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SOCIOLOGY'S RHYTHMS: TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Abstract: *From the temporal perspective, this article examines shifts in the production of sociological knowledge. It identifies two kinds of rhythms of sociology: 1) that of sociological standpoints and techniques of investigation and 2) that of contemporary academic life and culture. The article begins by discussing some of the existing research strategies designed to "chase" high-speed society. Some, predominantly methodological, currents are explored and contrasted with the "slow(er)" instruments of sociological analysis composed of different, yet complementary, modes of inquiry. Against this background, the article stresses that it is through the tension between fast and slow modes of inquiry that sociology reproduces itself. The subsequent part explores the subjective temporal experience in contemporary academia. It is argued that increasing administration and auditing of intellectual work significantly co-shapes sociological knowledge production not only by requiring academics to work faster due to an increasing volume of tasks, but also by normalizing time-pressure. The article concludes by considering the problem as to whether the increasing pace of contemporary academic life has detrimental consequences for the more organic reproductive rhythms of sociology.*

Keywords: *sociology; time/temporality; acceleration; audit culture; time-pressure*

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Rytmy sociologie: produkce vědění a její časové dimenze

Abstrakt: *Tento článek zkoumá proměny produkce sociologického vědění, a to z perspektivy temporality (časovosti). Odlišuje dva druhy sociologických rytmů: první souvisí se sociologickými hledisky a technikami zkoumání, druhý potom se současnou podobou akademické kultury. Článek se nejprve zabývá několika existujícími výzkumnými strategiemi určenými ke „stáhání“ vysokorychlostní společnosti. Některé, především metodologické proudy jsou podrobeny diskuzi a porovnány s „pomalými/pomalejšími“ nástroji sociologické analýzy, sestávajících se z odlišných, avšak komplementárních způsobů šetření. V této souvislosti článek zdůrazňuje, že napětí mezi rychlými a pomalými způsoby šetření tvoří reprodukční předpoklady sociologie. Následující část se zabývá subjektivní časovou zkušeností v podmínkách soudobého akademického světa. Článek tvrdí, že zvyšující se administrativa a auditování intelektuální práce značně spoluutváří výrobu sociologického vědění; a to nejen proto, že akademičtí pracovníci jsou díky vzrůstajícímu počtu úkolů nuceni pracovat rychleji, ale také kvůli normalizaci časového tlaku. Závěrem je pojednáno o tom, do jaké míry lze tvrdit, že tempo současného akademického života má neblahé důsledky pro organické reprodukční rytmy sociologie.*

Klíčová slova: *sociologie; čas/časovost; zrychlení; kultura auditu; časový tlak*

In comparison with the much-discussed “spatial turn” in the social sciences,¹ temporality as an explanatory and analytical perspective has been overdue.² Against this backdrop, there has been an argument for a “temporal turn” and establishment of “time studies”³ as a counterpoise to the dominance of the spatiality focus.⁴ These productive propositions may, however, conceal the fact that the category of time has traditionally been a significant variable and analytical focus in the social sciences and in sociology, in particular.⁵ Nonetheless, the renewed interest in the changing character of time – broadly animated by the influential scholarship on globalisation that emerged in the

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¹ Henri LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell 1992 [1974]; Edward SOJA, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso 2011 [1989]; Ash AMIN, “Spatialities of Globalisation.” *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 34, 2002, no. 3, pp. 385–399; Doreen MASSEY, *For Space*. London: Sage 2005; David HARVEY, “Space as a Keyword.” In: CASTREE, N. – GREGORY, D. (eds.), *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: London 2006, pp. 270–293; Barney WHARF – Santa ARIAS (eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London – New York: Routledge 2009.

² Bob JESSOP, “The Spatiotemporal Dynamics of Globalizing Capital and Their Impact on State Power and Democracy.” In: ROSA, H. – SCHEUERMAN, W. (eds.), *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press 2009, p. 135 (135–158).

³ Helga NOWOTNY, “Time and Social Theory: Towards a Social Theory of Time.” *Time and Society*, vol. 1, 1992, no. 3, pp. 421–454; Robert HASSAN, “Globalization and the ‘Temporal Turn’: Recent Trends and Issues in Time Studies.” *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies*, vol. 25, 2010, no. 2, pp. 83–92.

⁴ However, some authors argue that spatiality thesis cannot simply be overturned by focusing on the temporal dimension. Rather, time and space need to form non-reductive and inextricable dualism. See John MAY – Nigel THRIFT (eds.), *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*. London: Routledge 2001. See also Noel CASTREE, “The Spatio-temporality of Capitalism.” *Time & Society*, vol. 18, 2009, no. 2, pp. 26–61; HASSAN, “Globalization and ‘Temporal Turn,’” pp. 89–90.

⁵ See *inter alia* Pitrim A. SOROKIN – Robert MERTON, “Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis.” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, 1937, no. 5, pp. 615–629; Georges GURVITCH, *The Spectrum of Social Time*. Dordrecht: Reidel 1964; Barbara ADAM, *Time and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1990. Norbert ELIAS, *Time: An Essay*. Oxford: Blackwell 1992; Helga NOWOTNY, *Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1994.

1990s⁶ – does innovatively and productively approach the transformation of social temporality that began to take shape with the advent of a qualitatively different configuration of capitalist modernity.⁷ New registers, conceptual and operating sensibilities of sociology accompanying a variety of blends of globalisation scholarship have been introduced, deployed and discussed.

Highlighting the particularly acute temporal modality implicit to late modern capitalism, Nicholas Gane noted that “sociology has, in general, neglected the speed of its own enterprise, along with the speed of the world it seeks to explain.”⁸ Accordingly, this article extends reflections on this issue by exploring, to paraphrase CW Mills, differentiated temporal composition of the “politics of (sociological) truth” and the temporal demands associated with the “economics of (sociological) truth.”⁹ How can we therefore think about sociology in terms of the rhythms of its analytical and intellectual instruments, the rhythms of the world it seeks to explain and the more organizational rhythms of sociology’s natural habitat – academia? There are two conceptual registers that can assist us in tackling these questions: one that involves epistemological disputes around the tasks and sensibilities of sociology; and another one, which entails experiential effects of organizational and institutional changes in the academic workplace and culture. The article’s main aim is to conceptualise and analyse the tensions between these two rhythms.

Firstly, the analysis focuses on the temporal underpinnings of theoretical and methodological currents and argues for a closer connection between the recent scrutiny of acceleration as self-standing social phenomenon and the current wave that advances digital sociology. Subsequently, it charts different – “slower” – temporal modalities of sociological analysis and argues for their necessity. Whereas sociology might, and does, benefit from different temporal orientations and focuses on various standpoints, concepts, methods, imaginaries and modes of analysis, the current institutional conditions for its reproduction may not be necessarily favourable for the sociological enterprise. These conditions result from the on-going transformation of the

⁶ See Mike FEATHERSONE (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. London: Sage 1990.

⁷ David HARVEY, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell 1989.

⁸ Nicholas GANE, “Speed Up or Slow Down? Social Theory in the Information Age.” *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 9, 2006, no. 1, p. 32 (20–38).

⁹ John H. SUMMERS, *The Politics of Truth: Selected Writings of C Wright Mills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008.

university characterized by a set of “policies [that] have been and are being implemented by a new class of managers who justify their approach with reference to free market ideology but who at the same time have introduced an unprecedented network of controls.”¹⁰ Secondly, therefore, the article examines some broader trends of the changing time regime in contemporary academia; namely the proliferation and sedimentation of the audit culture and managerialism¹¹ and their temporal effect on knowledge production.

