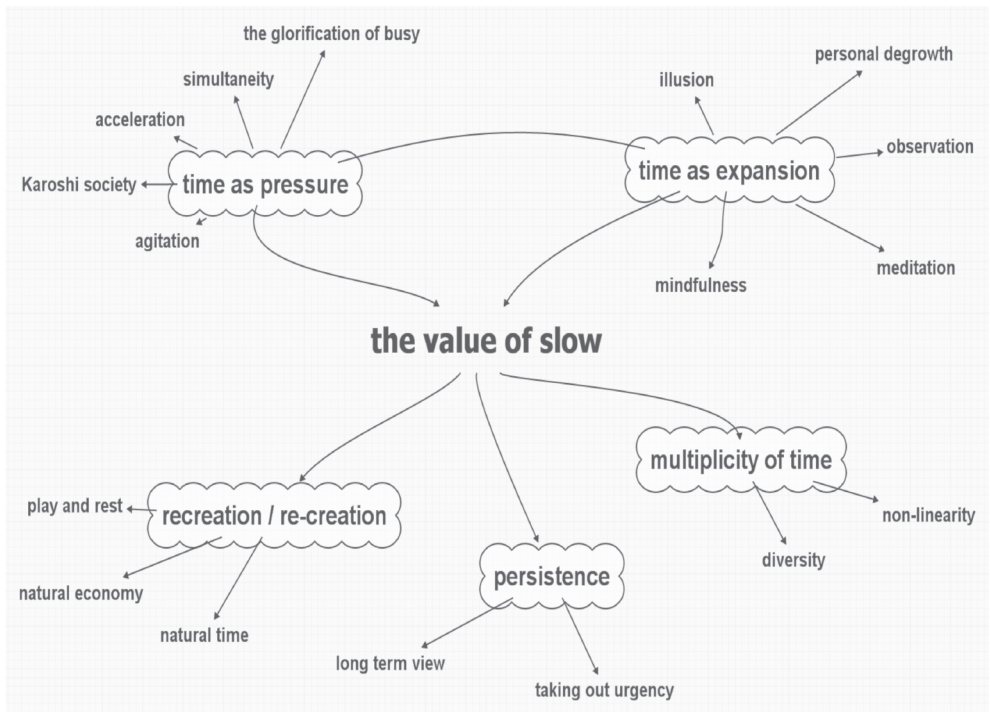
As F. S. stated:

We left our jobs so we could dedicate our time being BUSY on finding solutions for a more simple and sustainable lifestyle, linking people, connecting projects and bridging movements such as permaculture, transition town, and ecovillages. And there is so much work to do and explore in these areas that I created the illusion that I couldn't stop even for a minute [...].

On the other hand, experiencing slow time through mindfulness and meditation has also facilitated spiritual experiences to some of the respondents. They shared their perception of time as being an illusion that varies in relation to external objects. Time is mobility and speed only when we reference it to movement. The time spent in the garden observing plants grow or the time spent in the car on the highway are two very different temporal experiences; one is slow, the other is fast; one is natural, the other is artificial. In this sense, D. S. was able to elaborate on how time is an illusion when they experienced it as time-space, not as time: 'slow or fast are attributes of speed, and time should be a constant. Time-space is not time in itself, it is something else.'

Building on these perceptions of time as pressure and time as expansion, the discussions with my respondents evolved towards assessing the value of slow for a sustainable world. In their views, experiencing a slower time reveals at least three values necessary to build sustainability: persistence, multiplicity, and recreation. Persistence is a work attitude that implies the capacity of viewing long-term processes and effects. It is highly dependent on observation, as only taking the time to observe can reveal where action is needed. In D. S.'s words: 'what we do today in our culture of fast is to do a lot now and tomorrow correct what we have done today, a spiral that goes like crazy to nowhere, instead of slowing down and observing what really needs to be done.' A work attitude in which we focus on now and on today is short-sighted and unable to account for slower effects. Living agitated lives in the glorification of busy has created a general sense of urgency, of anxiety, as we have discussed above. Adopting a persistent attitude through slowing down may enable us to take out the sense of urgency (A. G.). This leads the way towards new cultures, in which we recreate and recreate. Consistent with the characteristics of cultural creatives, my respondents' experiences with slowing down have revealed the necessity and opportunity to recreate cultures, economies, and livelihoods. So, slowing down is not only an individual choice under the pressures of the present, it is also a social act based

on individual agency, which generates new ways of living. Slow is valuable in the transition from a busy, work-based life to a more natural life, in which work, rest, and play are balanced. Slow is an opportunity to better negotiate between these qualities of time through ‘stepping out from the one dimensional quality of time’ (P. J.). For another respondent, recreation both as play and rest and as creating a new culture is not about stepping out. It is about centring: ‘when I’m the centre, I let things come to me and I have the consciousness that everything is all right, I’m doing the right thing at the right time and I can change a lot, instead of trying to be everywhere. Sometimes I don’t need to do anything, because things are coming to me’ (M.W.). These various experiences of slow have revealed a quality of time that is not accessible in the fast society: multiplicity. My respondents have reported on how observing and working with various qualities of time has enriched their lives, rendering them capable of living multiple livelihoods in the same amount of time. The non-linearity and diversity of slow times has helped some of the respondents to understand the difference between natural time and economic time.



Graph 1. Conceptual map of the recurring topics in the unstructured interviews on perceptions of time and the value of slow. Generated with xMind.

The last 100 years we passed from the natural time to the economic time. Time is no longer about the speed of light or the growth of a tree or the revolution of

Earth around the sun. Rather, it is the time needed to travel from here to New York. We used to do this in several months, now we do it in a few hours. We constructed the concept of time around business, money, speed: the higher the speed the shorter time seems to be. This isn't an objective situation, it is just an economic construct based on cheap energy and higher and higher speeds of transfer of data (D. S.).

A natural time and a natural economy are systems in which work and productivity are no longer the focus. They are systems in which people no longer make a living based on earning money, but build livelihoods through participating in community life, engaging with nature, and working in a sustainable way.

Conclusion

The accounts on temporal experiences, as illustrated above and in *Graph 1*, indicate that members of the social movement for sustainability found individual and social ways of temporal disengagement with the processes of etatization, colonization, and commodification of time. Once venturing in experiences of slowing down, the respondents experienced desubjectification from various means of temporal control. This had a twofold effect. On the one hand, they have become the others of the mainstream culture, but any possible tension from disidentification was solved through acquiring the awareness of a higher scope and meaning: that of actively working for a sustainable future. Choosing to downshift and slow down and actively working for sustainability are not necessarily chronological, rather they are mutually informative. Through this reciprocity, slow time receives a political and cultural value. First, it mobilizes individuals to critique and disinvest the status quo, thus negating the current state of the crisis as being the only one. Indeed, the respondents who experienced the value of slow can see beyond Bourdieu's economic fatalism. Second, experiencing slow transformed from an individual subjective experience into a vision, a provocation for alternative futures. In this sense, the value of slow in the movement for sustainability resides in its intrinsic utopian character. The abilities to see and foresee beyond the tension of the crisis transform slow living into a utopian performance. The present is redefined as multiple, as diverse, as natural, as long-term, as not urgent, as playful and resting, and as opposed to busy, agitated, accelerating, and pressuring. The mere exploration of possibilities to slow down can transform time as pressure into time as expansion, from where our fast society can be informed and inspired on how observation, persistence, and multiplicity can re-create sustainable futures and hope.

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Academic Time at the Campus

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Abstract. The time budget of students is similar to that of the general population; the difference is that in the case of students we have substituted obligatory activities with academic time. This tract has got several elements at the campuses: students attend lectures, write essays, or read scientific literature, etc. The mass higher education system started to be formed in Hungary from the 90s, and this system has got some parts in which students' life is not so learning-centred because paid work and free time are also important elements of their lifestyles. In this study, we analyse two parts of academic time; firstly, the duration of preparing for lessons and, secondly, attendance at lessons. During this analysis, we used the HERD database from 2012.¹ From this international database, we separated the subsample of the University of Debrecen (N=1,118). Our aim was to feature the patterns of this field, and after that we analysed the results from the viewpoints of socio-cultural background, achievement, and academic attitudes. The findings show that the group with high academic timeframe comes from lower social groups (villagers, non-favourable economic situation, etc.). We can state that the academic attitudes (academic habitus, learning strategies, achievement) and academic time constitute a complex behavioural and thinking set for students.

Keywords: higher education, lifestyle, time budget, academic time, students

Theoretical frames

Universities are formal institutions, and this type of institution has got several different forms. Obviously, students have fixed time frames at campuses (lessons, practices, etc), but the extent of the autonomy is also significant. So, if we wished to approach universities from the viewpoint of institutional sociology, we could state that universities are not totally authoritarian organizations and they give several elements of the autonomy for the students. One significant part of this autonomy refers to the time budget. Some institutions stand closer to formal rules or strict norms; these are hierarchical systems, but in its every form individual

1 Registration number: HURO/0901/253/2.2.2. Leader: Prof. Dr. Tamás Kozma.

autonomy is a very important part from the Middle Ages (Bär 2005). In addition, in some ways, universities always take place ‘outside’ the society, and being a student at a university gives a special rhythm and special fixed activities.

