

# Acceleration in Practice

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*Everyday Life in Reflexive Modernity*

MSc-thesis

by Ewert Aukes



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In loving memory of  
My dear grandmother

## Summary

Social acceleration is a newcomer in the field of modernity theories of social change. This explorative study investigates its effects on a number of selected practices in the everyday lives of people. It explores the feelings triggered by social acceleration and depicts how people cope with time problems occurring in their everyday lives. In devising social acceleration theory, as opposed to other contemporary theories of social change, a novel view on the organisation of people's everyday lives is pursued. Important elements of the conceptual model designed to confront the broader phenomenon of social acceleration include: (a) 'situative identity' – the fragmentation, pluralisation and context dependency of the Self; (b) 'reversed colonisation of the life-world' – the increasing permeability of the distinction between work and free time; and (c) 'feelings of harriedness' – the result of a perceived loss of control over time management. These key concepts are introduced, defined and operationalized in order to organize the empirical research. The concept of 'social practices' is used as a key concept to help translate the theoretical framework to the reality of everyday life routines. Three practices, namely the food chain, commuter traffic and low-season holidays, were chosen and included in the interview scheme by asking about current behaviour, recent behavioural changes, observable society-wide trends, and feelings with regard to the practice. Due to the explorative character of the study, it was decided to carry out qualitative in-depth interviews (n=11). The interview scheme was changed once during the data collection phase to improve focus of the questions. Respondents were sampled by snow-balling and the interviewing phase was finalized when saturation was achieved.

The main findings are that harriedness is not very common in either of the selected social practices, which indicates that it is not a pervasive, society-wide feeling (mind the non-representativity of the sample). Second, it seems that the choice of residential environment has priority over the location of the work place. This is a confirmation of the claim of social acceleration theory that time has won primacy over space, as people are not dependent anymore on living near the work place in order to be able to be at work on time. Furthermore, when it is possible to carry out tasks during commuting, this opportunity is mostly used and "doing nothing" is disapproved of. Thus, there are signs that reversed colonisation of the life-world is on-going. Third, the time for holidays is still very much coupled to the school year, although more and more holidays are planned outside school holidays. The advantages of low-season holidays are lower costs and a perceived higher relaxation. The increased flexibility that comes with the possibility of going for holidays in the low-season enables new coping strategies

and could relieve the pressure on the school holidays. Although parents noted that they could not go for a holiday during school time as much as they wanted to, there seems to be a preference for low-season holidays. Moreover, people prefer going for a holiday more often per year rather than once for a long time indicating the desire to split up one's relaxation time and visit many places, which again is an expression of the personal curiosity that comes with a situative identity. Fourth, hot-and-cold-spotting – compressing many tasks into a short time frame in order to have less to do later – is a common coping strategy to get rid of time-squeeze and it is also the room for manoeuvre for individuals to overcome the pressure of an increasing average speed of social change. Fifth, communication technology is more and more adopting a fundamental position in the lives of people, which is not always realized as much by individuals. This has led to a technological generation gap, as younger people are, in general, much more “connected” than older people. As social acceleration theory suggests, it can also be concluded that technological development has the highest leverage when it comes to synchronising individuals society-wide, whether that is through slowing down the faster individuals or speeding up the slower individuals. Nevertheless, as harriedness as a negative effect of acceleration could not be confirmed, there is no evidence as to the necessity of slowing down or stagnating acceleration.

Social acceleration theory has proven to be a valuable addition to the set of currently accepted modernization theories of social organisation and change, which not only brings in a more solid, multidimensional concept of time, but which may also, in combination with social practice theory, deliver solutions to time problems in people's everyday lives as well as posing a critical note to unrestricted modernist tendencies.