Sociology’s temporal sensibilities

In terms of the temporal orientation, it is figuratively possible to identify “fast” and “slow” modes of sociological inquiry. Having said that, however, fast does not mean that sociology, as such, would be accelerating in one way or another. The term fast rather seeks to capture those modes of inquiry and involvement that aim to conceptually and empirically tackle what it means to live in a “fast-changing world.” Similarly, slow does not indicate that sociology’s analytical modalities would be best conceived as sluggish or idle. It means that some sociological tasks need to be adequately detached when disaggregating their objects of inquiry – especially if sociology still advances explanation, description, and evaluation/critique as its hallmarks. Yet, as we will see in this and the subsequent section of the article, these two temporal orientations ideally comprise a fruitful tension. It is productive due to the considerably *indeterminate* nature of sociology – especially in comparison to other (social) scientific disciplines. To this end, John Holmwood pertinently asserts that sociology actually never had a stable core, or fixed frame of refer-

¹⁰ Chris LORENZ, “If You’re so Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 38, 2012, no. 3, p. 600 (599–629).

¹¹ In spite of the fact that British/English higher education context is exemplified in this article, there are numerous accounts that indicate that other higher education system face similar pressures. For the developments in the U.S. see Sheila SLAUGHTER – Gary RHOADES, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2004; Australian higher education transformation is aptly examined by Simon MARGINSON – Mark CONSIDINE, *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000; for recent trends in New Zealand see Chris SHORE, “Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance: Universities and the Politics of Accountability.” *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 8, 2008, no. 3, pp. 278–298; for Germany see Rosalind PRITCHARD, “Trends in the Restructuring of German Universities.” *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 50, 2006, no.1, pp. 90–112; for Finland Oili-Helena Ylijoki, “Entangled in Academic Capitalism? A Case-Study on Changing Ideals and Practices of University Research.” *Higher Education*, vol. 45, 2003, no. 3, pp. 307–335.

ence, and that this was partially associated with its openness to new voices. Sociology needs not to be “understood as based upon timeless truths, but [rather as] a product of historically located practices. [Sociology]...has to be ‘achieved’, or continually re-invented, in new circumstances.”¹² Sociology’s core, therefore, lies in its dynamic sensibility as part of sociological imagination, not only in static concepts, categories, arrangements and methods.¹³ It is through this sensibility that many defining expressions and standpoints of sociology are reframed, rethought and reinvented.

What Gane calls “the speed of the world” might be identified as an exemplary outcome of sociology’s temporal sensibility – both in terms of the diagnostic endeavours to interpret the social world, as well as in terms of the subsequent reflections, which advance the reinvention of sociological theory. Gane continues: “how can and should [sociological] theory respond to the acceleration of social life and culture? Should theory attempt to keep pace with a world that is changing faster than ever, and if so, what methods should it employ?”¹⁴ One of the frequent claims in a recent influential sociological genre, explicit or implied, is that globalisation is, besides other things, accompanied by dramatic shifts in the social experience and dynamics of time.¹⁵ As a result of this turbulence, it is claimed, a re-articulation of categories and concepts used for diagnosing and interpreting contemporary social reality is overdue. Let us consider a typical manoeuvre that illustrates this way of reasoning. For Ulrich Beck and his colleagues, who aim to ambitiously develop a new type of cosmopolitan sociological inquiry, the acceleration of time in a “compressed modernity” appears to reshuffle hitherto more or less fixed social processes and registers:

In the old days when Modernity was still First Modernity, acceleration signalled the coming of the apocalypse. Now acceleration (and maybe even the apocalypse) is part of our everyday life. [...] Modernity, therefore, means an accelerating accumulation of experience [...] compressed modernity also means that it is increasingly difficult to develop horizons of experience ... Sociologists are used to thinking in structures. But structure means that there exists a relative

¹² John HOLMWOOD, “Sociology’s Misfortune: Disciplines, Interdisciplinarity and the Impact of Audit Culture.” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, 2010, no. 4, p. 649 (639–658).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ GANE, “Speed Up or Slow Down?,” p. 21.

¹⁵ See Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2000; Manuel CASTELLS, *The Rise of Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell 2000; Ulrich BECK, “The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies.” *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 19, 2002, no. 1/2, pp. 17–44; John URRY, *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2003.

duration: no structure without time. However, with increased acceleration, in compressed modernity, there may be neither duration nor structure.¹⁶

Given the profound transformation of social structures (or even the disappearance of them as Sznajder has it) in the age of globalisation – as the general argument goes – there is a need to think the notion of the social anew. Beck and Sznajder say that there are now “new realities...arising: a new mapping of space and time, new co-ordinates for the social and the political are emerging which have to be theoretically and empirically researched and elaborated.”¹⁷ Following up this claim, influential currents in contemporary sociology seek to develop an adequate conceptual grammar (e.g. flows, fluids, mobility, networks, non-equilibria, interconnectivity, hybridity) that would ideally allow sociologists to grasp what it means to live in a complex, rapidly evolving “globality” and tackle the textures and consequences of the increasing rates of social change. These sociological voices are important not necessarily due to their analytical purchase or revelatory capacities,¹⁸ but because that, according to some, they are at the heart of the resuscitation attempts of the enterprise of sociology and are aimed at saving sociology from, as Beck implied, becoming a “museum piece” or a “zombie discipline.”¹⁹ New conceptual languages and instruments, putatively well suited for the rapidly and radically changing social reality, are expected not only to generate new knowledge claims but also to re-energize the allegedly ailing sociology.

Illustratively, Scott Lash, suggests that the very speed and ephemerality of the contemporary social world leaves almost no time for reflection and that sociology simply needs to adapt itself and get “in synch” with the “runaway” social reality.²⁰ According to him, the main qualities of “informa-

¹⁶ Nathan SZNAIDER, “Rewriting the Persian Letters.” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61, 2010, no. 3, p. 630 (627–633). However, here the term “First Modernity” remains rather ambiguous. Reinhart Koselleck for instance notes that foreshortening of time in the 15th and 16th century was a sign of the coming of the end of the world, whereas in the 18th and 19th century’s cultural and political imagination acceleration signalled not apocalypse, but progress of human reason. See Reinhart KOSELLECK, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia University Press 2004, pp. 12, 24, 42.

¹⁷ Ulrich BECK – Nathan SZNAIDER, “Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda.” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61, 2010, no. 1, p. 386 (381–403).

¹⁸ Some of the “radically new” themes comprising globalisation scholarship have been seriously challenged. See for example Gregor McLENNAN, “Sociology’s Complexity.” *Sociology*, vol. 37, 2003, no. 3, pp. 547–564.

¹⁹ Ulrich BECK, “The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies.” *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 19, 2002, no. 1/2, pp. 17–24.

²⁰ Scott LASH, *Critique of Information*. London: Sage 2002.

tion” – that, for him, characterize our high-speed social reality – are flows, disembeddedness, spatial compression, temporal compression and real-time relations. To this end, even sociological critique, Lash suggests, needs to become “informational” because there is nothing outside the information order and that critique simply needs to “embrace its fate” better in order to become relevant component of the new fast global social order.