Horsmanhof and Zimitat (2007) contend that students’ way of life is a balance among different demands and roles. Nowadays, in the context of mass higher education, the system has formed this opportunity, which also attaches to the selection and duties the concept of time balance. In the elite segment of higher education (HE) system, learning-centred activities and lifestyle are typical, but in some segments of the HE system this rigid lifestyle is not characteristic. Nevertheless, we have to see that this new section of the institutions sometimes stays closer to the secondary schools and leans less on the students’ autonomy.

Also, we have to see that the learning-centred lifestyle may work well if the degree generates a stable middle-class position and favourable opportunities at the labour market. In this case, the invested work can pay off. But this mechanism does not clearly function in Hungary, at least not after the Millennium. A degree can facilitate someone to find a suitable job, but it is not a guarantee for it. The higher education system in Hungary has changed since the 1990s. The number of full-time students has reached 200,000 over the last decade, but the gaps in the system have grown. We suppose that one part of the students have fallen away from the academic standards and life goals, but we do not have knowledge of the national and longitudinal data about the academic time of students.

It is also important that the academic time is not the only resource of the enlargement of the cultural capital. Several free-time activities and some segments of the paid work can generate similar processes as well. In connection with the first phenomenon, George et al. (2008) use the notion of ‘academic leisure activities’ (for example reading, writing poems, or debating). Time budget analysis is not the only method whereby we can recognize the students’ way of life. Such research results do not provide us data at all about the relation to time (collectivist or individualist patterns, the attitude towards rapidity, the fragmentation of time, flexibility, desultoriness, etc.). For those changes which have become general over the past two or three decades (Schilling 2005; Jurczyk and Voss 2015), universities offer ideal places. The special rhythm of students’ lifestyle and the frames of these institutions can verify these patterns. The process of mediatization can confirm these changes too.

Zinnceker (1993) observes that the degree of the youth’s autonomy has broadened in the second half of the 20th century. This change has presumably shaped the rules and norms of the universities, too. On the other hand, over the last few decades, the way of life became a substantial element of social stratification (Andorka et al. 1995), and this dimension has got a special relevance in the case of the youth. The different free-time activities are parts of the identity and show a picture about the self to the outside world. These activities generate a social status and they can

function like a status symbol, and we suppose that these mechanisms are working at the campuses, too. The subcultures of youth evolve generally opposite to the adults' world – and time use is an important segment of the adults' world. Violating the rules of society will become a significant part of identity in this cohort. For that very reason, the different activities were transposed into night-time (and these actions will be visualized on the Internet, too) or different social groups configure another attitude towards time and they try to intermit the 'rat race' of modern life.

Findings of earlier researches

Firstly, we have to see that the phenomenon of academic time is not productive in every case. During these periods, students can be passive or not too efficient; so, this value is not a guarantee of the academic achievement. But analysing the academic time is a very useful tool if we wished to give an overview about students' way of life.

Zulauf and Gortner (2009), in their analysis on the American students' time budget, observed that students' way of life is similar to the average American lifestyle, at least if we substitute paid work with learning. But we can state that these time frames are finite and if the duration of Information Technology (IT)-use or paid work widens, the academic time has to be reduced. The duration of these elements can be formed by the institutional programme requirements as well. Babcock and Marks (2011) analysed the academic time of American students, and they found that this period was reduced from 40 hours to 27 hours a week between 1961 and 2003. Meanwhile, IT-use and free time became more dominant in the students' time budget. Jacobsen and Forste (2011) concluded that the length of academic time is 5.5 hours a day in the case of the average American student. According to Mokhtari et al. (2009), the duration of Internet use is 2.47 hours a day, television use is about two hours a day, and reading is 3.3 hours (in scientific and recreation fields together).

The judgement of the reducing academic time is not unambiguous. These periods are not productive in every case. The evolution of educational technology can make a learning process easier and faster. When we analyse the connection between academic time and students' achievements, we have not found a clear relationship. One group of researchers have shown positive but not strong connection between these two fields, while the other group does not prove this correspondence (Zulauf and Gortner 1999).

In the frame of the Regional University Research (NKFP-26-0060/2002, Research Co-ordinator: Prof. Dr. Tamás Kozma), we have analysed the time budget data of students from three universities in the Partium region (University of Debrecen, Hungary; Partium Christian University, Oradea, Romania; Ferenc Rákóczi II

Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, Berehove, Ukraine). Learning, IT-use, free-time activities, and reading were significant parts of the students' lifestyle, but the means of homework and television use were under the mean values of the average population. The fixed terms were dominant, but the informal activities were also widespread (see Table 1). The sum of academic time was 368 minutes a day. Because the research was conducted in three countries, we are able to compare the time budget of the subsamples. The longest span of academic time was perceivable in Oradea (454 minutes a day).

Table 1. The students' time budget on a normal workday in 2005 (in minutes)

Activities	Minutes (mean values)
sleeping	419
personal hygiene	49
rest	71
attendance at lessons	203
learning at home	131
self-development	34
paid work	39
housework	43
transport	83
shopping	31
reading	49
television use	77
listening to music	82
computer use	54
Internet use	50
social life	95
hobbies	37

Source: Regional University Database, N=952 (see: Bocsi 2013a)

Although we do not know the general Hungarian students' time budget data, there are few research results which analyse the IT-use. For instance, Nagyné and Ambrus (2015) analysed the arts students from this aspects at the University of Pécs, and they contended that the most frequent answers were between three and four hours a day. When we try to map the attitude towards time and the special time frames of universities with qualitative methods, we receive a dissonant picture. This hectic and flexible lifestyle provides favourable circumstances for students, but their opinion is not univocal: we have found traces of nostalgia about their life before the massive IT-use and they find their lifestyle too casual and unpredictable (Bocsi 2014).²

² These attitudes are observable from the grounds of the 'Slow Movement'. Some parts of

Methodology

The HERD research was an international research with the participation of the University of Debrecen, the University of Oradea, and Partium Christian University. It was a two-year-long project: we laid down theoretical frames and an empirical phase, which was conducted in 2012. The same omnibus questionnaire was used in every country, so the findings are comparable. The project co-ordinator was Prof. Tamás Kozma.³ In this article, I analyse only the data of the University of Debrecen (N=1,118). The University of Debrecen has got a relatively high student population (28,000), and it is a regional university: our students come from the northern and eastern parts of the country and the economic level of these regions is relatively low.

Two questions referred to academic time in this questionnaire. The first referred to the preparation for lessons (less than one hour, two or three hours, over three hours) and the second is the attendance at lessons. In this last case, the students had to tell how many percent of their lessons they attend. We have analysed the duration of the IT-use (in minutes) and the frequency of the paid work, too. The following socio-cultural variables were used in the analysis: parental degree, economic situation (with the help of consumers' goods), the type of settlement, and the faculties of the university that the student attends. The analysis has three significant parts: the field of learning and its socio-cultural background, the segments of academic habitus, and the field of cultural activities.

Students' achievement was analysed with the help of 18 items (have written a publication, participated in a scientific conference, etc.) – and we created the index of achievement with the help of these values. We modelled the academic habitus with a question block that measured the attitude towards learning. The rate of accordance is relevant to these statements (also rated on a 4-step scale).⁴ We also configured the index of the learning strategies, which models the ability of learning. We analysed the field with a 4-step scale⁵ as well (contains 4 items such as: *I am able to prepare myself for the exams, I am able to study when I have more interesting things to do, etc.*). We analysed the cultural activities of students in the questionnaire, too (the frequency of reading, attendance of theatre, library, etc.). The following techniques were used during the analysis: percent, means, crosstabs, and variance-analysis.

this movement are observable in Hungary too. For example: <https://hu-hu.facebook.com/SlowBudapest> or <http://www.kultura.hu/slow-design-theme-of-9th>.

3 Research findings are available at: <http://unideb.mskszmsz.hu/hu/kutatasi-eredmenyek>

4 We assess the academic habit with the following statements: *The studies that I am doing will be useful in my professional career; I am very determined to finish my studies; I would like to achieve even better scholastic records; I do everything to participate in the seminar and the course.*

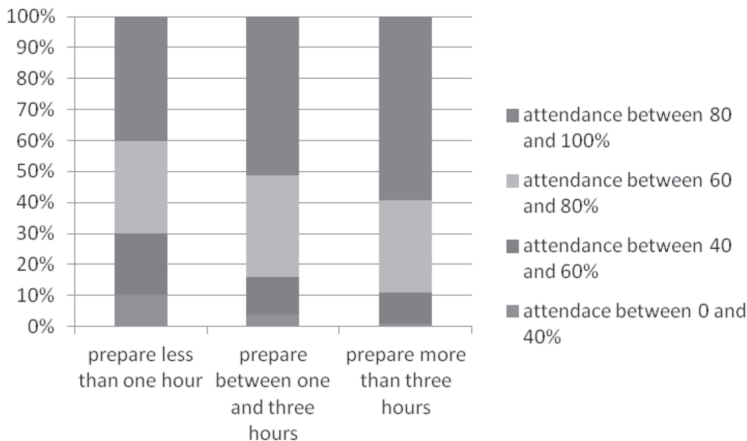
5 We made the index of learning strategies with the following statements: *I am able to study when I have more interesting things to do; I finish the papers in time which are required by the teachers; I am able to get ready for the exams; I am able to focus in the class; I participate in the course/seminar.*

Results of the analysis

Patterns of academic time

Unfortunately, we do not exactly know the means of the academic time because students had to choose terms. 26.6% of the students prepare less than one hour at home, 50.2% between one and three hours, and 23.2% more than three hours a day. These rates are comparable to the data of the Regional University Research from 2005 (then, 28.8% of the students prepared less than one hour and 17.1% of the students more than three hours). As to the strengths of these findings, we can state that the learning-centred attitude of students' way of life has not essentially changed over the last decades.⁶

If we analyse the frequency of lesson attendance, we can see that about 50% of the students take part in almost every lesson (between 80% and 100%) and it is relatively rare that they do not attend the lessons (4.4 percent of the students between 0% and 40%).⁷ We need to know that the students who took part in two or three trainings at the same time were significantly more common after the Millennium. If we analyse the relationship between these two fields, there is a significant connection (chi-square statistics, $p < 0.05$, sig: 0.000). The joint moving of these two dimensions is obvious: students who tend to take part in almost every lesson prepare more time at home, too. Therefore, a significant part of the students' life is learning-centred (*Graph 1*).



