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Slow and Fast: An experiential storytelling dialogue about festivals

Jerzy Kociatkiewicz

University of Essex

Monika Kostera

University of Warsaw

Address(es) for correspondence:

Jerzy Kociatkiewicz
Essex Business School
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
CO4 3SQ Colchester
E-mail: kociak@kociak.org

Monika Kostera
Faculty of Management
University of Warsaw
Szturmowa 1/3
02-678 Warszawa
and Linnaeus University, Sweden
E-mail: monika@kostera.pl

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Abstract

Speed has a long history of usage in managerial discourse, both as a metric of efficiency and as a point of resistance. In this text we explore its validity as a category for organizing experience, through autoethnographic exploration of participation in experience economy events. We present slow and fast as distinct modes of experiencing the same festivals, and explore the possibility of arriving at a syzygic mode uniting the two oppositions (while preserving their inherent contradictions). Finally, we reflect on the possibility of utilizing ethnographic bursts of experience as a tool for more nuanced management education.

Keywords:

Ethnography, Experience, Festival, Management Education, Myth, Reflexivity, Speed, Storytelling

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Introduction

The notion of speed has emerged as one of the defining axes for describing contemporary culture, appearing in descriptors ranging from *Fast Food, Fast Talk* (combined in a title of Robin Leidner's 1993 ethnographic study) and *Fast Company* (a business magazine already in its fifteenth year of circulation) to its opposites in slow food (a celebrated movement that "brings together pleasure and responsibility"), slow architecture (a manifesto and accompanying website issued by a group of Dutch architects), and just general *Slowness* (proclaimed in Milan Kundera's 1995 novel). Relatedness of these issue can be examined in a variety of ways, but what we find particularly interesting is the ambiguous valuation given to speed by different theorists and thinkers, often in very similar contexts. This is by no means a new phenomenon: the pensive *flâneur* of Baudelaire and Benjamin, strolling through the city at the dawn of the last century was bound to have collided with Marinetti's futurists attempting to run by with "the racer's stride" or drive by in "a racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath." (Marinetti, 1909).

In this paper we explore this double valuation by examining a number of experience economy events through a conversation between Slow and Fast. After Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (1999), we understand experience economy as a new type of market orientation, or perhaps rather a new perspective on retail transactions, where businesses strive to simultaneously achieve a high degree of product differentiation and mass customization. The resulting transactions are viewed as theatrical spectacles, aiming at providing clients with unique experiences. The paper ends with a proposition of a learning method suitable for the

experience economy area, which combines the fast and the slow side of the experiences and thus enables managers to explore the theatricality of such events without loss of their enthralling complexity.

Speed up

The Italian futurist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1909) believed in the gospel of speed. In his *Manifesto of Futurism* he exalts in the beauty and energy of speed:

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*. (ibid.)

More contemporarily, authors such as Virilio (1997) or Baudrillard (1992) proclaim the near infinite speedup of the social, of which they are both deeply wary. Paul Virilio considers speed one of the main characteristics and at the same time – major problems of contemporary society. The speed of progress and the acceleration of virtualization pose a threat to humanity and nature, and we, due to our passivity, are doomed to fall victims to a global accident which will take place in cyberspace. Two of the natural barriers to speed has already been crossed: sound and heat, but the third, light, so far remains constant. Speed makes people disorientated and deprives them of history, as history happens in time. Instantaneity globalizes time, distorts it and vacates it of space for things to happen in local spaces and frames. Now history is supposed to take place in a global time – a new phenomenon in society, until now known only in astronomy. Global time belongs to the new media, it is created by a deconstruction of local

relationships and at the same time of the ever-flowing information. According to Virilio, information is always accompanied by disinformation and in the times of information explosion, disinformation baffles and desensitizes human beings. In the process, democracy suffers too. Globalization and speed may be the path to allow tyranny into society via the new media. Information superhighways are the ways through which phenomena such as deregulation, liberalization of financial markets etc. are allowed to travel throughout the world. Information flows at a pace that is too fast to be able to be experienced. Existence is situated here and now, and the pace of virtualization poses a threat to it, as it disconnects communication from the here and now. The speed of virtualization disintegrates human beings and the way they work in a society. In that sense, it is a threat as real as the atomic bomb, albeit in another sphere – the experiential one.

Jean Baudrillard (1992) believes that the speed of contemporary society has caused a destabilization of the linearity of history. It has now taken the form of a curve striving upwards, ascending and progressing into the plateau which Francis Fukuyama believed to be the epitome of human organization – the contemporary capitalist society. The modern speed of information has annihilated time, it is denying delay, creating instantaneity. News travel so fast that they produce a void behind them, like black hole, devouring everything, including time itself. What we experience are but simulacra, a memory of events that belong in a different reality from the one where people live their lives. History is recycled and reutilized and then turned into virtual waste again. All this happens outside of the human frames of existence, heading for an apocalypse where several moments co-exist and produce a kind of artificial immortality. Both Virilio and Baudrillard consider speed something typical of our age, rather inevitable and rather sinister.