Several crucial questions arise here: *how fast* is the fast-changing world? Aren't the notions of fluidity and flux themselves problematic categories? Isn't the claim that we live in a high-speed society (or a fast-changing world) world an established assumption and dictum that itself deserves to be analytically dismantled – and perhaps empirically interrogated²¹ – rather than readily reproduced as an overdetermined context that social inquiry needs to adapt to? Is it really the case that the temporal forces – i.e. the unprecedented speed of social life inherent to late modernity – have radically transformed the traditional foci of sociology such as, for example, gender, class and ethnicity? Snazaider's and Lash's claims seem exaggerated given that one of the encoded features of sociology, as we said earlier, is its *continuous* re-invention and “achievement” under new circumstances. Also, the logic of this reasoning is problematic in a different sense – the causality that characterizes the move from the assumption that we now live in a fast-changing world to the articulation of the radical reconfiguration of sociological concepts and the categories that would potentially explain this world can be said to be a foundational feature that itself animated the emergence of the discipline of sociology as a study of modernity.²² Furthermore, as some influential scholars noted, the onset of modernity had itself been characterized by acceleration and a reshuffled temporal horizon and experience.²³ Counter-intuitively, perhaps, the examination of social change and even its speeding-up (and its manifold implications) is inscribed in the

²¹ On the necessity of empirical *and* theoretical investigation of social acceleration consult a debate between Judy Wajcman and Robert Hassan: Judy WAJCMAN, “Life in the Fast Lane? Towards a Sociology of Technology and Time.” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59, 2008, no. 1, pp. 59–77; Robert HASSAN, “Social Acceleration and the Network Effect: A Defence of Social ‘Science Fiction’ and Network Determinism.” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61, 2010, no. 2, pp. 356–374; Judy WAJCMAN, “Further Reflections on the Sociology of Technology and Time: A Response to Hassan.” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61, 2010, vol. 2, pp. 375–381.

²² See Bryan S. TURNER, “The Two Faces of Sociology: Global or National?.” In: FEATHERSTONE, M. (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. London: Sage 1990, pp. 343–358.

²³ Marshall BERMAN, *All that is Solid Melts into the Air: The Experience of Modernity*. London and New York: Verso 1982; KOSELLECK, *Futures Past*.

constitution of social research. I would propose that some of the existing scholarship heralding speed as an implied context and/or taken-for-granted parameter of late modernity might, ironically, be criticised by fleshing out recent attempts to theorize, analyse and historicize the social acceleration.

Notably, there are a number of contemporary social thinkers who – rather than taking changes in the temporal experience of modernity as implied and implicit context or declaring that fast mobilities, fluxes and fluidities are defining “epochal” features of late modernity – aim to conceptualize the issue of acceleration and analytically dismantle the social compression of time.²⁴ This body of scholarship, paradoxically, accounts for substantial conceptual challenge and critique of the assumption that we all live in an increasingly faster world, which is possible to understand only through new semiotics and conceptual referents. First, there is a broad consensus that social acceleration is an inherently modern relational phenomenon and cannot be restricted to post, late, high, reflexive, liquid or another kind of specific epoch of modernity. Yet, as John Tomlinson notes, it is different and overlapping cultural forms of acceleration, which characterise modern era.²⁵ Furthermore, the social vertigo and intellectual fascination with speed purported in both popular and academic discourses is barely new: it can be traced back to the mid 19th century at least.²⁶

Second, acceleration is a fundamental reproductive feature of capitalist political economy and the key mechanism of capital circulation and accumulation²⁷ and “digital revolution” needs to be understood within the broader confines of the capitalist logic. Third, acceleration is a dramatically uneven social phenomenon, affecting different segments of populations, dif-

²⁴ Thomas Hylland ERIKSEN, *Tyranny of the Moment*. London: Pluto Press 2001; Hartmut ROSA, “Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a De-Synchronized High-Speed Society.” *Constellations*, vol. 10, 2003, no. 1, pp. 3–33; William E. SCHEUERMAN, *Liberal Democracy and the Social Acceleration of Time*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2004; John TOMLINSON, *The Culture of Speed: The Coming of Immediacy*. London: Sage 2007; Simon GLEZOS, *The Politics of Speed: Capitalism, The State and War in an Accelerating World*. London – New York: Routledge 2012.

²⁵ TOMLINSON, *The Culture of Speed*.

²⁶ Stephen KERN, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880–1918*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2003 [1983]; Ryan A. VIEIRA, “Connecting The New Political History with Recent Theories of Temporal Acceleration: Speed, Politics, and The Cultural Imagination of *fin de siècle*.” *History and Theory*, vol. 50, 2011, no. 3, pp. 373–389.

²⁷ Moishe POSTONE, *Time, Labour and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 1993; David HARVEY, *Limits to Capital*. Second Edition. London and New York: Verso 2006 [1982].

ferent social institutions and sites unequally. Other sociologically relevant variables and preferences add to the social and individual experience of acceleration significantly. Hence, it is more productive to think about social reality as composed of different, often conflicting, “zones of time” or “time-scapes” moving at different tempos²⁸ rather than conceiving it as unified high-speed flux. Fourth, many societal terrains and processes resist acceleration or even decelerate.²⁹ Fifth, this body of scholarship aims to develop and provide conceptual instruments that address causes, consequences, forms, scopes, drives and limits of acceleration in order “to distinguish better between serious social analysis and the superficial technobabble and imbalanced ideology ubiquitous in contemporary discourse about speed.”³⁰ We might say that Beck *et al.* and Lash-style propositions reproduce, rather than contest, the discourse about speed in an ahistorical and declarative manner. However, we can also note a wave of serious empirical engagements potentially conducive for substantiating and fleshing out social acceleration and particularly the notion of immediacy,³¹ especially in connection to the current preoccupation with the question of the digital transformation of social relations³² and the debates on tensions between online and offline experience.³³

Hartmut Rosa, for his part, admits that an empirical examination and measuring of acceleration remains a considerable challenge for empirically-oriented sociologists.³⁴ Currently, methodological tools that directly or indirectly target some specific aspects of high-speed rhythms of increasingly

²⁸ Barbara ADAM, *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1995; Sheldon WOLIN, “What Time Is It?” *Theory and Event*, vol. 1, 1997, no. 1, pp. 1–10; Jean CHESNEAUX, “Speed and Democracy: An Uneasy Dialogue.” *Social Science Information*, vol. 39, 2000, no. 3, pp. 407–420; William E. Connolly, *Neropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press 2002, pp. 141–7.

²⁹ Hartmut ROSA, *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality*. Malmö: NUS Press 2010, pp. 33–41.

³⁰ Hartmut ROSA – William E. SCHEUERMAN, “Introduction.” In: ROSA, H. – SCHEUERMAN, W. E. (eds.), *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press 2009, p. 3 (1–32).

³¹ TOMLINSON, *The Culture of Speed*, pp. 72–93.

³² Rob LUCAS, “The Critical Net Critic.” *New Left Review*, vol. 77, September/October 2012, pp. 45–69.

³³ Nicholas CARR, “Digital Dualism Denialism” [online]. 2013. Available at: <<http://www.rough.type.com/?p=2090>> [cit 25. 4. 2013].

³⁴ ROSA, “Social Acceleration,” p. 3.