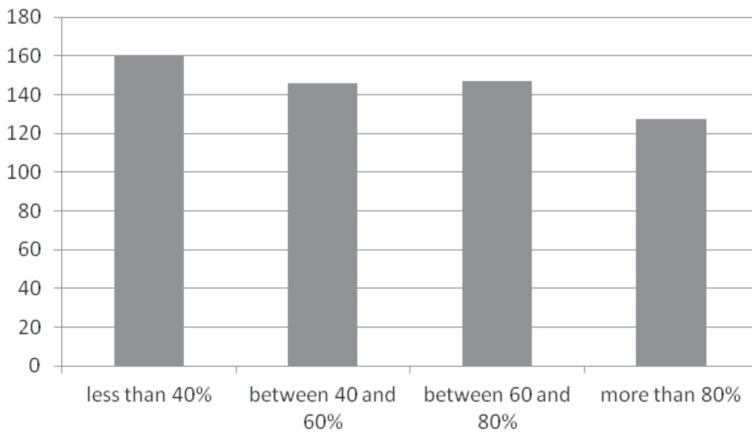
Source: HERD database. N=1,118. Cross-tabulation. Authors' computation

Graph 1. The relationship between the attendance of lesson and the learning at home

6 Unfortunately, we have no current statistics that deal with the students' time budget system.

7 0–40%: 4.4 percent of students, 40–60%: 14.4 percent of students, 60–80%: 31.7 percent of students, 80–100%: 49.8 percent of students.

As we have said, the students' life style is a balancing between learning, free time, and paid work. But this split is not clearly the students' choice because we have to reckon with the institutional features and requirements, the amount of the tuition fee, and the economic background of the students. In Hungary, a significant part of students have to pay tuition fees. Moreover, the system of student work has expanded in the last decade, so these opportunities are manageable from campuses. It is an important research question whether these two fields are opposed to the students' lifestyle or not. In the HERD questionnaire, we used different items to analyse the students' participation on the labour market.⁸ The cross-tabulations show one significant relationship – in the case of the attendance of the lessons (chi-square statistics, $p < 0.05$): students who regularly work during the terms and the holidays attend their lessons more rarely (sig.: 0.000 and 0.001). But we have to see that the participation on the labour market does not reduce the time of preparing in this sample. So, the contraposition of these two fields is not clearly demonstrable in students' lifestyle because the duration of the paid work does not shape the time of learning at home.



Source: HERD database. N=1,118. ANOVA-test. Authors' computation

Graph 2. The relationship between Internet use and the attendance of lessons (in minutes)

IT-use became an important part of students' life after the Millennium. The world of higher education system has adjusted to the Internet, but this time frame is not only connected to the periods of free time since students have relocated a significant part of the learning process to the Internet. If we analyse the time frame of Internet use,⁹ we will find a significant relationship between the

⁸ Two items were used: *I work during the term* and *I work during the holiday*. The eligible answers were the following: *never*, *sometimes*, and *regularly*.

⁹ We could not use a real-time analysis – students have to give the approximate time frame of their

attendance of lessons and the average number of minutes of Internet use during a normal workday (see *Graph 2*, ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.003). The mean value of Internet use is 137 minutes per day at the University of Debrecen. There was no connection between the preparation for the lessons and Internet use – but we have to see that these two activities can interlock during the learning process.

The effect of the socio-cultural and institutional background

When other researchers studied the relationship of academic habitus and the socio-demographic variables at the University of Debrecen, they found that strong academic goals and integration are not typical in the case of students who have a favourable background (Ceglédi 2015). We also tried to give an overview of the effects of gender, parental degree, economic capital, and the type of settlement. In addition, we used the data of nine faculties, too. The following table shows the overrepresented subsamples that give higher rates in the field of academic time.

Table 2. The socio-demographic background of the two fields of academic time

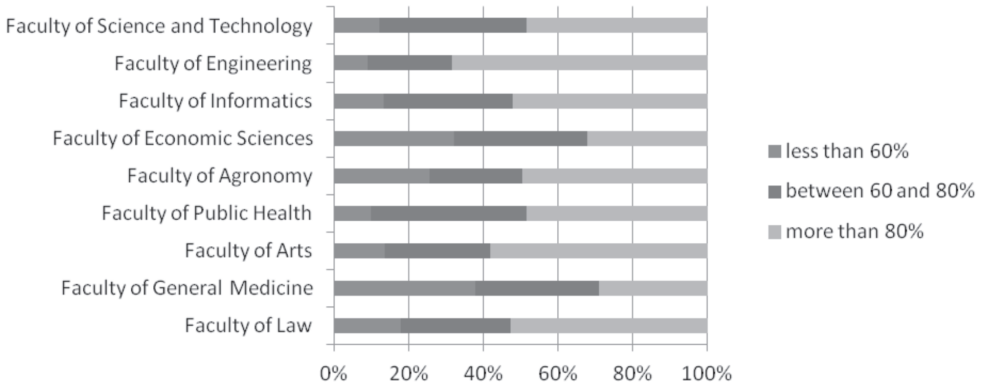
	Gender	Fathers' parental degree	Mothers' parental degree	Economic capital	Type of settlement
Attendance at lessons	women	-	without degree	low economic situation	-
Preparing for lessons	women	-	-	low economic situation	smaller city and villages

Source: HERD database. N=1,118. Cross-tabulation, $p < 0.05$. Authors' computation

The relationship is clearly interpretable – the duration of academic time is longer in the case of students who come from lower social groups. It is a very important question what kind of explanation can be used if we wanted to illuminate this connection. At first, we do not know whether this pattern is available at other Hungarian universities or not. But we can use the phenomenon of 'resilience' during the explanation (Ceglédi 2015), and we have to reckon with the Hungarian feature that the gaps between different social groups are less and universities give a relatively effective path of social mobility. Gender differences can be explained by the fact that women tend to follow stronger social norms (in this case, institutional norms).

When we use the variable of the faculties, it is important to know that rules and norms are different inside the campus as well as the requirements. In some

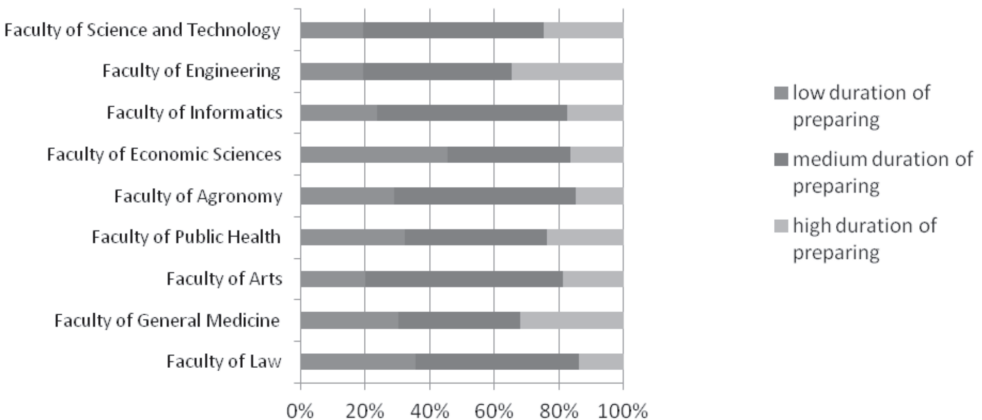
faculties, attendance is stressed and important, but in others the results of the examinations are more important. If we analyse the effect of the faculties, two significant relationships can be found (graphs 3 and 4).



Source: HERD database. N=9.52, ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

Graph 3. The relationship between attendance at lessons and the faculties

The patterns of the diagram show us different activities in this field. But we have to know that this is not the only element of the academic time, and not every attendance is effective. Some faculties with high prestige have got low proportions (Faculty of Economic Sciences, Faculty of General Medicine), but this connection is not typical in every case. A higher rate of proportion is typical at the Faculty of Engineering and at the Faculty of Arts.



Source: HERD database. N=9.52, ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

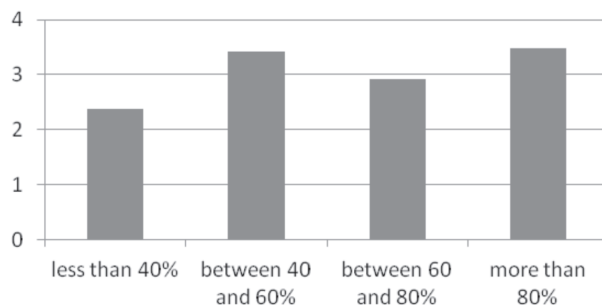
Graph 4. The relationship between preparation time for lessons and the faculties

The data referring to the time spent for preparing for the lessons are not in opposition with the previous pattern. The extent of academic time is minor for example in the Faculty of Economic Sciences or the Faculty of Public Health. Preparing for the lesson is more typical in the Faculty of General Medicine. Nevertheless, we have to handle these data carefully because the survey was conducted during the semester and not the examination period, and the high inputs of academic time are not a guarantee for efficiency in every case. But it is clear that the institutional segments generate the different patterns of academic time and the students' entire lifestyle.