## Preface

The finalization of this thesis unexpectedly fell into a turbulent phase of my life, due to the passing away of my grandmother one day before the final deadline. Nevertheless, I hope to have produced a valuable piece of research which is of use to other scholars. There are obviously parts of the research which I would have liked to do differently, but this also means that it is never complete: there will always be new things to study and improvements to make. As a friend of mine said: “That is the strange thing with research: When you are at half time you should start finalising!”. Hence, I experience this thesis as the end of a steeplechase until the next starting signal. It certainly is a milestone, as I hope to obtain my degree with it, but it may just as well be the prelude of more of this kind of work.

My thanks go out to my supervisor Gert Spaargaren, who put up a challenging steeplechase for me, but who also took the time to guide me through it. Furthermore, I would like to thank Annemiek for her comments and support. Never should I forget to thank my parents who have made this possible in the end. Finally, thanks to my corridor mates and orchestra friends with whom I spent many hours of my free time!

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## 1 Introduction

Multitasking nowadays is talk of the town. Carrying out as many tasks in as short a time as possible is comforting, because it produces time which can then again be filled with a lot of new activities. Multitasking can superficially be seen as a helpful strategy to get things done, but it is also the practical expression of an underlying profound change in the everyday lives of people living in present-day modernity.

While modernist thinkers have brought up perspectives of how social change happens for quite some time now – think of structuration theory, risk society theory or the theory of the network society –, it was not until around the new millennium that an intriguing newcomer hit the social science stage: acceleration theory. Technological innovation keeps speeding up, political developments cannot follow economical change anymore and peoples' agendas become fuller and fuller, in short, life is accelerating. The indications for a speed of social change, which is not uniform and linear but multi-layered and constantly accelerating, are accumulating.

Hence, this study pursues a dual interest. For one, it is the intention to obtain an overview of modernity theories in order to locate acceleration theory's position as a junior among seniors. This is necessary, as the body of literature for acceleration theory is not yet very extensive and its significance can up to now only be valued in the light of the other significant thoughts in contemporary social theory. Secondly, the effects of accelerative processes in everyday modern life are to be explored in some more detail. This will happen by answering the following questions:

- What are the effects of accelerative processes on the everyday lives of people?
- Which feelings are triggered among those who experience these accelerative processes?
- In what way do people try to cope with the changes these accelerative processes bring about in the existing forms of time management?

Social change and acceleration are rather abstract concepts and therefore their study calls for a way in which the traces of accelerative processes may be unveiled in everyday life. Thus, the concept of social practice is introduced as a hinge between acceleration theory and the empirical reality of the lives of people.

This section will be followed by the theoretical framework featuring modernity theories and culminate in a display of acceleration theory. Section 3 explains the conceptual model used to confront the phenomenon of acceleration and its operationalization for empirical research. Section 4 describes the methodology used. Subsequently, section 5 lists the main findings of the

qualitative interviews. Section 6 comprises the discussion and conclusions and section 7 proposes several recommendations for further study.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

The following elaboration describes the development of what is alternately called “second”, “reflexive” or “late” modernity and aims at providing a landscape in which to position social acceleration theory as a new theory. Ideas of various much vaunted modernity theorists are displayed and explained. The aim of these theorists throughout is to understand the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of society nowadays. Many suggestions as to how societal processes function nowadays have been proposed within sociology in particular, but those illustrated here concern (a) transnationalisation of states as a response to globalising processes, (b) the development of novel societal forms of organisation and (c) the constant acceleration of the processes defining individual as well as social life. The account builds up to the actual theoretical framework which is based on the latter perspective – acceleration theory – and positions the study in its sociological, theoretical environment.

The section sets off with some general remarks regarding modernity theory, including some of the metaphors which are used in order to summarize modernity’s complex impacts on people’s lives. The statist perspective of the world risk society and its new meta-game is then the first body of theory which is highlighted, because it reflects the development of a reflexive society. Nevertheless, it is due to its macro-level character not very well suited for the study of everyday lives of people. This account is followed by an explanation of the network society, as networks are seen as an exemplary novel form of social organization in reflexive modernity. Together with the complexity aspect of reflexive modernity, networks are an organizational form which people can relate to, because the communication revolution has very much introduced the vision of a network as a basic way of understanding one’s life. However, reflexivity is taken a step further by including a solid time variable, which is what acceleration theory does. It redefines well-known underlying social change processes in terms of time and time conflicts. It, furthermore, has a more pronounced element of everyday life than the previous bodies of theory, as the life of individuals is one of three interrelated levels at which acceleration is at play and which influences the other two levels.