On the other hand, much of managerial discourse was, until recently, quite thrilled by the idea of ever-accelerating speed. John Jones (1993) promotes high speed management (HSM) as a response to the ever-changing environment. Time based management strategies are aimed at working faster than the competition, knowing that time is money and using time as a most valuable resource. All processes, including the way managers work and the culture of the companies, should be sped up, creating the conditions for rapid innovation, speed to market and instant adaptation processes. Donald Cushman and Sarah Sanderson (1996) point to a rapidly changing environment that poses new pressures on enterprises. These pressures should be met by high-speed management which enables immediate adaptation. Like Jones, they regard this approach to management as all-encompassing. They seek to propose a set of useful communication techniques and strategies based on the speeding up of integration and coordination processes. Continuous organizational change can take place through a well orchestrated teamwork. Managers should change their style of working and making decisions. Pierre Mourier (2001) advocates for a new velocity management, based on “decision making at lightning speed” (p. 24). Velocity management enables management to develop an instinct for immediate reactions to errors and disturbances. Thus improvement can take place in “off-schedule conditions” (p. 27). The popular business press emphatically echoes this fascination with speed. Speed is good for team spirit in software firms and slowing down can cause losses of clients as well as of morale (Dahl, 2009). But not only change of organizational level is to be achieved through high speed. According to Andrzej K. Kozminski (2005), high-speed management, together with flexibility, is a suitable template for systemic transformation of the European economy. In fact, speed should be maximized as only the top performers can win the competition game in the changing world. One of the conditions for the introduction of such strategies are flexible labour markets to which people and companies will have to adjust. This calls for a management education programme which will enable breeding of niche finders –

people who can successfully identify and exploit niches in the market. These individuals are active, self-reliant and have a strong drive of achievement. Management education should promote speed and flexibility through the ability to adapt instantaneously and cope with radical change.

John Child and Rita Gunther McGrath (2001) hold that the current transition from an economy based on materials to one based on flows is creating new conditions for management. Organizations have broken free of physical constraints and velocity has become one of the main challenges facing them, together with interdependence, disembodiment and power. The altered conditions have brought about a change in organizational forms which is better suited to the speed at which the environments in information-intensive economies work. Such new forms are based on decentralized goal setting and decision making, vision, team work, fuzzy role-definitions and other anti-bureaucratic and non-hierarchical principles of organizing. The role of transformational leadership is becoming ever more important and the ability to manage constant change is crucial for all organizations that wish to survive under the current conditions (Kozminski, 2005; Doyle, 2002). Not just people but also things should be managed as fast as possible – Just-in-Time delivery are one of such methods for speeding up operations, ideally to the level of instantaneity, via perfect coordination (e.g. Zimmer, 2001). It can and should be applied to organizations outside of the material production sphere, such as knowledge intensive firms (Davenport and Glaser, 2002).

Slow down

However, not all of literature on the subject of contemporary organizations is as enthusiastic towards speed. In an article entitled “Need Speed? Slow Down” recently published in the

influential *Harvard Business Review* Jocelyn Davis and Tom Atkinson (2010) propose that some space for reflection is needed in order for companies to achieve high performance. Indeed, strategic speed is different from operational speed and depends on the allowance for some slowness.

[P]erformance suffered at firms that moved fast all the time, focused too much on maximizing efficiency, stuck to tested methods, didn't foster employee collaboration, and weren't overly concerned about alignment. (ibid., p. 30).

This critical view is shared by several authors publishing research texts. Ronald Purser (2002) is critical towards the idea that fast is good. Management decisions should not be made impulsively or on demand, important issues need time to be thought through. Decision making should take the future and the past into consideration, something that the current trends to speed up do not allow for, creating instead something of a "prolonged present" (p. 156). The new technologies are "radically altering our everyday experience of space, time, and knowledge" (p. 158). Space is becoming claustrophobic, while time and knowledge are expanding in volume yet becoming more superficial. In demanding instant reactions to events, new technologies distort the role of the human being, who needs time to consider and experience. Decisions and communication without experiencing are becoming devoid of human judgement and disconnected from the spatial environments. Instead, it would be advisable to take the complexity and multidimensionality of time into consideration, allow for a participation beyond the surface and thus counterbalance the drive to speed. The example of Enron can be seen as a pertinent illustration of what can happen if speed is allowed to take precedence over reflection. Joanne Roberts and John Armitage (2006) present a history of the company, ultra-fast in its appearance as well as disappearance, however, having caused gigantic problems in its wake. They label Enron a hypermodern organization, characterized by

unfettered acceleration. Hypermodernity is all about velocity, globalization through elimination of real space and time.

The hypermodern organization is [...] an impermanent organization and an organization that is almost wholly determined by its relationship to the excessive speed at which it operates in relation to its environment. (ibid., p. 564).