Analysis of students' academic attitudes

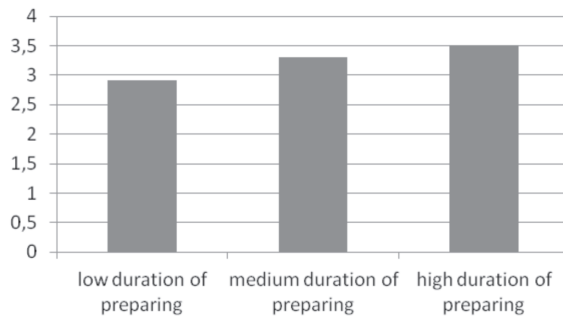
Students' academic habitus was analysed by the values of academic habitus, learning strategies, and achievement. From these listed values, we created an index. As we mentioned before, the scientific literature tends to contend that achievement is not associated with academic time in every case. One of our earlier researches showed that the wider academic time does not generate higher grade point averages (Bocsi 2013b) – but the GPA is not equal to the achievement.

In our first step, we used the index of achievement, and its means were analysed by ANOVA test (graphs 5 and 6.). Two significant relationships were found, but only one is linear. We have to claim that the achievement stays in a clear connection with preparing for the lessons; so, this element of academic time seems to be more effective. Attendance at lessons is rather part of the institutional requirements and not an autonomous choice of students.



HERD database. N=1.118. ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

Graph 5. The relationship between the index of achievement and the attendance at lessons



Source: HERD database. N=1.118. ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

Graph 6. The relationship between the index of achievement and preparing for lessons

When we used the index of learning strategies and academic attitudes, we found a significant and linear relationship. Therefore, commitment towards academic goals and plans generates higher durations in the fields of preparing and the attendance of the lessons (*Table 3*). The most different fields of academic time stay in connection with academic habitus, but there was no linear relationship between the attendance of the lessons and the index of achievement.

Table 3. The academic times' relationship with the academic habitus and the learning strategies

<i>Attendance at lessons</i>	Mean of academic habitus	Mean of learning strategies	<i>Preparing for lessons</i>	Mean of academic habitus	Mean of learning strategies
less than 40%	12.75	13.55	low duration of preparation	15.57	16.83
between 40 and 60%	14.82	16.31	medium duration of preparation	16.4	18.47
between 60 and 80%	16.13	17.86	high duration of preparation	17.22	19.37
more than 80%	17.11	19.42	<i>sig.</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>
<i>sig.</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>			

Source: HERD database. N= 1,118. $p < 0.05$. Authors' computation

Cultural activities and academic time

These two fields (cultural activities and academic time) are important elements of students' lifestyle and time budget. As we mentioned, the proportion of free time has changed over the last few decades, but we do not know the exact trends regarding the Hungarian student population.

Reading can significantly improve the measure of cultural capital, but not every form of this activity belongs to the high culture. Moreover, it is a typical intellectual activity. Some segments of reading undoubtedly link to the academic time. We analysed the connection between frequency of reading and two fields of academic time, but we have not found any relationship. In the following step, we looked into the frequency of different cultural activities (theatre, multiplex cinema, traditional cinema, museum, concert, and library). The relevant data can be seen in *Table 4*.

Table 4. The relationship between academic time and cultural activities

	Attendance at lessons	Preparing for lessons
Theatre	–	–
Multiplex cinema	negative relationship	–
Traditional cinema (for example, art cinema)	negative relationship	–
Museum	–	positive relationship
Concert (classical music)	non-linear relationship	positive relationship
Library	positive relationship	positive relationship

Source: HERD database. N = 1.118. Cross-tabulation, $p < 0.05$. Authors' computation

The positive connection in the case of library attendance is a common feature, but we have found different patterns. First, we can declare that academic time does not shape every item of cultural activities and the directions of these two fields are different, too. Preparing for lessons can be linked easier to the high culture, but the effect of attendance at lessons is not univocal. If this time frame is significant, students tend to go to cinema rarely (though traditional cinema is closer to high culture), and we have found a non-univocal pattern in the case of concerts.¹⁰

Summary

The lifestyle of students has changed and the academic time has been reduced – this is the main edification of some international researches. The mass higher education system may give a favourable context to this transformation in Hungary,

¹⁰ Students who never go to concerts are overrepresented in the subsample, which is characterized with attendance at lessons between 60 and 80%.

too. In this study, we have tried to give an overview connected with the notion of academic time. Our findings are not generalizable because only the subsample of the University of Debrecen was used during the analysis.

The main edification of our work is that the students' lifestyle is henceforward learning-centred. But these patterns are embedded in socio-demographic backgrounds and the more significant amount is typical in the case of students from the lower social groups. We used two dimensions of academic time: the attendance at lessons and the preparation for lessons. The second dimension can be linked easier to the achievement and to the high cultural activities. Not univocal and linear connections can be observed in the case of attendance at lessons, but this time frame may be due to institutional norms and requirements and not to findings of independent choice in every case.

We can declare that with the help of these findings academic time, academic attitudes, and cultural activities have got several intersections, but we know that these connections are not punctual and deep enough. In the future, it will be very important to conduct qualitative analyses on this topic (academic time, academic attitudes, and students' lifestyle) and make a longitudinal survey too.

If we wished to connect our findings to the problem and chance of slowness, we could state that the students' time budget and the spacious duration of free time can offer these conditions. But we suppose that there are different circumstances which encumber, for example, the unreasonable length of screening time and the unpredictable and hectic way of student life. Our earlier research (Bocsi 2014) showed that these movements have reasons for existence at universities, too.

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Case studies



Is It Possible to Really Slow Down in Our Everyday Lives? The New Challenges of the Slow Movement and Why Has the Slow Food Movement Approach Been Exceeded?

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Abstract. The unknown, yet increasing negative effects of the digital era, the wishes and dreams sold by the media and big corporations, the instant solutions provided by the banks and the psychology behind it, together with our lack of self-awareness and an unwillingness to take responsibility for our own decisions, lead us to a rat-race-like, consumerism-based life, the maintenance of which is so energy-consuming and stressful that we can hardly believe there is a slow way out of it. The author, leader of the Slow Budapest movement, got on a mission to find the way to a successful Slow Change.

Keywords: Slow Movement, slow change, awareness, self-motivation, ability to change, Slow Budapest

'We are in a hurry because we don't want to miss out on the important things. Or do we miss out on the important things because we hurry?'

The (re)definition of 'being slow' in our day and age, and the complexity of the problem of 'being fast'

Thanks to the already existing word 'slow' with all of its fixed negative connotations,² one of the first challenges according to the slow movement is the adaptation and thus redefinition of the notion: being slow. A slowdown usually equates with something decreasing, diminishing, decelerating, or declining.³ It

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2 The Free Dictionary (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/slow>, last visit on 23 July 2015).

3 Oxford Dictionaries (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/slowdown>, last

does so in economic terms too; so, whenever we hear this at a company meeting or on the news, it does not mean too much good is coming, does it? Even when it comes to describing someone and we use the word ‘slow,’ that person is actually being called lazy or less brighter or intellectually challenged.⁴

No wonder that all of the committed slow organizations, talkers, or service providers spend quite a lot of effort and time on explaining why slowing down does not mean anything bad that we (people, companies, society) need to fear. *The task is not smaller than changing the pervading viewpoint that fast is success and slow is failure.*

Here is a statement from Cecile Andrews (2006, 9) that might make you wonder about challenging your traditional point of view:

Fast and Slow do more than just describe a rate of change. They are shorthand for ways of being, or philosophies of life. Fast is busy, controlling, aggressive, hurried, analytical, stressed, superficial, impatient, active, quantity-over-quality. Slow is the opposite: calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over-quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections – with people, culture, work, food, everything.

What we can also see here is the confirmation of the coexistence of slow and fast: ‘Slow’ has always been defined as the opposite of ‘Fast’ and vice versa – these two notions do not exist without each other. That might be the reason why Carl Honoré (2005, 15) says that slowing down is rather about finding a balance between the two opposites: ‘Be fast when it makes sense to be fast, and be slow when slowness is called for’.

And here lies the second challenge of the slow movement: it is actually really hard to decide wisely what is good or bad for us, what is necessary or enough and when. We live in a society where we will not ever be told not to consume more. We will not ever be reassured that as people we are enough. Think about the messages coming from the media or the advertisement campaigns run by big corporations. We are constantly bombed with unmissable offers; so, we are likely to think it is okay (not even okay but a must) to buy a house, the most expensive cell phone or laptop and one or two cars... things we actually cannot afford. No problem, we take on loans, a common activity of our society, which is clearly a sign that means we over-consume big time.

And if this is not enough there is that fact too that we live in the world of limitless possibilities thanks to the digital shift that enables us to gather information, learn a foreign language, set up a business, or sign up to a course anytime and anywhere in the blink of an eye. As promising and rewarding this situation is, it is not hard to start thinking that we are missing out on something.

visit on 23 July 2015).