“transactional” social life are being developed and discussed nevertheless.³⁵ It is possible, therefore, to identify an empirical sociological register, which is helping to capture the condition of immediacy and high-speed interdependencies by chasing “myriad mobilities, switches, transactions and fluidities that *are claimed* to make up contemporary social life.”³⁶ A widely discussed stream advancing a closer engagement with the “digital now” has been associated with, what some call, sociology 2.0.³⁷ The key assumption of this current is that if academic sociology is to remain important in producing evidence about and analyzing social processes it needs to shift its emphases and foci and take into consideration the speed of the contemporary social world. Accordingly, sociology 2.0 advocates new methodological innovations and repertoires – especially new techniques exploiting digital technologies. Sociology 2.0 makes a few propositions that differentiate it from the discourse advanced by Beck *et al.* and Lash. One of the major suggestions is that reinvigorated sociology should concentrate on new proxies such as “data-sets formed as the by-product of routine administrative processes.”³⁸ In order to disentangle high-speed social reality sociology 2.0 needs to expand and invite more quantitative experts, including computer scientists.³⁹ Consequently, increased trans-disciplinary collaborations should enable further reinforcement and foregrounding of social transactional and digital research technologies⁴⁰ and the embrace of social networks (such as Facebook and Twitter) for social investigation.⁴¹

A recently discussed example is the use of “social media data aggregators” software that aims to capture accumulated digital by-product data and

³⁵ David BEER – Roger BURROWS, “Popular Culture, Digital Archives and the New Social Life of Data.” *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 30, 2013, no. 5, pp. 47–71.

³⁶ Mike SAVAGE – Roger BURROWS, “The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology.” *Sociology*, vol. 41, 2007, no. 5, pp. 885–899, emphasis added.

³⁷ David BEER – Roger BURROWS, “Sociology and, of and in, Web 2.0: Some Initial Considerations” [online]. 2007. *Sociological Research Online* vol. 12, no. 5. Available at: <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/5/17.html>> [cit. 15. 3. 2013].

³⁸ Richard WEBBER, “Response to ‘The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology’: An Outline of The Research Potential of Administrative and Transactional Data.” *Sociology*, vol. 43, 2009, no. 1, pp. 169–178.

³⁹ Geoff PAYNE, “Social Divisions Social Mobilities and Social Research: Methodological Issues After 40 Years.” *Sociology*, vol. 41, 2007, no. 5, pp. 901–915; Rosemary CROMPTON, “Forty Years of Sociology: Some Comments.” *Sociology*, vol. 42, 2008, no. 6, pp. 1218–1227.

⁴⁰ WEBBER, “Response.”

⁴¹ BEER – BURROWS, “Sociology and, of and in Web 2.0”; BEER – BURROWS, “Popular Culture”; These propositions also directly and indirectly mobilized the emergence of the website “Digital Sociology”, see <http://digitalsociology.org.uk/?page_id=2>.

facilitate their analysis.⁴² The main methodological developments happening under this banner are predominantly associated with investigation of social trends and elections patterns transmitted by Twitter. A group of computer scientists based in the UK, deploying complex algorithmic and statistical parameters have been advancing investigations in the ways in which the micro-blogging site Twitter expresses “the mood of the nation” and “prevalence of flu-like symptoms,” and conveys “election patterns.” In a recent study, when explaining their rationale – and reflecting on their investigation of the public mood/sentiment expressed in the “collective discourse that constantly streams through Twitter” – they say:

Have you ever had the impression that everyone around you is stressed? Or is it just you? Answering a simple question like this can be very hard, as it would involve interviewing a large sample of people, and asking the right questions, in order to assess their levels of stress (unless you want to measure cortisol levels in faecal samples, as done in wild animal populations). The truth is that this is just one of many aspects of a population that are very difficult to measure or even detect. We often talk about macroeconomic quantities (such as the current level of inflation, or economic growth), forgetting that these quantities always refer to the past, since it takes several months to collect, aggregate and analyse the various economic indicators. Measuring the state of a society or an economy in real time is not an easy task. It is a task that certain practitioners call “nowcasting.”⁴³

Tweets, according to the authors, have the advantage “to be of-the-moment, sent by impulse. They have *immediacy*; they reflect what the sender is feeling at the time, not what he or she feels looking back, a considered opinion from later.”⁴⁴ As always, propositions of this kind are, by default, unable to “track” considerable segments of population that are off-line and/or not using social media. Also, as David Beer notes, the exploration of “sentiment” by looking at social media cannot capture and differentiate irony or insider discourse.⁴⁵ Albeit minimally, Lansdall-Welfare *et al.* are aware of these limitations: “Even if there was an increase and fear after spending

⁴² David BEER, “Using Social Media Data Aggregators to Do Social Research” [online]. 2012. *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 17, no. 3. Available at: <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/17/3/10.html>> [cit. 25. 3. 2013].

⁴³ Thomas LANSDALL-WELFARE – Vasileios LAMPOS – Nelo CHRISTIANINI, “Nowcasting The Mood of the Nation.” *Significance*, vol. 9, 2012, no. 4, pp. 26–28.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ BEER, “Using Social Media,” paragraph 4.10.

cuts were announced [as a result of the 2008 financial crisis], how do we know that this was due to the announcement? Many other factors could have caused it.⁴⁶ Notwithstanding these problems, there is a significant potential for this methodological inquiry, especially as it relates to the exploration of the intuitive connection between acceleration and emerging technocommunicational platforms and electronic processing. By introducing their sociology 2.0 focused on immediacy, Lansdall-Welfare *et al.* reflect on the promises of such analyses:

Social science can now enter a data-driven phase but this will require vast amounts of non-traditional data. The exploitation of big data will require the use of multiple tools, from different fields. Data management, data mining, text mining, and data visualization, all seem to be as necessary as the statistical analysis part.⁴⁷

Similarly, Vasileios Lampos (one of the co-authors of the previously quoted study) notes in his PhD thesis: the “vast amount of information provides for example the social scientists or psychiatrists with the opportunity to answer questions, which before have been considered as experimentally infeasible.”⁴⁸ Nowcasting may thus potentially be a promising method that actually empirically inquires into digitally-mediated social immediacy about which many sociologists have hitherto only been theorizing.

Slower facets

Nevertheless, the uses of sociology 2.0 for an analysis of immediacy raise a number of questions. David Beer voiced an important caveat, directly relevant to our analytical scheme.⁴⁹ The technologization of research practices – to an extent previously impossible – often moves the analytical processes of social research into the hands of machines and methodological algorithms. Beer observes that, despite the attraction of computer-assisted research methods that may help to trace high-speed socialities, we should also retain distinctive critical faculties integral to sociological analysis. In

⁴⁶ LANSDALL-WELFARE – LAMPOS – CHRISTIANINI, “Nowcasting,” p. 28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Vasileios LAMPOS, *Detecting Events and Patterns in Large-Scale User Generated Textual Streams with Statistical Learning Methods*. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Bristol, p. 209.