As seen in the case of Enron, this means an abandonment of long term thinking and its replacement by accelerated market-to-market decision-making which does not include any kind of reflection or broader consideration. Mikael Holmqvist (2000) also brings to attention the pathological side of organizational speed. Some of the effects of speed limit the ability of organizations to learn. In order to circumvent this the author suggests a slowing down of organizations by “complicating” them, i.e. making their learning processes more complicated through interorganizational collaborations. Organizations have to learn more slowly, thus avoiding learning traps that negatively influence the quality of the learning process and its effects. Management consulting should take time, too, as good consulting practices benefit from a prolonged contact with the organization, metaphorical thinking and reflection – shortcuts are a sure way to make mistakes (Hensel, 2010).

A special issue of *Culture and Organization* (Case, Lilley and Owens, 2004) and an edited book (Case, Lilley and Owens, 2006) radically question not only the assumption that speed is good for organizations, but, indeed, that it is necessary. Some authors, such as notably Carl Honore in his book *In Praise of Slow* (2004) not only present a critical stance towards speed but straightforwardly praise slowness as simply better. He presents the Slow Movement, which is all about balance, taking the necessary time. Humanity has been trapped in a self-proclaimed dogma of incessant acceleration, with speed becoming an addiction, and every day turning into

a race. This constant living in the fast lane makes our experiences superficial, takes a toll on our relationships, and drives us towards a kind of existential stalemate. Slowness is an essential feature and condition of enjoyment. Movements such as Slow Food offer sustainability and pleasure, where human producers and consumers, as well as nature do not necessarily strive at contradictory aims but where everything and everyone has a chance to fall into place. Its growing popularity shows that people enjoy eating well cooked quality food without a hurry, even at a higher price. It has also beneficial “side effects” such as the diminishing of the need to diet, taking better care of the environment, less cruelty to animals in the stock-raising process, strengthening of relationships. Not just eating can be slowed down. Other examples are cities, which benefit from the inhabitants' predilection for slowness by the reduction of noise and pollution, work, which once again can be a fulfillment and, paradoxically, bring about better productivity, sex, which can be both enlightening and offer better relationships, to name just a few examples from the book. Slowing down is a life changing experience. We can all learn. For a start, in the words of the author:

Try to think about time not as a finite resource that is always draining away, or as a bully to be feared or conquered, but as the benign element we live in. Stop living every second as if Frederick Taylor were hovering nearby, checking his stopwatch and tut-tutting over his clipboard. (ibid, p. 243)

Fast or slow organization?

There are numerous examples of fast organizations to be found among organizational ethnographies and other writings on organizations, many quite complimentary, as well some descriptions of slow businesses. We will briefly present a few better known ones, in order to

sketch the frame of the organizational realities that we wish to contrast to our own brief field study of festivals. Starting with fast organizations, the book by Lars Strannegård and Maria Friberg (2001) tell the story of the aptly named Quickcompany where play and work intermingle and in equal measures contribute to the company's success. The organization is an IT-firm, active within several countries across the world which has been rapidly developing in the 1990s. The employees are all relatively young and dedicated to their job. The people of Quickcompany do not feel comfortable in traditional, structured professions, but prefer the challenge of more chaotic and, indeed, high-speed environments. Employees are apparently not constrained by structure or custom, and originality is cultivated. The constant creative change is, however, not regarded as anything exceptional by the employees, rather, it is "business is not as usual" (p. 40). The speed is not forced; this is the way things happen around here, by the sheer force of enthusiasm and spontaneity. This can be explained by the industry that Quickcompany operates in: IT. Computer games and playing with technology are part of the everyday routine, just like writing programs. Slowness, as in lengthy decision-making processes, protracted pondering and pure idleness are the cardinal sins in this company. The employees say that they love the company and rejoice in their individuality, originality and the pace of play and work. The authors believe that Quickcompany is a foretaste of what management might look like in years to come:

Perhaps we are moving toward a different way of working in, and managing, companies. Not just toward a business philosophy that tries to successfully blend innovation and profitability, but toward a way of working that erases the border between innovation and profitability, play and seriousness, work and leisure time. (Strannegård and Friberg, 2001, p. 106)

Another example of a fast organization, from the same industry as Quickcompany, is described

by Sami Boutaiba (2004). YalaYala (fast fast in arabic) is a small, newly started company. In the company's quarters there hangs a poster on the wall, saying "Speed is God and Time is the Devil". They are a group of very creative people, with an ambition to create a company far from traditional, perhaps more of a free network where they can all do the sort of work that they really like. They like the idea of being the same persons at work and outside of it and being fast is one of their distinguishing traits, also, it is closely linked to their entrepreneurial spirit. They are always ready to let go, to begin anew, and on the whole "YalaYala's way might be referred to as the way of the moment" (ibid, p. 33). The extraordinary level of diversity within the company, as well as the strength of the tolerance for differences is equalled only by the pace at which the firm is operating; perhaps the speed brings the freedom that the founders value so much. The culture of the company is described by the author as "a world of suddenlys" (ibid, p. 34).