4 Cambridge Dictionaries (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/slow>, last visit on 23 July 2015).

The FOMO (fear of missing out)⁵ is an existing source of stress nowadays and an important accelerator in the developed and developing world.

You might be one of the increasing number of people (now 54%; in 2050, it is projected to be 66%) living in big cities.⁶ Among the several challenges that are put on the local governments by this phenomenon, there is the individual problem of it too: people get de-attached from nature; for them, it must be a pre-planned programme to go out to the trees and connect to the nature. We miss the change of seasons in our climate-controlled flats, offices, and cars, and we are exposed to light and noise pollution, which affect the quality of our sleep. Living in a big city does not provide us with the rest that is essential for allowing us to stop, reflect, and process. This altered lifestyle and the new kinds of jobs (like web engineering, application development, administration... that have outrageously increased in the fast world) put us in our heads – we cannot touch anything anymore, the results of our jobs are not tangible. This leads to the lack of a sense of achievement and decreased production of happiness hormones. No wonder we start to look for it in other ways, like by spending more money and piling up stuff or doing endurance sports, i.e. further accelerating our lives.

The unknown, yet increasing negative effects of the digital era, the wishes and dreams sold by the media and big corporations, the instant solutions provided by the banks and the psychology behind it, together with our lack of self-awareness and an unwillingness to take responsibility for our own decisions, lead us to a rat-race-like, consumerism-based life, the maintenance of which is so energy-consuming and stressful that we can hardly believe there is a slow way out of it.

How can we find the slow way? The building of the Slow Movement.

The foundations of the Slow Movement were laid down in an activist approach, which meant and still means questioning the government, defining principles, organizing group events for the affected actors, sharing information, creating and educating communities all over the world, and co-operation with governmental and EU institutions. Ever since, they have been forming representative groups in the interest of the people, and practising pressure on the ones at the top of the food chain. Just like a traditional NGO would do.

This is how the Slow Food Movement has been building itself since 1986, when a gastroblogger, Carlo Petrini (now the head of the Slow Food Movement), demonstrated against the opening of a McDonald's at the Spanish Steps in Rome.

5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_of_missing_out (last visit on 23 July 2015.).

6 <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

At this time, the movement's focus was only on food, with the initial aim of defending regional traditions, good food, gastronomic pleasure and a slow pace of life, thus its name: a movement against fast food.⁷

Here is the simple advice that they have been giving to people and communities:

Go Slow in your life: 1) Buy whole ingredients. Cook them. Eat them. 2) Avoid processed stuff with long ingredient lists. Eat real food. 3) Grow some of your own food. Even if just on your windowsill. 4) Whenever possible, know the story behind the food you buy. 5) Buy local food; find out what is in season!

Go Slow in your community: 1) Cook and eat with others – not just family and friends. Bring new people and perspectives to the table. 2) Join a community garden and grow food with others. 3) Connect with your local Slow Food chapter. 4) Shake the hand that feeds you. Meet the people who grow your food. Shop at a farmers' market, visit a farm or buy shares from a farm that offers a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programme. 5) Learn about your local or regional food history and cultural dishes.⁸

With a lot of effort, expertise, and commitment put into it, now the Slow Food Movement consists of more than 1,500 *conviva* (which are the local representative forces) in more than 150 countries involving millions of people, who either support (1 million) or pay membership fees (100,000) to the leading organization in Bra, Italy.⁹ Together they are working on thousands of projects and undertake such topics as: animal welfare, bees, family farming, food waste, GMOs, indigenous Terra Madre Network, land grabbing, slow meat, slow cheese, slow Europe, slow fish, or slow wine.¹⁰

With Petrini at the top, they run a university¹¹ where you can earn an undergraduate or master's degree in Gastronomic Sciences, Food and Culture Communications, the Slow Art of Italian Cuisine and Italian Wine, at a fee of 12,500–23,200 euros. He also governs a publishing company, Slow Food Editore,¹² and an event organizer company, Slow Food Promozione,¹³ that organizes the famous Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre gatherings every second year. They reinvest all income into the building of the Slow Food Movement. Petrini also helped to launch the Slow Cities (in Italian: Cittaslow) movement in 1999.¹⁴

The designation 'Slow City' will become the mark of quality for smaller communities (only those with less than 50,000 residents may apply). Slow Cities are

7 Slow Budapest, 2015. 07.23. <http://slowbudapest.com/about-slow-budapest/> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

8 <http://www.slowfood.com/international/27/be-a-coproducer>.

9 Slow Food (<http://www.slowfood.com>, last visit on 23 July 2015).

10 Slow Food (<http://www.slowfood.com>, last visit on 24 July 2015).

11 University of Gastronomic Science: <http://www.unisg.it/en/> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

12 <http://www.slowfood.com/international/food-for-thought/publications/79792/slow-food-editore/q=123> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

13 <http://www.slowfood.com/international/6/faqs> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

14 <http://www.cittaslow.org/section/association> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

not state capitals or the seat of regional governments, but they are strong communities that have made the choice to improve the quality of life for their inhabitants.¹⁵

The Cittaslow movement relies on the actual towns and their governing board. A town can be accepted as a slow city if it 'scores at least 50 percent in a self-assessment process against the set of Cittaslow goals (= accepting the guidelines of Slow Food and working to improve conviviality and conserving the local environment), and then applies for admission to the appropriate Cittaslow national network. An annual membership fee of 600 euro is payable by towns.'¹⁶ There are now 199 cities from 30 countries in the network,¹⁷ where they implement programmes such as recycling projects, Presidia (= to sustain quality production at risk of extinction, protect unique regions and ecosystems, recover traditional processing methods, safeguard native breeds and local plant varieties.),¹⁸ after-school programmes, and information for tourists that helps them have a real "local's" experience.¹⁹

So, now we know better what is good and bad for us thanks to these global movements. But a question still remains: how can we implement a good habit into our own lives when the children have to be taken care of, when we cannot quit our demanding jobs because of money issues, when we live in a big city surrounded by supermarkets?

A simple advice about going to the farmers' market or spending more time in the nature will not be enough.

Self-motivation and the ability to change: two important elements in creating the slow life. And why have the global slow movement's challenges exceeded the Slow Food and Cittaslow approach and practice?

The Slow Food and Cittaslow movement initiated the global slow movement and made it possible to slow down in gastronomy and (to a lesser extent) small-town living. But thanks to the new challenges of the fast world, they do not necessarily answer its challenges anymore. There are new topics to be taken care of as well as another important thing, i.e. the Food and Cities approach is rather about macro-changes on a society level, and they have got extremely good results

15 <http://www.cittaslow.org/section/association/philosophy> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

16 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cittaslow> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

17 http://www.cittaslow.org/download/DocumentiUfficiali/CITTASLOW_LIST_July_2015.pdf (last visit on 23 July 2015).

18 <http://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/what-we-do/slow-food-presidia/> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

19 <http://www.cittaslow.org/section/association/how-to-become> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

there, but they have got limitations with regards to supporting the slowdown of the individual's actual pace of life.

For instance, the Slow Food organization helps the producers develop and finance themselves, it helps the consumers, chefs, and the world of gastronomy acquire more knowledge on healthy eating and access good quality food in more and more places in the world. It helps everyone become more conscious of what kind of food they should produce, eat, and pay for. They participate in breeding the best quality of seeds and protecting rare species. They bring attention to the actual value of the food that one eats, the fair compensation of the farmers, and the individual responsibility of the consumer. They are mission-oriented, and for this they built a global organization with connections and dialogues on every level of the food chain. And it is a very great thing! No wonder Carlo Petrini has been honoured with so many prizes and titles, including the '50 people who could save the planet' by *The Guardian*.²⁰

The Slow Food and Cittaslow movement, however, do not give an answer for the individual struggling in the world of digital frenzy and in a big city, which could actually be the root cause of choosing fast food over seasonal and local products or cooking too. These two base movements function well under relaxed conditions and (actually together with the Slow Design²¹ or any other approaches²² that stop on the same level too) were born to create sustainable possibilities and to share knowledge, but they do not provide advice on how and why the actual change happens in our own everyday lives. They still keep people on a certain level of inertia, i.e. they do not deal with the emotional and psychological causes of our hurried lifestyle and do not help to solve the lack of the ability to change our habits, reach out for the better, set up a plan, and realize it.

The question of slowing down is still out there: how can we slow down our own over-hurried lives when we do not operate under ideal conditions and a change is necessary?

The slow change

In the past 3 years since I launched Slow Budapest,²³ I have been trying out different tips and practices and continuously discovering the solutions and answers provided by other actors in the global slow movement. In 2012, I started my NGO

20 <http://www.slowfood.com/international/7/history> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

21 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow_design (last visit on 23 July 2015).

22 <http://www.slowlivingtoday.com>, <http://www.slowmagazine.com.au> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

23 Slow Budapest is a team of 15 volunteers including communicators, foodies, coaches, photographers, graphic designers, and travellers. The movement has 3 years of operation and more than 15 slow events, more than 40 contributing partners, more than 10,000 Facebook likes,

with the aim of slowing myself down. At that time, I was leading a very stressed-out life in the Hungarian capital, Budapest, and I did not feel happy. I knew that a lot of things were not right in my life and that a change was necessary – but I did not know which way to start. Then I randomly bumped into an article written about the slow movement, and I suddenly realized that my life was too hurried to be enjoyable and that I was on a wrong track, but until then I had not even had enough time to find this out. I felt that slowing down could be a simple answer to my problems. I felt it would be simple because nobody else or no money seemed necessary to slow myself down – the success was upon me. At the beginning of my slow change, the principles and the topics undertaken by the slow movement helped me on my way: I knew that a fast lifestyle affects our way of eating (= Slow Food Movement) and commuting (= cittaslow movement), our holidays (= slow travel), our relationships with nature and other people, our reading and parenting habits (= low reading and slow parenting movement) and usage of objects (= slow design), our way of working (= slow work movement), even our e-mailing habits (= slow e-mail movement). So, I started to change my habits in these areas and without knowing it I started on my journey about self-awareness.