In the first part of this section, the risk society theory, network society theory and social complexity theory are described based on a major work. These descriptions are evaluated at the respective ends of the sub-sections with regard to their value for studying the everyday lives of people. Thus, this section places the theory of social acceleration in the context of contemporary theories of social change and aims to show that it is well suited to study situations of social change through acceleration in everyday lives.

## 2.1 Part I: Theoretical Positioning – Modernity theory

The beginning of second modernity – its exact time is still debated – was marked by a profound transformation of human consciousness. Many authors observe and acknowledge tendencies to globalisation in technical, economic, political as well as social relations, but the more the complexities and conflicts of these developments manifest themselves, the more diametrical developments towards simplification and localisation of relations may be discerned. For individuals, the synchronous up- and down-scaling of all kinds of relations results in novel challenges to the organisation or even in the total reorientation of their own lives and life paths. In Giddens' terminology, people more and more feel like riding a Juggernaut (Giddens, 1990, p. 372). The Juggernaut is

*“a runaway engine of enormous power which, collectively as human beings, we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of our control and which could rend itself asunder. The juggernaut crushes those who resist it, and while it sometimes seems to have a steady path, there are times when it veers away erratically in directions we cannot foresee.” (Giddens, 1990, p. 139)*

Thinking of modern life as riding a Juggernaut sounds adverse, but may in Giddens' opinion also yield positive effects. However, its “bumpy” ride displays the “risks of high consequence” which lay in the path of the cart (Giddens, 1990, p. 139). And neither is the road plain nor is the cart itself a streamlined and smoothly running thing. On the contrary, it is made up of a “tensionful, contradictory, push-and-pull of different influences” (Giddens, 1990, p. 139). This is one of the reasons why people nowadays are constantly busy with pioneering new ways to cope with contingent choices and problems so far unknown.

Beck already observed the evolution of a world risk society in 1986 as the transition from first to second modernity with the expectation of the unexpected as the major background variable of human action (Beck, 1986; 2009, p. 167). Because risks have not only changed in perception, but also increased in severity (Giddens, 1990, p. 124), they have come to be so all-encompassing and deep that the former differentiation between subsystems of society is useless with respect to those risks: they “penetrate the self-referentiality of subsystems” (Beck, 2009, p. 169; Giddens, 1990, p. 125). It is not any more as it was in first/classical/early modernity that “accidents in the aggregate were absolutely predictable” (Beck & Willms, 2004, p. 114).

Second modern risks have a new character. Such risks are not defined as calculable nor are they touchable (Beck & Willms, 2004, p. 136). Important characteristics of risks which differ between the first modernity and the second modernity are “their predictability, their controllability, their

evadability, and their insurability” (Beck & Willms, 2004, p. 131). Second modern risks are systemic risks and their transnational character means dealing with them at a national level is inappropriate (Beck & Willms, 2004, pp. 125, 139). This inappropriateness is visible from reactions of national governments to risk crises, when “nationalistic scapegoating [is] the last refuge of the impotent” and “finger pointing [...] a sign that things are beyond control of politicians and technicians” (Beck & Willms, 2004, p. 126).

Following Giddens (1990), the risk profile of modernity can be split up in mechanisms changing the “objective distribution” and those “that alter the experience of risk or the perception of perceived risks” (Giddens, 1990, p. 125). The first type consists of the “intensity, the expanding number of contingent events, the created environment and institutionalised risk environments”(Giddens, 1990, p. 124). The second type is represented by the “awareness of risk as risk, the well-distributed awareness of risk and the awareness of the limitations of expertise” (Giddens, 1990, p. 125).