They [are] ecstatic by the apparent speed of the new economy, and by the prospect of becoming rich as if a whirlwind motion has carried them way forward as compared to a normal, incremental line of development that one might expect from more "traditional companies". [...] Life seem[s] instananeous, indeed, and even though it [does[create a bit of panic in YalaYala, the panic [is] of an ecstatic nature, one of seizing the moment (ibid, p. 35)

By being so fast – they "escape prosaics" (ibid, p. 37).

Robin Leidner (1992) depicts far more traditional – and less ecstatic – organizations in her book *Fast Food, Fast Talk*. McDonald's, the famous fast food company, demands fast highly routinized work and sets out to control the employee's behaviour. Combined Insurance, wants to instil a commitment and motivation into its employees that could be then "carried home" to

create a connection to work even in their free time. They do so by the introduction of routinized and energetic ways of talking and interacting with potential clients. Routinization, including high speed, is not necessarily resisted by the employees. At McDonald's, it gives them some space for their personal thoughts and interactions, and makes their job easier, and at Combined Insurance it boosts their confidence and offers psychic protection from the burnout that the job may bring. Similarly, in Michael Burawoy's (1979/1982) famous study, the workers work as fast as they do, and do not resist or try to work as slowly as possible, because they create a game of meeting quotas and trying to avoid monotony at work. They abstain from working too fast, because that would cause the rising of quotas and put them in a situation where they would have to work harder for the same amount of money. But within the limits of the current quotas they are putting in effort that cannot simply be explained by the purely financial motives that Frederick Taylor ascribed to them. Workers define their identity from these games, as well as through the machinery they operate. They also define relationships within the factory; a well-respected worker is one who is good at the game and thus, rather fast.

Mara Miele and Jonathan Murdoch (2002) present a case study of Slow Food restaurant. They view the principle on which the operation of the organization is based as basically aesthetic. Renato Sardo, the director of Slow Food International, is quoted to say that Slow Food can both be seen as a way of protesting against standardization, and as a way of bringing the pleasure of food to the public. McDonald's fast food restaurants were seen as a threat mainly to popular food establishments. Therefore, Slow Food establishments focused on the promotion of local food cultures. Currently the movement embraces restaurants in several dozen countries. The authors describe the Bagnoli restaurant as an example of the movement, as it "embodies the principle of 'slowness' in its adherence to typical cuisine, in its use of local materials and

products, and in its ambience of relaxed conviviality” (ibid, p. 318). The restaurant is operating since the mid-60s and is a local business located on the coast on Tuscany. The current owner and chef joined the Slow Food movement with the ambition to do something different, “less intensive and more interesting, more creative” (ibid, p. 320). The restaurant has traditionally based its cuisine on products from the local forest and continues to do so. It has grown more sophisticated since the joining of the movement but remains a local restaurant, accessible to all classes. The restaurant is keeping strong ties with local businesses, government and networks. It offers the guests an experience, which is an effect of and element in a rich social network. Seen in this context, it operates in a slow way indeed, even if the end process consisting of serving the food to customers does not necessarily last very long. The space for practical aesthetics is very high in the case of the Bagnoli restaurant, and its functioning is deeply rooted within a broader context: political, cultural, and ecological.

Experiencing festivals – fast or slow?

The type of organized event that we explore in this paper, the festival, is seen as a prime example of organizations active within the experience economy. Gilmore and Pine (2007) emphasize that not only firms and management canons change with the introduction of the experience economy, but so do popular expectations. Customers now tend to seek products that fit their way of interacting with the world and which they can incorporate as a significant part of their lives. The product is staged in a performance that strives to engage both parties: the customer and the employee.

Hjorth and Kostera (2007) argue that experience economy is based on the following four principles: immediacy, subjectivity, playfulness, and performativity. Experiences are always

embodied and contextualized, never abstract, and so the experience economy product needs to be immediate, situated in concrete time and space. Subjectivity means that experiences always have an active subject, engaging with the process and transforming it, while being transformed him- or herself. Authenticity of experience does not mean earnestness; experience economy performances playful, thriving on the ironic distancing towards the activities. The customers are ideally aware of the staging and do not take it all that seriously. The whole interaction is about having fun. Finally, performativity of the economy means that the products are being created "on the spot", they are realized as they are experienced. It is impossible to store experiences or to recycle them. They come and are they are consumed fresh.

Hjorth and Kostera also point out that there are different scales of experience production, from unique through mediated to mass-produced. The products are in all cases equally subjective, immediate, and performative, but they may be presented as belonging to different experiential scopes. The unique product is one of its kind, such as for example in art production. The mediated product is an experience of one kind transformed into another, as in design the ordinary is changing into the aesthetically sophisticated. Finally, mass-produced experiences are shared with many others, this is the case of e.g. sports spectacles. Depending on the type of practice, customers are invited to be introspective or extroverted in their experiences. Yet in all types consumption takes the form of a quest – for adventure as well as for identity.