In the following years, I managed to change the way I eat and live in the big city: I switched from fast food to farmers' food and cooking, and from public transport and taxis to cycling and walking. I started to switch off and I de-cluttered my life, I gave a lot of speeches, including two TED talks about the movement and my experiences; I was building my organization and got 40 volunteers by my side, with whom we organized several events and communication projects, such as the world's first Slow Week²⁴ or Budapest's first Farmers' Market Map,²⁵ to help spread the goodness of Slow in Hungary. I quit my old, stressful job, took up yoga and meditation, and swapped back to a dumb phone.

But as good as it was going for me I could see a lot of people around me still struggling in their fast lives despite our work at Slow Budapest. I got interested in the psychology of change and the functioning of the mind and the reason why it is so hard to pay attention to ourselves and bring goodness into our lives. With my team, and especially with Györgyi Sudár,²⁶ a life coach, art therapist, and psychology student, we got on a mission to find the answers. Together with her we elaborated a long-term slowdown programme based on positive psychology, coaching methodology, and the slow philosophy.

and more than 50 media appearances including in Marie Claire, The Economist Intelligent Life, We Love Budapest, etc. We edit the Slow Budapest newsletter: the monthly summary of our news (in Hungarian); we have Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram pages. More details at: <http://slowbudapest.com/about-slow-budapest/>

24 <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.608605855830909.1073741826.466006833424146&type=3> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

25 <http://slowbudapest.com/termeloi-piacok-budapesten/> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

26 <http://sudartcoaching.com> (last visit on 23 July 2015).

We like to think about ‘being slow’ as a balanced way of living. For us, it means to take a slower pace in every area of our lives. To do fewer things and to do them well. It is not about living at a slow speed; rather, it is a mindset, a way of life where quality is more important than quantity. It allows us to arrive back at our natural pace, to connect, and feel more at peace.²⁷ Slowing down does not mean travelling back in time, neither it is about setting up our own eco-farm in the middle of nowhere, nor about escaping to backpack in South America for a year. A lot of us can not or do not want to make such changes. For example, if you live in a big city and have got a demanding job that you can not quit because of money issues, you should not and could not start changing your life by giving up everything. In the search for balance, one thing is really essential: try to avoid extremities that cause more stress. When you would like to de-clutter your life and mind, it is not helpful to maintain the same attitude from where you want to escape. So, the first step towards ‘being slow’ is to try to avoid extremities and the second is to try to shift from our perfectionist attitude to a more patient and understanding one.

It is recommended to map the problem and our current situation as well as to be aware of the outer world’s (not just the media’s but even our family’s too) contradictory expectations and accelerating messages, like working overtime is the way to success in our career.

We then must put effort and time into getting to know ourselves. And I think this is by far the biggest challenge. As Henry T. Ford says: ‘Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it’ (Honoré 2013).

Building self-awareness is so essential in our opinion that our long-term slowdown programme revolves around it. With the question of a slow change, there comes a lot of issues, wishes, and beliefs hidden deep inside ourselves. Why can we not be patient? Why can we not take that step? Why do we schedule up our days? Why do we not respect our body and mind and give them a rest? Why do we blame others for our situation? Why do we always live in the past or in the future? Why do we always procrastinate? Why can we not switch off? What are our strong points and motivations that can help us in a slow change? What are the pitfalls that we need to watch out for? What can be our real goals with slowing down?

With Slow Budapest, we have put ourselves on a mission to find these answers and help the change really happen. We are at the beginning of the journey and we will surely learn a lot about the slow change in the coming years. One thing is for sure: in this superficial world where everyone is just talking instead of doing, where products come out without being tested, where there is no time for development and perfecting, it is still possible to live slowly in a successful

27 A quote from my article at: www.yogiapproved.com/life-2/the-slow-movement/ (last visit on 23 July 2015).

way. But it requires time, patience, and knowledge – things that we actually miss in our fast lives.

For now, I would recommend these: 1) Be honest with yourself and acknowledge that you do not feel well and that a change is necessary. This can be hard, but it is essential for the change. The revelation will give you motivation that will trigger you in the following steps. 2) Get to know the problem. Collect knowledge, check out the slow websites and resources! By reading them, you will get to know the conditions surrounding you: it is not necessarily your fault that you are speeding up, you know? So, do not wind yourself up! 3) Stop, and make time for the change. Let go of that belief that if you say no to things and opportunities you would be left behind. 4) Prepare! We are likely to jump this step, but, hey, we are about slow down; so, give time for the preparation! On preparation I mean, for example, finding new habits instead of the ones to give up. Write a list about what you like, what you do not like, and what you would like in life. 5) Be open to changes, trust in the unknown and the belief that everything will work out well. Slowing down can be seen as a passive activity, but it actually requires stamina and courage. This step can be helped by doing yoga and meditation. 6) At the beginning of forming a new habit, let yourself fall into the situation and stay there, even if you feel a bit scared of it. Give it a chance! 7) Search for groups and friends who are supportive in this case. Search for professional programmes that can enhance your own journey. They will help you be ready for the pitfalls too. Because there will be pitfalls for sure! 8) Reflect! Sometimes new situations and challenges can come up that make us forget about the real goals. It is important to be alert. 9) Finally, do not forget to be happy about the little joys and successes.

You will go through different phases, i.e.: 1) The level of awareness: when you learn about yourself and the environment surrounding you. 2) The survival with ad-hoc slowdowns: you will know you will want to slow down and you will have slow moments or days, weekends, but the theory will still be hard to implement into practice on the long term. 3) Be slow in your free time but fast at work or in other areas of your life: you have changed your free time (where you are the boss), but in the other areas of your life, where you have to adopt to certain expectations, especially at work, it will still be a challenge to stop. 4) Balanced and hurried periods follow each other in your life: you can manage your slow life in a successful way and you can feel the good effects of change, but the new situations (e.g. having a child or changing jobs) will still be a challenge. 5) Being slow every day: here, slowing down is the goal, not the tool. You subordinate your decisions to it. You might change your profession, move out of your city, make new friends, and create your own community.

There will surely come feelings of doubt, fear, anger, courage, success, love, and peace with this. And you will eventually find out which stage you want to get at and how much it is worth for you to change. We are not the same and we

are not at the same stage of our lives. So, one thing is for sure: even the most professional programmes cannot help you if you economize on making your own decisions. Develop self-awareness and reflect on what is happening to you and on how you feel – that is the most important element of a slow change.

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Resources on Slow Budapest

- Nelli Krajcsó's TED talk: Slowness, the Way to Completeness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvhHOUpLxr0>.
- Nelli Krajcsó's article on the slow movement: Why Is It Time to Take a Slower Pace? <http://www.yogiapproved.com/life-2/the-slow-movement/>.
- On Slow Budapest: <http://slowbudapest.com/about-slow-budapest/>.



The *Slow Media Manifesto* and Its Impact on Different Countries, Cultures, and Disciplines

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Abstract. The article presents the evolution of the Slow Media Manifesto, a project which was launched in 2010. The Slow Media Manifesto was a collaborative work written on a web page in German. The Manifesto can be perceived as a different media, a different reaction to the online versus print media debate. It is a media which puts the accent on sustainability, monotasking, discursive content, social distribution, etc. The present study looks at the case of this project from its beginning to nowadays.

Keywords: slow media, sustainability, translation, journalism platforms

Introduction

In 2010, Benedikt Köhler, Jörg Blumtritt, and Sabria David published the Slow Media Manifesto on the 2nd of January (Blumtritt et al. 2010). It was a collaborative work, written on a web-based collaborative real-time editor the days and nights before. It picked up conversations between the authors during the last months, starting with a discussion on Twitter, continuing on conferences, in blog posts, in the comments of blog posts, and at kitchen tables. The Manifesto also was a reaction to a specific phase in the German media debate, which was a non-constructive fight between online media and print media, each one claiming to be the universal solution. We, authors, felt that in these times of transition it was time to look at media and society from a different angle. We were – and still are – searching for ‘appropriate reactions to this media revolution [that] are to be developed and integrated politically, culturally and socially’.¹ Referring to Carlo Petrini’s term of ‘slow food’ (Petrini 2001), we named our concept ‘slow media,’ defining criteria for how ‘good’ media can work in our times. Several Anglophone authors had already used the term ‘slow media’ in publications, like Tyler Brûlé (see Butterworth 2009) and Jennifer Rauch (Rauch 2009).

1 The Slow Media Manifesto (<http://en.slow-media.net/manifesto>), (German original <http://www.slow-media.net/manifest>)

The Slow Media Manifesto was written in German, picked up an Italian concept of slowness, and referred to Anglophone publications. So, the Slow Media Manifesto had, from its beginning, an intercultural and discursive character: it is the result of conversations and wants to talk to people.