However, risks do not simply exist and have to be dealt with. They are part of the game of power. As risks, with Beck, are understood as social constructions based on “Expertenwissen, aber auch [auf] kulturelle[n] Wertungen und Symbole[n]”, the conflict over them produces a “weltöffentliche[n] Diskurs, ein[en] globale[n] Wert- und Normenhorizont” (Beck, 2009, p. 172+168). This global discourse is fed by the struggle for power over the “Zugang und die Art der Ressourcen, die notwendig sind, um Risiken sozialverbindlich (weg)zudefinieren” (Beck, 2009, p. 172). Beck notes the “war on terrorism” declared by the U.S. as an example of how public perception and reflexion may put the triumph of economy to a halt as suddenly priorities were reconfigured (Beck, 2009, p. 388).

With John Dewey, a “real public discourse” capable of politicising risks “would have to jump not only geographic boundaries, but more importantly the boundaries between experts and laymen, and the boundaries between specialists themselves” and that such a public discourse “would arise not from consensus but from dissensus”, so from risk conflicts (Beck & Willms, 2004, p. 141). The inappropriateness of the national level and the global character of the risk discourse have triggered Beck to look into the possibilities of giving up the national arena in favour of the transnational.

### 2.1.1 The new meta-game of the World Risk Society

In the second phase of modernity, the national level has become inappropriate to discuss and solve global problems and risks due to a new metagame discerned by Beck. It is not only a game of playing against another player in the political field anymore, but it is also possible now to

question the very system and rules by which the game is played. This is expressed in “eklatante[n] Unterschiede[n] und merkwürdige[n] Polyvalenzen in der strategischen Qualität der Steine und Spielzüge” (Beck, 2009, p. 24). The new metagame in second modernity is in majority played by actors from the economy on the one hand and from territorial states on the other hand. The former is, as Beck explains, already deterritorialised, due to the mobility of capital versus the relative confinement of the labour force to a certain territory. This deterritoriality gives world-economic actors the power of what Beck calls selective in- or exclusion with which they gain translegality, the capability of rewriting national rules.

Territorial states have difficulty in regulating these transnationalised world-economic actors, because of the national fixation of politics. For Beck, the scientific paradigm of methodological nationalism and the political view of normative nationalism display a “verdeckte und daher ultrastabile Harmonie der sozial und sozialwissenschaftlich leitenden Wertgesichtspunkte und Hintergrundannahmen” (Beck, 2009, p. 51). These two correspond to Beck’s solution for this problem: “methodological cosmopolitanism” and the “cosmopolitan view”, respectively. The latter “*erschließt Handlungsräume und Handlungsstrategien, die der nationale Blick verschließt*” (Beck, 2009, p. 67, emphasis in the original). The risk associated with the national fixation is, as Beck explains, the nationality trap. If the world-economy is transnationalised, and has the powers explained above, and states are still in the national fixation, the world economy has power over the states.

By deterritorialising, states can balance out this power asymmetry between them and the deterritorialised world-economy. In Beck’s perspective, “gerade weil und nur solange der Nationalstaat territorial gebunden bleibt, entstehen *weltwirtschaftliche Quasi-Staaten*, die sowohl transnational als auch national notwendige Regulierungsfunktionen im weltwirtschaftlichen Raum privat(wirtschaftlich) wahrnehmen und organisieren” (Beck, 2009, p. 225, emphasis in the original). Beck claims that this deterritorialisation of politics can be reached by adopting a new political line of action – cosmopolitan realism – necessitating the (a) dissolution of the sharp distinction between the national and the international, (b) the evolution of polycratic politics, (c) the interference of side-effects and (d) the redefinition of territoriality (Beck, 2009). Furthermore, in cosmopolitanism, there is no absolute exclusion: it means that “diese Denkfigur der exklusiven Unterscheidung – das Entweder-oder-Prinzip – [...] durch die Denkfigur der inklusiven Unterscheidung – das Sowohl-als-auch-Prinzip – ersetzt [wird]” (Beck, 2009, p. 71, emphasis in the original).