⁴⁹ BEER, “Using Social Media.”

a different guise and with different emphases, John Goldthorpe's advocacy of closer sociological involvement with the present, with the "now,"⁵⁰ and Michael Mann's and Nicky Hart's, defence of "slower" aspects of historically oriented "macro-sociology" – particularly highlighting, for instance, the importance of historical-casual analysis⁵¹ – account for similar tension to the one discussed in the present article. Mann, Hart and Beer try to emphasize that, in spite of its openness to new voices that chase the "now", sociology should maintain the ability to critically engage with historicity and examine origins of the conditions that gave rise to the modern social institutions, processes, structures and ideologies. One might say that sociology, next to its attractiveness which lays in the potential to inquire into the immediate present – the "(digital) now" – also "indulges in [...] delay and deferral of decisions about what the world is like, how to describe and explain it, and what to do about it."⁵²

Critique and other aspects of sociological understanding seem to sit somewhat uneasily with the agile sociology 2.0 – especially in its computer science applied variant. Now, what do we mean by the notion of critique/critical task of sociology and how can elaborate on its temporal underpinnings? Critique here is something I would, in a broadly Marxist fashion, define with three principles: reduction of illusion, unmasking domination, and dismantlement of "real appearances."⁵³ These principles include the denaturalization of apparently natural phenomena (i.e. globalisation, capitalism, neoliberalism or even, paradoxically, high-speed society), the identification of human suffering, lack of well-being and the conceptualization of flourishing as it relates to the societal forms of organizations.⁵⁴ Moreover, the critical task of sociology sustains our abilities for registering,

⁵⁰ John GOLDTHORPE, "The Uses of History in Sociology: Reflections on Some Recent Tendencies." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, 1991, no. 2, pp. 211–230; John GOLDTHORPE, "The Uses of History in Sociology: A Reply." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, 1994, no. 1, pp. 55–77.

⁵¹ Michael MANN, "In Praise of Macro-Sociology: A Reply to Goldthorpe." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, 1994, no. 1, pp. 37–54; Nicky HART, "John Goldthorpe and Relics of Sociology." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, 1994, no. 1, pp. 21–30.

⁵² Dick PELS, *Unhastening Science: Autonomy and Reflexivity in the Social Theory of Knowledge*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2003. See also Michael SAWARD, "Slow Theory: Taking Time Over Transnational Democratic Representation." *Ethics and Global Politics*, vol. 4, 2011, no. 1, pp. 1–18; GANE, "Speed Up or Slow Down?"

⁵³ Andrew SAYER, "Who is Afraid of Critical Social Science?" *Current Sociology*, vol. 57, 2009, no. 6, p. 770 (767–786).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

comprehending and contesting inequalities and inhumanities of a structural character. In other words, this is a type of sociology that seeks to uncover the hidden and unconsidered ideas on which practices may be based, as well as examining value-formations related to complex models of reasoning.⁵⁵ This “slower” type of sociological conduct also promotes a different conception of interdisciplinarity. Whereas sociology 2.0 proposes closer engagement with the computer (and also natural and human) sciences by bringing the social closer to these disciplines in their diverse appreciations, broadly critical sociology would account “for a closer engagement between social science and the sustained, patient deliberation on forms of judgment and their legitimacy provided by lay ethical thought and by moral and political philosophy.”⁵⁶ An appeal to deeply ethical problems presumably requires a different temporal framework; one that is rooted in an articulation of foundational, normative visions/arguments which are of a different nature to ICTs-techniques, technologization and reportage-oriented task of sociology 2.0. Arguably, the critical task of sociology thus assumes the *longue-durée*, a mode of long-term tenacious processual learning, knowledge acquiring, risking hypotheses, revisiting assumptions, and developing an engaged – i.e. time-demanding – understanding.

Gregor McLennan identifies four dimensions of sociology that, in fact, *combine* fast and slow conduct: reportage, explanation, description and evaluation.⁵⁷ Reportage, for its part, “involves compiling bare-boned inventories of people and events;”⁵⁸ description “conveys and reinterprets how social situations impacts upon people’s experience;”⁵⁹ explanation “is essentially about establishing valid causal relations;”⁶⁰ and evaluation “involves arguments as to whether a reported, explained and described state of affairs is a good thing or not.”⁶¹ Andrew Sayer, similarly as McLennan, suggests a productive mix of fast, reporting sociology with more descriptive and critical, slow principles: “[an] explanation requires evaluation [... and] social science has to be critical in the strong sense [...] if it is to describe and explain its objects. The goals of social scientific description and explanations *and*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 771.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Gregor McLENNAN, *Sociological Cultural Studies: Reflexivity and Positivity in the Human Sciences*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2006, p. 45.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

critical evaluation are consistent rather than at odds.⁶² Naturally, different research problems and topics require different techniques of investigation; yet the major danger with reportage-oriented sociology 2.0 is that the inquiry and close engagements with causalities and regularities in “real-time” social reality might compromise other dimensions of social inquiry such as explanation and description, interpretative capacities and even critical dimension seeking for emancipatory social change and alternative social futures.⁶³

Nevertheless, this is not to say that sociology 2.0 suffers of some lower level of sophistication and complexity due to its fast conduct, maybe quite the contrary. One of the intrinsic *progressive* characteristics of sociology is the very sensibility to the world to which it speaks. Yet the “actuality” of sociological knowledge has been traditionally complemented by painstaking integration of those slow modes of sociological inquiry we identified – explanation, description, critique. The point, however, is not to propose some regressive or Luddite argument that would convulsively resist the dynamics and sensibilities of sociological imagination and those investigation attempts that seriously deal with the changing temporality of social structures and formations. Sociology 2.0 – and its capacity to mobilize the attention and attractiveness of contemporary engagements with the digital – and temporal horizons of slower disciplinary commitments, that Sayer and McLennan discuss, should not be mutually exclusive. The temporal protocol of fast (chasing/agile) and slow (critical/sedentary) sociology should overlap and find their synthetic expression in practical conduct, pedagogy and in its “exporting” activities to other social scientific disciplines. With the exclusive emphasis on its fast features we risk the instrumentalization of the sociology.⁶⁴ Conversely, with the overemphasis of slow features we risk relative irrelevance of sociological claims in the face of dynamically changing socio-economic realities.

Therefore, two broad “speed lanes” – one of temporal engagement, one of temporal detachment – would ideally co-exist, inform and complement rather than discriminate against each other. These are associated not only with the inherent heterogeneity of sociological practices and conducts but could also be detectable in the very idea of sociology, that “has to do with

⁶² SAYER, “Who is Afraid,” p. 780, emphasis added.

⁶³ CROMPTON, “Forty Years,” p. 1225.

⁶⁴ John HOLMWOOD, “Sociology after Fordism: Prospects and Problems.” *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 14, 2011, no. 4, pp. 537–556.

the viability of notions of structured social totalities, and the possibility of making authoritative distinctions between the objects of social enquiry and the frameworks of discourse available to configure them.”⁶⁵ In a sense the *viability* of notions of structured social reality needs to be based in temporally symmetrical – fast – methods of data collection and concepts with ample exploratory purchase that effectively assist us in generating protocols describing the composition of a changing social reality. The second instance of the *possibility* of making distinctions between the very objects of social enquiry and discursive frameworks that configure them arguably rests on asymmetrical – slower – differentiated temporal registers. In other words, re-energized sociology 2.0 and its reinvigorated rules of sociological method and slowly paced aspects of sociology need to cross-fertilize each other. Fast and slow aspects are most productive when they are sustained in constant synergistic tensions and continuously revisited in critical debates.