This paper retraces the viral spread of the Manifesto from its beginning and brings together reactions, backlinks, and debates from all over the world. It adds relevant international sources to the work of Jennifer Rauch: ‘The Origin of Slow Media: Early Diffusion of a Cultural Innovation through Popular and Press Discourse, 2002–2010’ (Rauch 2011). According to the databases she used, Jennifer Rauch focused mainly on English sources. She writes:

While this study sketches the general contours of Slow Media’s origins, emergence and diffusion, it probably does not represent the full range of worldwide discourses about this sub-cultural movement. [...] The study also likely under-represents non-Anglophone discourses about Slow Media, since foreign-language sources were largely absent from the databases that I used. (Rauch 2011)

As we can trace the backlinks on our German and English blogs, we can add especially a lot of non-English sources. These sources show that the Slow Media Manifesto was adapted and adopted all over the world, essentially in the Northern Hemisphere, adding Australia, Brazil, and South Africa. The Slow Media discourse is a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary phenomenon.

Translations and adaptations

One of the very early reactions to the published manifesto was a tweet by Wolfgang Blau, who was – at that time – chief editor of ‘Zeit Online,’ the website of the leading German weekly newspaper. He claimed an English translation as he wrote:

‘Worth reading: “The Slow Media Manifest”² (in German only, thus far). So, we translated the manifesto into English and set up a slow media blog in English with the translated manifesto and several translated blog posts.’ Most of the international links refer to this English blog. Only a month later, on the 19th of February 2010,¹ French readers translated the German manifesto in French and announced it on Twitter.³ It was widely spread in France via Twitter, blogs, and newspapers. One of the reactions was an invitation to speak at a French conference at the European Council in Strasbourg (Les Assises du Journalisme, in

2 Blau, Wolfgang, @wblau, 3rd January 2010, Web (Twitter). <https://twitter.com/wblau/status/7327194804>.

3 Le manifeste des slow media. In: OWNI.fr (<http://owni.fr/2010/08/04/le-manifeste-des-slow-media-traduction-fr/>) French translation by Enikao (Nicolas Doll).

November 2010). The conference showed that there are equivalent discussions on slow media, slow info, and the future of journalism in France. Five days after the launch of the French translation, a short paraphrase of the Slow Media Manifesto was published in Italian,⁴ referring to the French translation.

On 23rd June, 2010, Geert Lovink, the Dutch-Australian media theorist, picked up the English translation of the manifesto and posted it in full length on his mailing list *nettime* (Lovink 2010). Five days later (28th June 2010), Bruce Sterling also posted the complete English translation on his Wired Blog 'Beyond the Beyond' (Sterling 2010). As Geert Lovink told me later on a conference, Bruce Sterling had read the manifesto originally on *nettime* before he handed it on to his own readers.

After those two publications, we recognized wide international reactions such as several Russian translations⁵ and several Ukrainian translations.⁶ The manifesto was widespread in Russia, as we can see by the web search for the Cyrillic transcription of the authors' names.⁷ The quoted Russian translation also shows 94 comments, proving that people are debating the statements and adopting and continuing the discourse in their local contexts. Recently, the Manifesto has been translated into Spanish⁸ and Catalan⁹ by the readers (the Spanish translation is from the German, the Catalan from the English manifesto).

Another multiplier for international response was an interview on Slow Media that I gave for the Goethe Institute.¹⁰ It was translated into English, Spanish, Chinese, Ukrainian, Portuguese, and Arabic, and published on the local Goethe websites in China, UK, Australia, Lebanon, Gulf Region, Egypt, Mexico, Chile, and Brazil. The international departments of the Goethe Institute decided whether the subject was of local interest.

4 Slow Media Manifesto. Italian paraphrase (<http://www.lsd.it/2010/slow-media-manifest/>).

5 See, for instance: <http://habrahabr.ru/post/98367/>.

6 See, for instance: <http://www.mandala.org.ua/voprosy-i-otvety/slow-life-novaya-filosofiya-zhizni-chast-1>.

7 Google search for Бенедикт Кёлер, Сабрия Дэвид и Йорг Блумгринт: <http://bitly.com/TyntFO>.

8 Manifesto de los 'slow media' (<http://www.slow-media.net/manifesto-de-los-slow-media>).

9 Manifest dels 'slow media' ('mitjans lents'): <http://www.slow-media.net/manifest-dels-slow-media>.

10 Zickgraf, Arnd: Die Neuentdeckung der Langsamkeit – Slow Media. In: www.goethe.de. January 2011. (<http://www.goethe.de/wis/med/pan/de7049870.htm>).

English version:

http://www.goethe.de/wis/med/pan/en7049870.htm?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter.

The wandering manifesto



Graph 1. Global response to the Slow Media Manifesto

The viral spread of the Manifesto was enormous. It was referred to from over 30 countries: France, the Russian Federation, the United States, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, Japan, Israel, Norway, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Canada, Australia, China, Mexico, Colombia, South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Finland, and, of course, Germany. Most international references came from France, the USA, and Russia. The references are continuously added on the Slow Media blog.¹¹ If the Goethe Institute interviews were added, the list would also add Egypt, Lebanon, the Gulf region, and Chile.

The web sources are sometimes uncertain and confusing. They are popping up on the Internet and vanishing again, moving to other sites. Some show no author or no publishing date. Without a clear legal notice, not even the country is easy to identify – like in the case of an Anglophone reference with .com-domain from Belgium. Some backlinks lead to languages which are not easy to identify. But even considered that the list of references is fragmentary, the global chart (Graph 1) shows a clear picture: a division between the Northern and the Southern Hemisphere. Slow media is referred to around the Northern Hemisphere, regardless of cultural differences between the USA, Europe, the Russian Federation, and China. Included are from the south of Australia, Brazil, and South Africa.

A hypothesis on the Slow Media North–South divide would be that discussing slow media relates to a special phase in technological development. It seems to be the moment when people realize that technological progress is ambivalent and also comes with dark sides that have to be considered. As we say in the preamble of the Manifesto:

11 The international backlinks are continuously collected and published on the blog: <http://www.slow-media.net/resonanz>.

In the second decade, people will not search for new technologies allowing for even easier, faster, and low-priced content production. Rather, appropriate reactions to this media revolution are to be developed and integrated politically, culturally and socially.¹² (Blumtritt, David, Köhler)

Slow media claims reflection and consciousness and advocates a thoughtful progress. Further research would have to analyse which cultural and economic parameters correlate with being attracted by the slow media concept. Another interesting question would be the reverse perspective – what correlates with not needing to talk of slow media? There seem to be two options: Either those countries are not yet technologically developed enough to have this kind of problems (which would mean they will think of slow media in ten years) or they do not have to respond to Slow Media because they already (or: still) proceed gently and embrace technology in a reflective and conscious way (which would mean we could learn from that).

Conclusions

The Slow Media discourse is related to a phase of transition and fundamental change in societies that are linked to technological progress. A recent study by the authors of the Slow Media Manifesto on Slow Skills and Slow Lifestyles shows that the fundamental aspects of slow media – focus, discourse, attachment, sociality, and quality – are deeply connected to digital change and the needs of a post-digital society. Speaking of disruptive changes and offering a new perspective to respond to them, the Slow Media Manifesto was spread around the world. It was recommended, passed on, criticized, advocated, taught, and rethought via word of mouth, in blogs, comments, in television, on mailing lists, in newspapers, on radio stations, on conferences, and on the street. It has been discussed at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute among Dada, Futurism, and Bauhaus as ‘Discourse and Manifesto of the Avant-Garde’.¹³ It inspires people to think of how they want to communicate in a web forum, how they want to interact with their customers.¹⁴ It inspires people to create new journalism platforms that dedicate themselves to more thoughtfulness and quality in journalism and to write for readers instead for advertisers.¹⁵ It even inspires people to think of

12 The Slow Media Manifesto (<http://en.slow-media.net/manifesto> (original German: <http://www.slow-media.net/manifest>).

13 Curriculum ‘Electronic Arts Overview’ at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Fall 2011: <http://www.arts.rpi.edu/~century/eao11/eao11.htm>. Lecturer Michael Century.

14 Michael Schubert: Slow Media als einen Beitrag zur höheren Kundenorientierung <http://www.media-treff.de/index.php/2010/01/05/slow-media-als-einen-beitrag-zur-hoheren-kundenorientierung/>.

15 Thomas Krüger: Wenn weniger mehr ist. In: Vocer. Web. <http://www.vocer.org/de/artikel/do/>

what design can be and how they can transform reused beloved things into new designed works of daily use.¹⁶

Translations and personal recommendations had a catalytic effect on the viral spread around the world. The Slow Media Manifesto evokes debates and discussions that cross the borders of language and culture. It still moves because people talk, wonder and care about, and like to share it.

The Slow Media Manifesto became in practice a most wonderful example of its own theory.

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GLAMURS – Green Lifestyles, Alternative Models and Upscaling Regional Sustainability. Case Study Exchange

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Abstract. In the period of 17–20 June 2015, the West University of Timișoara hosted the GLAMURS – Green Lifestyles, Alternative Models and Upscaling Regional Sustainability – Case Study Exchange Conference. For four days, practitioners from a variety of social innovation and sustainability initiatives throughout Europe and researchers interested in the interdisciplinary value of the sustainability movement gathered to explore how the said initiatives can inform each other and how academic research can contribute to the development of the sustainability movement. As the conference began with a five-minute meditation, the event was in itself an exploration of the value of time and space in supporting green sustainable lifestyles in a variety of environments from home, through public squares, and to the university.