For every type of actor involved, Beck sketches a number of strategies which lead to their deterritorialisation. Although the world-economy is already deterritorialised, economic power

has been transformed into political power as a side-effect. Moreover, while it is not obligatory for world-economy to legitimize itself, capital strategies still pursue the production and extension of sources of its legitimization.

Beck lists four types of strategies of the world-economy. First, autarchy strategies mainly aim at becoming independent from states, including independence from territory, the power of legislation and control over innovative forces. Second, as only the non-exchangeability of states enables world-economic actors to play off states against each other, it is the target of substitution strategies to maintain the global inequality between states. In consequence, Beck observes a perverse coalition between low-income countries and their economic beneficiaries. The third type of strategies should be strategies of reduction of competition, which in concurrence with substitution strategies, produce and strengthen hierarchies of inequalities. Fourth, states should be kept alive as branch or secondary offices of world economic policy (preventive strategies of dominance), because completely debilitating states is counter-productive for world-economic actors.

Beck suggests a list of strategies which could help transnationalising politics. First are strategies of indispensability and irreplaceability aiming at the reinforcement of the primacy of politics, its re-monopolization and the creation of a strict legal framework in “host countries” (Beck, 2009, p. 273). Secondly, by intensified cooperation, a win-win situation for all participating states emerges, their sovereignty might even increase with the secularization of state and nation/territory as a result and competition among world-economic actors would increase. Beck also states, as a third strategy, that politics must strive for its re-politicisation by redefining topics such as social security and justice for the global age, reframing world-economic actors as the only “global, political actors” until now as well as finding new partners to cooperate with (Beck, 2009, p. 317). Finally, in order to reach the cosmopolitanisation of states, Beck notes the development of an “aktiv vernetzte Außen-Innen- bzw. Innen-Außen-Politik enthierarchisiert und verflüssigt staatliche Politik und erneuert die transstaatliche Handlungsfähigkeit staatlicher Akteure diesseits und jenseits nationaler Grenzen” (Beck, 2009, p. 325). Returning to earlier work, Beck assumes that the experience of the world risk society as a global collective issue will help to cosmopolitanise politics.

In addition to politics and the world-economy, Beck discerns social movements in civil society as an actor with certain powers. Information and the power of legitimation could, in Beck’s view, combine into a strategy for a new world-public. Hence, by informing, civil society can make political choices and become a global customer/consumer vis-à-vis the world-economy. The power of the world-public increases in proportion to the growing degree of organisation in

transnational networks. However, in fighting the translegality of world-economic actors, advocacy movements themselves “reinterpretieren, schaffen, und bestärken vielmehr international Normen und Regeln” (Beck, 2009, p. 361) and thus participate in the new meta-game.

### *Evaluation*

Although Beck does not directly relate to the everyday lives of people, his ideas certainly reverberate to them. First, politicians – as opposed to the world-economy – are elected by the part of the population with the right to vote. That means that their choices regarding governments in different types of democratic states have a time-lagged effect on their lives, mainly through taxes and products allowed and kept out of the state/territory. However, the electorate’s ability to influence politics is in most democracies only of periodical character. This leaves many voters with a feeling of powerlessness regarding the influence they have on politics and through that, indirectly, on their own lives (Southerton, 2006). Secondly, as Beck notes, there is a possibility for people to influence the world-economy by acting as political consumers. The disadvantage of this is that political consumerism only works collectively and is doomed to fail, due to too little an effect, if only minorities choose their products on the market politically. Third, participation in social movements may increase the influence of people vis-à-vis the actors of politics and world-economy. Fourth, by participating in the new meta-game, individuals increase their ability to actively steer the discussion about the definition of risks which in turn increases the manageability of their own lives. Hence, Beck’s perspective leaves some small options for individuals to manage their lives with regard to the large actors in the meta-game.