Different temporal horizons and underpinnings need to be maintained not as antinomies, but as attributes of sociology’s temporal pluralism. In fact, this principle would correspond to Max Weber’s remark about the “unsettled” nature of sociology: “the continuous changes and bitter conflict about the apparently most elementary problems of our discipline, its methods the formulation and validity of its concepts” can be still seen as the defining characteristic of sociology.⁶⁶ Not only does this pluralism presupposes a degree of temporal autonomy, one may even suggest – seemingly paradoxically – that practitioners of sociology 2.0 need enough temporal resources to engage with the high-speed social world (orientation in datasets; collection of on-line data; developing methods that trace, sort-out and classify social evidence; not to mention time-consuming analysis of the gathered bare-bone data). This progressive temporal tension of sociology – and the pluralism of its temporal horizons – may, however, be under siege due to a rather different type of rhythm to which I now turn.

Auditing intellect: notes from the United Kingdom

The social sciences are gradually being undermined by two characteristic trends of the transformation of the British higher education sector. First, ever since Tony Blair’s administration, higher education is marked by an increasing presence and entanglement of neoliberal audit practices that

⁶⁵ McLENNAN, *Sociological Cultural Studies*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Cited in HOLMWOOD, “Sociology after Fordism,” p. 542.

are governing knowledge production;⁶⁷ and, second, more recent “impact agenda”⁶⁸ conceived primarily as economic impact accounts for a radical device with far reaching consequences for public nature of universities.⁶⁹ These imperatives also function as determining proxies fundamentally altering the politics of science and research funding. Not only do funders integrate the imperatives of economic benefit and innovation delivery through terms such as “excellence with impact” into their decision-making processes (i.e. distribution and allocation of funds) they also, importantly, as John Holmwood notes, “nudge” academic behaviour into “adopting those objectives into their own research proposals.”⁷⁰

As a result, Roger Burrows notes, academics are increasingly de-professionalized and nested into commensurable value scales; heterogeneous concreted activities are quantified and expressed in numbers, which allow departmental and university comparison and competition.⁷¹ Maintaining the issue of time at the centre of the discussion, the remainder of this article, therefore, looks at the ways in which these developments impact

⁶⁷ See Simon HEAD, “The Grim Threat to British Universities” [online]. 2010. *The New York Review of Books*. Available at: <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/jan/13/grim-threat-british-universities/?pagination=false>> [cit. 22. 4. 2013]. However, as Head also notes, „the imposition of bureaucratic control on the academy goes back to the Thatcher era and its heroine.“

⁶⁸ See e.g. Ben MARTIN, “The Research Excellence Framework and the ‘Impact Agenda’: Are We Creating a Frankenstein Monster?” *Research Evaluation*, vol. 20, 2011, no. 3, pp. 247–254; John HOLMWOOD, “The Impact of ‘Impact’ on UK Social Science.” *Methodological Innovations Online*, vol. 6, 2011, no. 3, pp. 13–17.

⁶⁹ See John HOLMWOOD (ed.), *A Manifesto for the Public University*. London: Bloomsbury 2011.

⁷⁰ John HOLMWOOD, “TRACKed and FECKed: How Audits Undermine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences” [online]. 2011. Available at: <http://exquisitelife.researchresearch.com/exquisite_life/2011/03/tracked-and-fecked-how-audits-undermine-the-arts-humanities-and-social-sciences.html> [cit. 30. 4. 2013]. Holmwood is indeed referring to the UK higher education sector, yet as there are indications that other higher education systems elsewhere not only face similar challenges (see footnote no. 12), but that higher education policy direction in some countries is directly or indirectly shaped by British development. This is apparent for instance in the Czech Republic, see Council for Defence of British Universities, “Radical Changes on an International Scale: On the Parallel ‘Reforms’ of British and Czech University Systems” [online]. 2012. Available at: <<http://cdbu.org.uk/radical-changes-on-an-international-scale-on-the-parallel-and-simultaneous-reform-of-british-and-czech-university-systems/>> [cit. 1. 5. 2013]. Therefore, the context-specific examples analysed below are worth paying attention to even by scholars not based in the UK.

⁷¹ Roger BURROWS, “Living with the H-Index? Metric Assemblages in the Contemporary Academy.” *Sociological Review*, vol. 60, 2012, no. 2, pp. 355–372.

on individual time experience – arguably the indispensable contemporary institutional context and condition in which academic knowledges are (re) produced.⁷² This temporal dimension, focusing on the lived experience and temporal resourcefulness, comprises another complementary, and as we will see connected, register to the one outlined above.

An increasing number of complex datasets monitoring and measuring academic practices is hardly news, since they are the everyday reality for the majority of academics in the UK. Essentially, these metrics not only measure, but also actively define and constitute, academic practices of teaching and research. In the British higher education they include *inter alia*: the National Student Survey (NSS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject and institutional reviews, the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC), PhD completion rates, research income per capita, individual and group h-indices, journal impact factors, and indeed the Research Excellence Framework (REF).⁷³ In principle what we can identify are particular “audit technologies” that comprise requirements which academics are exposed to and need to comply with nowadays: citation metrics, workload models, transparent costing data, research assessment, teaching quality assessment, university league tables.⁷⁴ In effect, and given that these techniques of monitoring also determine the value of academic disciplines, their further reproduction is directly implicated here: “the enactment of value and relative worth in academic work by formal processes of academic judgment, measurement and algorithmic resource allocation has become fundamental to [disciplinary] survival.”⁷⁵

Entangled in these management devices, academics are then expected to be preoccupied with dissemination, speed of conduct, accountability and relevance/impact and by implication, as some commentators say, suppress the more traditional academic values of the deeply rooted notions of

⁷² See Pierre BOURDIEU, *Homo Academicus*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1988.

⁷³ Aidan KELLY – Roger BURROWS, “Measuring the Value of Sociology? Some Notes on Performative Metricisation in the Contemporary Academy” [online]. 2012. Available at: http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/6605/1/Kelly_and_Burrows_July_2011.pdf [cit. 29. 4. 2013], p. 3.

⁷⁴ BURROWS, “Living with the H-Index.”; See also Massimo DE ANGELIS – David HARVIE, “‘Cognitive Capitalism’ and the Rat-Race: How Capital Measures Immaterial Labour in British Universities.” *Historical Materialism*, vol. 17, 2009, no. 3, pp. 3–30.

⁷⁵ KELLY – BURROWS, “Measuring the Value,” p. 3.

professionalism, academic standards and collegiality.⁷⁶ In this sense audit technologies presuppose a fundamental “economic” mechanism:

There are commonalities in that all [audit technologies] give an emphasis to numeric representation, order and rank, all focus on the “measurable”, and all appear to have an interest in promoting competitive changes that alter number and ranks over time. The crucial thing though is that together they are now experienced “on the ground” as more or less ubiquitous melange of measures [...] that increasingly function as overarching data assemblage orientated to myriad forms of quantified control; as assemblage that the enactment of which invokes the sorts of affective reactions.⁷⁷

The typical “affective” reaction experienced “on the ground” is that of hurry-sickness.⁷⁸ In this relation, Rosa aptly describes the pitfalls of “time compression” mood often experienced in the contemporary university and what it might mean for intellectual and scientific practice:

It is almost self-evident that the formulation, filtering and collective weight of arguments is a time-consuming process. This is true for the world of science, where one might well argue that the speed and succession of the conferences and papers is so high and, much worse, the number of papers, books and journals published is so excessive that those who write and talk in the “publish-or-perish” age hardly find sufficient time to develop their arguments properly, whereas those who read and listen are lost in a host of repetitive and half-baked publication and presentations. I am firmly convinced that, at least in the social sciences and the humanities, there is, at present, hardly a common deliberation about the convincing force for better arguments, but rather a non-controllable, mad run rush for more publications, conferences and research-projects the success of which is based on network-structures rather than on argumentational force.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Martin PARKER – David JARY, “The McUniveristy: Organization, Management and Academic Subjectivity.” *Organization*, vol. 2, 1995, no. 2, p. 327 (319–338).