Experience economy operates in a variety of rhythms, and its events can be understood as slow or fast depending on the inclinations of the participants rather than any definite features of the events themselves. Thus, a Volkswagen factory in Dresden has been described as a clear example of experience economy approach (Hjorth and Pelzer, 2007): this Transparent Factory (its official name) allows prospective customers as well as tourists to watch the entire manufacturing process, and gives the buyer the possibility to follow one's ordered car from its

inception right to the handover of the finished product. The process embodies both a speedy creation of a fast vehicle and a slow process of familiarization with one's automobile-to-be.

In this text we endeavour to explore different facets of swiftness and slowness in several experience economy performances, such as fairs and bazaars. To do this, we set out to experience these events through the antonymic personages of Fast and Slow, representing, in only slightly abstracted form, the temperaments of the authors. The following dialogue in words and photographs is the result of these exploration.

The study

We carried out a narrative space study based on hybrid observation (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2010). The observation was a kind of a merged participant and non-participant observation, where the former implies the taking upon oneself of roles from within the studied field and the latter means not taking upon oneself any such roles and thus remaining an outsider (Kostera, 2007). In such a way we collected short ethnographic stories concerning us moving around in the field, and therefore we call them space stories (de Certeau, 1984/1988). They are full narratives and the end result of our research rather than field notes in need of explication.

Ethnographic research means immersion in a culture and enables to study phenomena in their living context (Agar, 1986). Directly experienced situations, interactions, personally made observations and interviews, as well as jotted down field notes are collected and created. When the researcher leaves the field, they are subjected to theoretical interpretations (Rosen, 2000). The short stories which we present are a form of interpretation and theorizing, and

simultaneously a means of capturing the personally experienced dimension of our study. John Van Maanen (1988) labels such stories impressionist tales, that is, tales that "evoke and open, participatory sense in the viewer [...], startle complacent viewers" (p. 101) and engage the reader with the field. They consist of "words, metaphors, phrasings, imagery, and most critically, the expansive recall of fieldwork experience" (ibid., p. 102). The aim of the author of such stories is to produce a feeling of "having been there" in the reader.

Our research is placed within the narrative tradition (Gabriel, 2000; Boje, 2001). We believe, as does Barbara Czarniawska (1997), that organizing may with advantage be seen as a kind of storytelling, as the result of the study of organizing may also be presented in the story form. The stories are personalized and told in in first person singular in order to emphasize the subjective quality of experience (Hjorth and Kostera, 2007). The stories we cite in this text are a selection from a wider collection of observations that we conducted together. We have in all observed seven festivals during one year (2010) in three different countries. We chose the stories we present in this paper because in our opinion they sum up our experiences the best. They are not quotations from our field notes which were sporadic and sparse, yet accompanied by numerous photographs in order to capture experience in the best way possible. These stories are written ex post, as a way of interpreting and concluding our study. We also chose a narrative interpretive tool, which will be presented in the Discussion section.

The stories

Presentation of characters: Fast and Slow. FAST is shooting from the hip, catching moments that lack dimensions, taking photos that are perhaps attempts at puncturing the fabric of reality. Whatever will emerge from the holes? Lacking time, they are not really passing moments,

rather glimpses of instantaneous eternity. Not pausing to evaluate or compare, she is *already elsewhere* (Strannegård and Friberg, 2001), dislocating the experience from the frame, exposing the subliminal messages under the blink, always one step ahead of herself.

SLOW embraces patience, deliberation, and reflection. It is to live through each moment as it comes, savouring time in its sequence and succession. It is to allow oneself the leisure of coming to grips with one's sensations and feelings. It is to pause, choosing the exact words that can capture all the hues of the described situation. Slow is analytical, and careful in his observations. He sees experience economy as a further opportunity to explore minute facets of existence, taking delight in the details of each performance

He is aware that reflection is no defence against cliché.

The Medieval Fair. FAST. The sounds blend and fuse together: human voices, the shrieks of children, sounds of various instruments, and something like repetitive tapping of wood against wood. After the relative orderliness of the queue at the entrance, the streams of people mingle and shift. Everyone is on their way somewhere, around the tents placed all around the green area around the castle. A woman dressed in a long black velour dress and a hat. A man in a long off-white shirt and brown trousers, a small child in a dress, holding its rim to her breast. Birds of prey – they keep still, watchful. Oh, they are attached to poles by the foot... Poor things... A puppet dragon gaping at a group of kids sitting down in front of the puppeteers' stage, screaming with delight. A man drinking mead. A child falling on its bum. A woman in a long green skirt playing the violin while a group of men in velvet hats sing. A young woman driving her baby carriage right into the crowd. A man squatting down, pausing to deliberate over some bottles of liquor; I look over his shoulder. The labels say these are elixirs. A spirited storyteller draws applause from an enchanted audience. Here I linger a little while longer, he glimmers in front of me, shapeshifting, magnetic, carrying us away into world of his stories. Barefooted

drummers stomping and shouting, while tapping their drums. Smells of woollen cloaks and smells of roasted meat, sweet smelling buns and bitter of the metallic surfaces where they are served. Everything moves, even the stands seem to flicker in the powerful sunlight. I float, I skip, I swirl, with and against the others, around the stands, around the performers. The place and people betwixt and between: past and present, distant and close, fairytale and reality all overlapping and pulling apart, indefinite, neither-nor, and-or. The sound of flute and of human voices softly pour through the space, curling around the trees, stalls, tents, towards the centre.