Keywords: GLAMURS, green lifestyles, sustainability

The Green Lifestyles, Alternative Models and Upscaling Regional Sustainability GLAMURS¹ – Case Study Exchange conference, which took place in Timișoara, Romania, between June 17 and 20, 2015, is one of the many steps made by individuals, communities, and institutions in Europe for the transition towards sustainable lifestyles and green economies. GLAMURS started as a project aiming to facilitate communication at the regional and European level for sustainable initiatives and economic models. As the event gathered civic initiatives, green development organizations and research institutes as part of the project at the West University of Timișoara, GLAMURS facilitated the convergence of social innovation initiatives with the scientific community in order to explore the

¹ For more details, please visit: <http://www.glamurs.eu/>.

possibilities, opportunities, and challenges for transitions to occur. The main goals of the exchange were to explore the main directions in designing and developing sustainable future policies starting at local level, based on the current experience of the participants, which could be then elaborated into scientific models as possible solutions to the current global industrial capitalism paradigm. A secondary goal that emerged during the working sessions was to bridge the gap between the members of the civic society, working on social, environmental, and economic innovation, and the academic researchers interested in developing models of social change.

During the first two days of the workshop, pioneers of sustainability from six European regions – Galicia in Spain, Banat in Romania, Rotterdam-Delft-The Hague in Netherlands, Lazio in Italy, Danube Bohemian Forest in Austria, and Central Germany – together with researchers from the Sustainable Research Institute in Vienna, Universidade da Coruna in Spain, and West University in Timișoara worked towards the development of conceptual maps of changes required in a future society oriented towards sustainable development in several areas of the social fabric: research and education, resources and consumption, economic and financial models. These maps were developed drawing, on the one hand, on the practical experience of the participating sustainability initiatives and, on the other hand, on concepts such as the value of time as a qualitative dimension of society, the economy of the commons, the participatory culture of co-operation, sharing, and community. The sessions were held on the premises of the West University of Timișoara and were quite innovative in their formats. The academic environment of the university proved flexible and dynamic enough in order to accommodate the non-formal method of World Café.² This method is a simple, yet effective format that hosts dialogues in large groups. Active listening, the search for patterns and insights, diversity of perspectives, the exploration of questions that matter to the participants are some of the principles that World Cafés are based on. It was an excellent experience to witness the efficiency of such a non-formal method put at good use and good work in the formal academic environment.

The 45 participants worked in small groups of 5, on different conceptual maps. Each of these explored the question ‘What do we need to promote sustainable lifestyles and economic models in Europe?’ In the first round, the working groups explored the value and the potential of Knowledge and Learning to guide the search for the answer. For the second round, the groups shifted to a different conceptual map and explored possible answers considering the value and the potential of Resources that are currently available in Europe and those that might be further necessary. As *Figure 1* shows, the harvest of the results was creative and demonstrated the high productivity of the World Café. The groups were asked to draw the concept maps on flipchart papers, having complete freedom on

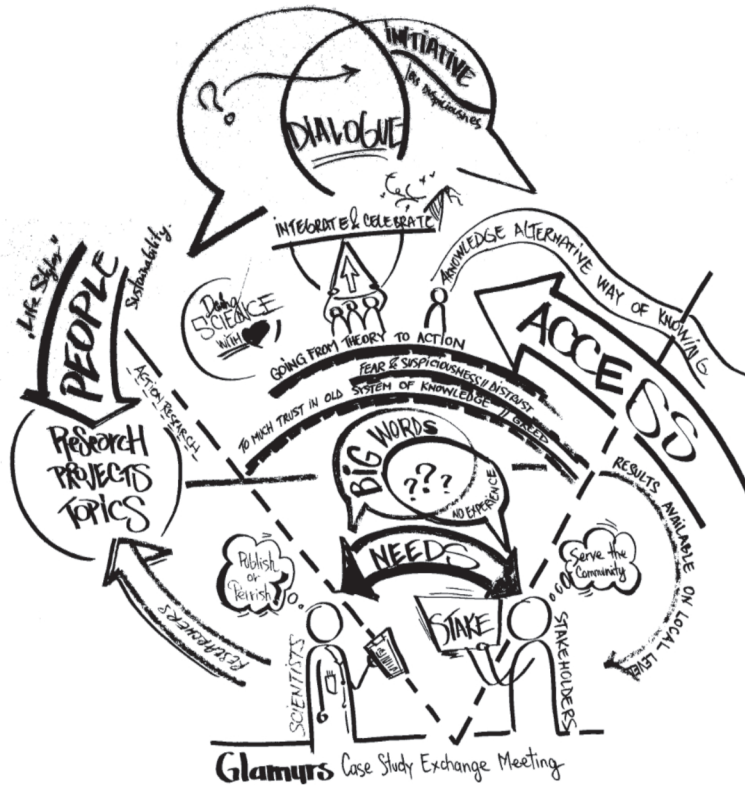
2 For detailed information, please visit: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>.

the scientific interest in examining the objective reality. As a result, the actual research on current models of socio-economic innovation, albeit important for a future sustainable society, is insufficiently rewarded by the academic standards of evaluation. Even more so, as the practitioners and stakeholders stated, the spiritual aspects of livelihoods, the emotional implications of lifestyles guided by the neoliberal values of profit, success, competition, and various alternative ways of knowing the world and living in the world (alternative to the mainstream individualist capitalist model) are insufficiently explored as such a pursuit would be both inefficient and indeterminable. The discussion revealed the necessity of incorporating more psychosocial variables, such as spirituality and the dynamics of emotions in research, as research topics and even as elements of better research designs. Moreover, the practitioners expressed their interest in the reorientation of research, especially social, anthropological, economic, and psychological research, from the predominant quantitative approach towards qualitative methodologies, as these were perceived as more human and less technical, more in depth and less descriptive, more complex and diverse in searching solutions to the current crisis in quite relevant social models for the change towards sustainability.

The next day, the group visited a local sustainability initiative in Stanciova, near Timișoara, where the first part of the day was dedicated to learning about the eco-village and the community experiences of one of the oldest intentional communities in Romania. In the second part of the day, the group used another non-formal method: the Open Space Technology.³ This technology allows to the participants that subjects of great significance, which were not touched upon during the organized sessions, to be brought to the attention of the larger group. The subjects discussed were varied and challenging: from the value of time in a fast society to the preservation of the virgin forest ecosystems still standing in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe. The process was a success as more than 10 workshops were offered on 2 sessions, each with harvests that were gathered for the later use of the GLAMURS researchers.

On June 20, the exchange continued with a general presentation of the harvest for the whole process, with the help of a very talented graphical reporter, continued by a sharing circle aimed at projecting future events and new gathering opportunities for the members of the group, acting now as a small trans-local community.

3 For detailed information, please visit: <http://www.openspaceworld.org>.



Graph 2. What researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders need from each other to promote sustainability in Europe. © GLAMURS. Author Adrian Popa, graphic recorder.

As a general review of the event, we were quite impressed with the efficiency and level of individual motivation and involvement of the non-formal methods and techniques, creatively used in academic and non-academic settings in order to bring together 45 people from different cultures, languages, and initiatives. The horizontality of the group, the empowerment of the participants to lead, develop, or propose alternative subjects for the discussions and debates, the sense of open safe spaces, and the opportunities to express emotions, not only thoughts, favoured the coagulation of the group as a small sample of a future sustainable, green, and ecological society. The combination of all these methods for the actual researching of how people and groups envision and work for sustainable futures shed a different light on how science, especially in the humanities and social sciences, can work for the greater good. This is why, in terms of social change and social design, the incorporation of practical experiences in the scientific research was determined to be one of the leading strategies towards producing viable

systemic models for sustainability. The inclusion of different ways of knowing, such as traditional wisdom, intuitive learning, and inner search, should become more frequent in the scientifically accepted research methodologies, together with a greater value offered to qualitative research. Also, the evaluation of the efficiency in the research process should be rethought, giving more resources to exploring the marginal, the liminal, and the alternative.

Such conversations regarding the value of scientific research and the openness of the western academic community are not new. They might be new in the Romanian academic context, but the ivory tower has been an important topic for decades, if not more, each time that academia, politics, economy, and the civil society intersect. How can each of these actors and processes better inform and support mutually? The conversations that the GLAMURS case study exchange facilitated were very similar in scope and nuance with what Professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls epistemologies of the South. De Sousa Santos asserts that the developments of social and political theory in the western academic environment are entirely European, highly determined culturally, being thus irrelevant for the Global South. The presuppositions of western social theory are not universally valid. In this sense, the knowledge developed by the western way of doing science is criticized as less objective, definitely not universally true, and a rather subjective experience of the world (Sousa Santos 2012). In this sense, the western scientific practices need to open up to exploring alternative epistemologies, to exploring other ways of knowing the world. The epistemologies of the South invite us all to regard the hegemonic knowledges of the Global North with different eyes and to develop a new ethical and epistemological framework of doing science, which would allow for the emergence of a larger, more nuanced, and more intercultural sociological imagination. The team of GLAMURS has created a temporary utopia on the premises of the West University of Timișoara, where researchers and practitioners have been able to bridge their worlds and to transfer meaningful knowledge from their direct experiences – a timely experience that we wish to see happening more often for the promotion of sustainability and futures of hope. What is the purpose of doing science if not serving the greater good?

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