⁷⁷ BURROWS, “Living with H-Index,” p. 360.

⁷⁸ Oili-Helena YLIJOKI –Hans MANTYLA, “Conflicting Time Perspective in Academic Work.” *Time and Society*, vol. 12, 2003, no. 1, pp. 55–78; Heather MENZIES – Janice NEWSON, “No Time to Think: Academics’ Life in the Globally Wired University.” *Time and Society*, vol. 16, 2007, no. 1, pp. 83–98; Oili-Helena Ylijoki, “Boundary-Work between Work and Life in the High-Speed University.” *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 38, 2013, no. 1, pp. 242–255.

⁷⁹ ROSA, *Alienation and Acceleration*, p. 55.

This individual sentiment noted by Rosa, is widespread and shared by academics across disciplines, countries, generations and genders. The point here, however, is not to promote slowness or idleness as some sort of organization solution. Rather we need to underscore the contemporary institutional conditions in which academics are required to operate in ever-increasing pace; and to stress that university audit technologies might be corrosive for disciplinary autonomy.⁸⁰ Owing to its unintended temporal consequences, the increasing auditing of intellect co-shapes the organically paced and autonomous rhythms of knowledge production of sociology addressed in the previous section.

This brings us to the problem of high-tempo of academic life, and what it means for sociology's temporal sensibilities. Audit technologies inflict sociology with a rhythm that is underpinned by a managerialist rationality and corporate culture in which speed of conduct is not only implicated in the associated modes of operations and but is also somehow valued and fetishized.⁸¹ Importantly, the required – rather than optional – pace of operations aims at instilling new norms of conduct into the sociological workforce. In this sense, audited sociology envisages a sociologist with internalized “speed habitus” which by extension might potentially structure and shape modes of perception and reasoning. The resulting action needs to be performed and organized not only according to requirements of audits, but also without delay and stalling; meaning that the turnover time of some core academic activities intensifies incessantly.

Audit technologies are linking efforts, values, purposes and self-understanding with measures and comparisons of output.⁸² In this regime, academics are increasingly expected to spend a considerable amount of time making themselves accountable and reporting on what they are doing. Stephen Ball, a sociologist of education, continues:

In regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything. Last year's efforts are a benchmark for improvement – more publications, more research grants, more students. We must keep up; meet the new and ever more diverse targets that we set for ourselves in appraisal meetings; confess and confront our weaknesses; undertake appropriate and value-enhancing professional development; and take up opportunities for making ourselves more productive,

⁸⁰ LORENZ, “If You Are So Smart,” p. 620.

⁸¹ ADAM, *Timewatch*, p. 100; CHESNEAUX, “Speed and Democracy,” p. 409.

⁸² Stephen BALL, “The Making of a Neoliberal Academic.” *Research in Secondary Teacher Education*, vol. 2, 2012, no. 1, p. 29 (29–31).

delivering up a “targeted self” or the “shape-shifting portfolio person”. Within all of this, more and more of scholarly disposition is rendered explicit and auditable.⁸³

Indeed, this may not only take up lots of time but, moreover, it can be detrimental to morale and *élan vital* behind inventive and progressive intellectual pursuits. The climate, arrestingly described by Ball, arguably not only favours a particular type of necessarily fast action and behaviour, but it also potentially co-produces an entrepreneurial speed-winner archetype, and by implication, its opposite – a speed-loser. In a number of existing accounts⁸⁴ it is indicated that audit technologies normalize a condition in which academics need to constantly demonstrate their accountability in a “treadmill” manner.

Audits may not only engender a compartmental or “Taylorist” mentality but also a mood of permanent urgency. In this relation, Nigel Thrift observed that urgency has become a normalized condition in the managerial discourse and business cultures: “what we are seeing...in the gradual unfolding of an attempt to engineer new kind of ‘fast’ subject positions which can cope with the disciplines of permanent emergency.”⁸⁵ Similarly as managers, academics now face audit technologies with their preferences of short-term and associated pressures to logistical reasoning and immediate expedition. They also arguably face remorseless pressure to be “creative”, while also conforming to the rigours of the audit. In extreme cases, it can be said that contemporary academics must be calculating subjects, able to withstand the exigencies of faster and faster return.⁸⁶

A “high-speed sociologist” would be a sociologist who skillfully manages time-pressure by essentially becoming “an organization person, someone dedicated to a ‘career’ with certain progression and rewards, and someone who knows their (and others’) quality rankings.”⁸⁷ This is not only

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Ida SABELIS, “The Clock-Time Paradox: Time Regimes in the Network Society.” In: HASSAN, R. – PURSER, R. (eds.), *24/7 – Time and Temporality in the Network Society*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press 2007, pp. 255–278; Rosalind GILL, “Breaking the Silence: The Hidden Injuries of Neo-Liberal Academia” [online]. 2009. Available at: <<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/cmci/people/papers/gill/silence.pdf>> [cited 1. 5. 2013]; YLIJOKI, “Boundary-Work.”

⁸⁵ Nigel THRIFT, *Knowing Capitalism*. London: Sage 2005, p. 131.

⁸⁶ Nigel THRIFT, “Performing Cultures in the New Economy.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 90, 2000, no. 4, p. 676 (674–692).

⁸⁷ PARKER – JARY, “McDonaldization,” p. 329.

because of the tacit assumption that fast conduct is required to keep up with the crowding of tasks, but also because being fast, agile and dynamic is structurally inscribed, rewarded and/or sanctioned according to audit criteria – for instance, in the case of promotion. Expected and required speed of conduct associated with ubiquitous auditing of intellect might, however, be detrimental for sociology.⁸⁸ In this sense, Holmwood adds: “the more likely consequence [for sociology] is not the flourishing of a diversity of voices, but a placing of all voices into the same register.”⁸⁹ The unsettled character of sociology that would ideally encompass this diversity of voices – with their different rhythms and temporal priorities that were discussed in the first section – might not be fully compatible with the audit technologies and the temporal requirements they inflict. In this sense, the very institutional – external – condition in which sociology is reproduced is an intrinsic determinant for its internal characteristics. Critique, for instance, and the differently oriented features we discussed – integral to sociology’s capacity “to produce a number of co-existing and mutually exclusive (semi) paradigms which continually split and re-form in different combinations”⁹⁰ – might not be recognized by audit regime. Epistemological conflict of paradigms is “possible” only *in so far as* sociology as such is institutionally reproduced; that means, as Holmwood pertinently notes, that in a minimal sense, sociology departments will continue to provide employment.⁹¹ Given our interest in time, we might add, that even if sociology departments continue to provide employment, it might be endangered even so without a degree of individual temporal autonomy.

Normalized time-pressure might therefore be, rather perversely, co-shaping a high-speed sociologist who is able to operate in agile, dynamic and flexible mode. This might, however, be potentially taxing for the organic features of sociological knowledge production. In other words, the contemporary knowledge production regime might arguably “train” a new generation of employable sociologists that would be in synch with audits and associated temporal horizons/priorities. The new generation, shaped by the current climate, might learn how to “manage rapid change” and time compression. Still for other sociological “species-being,” the lack of uninterrupted time and its fragmentation may not only become a personal

⁸⁸ Nicholas GANE, “Measure, Value and the Current Crises of Sociology.” *Sociological Review*, vol. 59, 2012, no. 2, pp. 151–173.