The Medieval Fair. SLOW. It is high spring, and the weather is glorious: the sun is bright, the air is warm, all the vegetation lushly green. The festival, organized in a park in the middle of the town, seems a natural fit with the surrounding greenery. It is an annual event, and this is the fourth time I attend this festival. Almost all of the stalls and performer tents look enticing, but I take my time walking around, familiarizing myself with the layout and breathing in the general atmosphere before approaching any of the sellers or artists. There is a fairly large and varied crowd milling about: a lot of families with children, quite a few childless couples and small groups of adults. Not too many solitary visitors, it appears. Most of the guests are dressed in everyday clothes, but a few wear pseudo-medieval clothes: tunics, gowns, dresses, and peasant shirts. As each year, I am enthused by the peacefulness of the presentation: there is a display of sword-fighting and an archery competition, but the vision of middle ages re-enacted here is not military at its core: there are many more musicians, storytellers, shopkeepers and food vendors than knights and archers. I like that a lot.

There appears to be no centralized timetable of performances available, but by walking around I begin to assemble a timetable for the few hours we might spend here: a storyteller, my very favourite entertainer of the show, performs every hour, then there is a musical show every 45 minutes, a puppet theatre play, and a live action play I would like to see. Putting them together

creates a leisurely rhythm for moving about the festival space, with periods of focused attention interspersed by aimless wandering and browsing through the displayed wares.

The quality of performances, and of the products on offer, is quite varied. One group of musicians seems quite skilled and well-rehearsed, while others sound rather amateurish. The difference in skill between two storytellers is also quite noticeable. Products sold range from tacky plastic swords and shields to elaborately presented potions boasting tongue-in-cheek miraculous effects. There is a falconry display bringing together twelve different birds of prey, but they are tied to their posts and appear much more pitiful than awe-inspiring.

FAST convinces me to have a go at 'Splat the Rat' a game of skill where the punter tries to hit a plush rat with a wooden mallet. Inevitably, I am too slow to win.

Food and Drink Festival. FAST. We enter the park and the first thing I see are the big rectangular tents just in front of the entrance, with lots of people streaming in and out. I plunge into the crowd, let myself be immersed in the hot, stuffy interior, with overpowering smells of food in the process of being cooked. The sound of people eating, talking, mingling, and the sounds of frying, grilling, stirring. Everything is so tempting, where should I look? What should I taste? So difficult to choose! It's the abundance, the cornucopia itself, the everything-at-once that attracts me, not anything in particular – but then again, why not? I taste some local sushi and a cookie. God, I'm thirsty now! Fast, fast, leave this tent, find something to drink... Apple juice in the other long tent, mmm, wonderful, cool, tastes of real apples, like those from my Grandmother's orchard, freshly fallen from the tree. It's hot and the light is bright, making everything sharp, setting the colours ablaze. Some foodstalls are so colourful I feel I'd like to eat them whole, colours make me feel that way, voracious, ecstatic, and somehow devout. I settle down on the green grass with a red, red elderflower drink, which is deliciously cooling. Some dogs run

around me, a child follows screaming, the shaded space soon gets invaded by more children and dogs and I leave. Everything I wish for now is here, all around me: sunshine, colours, the sounds of summer, like in a gigantic wok, we are fried, we are seasoned, we simmer. Even the trashcans look festive with the oyster shells heaping, the sunshine making the empty plastic cups glitter like crystals. Was it a woman dressed like a Roman soldier or was it a creation of my rapid imagination, racing wild around the place, showing no restraint. I don't know. When I close my eyes I clearly see the texture of the darkness of the kitchen in my Grandmother's house.

Food and Drink Festival SLOW. Another warm and shiny day for a festival and, consequently, huge crowd swarms the entrance. Inside, much of the area is covered by huge tents, where the air gets hot and somewhat stuffy at times. This is a much larger festival than the medieval fair, but also less thematically coherent: while the majority of stalls deal in various foodstuffs and kitchen utensils, there are also garden plants, framed photographs, and pony rides on offer. A vaguely Caribbean band is playing near the centre of the show, and a limousine hire company showcases classic cars. We take all of this in as once again I insist on strolling around before sampling any of the produce on offer. And there is indeed a lot of food, from basic vegetables to cooked meals, and from French cider to local wines and ales. Both pre-packaged foodstuffs and freshly prepared meals are on offer, though the latter tend to be relatively simple, if often very tasty: perhaps because of the difficulty of cooking more elaborate dishes in festival conditions.

