The Slow Advisor: Taking a Principled Stand in an Age of Immediacy

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Agenda

• How’d we get to moving so darn fast?
• I wanna’ slow down a bit, yeah?
• Is Slow best?
• Is fast all that bad?
• What am I supposed to do with all this?
How’d we get to moving so darn fast?

Tomlinson:

• Speed has a Cultural Significance.
• Speed has a Technological Dimension.
• Speed has an Economic Element.
• Immediacy is the Inevitable Destination.
The Cultural Significance of Speed

• Tomlinson’s “Three Stories”
  1. The disciplining of the inherently violent and unstable impulses of modern social and economic speed in a culture of rational regulation.
  2. Speed as it is encountered escaping that discipline and regulation, conferring complicated and frequently dark associations between risk, danger, violence and sensual-aesthetic experiences and pleasure.
  3. Immediacy emerges, fueled by the ubiquity of tele-mediation, altering the cultural impact of speed with new possibilities and problems.
The Technological Dimension of Speed

• The first and most measurable form of acceleration is the speeding up of transport, communication, and production, or technological acceleration.
• The second is the acceleration of social change.
• The third is the acceleration of the pace of life.
• The driving forces behind social acceleration are globalization and innovation in ICT, facilitating the fast turnover of capital across the globe.
• Fast capitalism annihilates space and time.
• ICTs as much reflect our high-speed culture, though, as shape it.
• Now is the time to contest the euphoria of speed and the technological impulse to achieve it, harnessing our inventiveness to take control of our time more of the time.
The Economic Element of Speed

- Sociologists, economists, engineers, and philosophers have all taken turns at understanding time.
- Clock time still dominates. Process time and wait time are related.
- It bears repeating: Fast capitalism annihilates space and time.
- Harvey (via Vostal): global capitalism sets as its goal at least 3 percent compound growth per year, thus new social domains and social and geographical territories are turned into accumulation machines.
The Inevitability of Immediacy

- Tomlinson chose *Immediacy* because of its multivalence: time *and* space.

- “It is the integration of communications technologies into modernity which is transforming all of its dimensions – globalizing, deterritorializing, shifting its methods and relations of production, delivery, and consumption, producing new conveniences, excitements and delights but also new anxieties and pathologies,” (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 75).
I wanna’ slow down a bit, yeah?

- 2014 – advising in the School of Art
- 2016 - Berg & Seeber’s *The Slow Professor*
  - Time Management and Timelessness
  - Pedagogy and Pleasure
  - Research and Understanding
  - Collegiality and Community
  - Collaboration and Thinking Together
- 2020...
THIS IS FINE.
Is Slow best?

• What is Slow?
  • 1986 – Carlo Petrini protests the opening of a McDonald’s
  • 1999 – Geir Berthelsen founds The World Institute of Slowness; Paolo Saturnini founds Cittaslow
  • 2004 – Carl Honoré’s *In Praise of Slowness*

• Values
  • Local / Traditional / Close / Intimate
  • Sustainable / Eco friendly / Abstinent / Balanced / Restful
  • Convivial / Pleasurable / Patient / Focused
Is Slow best?

“After reveling in the wonders of digital media for 20 years, I had abandoned the internet for six months and cellphones for a year. An exhibit of exquisitely illustrated letters by the whimsical, macabre artist Edward Gorey had got me thinking about the loss of material artifacts that had accompanied digital communication. I missed the creativity of making printed correspondence and the fun of receiving it. This mild wistfulness sparked me to try and reshape the contours of my mediated life. (Rauch, 2018, xi).”
Is Slow best?

*Nouveau Romantisme?*

- Romanticism (approx. 1800-1890), partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, emphasized emotion and individualism, glorified the past and nature.
- Berlin (2000) draws connections between the Romantic movement and, “something like the melting away of the very notion of objective truth," and thus not only nationalism but also fascism and totalitarianism (Berlin, 2000, p. 57-58).
Is Slow best?

“Despite its progressive feel, slowdown also stands for (1) a capitalist commodity, (2) a dangerous political objective that weaves together parochialism with fear-driven social sentiment and (3) an undesired subjective experience” (Vostal, 2019b, p.1039).
Is fast all that bad?

• Fast made Slow (Vostal, 2019a).
• Fast makes Slow possible (Wacjman, 2015).
• Fast brings Change (Connolly, 2002).
What am I supposed to do with all this?

- This isn’t New
- Have a Target
- Aspirational Models
What am I supposed to do with all this?

Adopt “normative ambiguity” (Volstal, 2019b) – neither Fast nor Slow:

“I have argued that we need to problematize simple claims that everything is speeding up, or everything should be slowed down. My main argument is that there is no theoretical reason for arguing that slow is normatively better than fast, or fast is any better than slow, when it comes to the question of how democracy and governance should be practiced. Instead, we should adopt a more ambiguous and ambivalent [attitude] towards speed in modernity.” (Fawcett, 2017, p.20-21)
What am I supposed to do with all this?

Assess which temporality is being “squeezed”:

• Volume – amount of time spent on tasks
• Organization – coordination of tasks with others
• Density – number of tasks during a unit of time
What am I supposed to do with all this?

Identify your “temporal orientation,” and those of key stakeholders:
• Time urgency - is time viewed as scarce and must be conserved?
• Pacing style - how is effort distributed over time towards deadlines?: early action, deadline action, and steady action
• Temporal focus / Time attitude - specific positive or negative attitudes towards past, present, and future
• Temporal distance - the extent to which individuals focus on events near or distant in time
• Synchrony preference - willingness to adapt pace and rhythm to others
• Polychronicity - extent to which one prefers to perform tasks simultaneously versus sequentially
What am I supposed to do with all this?

Use “wait characteristics” to your advantage:
• Temporal features of the wait – length, degree of indeterminacy, and pacing
• Reason(s) for the wait – anticipatory, inefficiency, scarcity, time-delay/natural, deliberate, individually-chosen
• Nature of the wait – alone or with others, and wait “purity” (waits can occur by themselves or while doing something else)
• Criticality of the wait – as defined by the degree of disruption the wait causes (or might cause)
• Context of the wait – occupational, organizational, social
• Status – waiting as an exercise of power
• Agency – how one uses wait time; “equipped waiting”
What am I supposed to do with all this?

10 Ways to Slow Down

1. Don’t hurry.
2. Don’t multitask.
5. Get good quality sleep.
6. Don’t cram your calendar.
7. Disconnect. Control your mobile.
8. Be early.
9. Slow down your personal clock.
10. Give your time.
What am I supposed to do with all this, now?

“The most pressing question is whether or not ... a liberal, pluralistic, democratic society that values the self-determination and autonomy of individuals as well as political communities, can be saved through a transformation aimed at founding modern society on a non-escalatory mode of stabilization. Such a transformation obviously requires a ‘pacification’ of the engines of economic appropriation, cultural acceleration and political activation in the first place. These engines eventually will be shut off anyway – the only question left open then is whether this will happen by design or by (natural or social) disaster” (Rosa, Dörre, Lessenich, 2017, p.64).
References


Artwork:

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