⁸⁹ HOLMWOOD, “Sociology’s Misfortune,” p. 652.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 649.

⁹¹ HOLMWOOD, “Sociology after Fordism,” p. 543.

and individual predicament, but it may have consequences for the ways in which the discipline evolves; through its diverse conducts; through deep engagement with the present/now, through wider internal reflections on sociology's own conditions of reproduction, through the maintenance of its constitutive "relics." Speed-losers might simply not fit into the contemporary dynamic knowledge regime; speed-winners might hold their positions, but arguably for relatively high-cost of self-denial and temporal compromises of, for example, psychological and personal nature and, importantly, for the ultimately high-cost: the decay of sociology.

I am not suggesting it is the case, but, similarly as things stand in present academia, contemporary sociology is now in "danger of becoming fast-food outlet that sells only those ideas that its managers believe will sell, that treats its [practitioners] as if they were too devious or stupid to be trusted, and that values the formal rationality of the process over the substantive rationality of the end."⁹² Under these conditions "unmitigated rationalization and standardization could leave little space [and time] for any practice that does not fit within very narrow definitions of efficiency."⁹³ Some commentators, rightly pessimistic, suggest⁹⁴ that we are already witnessing the disappearance of sociology in the UK, or at least its transformation into "applied social studies;"⁹⁵ now placed under the dogmatic register of "competitivenessspeak" and "excellencespeak"⁹⁶ sustained by the hegemonic "new normal" – audits – and their intrinsic temporal assumptions and preferences.

This by no means implies that variants of sociological creativity and innovation and even forms of criticism will get lost. These instances will nevertheless be (already are) reframed and aligned with managerial priorities. Indeed, within the contemporary academic knowledge production regime creativity and innovation will continue to be triumphantly and heroically declared as driving imperatives. Yet, to paraphrase Tom Osborne and Andrew Barry, high turnover of novel types of knowledges may not necessarily imply an escalation of *inventiveness*⁹⁷ – undoubtedly a time-

⁹² PARKER – JARY, "McDonalidization," pp. 335–336.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ HOLMWOOD, "Sociology's Misfortune," p. 652.

⁹⁵ HOLMWOOD, "Sociology after Fordism," p. 551.

⁹⁶ Bill READINGS, *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1996; HOLMWOOD, "Sociology's Misfortune." LORENZ, „If You Are So Smart.“

⁹⁷ Andrew BARRY, "Invention and Inertia." *Cambridge Anthropology*, no. 21, pp. 62–70; Thomas OSBORNE, "Against 'Creativity': A Philistine Rant." *Economy and Society*, vol. 32, 2003, no. 4, pp. 507–525.

consuming activity with complex “experiential infrastructures” composed of inertia, waiting, stalling and even time wasting.⁹⁸ These temporal modalities account for something undesirable and perhaps even unfashionable in the current situation. Inventiveness, as Osborne notes, underpinned by temporal autonomy is in opposition to acceleration-inflicted creativity industries, consumerist individualism, enterprise ideology, the cult of new as ever-unchanging fashion and productivism for its own sake that seem to characterize the contemporary higher education policy discourse.⁹⁹

Auditable creativity measured in terms of the rapid rates of production of ever-novel knowledges may occur precisely where there is a sense that time-demanding originality and inventiveness needs to be restricted.¹⁰⁰ This might concern sociological knowledge production too. Contemporary academia, with its preferences in economically useful knowledges and larded with market fundamentalism, unfavourable for subversive thought¹⁰¹ might simultaneously generate Bourdiesian “fast-thinkers.”¹⁰² They, when constantly working under normalized time-pressure, will offer pre-digested and pre-thought concepts, or as Roberto M. Unger says, context-reinforcing rather than context-breaking findings and analytics¹⁰³ and will transmit “received ideas”¹⁰⁴ and “bite-size” scholarship,¹⁰⁵ rather than original thoughts that result from conditions in which one is allowed to take – and self-determine – his or her time for thought. What might appear as originality and innovation according the current audit criteria and parameters might simply mean a step towards instrumentalization of sociology, divesting of its, often tense yet productive, temporal pluralism. In the conditions when audits are single proxies to quality, value and relevance, sociology’s sensibilities – those particularly associated with critique – might be recast into a personae of good reporter; an investigative journalist who bears witness to the

⁹⁸ PELS, *Unhastening Science*, p. 9.

⁹⁹ OSBORNE, “Against,” p. 522.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

¹⁰¹ LORENZ, “If You Are So Smart,” p. 600.

¹⁰² Pierre BOURDIEU, *On Television*. New York: The New Press 1998, p. 28.

¹⁰³ Cited in Gregor McLENNAN, “Disinterested, Disengaged, Useless: Conservative or Progressive Idea of the Univeristy?” *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, vol. 6, 2008, no. 2, p. 199 (195–200).

¹⁰⁴ BOURDIEU, *On Television*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ For an inquiry into the emergence of this type of scholarship in contemporary psychology see Marco BERTAMINI and Marcus R. MUNAFÒ, “Bite-Size Science and Its Undesired Side Effects.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, vol. 7, 2012, no. 1, pp. 67–71.

world and who is “an onlooker at the scene and teller of travellers’ tales.”¹⁰⁶ Consequently, audit-friendly critique, fully enveloped in the current climate of sociological knowledge production, will become

a form of mystification in what Horkheimer might have been moved to describe a new “double eclipse” of reason. The first eclipse occurs in the promotion of instrumental knowledge against critical knowledges, and the second eclipse in the way in which critique comes to serve the instrumentalization of knowledge.¹⁰⁷

Concluding remarks

Overall, I tentatively propose that sociology’s rhythms comprise two temporal registers:

- 1) different temporalities inherent to fast and slow modes of sociological inquiry;
- 2) individual time experience associated with the organizational and administrative arrangements of contemporary academia.

The temporal tensions and relations that compose the differently oriented epistemologies and modes of inquiry of the first type of rhythm can be productive. Fast sociological instruments are conducive for capturing the “digital now” and dynamically changing socio-economic realities. Yet, a key ingredient of sociological sensibility also lies in deferred analytical strategies that aim to describe, explain and critique the social world. This balance helps to sustain the combination of critical scholarly detachment, even partisan inquiry producing normative evaluation, and cutting-edge methodological and conceptual modalities that trace contemporary societal change and generate factual inventories and descriptions. The relationship between the two temporal registers is more problematic. The latter may have regressive consequences for the former. Audit technologies pose prohibitive “congestion”¹⁰⁸ in sociological environments, especially in the form of taking away or at least limiting the energy, zeal, tenacity – and above all free thinking time – associated with inventive intellectual sensibilities. The temporal priorities and demands academic sociologists are exposed to effectively

¹⁰⁶ HOLMWOOD, “Sociology after Fordism,” p. 551.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ See Ronald BARNETT, *Being a University*. London: Routledge 2011, pp. 72–83.

endanger the conflicting yet (re)productive rhythms that are at the core of the unsettled nature of the sociological discipline. Moreover, the hasty rhythms of audit culture and managerial ideology might, in the worst-case scenario, produce a generation of high-speed sociologists complacent with the expanding commodification and marketization of higher education.