This is another cyclical event and I am disappointed to find that some of my favourites from last year are not present. But many are in the same spots as previously, and there are many new exhibitors as well. As time passes by and the festival starts to wind down, the outside world begins to intrude on festival space and time: the football World Cup match is about to commence, and a large TV is being set up in one of the tents. A rowdy, if good natured crowd gathers around it, while other visitors begin to leave. We stay until half-time, then slink away.

FAST Comments. To me, the festivals were first and foremost about flows and streams: of people, smells, sounds, impressions, moving about at a rapid pace, differing from festival to festival, both as to their contents and feelings that the following of them evoked. The Medieval festival was more playful and melodic, the Food Fair was hectic and almost primordial. Experiencing them meant for me moving along their characteristic streams, getting involved with their rhythms and letting myself co-oscillate in synch with their vibes. The experience was a melange of impressions taken in by all senses at the level of some common denominator that they have, a stratospheric and ultrafast which sets the nerves alight, which only brushes against the matter they are made of and electrifies it like trance, like music, like a dream of finding a hidden way. The fast speed at which I experienced the festivals made it possible for me to catch the moment, immerse myself in the infinitesimal *now* which then expanded into something my own size, whatever that means, a bubble of time and space where I could encounter the others and witness others' encounters. Experiencing fast, so fast that it transcends human capabilities of sensing, breaking the barriers of matter makes it possible to lift, to take flight – like ducks do, when they alight from an ultra fast run on the surface of a lake. These were immensely enjoyable and powerful experiences. Yet even more enjoyable and perhaps somehow enlightening was the encounter with SLOW's mode of experiencing, the clash between our visions and the unlikely synergy of them on a level that was new to me, fresh, making me feel as curious and lively as a child. Learning about his way of seeing them was like gaining an extra dimension to the time that passed, as if discovering the undercurrent negating its linearity, revealing the hints of its many regions and depths.

SLOW Comments. Festivals of any kind are, for the visitor, the embodiment of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque: a time and space separated from the everyday routine, accessible only on specific, and relatively rare, occasions. But they are also cyclical, repetitive events that repeat,

with only slight variance, patterns from their previous incarnations. The experience of the festival is thus intimately connected to the patterns of the quotidian life, and to the memories of previous fairs. But at the heart of each repetition, as Giles Deleuze (1968/1994) famously pointed out, lies difference: the unexpected disruption of the status quo. And much of the enjoyment lies in being able to appreciate such novelties, the variations from the norm that form different, and more complex rhythms. The difficulty, as Henri Lefebvre (1992/2004) noted in his *Rhythmanalysis*, lies in aligning the different rhythms structuring out life into a coherent, isorhythmic harmonies. This is the dialectic between SLOW and FAST experience, between catching the moment and reflecting upon its context. This is wisdom which come, if ever, with age. And ageing is a slow process.

Telling Intertwined Stories: To explore and to learn

What do we make of those tales? How do they relate to organizing and organizations? We will now present our interpretation of our space stories, as well as say why we believe the dialogue can be important to others interested in experience economy events. We chose a particular kind of narrative as our main interpretive tool – the archetypal tale. Archetypes are patterns located in the collective unconscious and containing images related to human motivations and inspirations (Jung, 1968). Jungian archetypes are used in studies of organizations to depict and interpret hidden and dark sides of organizations (e.g. Bowles, 1991; Carr, 2002; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2010), to explore the inspirational potential of images of heroes, heroines and villains (e.g. Bowles, 1993; Aaltio, 2008), to narrate mythologized aspects and qualities of organizations (e.g. Kociatkiewicz, 2008; Parker, 2008), and to seek inspiration for motivation and engagement in change processes (e.g. Matthews, 2002; Hatch et al, 2005). The

archetypal tale is a kind of narration based on an archetype as a Leitmotif – the archetype can serve as plot, character, place or time of action (Kostera, 2010). A special kind of archetypal tale, one belonging in the sacred domain, is myth – a tale touching the spiritual sensibilities of humans (Campbell, 1972/1988; Armstrong, 2005). Other examples of archetypal tales are legends, folktales, fairy-tales or just profane stories containing archetypes and thus having the potential to profoundly move the listener or reader, inspire and explain important aspects of reality (Kostera, 2010).

First of all, the events we have studied can be seen as carnivals, which is an archetypal idea of collective katharsis and celebration, recurring throughout history in both religious and profane settings. In Bakhtin's terms, the carnival is a celebration of the “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (1941/1984, p. 10). This may be a way of counteracting the ordered and at times monotonous experience of the hierarchic organization of everyday life. Carnivals have the ability to release tensions and to resolve conflicts that otherwise solidify in the closed structure and it

tests and contests all aspects of society and culture through festive laughter: those that are questionable may be readied for change; those that are deemed legitimate may be reinforced (LaCapra, 1983/2003, p. 43).

Carnivals in the Bakhtinian sense are not just enjoyable but enlightening experiences. We fully agree with this idea and we believe that there is another potential source of enlightenment connected with differences in the experiencing of festivals that our contrasting stories reveal.

Festivals are not just gratifying on the individual plane, but may bring something quite valuable when shared. In order to show how this works and why, we would like to trace the archetypal roots of the encounter of contrasting experiences, in order to show how profound the cultural

resonances of this practice can be. An archetype of the joining of opposites is the Syzygy, or the Alchemical Wedding. Usually it is the effect of uniting the archetypes of the male and female aspects of the soul: Animis and Anima (Jung, 1968). Such a unification is a source of great power, and it also symbolizes communication and completion. It brings together the conscious and unconscious minds and domains and thus produces an enormous amount of inspiring energy. Through Syzygy, different individualities are joined but without the loss of identities. It has the power of transformation and fulfilment and is enormously inspiring and creative. We regard the coming together of Fast and Slow experiences as a Syzygy, though we would not like to link them to genders or associate them with the qualities of Anima or Animus. To achieve Syzygy, more than just a variety of experience is needed. It requires a means of sharing.

We believe that festivals are not just both fast and slow organizational events at the same time, and possible to experience in both modes, but there is an added value of sharing experiences of them, such as exchanging stories. In that way not just our knowledge of that kind of organized settings is enhanced by the means of the narrative (Czarniawska, 1997), but we become inspired to experience something unexpected and new. The Syzygy archetype brings not just mind-opening possibilities, but has the power to transform and revive those that embrace it.

We would like to propose a method for management education within the experience economy area which would make syzygy more likely. It would embrace shared storytelling, based on Boje's (2001) antenarratives, or short dynamic stories, often lacking plot, collectively created and exchanged by organizational actors in order to invoke and to perform rather than just tell what happened, where and when. We agree with Heather Höpfl (2005) and John Hendry (2006) that a more humanistically oriented education of managers is needed, and this applies especially to managers active in the experience economy. Models and tools are not likely to help them to communicate complex experiences or to develop ideas that do not shun paradox and

the co-existence of opposites. The case study method has been criticized for its underlying assumption of the repetitiveness of solutions (Grey, 2004). However, a number of authors have concentrated how to use more open ended stories in the management education context (e.g. Down and King, 1999; Gold and Holdman, 2001; Morgan and Dennehy, 2004). It is within this emerging tradition that we would like to place our proposed educational method.

The central role within the method is played by a kind of antenarratives (Boje, 2001), which direct people's attention and are experienced and not just cognized. Antenarratives thrive on ambivalence and ambiguity, they are powerful sensemaking devices and can be used a means for sharing and organizing (Magala, 2009). Festival stories, expressing bursts of experience rather than reflexive ruminations, are antenarratives about different festival experiences: fast and slow, brought together in a short learning event instead of traditional "cases". They could be actively collected by students working in groups based on the diversity of experience. The students would attend festivals and write short fragmentary stories, of the kind that we have presented in this paper. The stories need not have an exclusively written form, they can be told orally and accompanied with images and films in the classroom. Instead of seeking for traditional solutions to these "cases" the students could instead try to co-author archetypal stories, like we did in this paper, which would explore the differences in experience, for example along the lines of fast and slow, and concentrate on the syzygic effects these tales have on the readers, listeners and authors themselves. Thus the students would have a possibility to explore, discuss and learn about experience economy events such as festivals without simplifying them or depriving them of their contradictions and paradoxes. Experience economy is said to be different from mass production in that it is "mass customized" and thus individual experience is what lies at its very heart (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Attempts at simplifications of such events produce instead a series of negative effects which result in

feelings of alienation, impatience, frustration etc. (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2010).

Therefore a method of education that attempts at embracing the whole complicated experience as an enactment of the syzygy archetype may be particularly useful for the learning of the staging and coordinating of such activity.

We do not propose to replace more traditional classes but to complement them, and particularly in the area of experience economy management. Such sharing can not only teach us more about experience economy organizations, but about ourselves and throw new inspiring light on the benefits of diversity.

Concluding remarks

Is there a better and a worse way of experiencing the festival experience? We think not. As much as slowness has been celebrated as more artful, and as much as speed has been hailed as more modern and progressive, without the normative frames, they are just two ways of engaging with the world. Perhaps alternative ways: like two parallel lines they mark different experiential paths that cross in infinity. Or in an ethnographic conversation like the one in this paper. Experiences make little sense as they happen, they are made sense of ex post and in our opinion it brings an additional inspirational power to the sensemaking process if it is shared by people who have had different (fast and slow) experiences. Our social networks help us anchor our experiences in context, provide explanations and interpretation. The classroom provides apt opportunities for such a directed educational anchoring. The students may encounter others in the process but also contextualize our experiences, and embody our knowledge. The antenarrative storytelling method can be a great means of helping to further

and inspire us in these processes.

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