Other processes observed by scholars include the fluidisation of society, including increases in complexity levels and the organisation of society in networks and sub-networks. The organisational form of the network could be seen as the archetypical organisational form for second modernity in which contingency and uncertainty become the paramount feature of social processes. Building on Manuel Castells’ work on networks and the conception of the network society (Castells, 2000, 2009), John Urry develops the notion of complexity in analyses of social processes in the present (Urry, 2003). These two authors adequately represent the ideas elaborated around networks.

#### **2.1.2 From World Risk Society to Networks**

For Castells, the problem of coping with social change in second modernity is very much dependent on the degree to which life is organised in networks, which type of networks one organises his/her life in, how (manageability) power is distributed in those networks and how

communication works in these networks. He observes that in second modernity – due to the communication revolution – the network, whose advantages are flexibility, scalability and survivability (Castells, 2009, p. 23), has taken over as the main organizational form. Furthermore, the nodes of networks are not all equally important. Some of them – the centres – manage to increase their importance vis-à-vis the other nodes “by absorbing more relevant information, and processing it more efficiently” (Castells, 2009, p. 20). The connections between the nodes constitute what Castells calls the space of flows as it enables the exchange and transmission of streams of information.

The space of flows is the new spatial formation of modernity. In his earlier work discussing the network society, Castells defines the space of flows as the “disembodiment [of localities] from their cultural, historical, geographic meaning and [their] reintegration into functional networks, or into image collages” (Castells, 2000, p. 406). The temporal counterpart of the space of flows in second modernity is timeless time, characterised by simultaneity and timelessness. Rosa’s comprehension of timeless time is based on the assumption, “dass *Zeit* durch die Dauer, die Sequenz und den Rhythmus von Handlungen und Ereignissen geformt wird und folglich ein sozialer Zustand, der durch die Elimination der Dauer, die Entrhythmisierung sozialer Ereignisse und die Auflösung festgelegter und stabiler Sequenzreihen gekennzeichnet ist, und als *zeitlos* beschrieben werden kann, insofern in ihm die Modi der momenthaften *Gleichzeitigkeit* und, gleichsam als deren negativer Horizont, der *Ewigkeit* dominieren” (Rosa, 2005, p. 344).

According to Castells, the network view is applicable to most organizations, institutions, companies and other social actors known from first modernity. Before the communication revolution in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, networks tended to become “less efficient than vertically organized command-and-control structures”, if they exceeded “a certain threshold of size, complexity, and volume of flows” (Castells, 2009, p. 22). In those days, the state took up the task of gatekeeper of the nationally bounded networks, hence, increasing the stability of the network. With faster communication, the importance of the (nation-)state is reduced to a node “(however important) of a particular network, the political, institutional, and military network that overlaps with other significant networks in the construction of social practice” (Castells, 2009, p. 19).

Castells theorises how the relations between nodes come into being and develop from a power perspective. He defines power as the “relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor’s will, interests, and values” (Castells, 2009, p. 10). In this definition, actors include institutions, organizations and networks, but are ultimately the result of human actors. It is also noteworthy

that power is always relational. And within these relationships, power in a relationship is expressed by the unequal ability of influencing the other, with the one with the most influence being the one in power. Those subjected to power comply and accept. When compliance and acceptance turn into rejection and resistance, the relationship is transformed and the symmetry of power in the relationship may flip. While this is the general conception, applied to societies, power is called domination, “which is the power that is embedded in the institutions of society” (Castells, 2009, p. 10). Power is formed and maintained by two possible ways: violence and discourse (Castells, 2009, p. 11).

Castells poses that legitimization of a power relationship “largely relies on consent elicited by the construction of shared meaning” (Castells, 2009, p. 12). Legitimation for states may be reached by maintaining the “capacity to articulate different interests and values in the democratic process via communication networks” (Castells, 2009, p. 12). Castells determines trust, through education and communication, as the decisive source of power for the modern (nation-)state (Castells, 2009, p. 16). Because power is defined as a constant process of legitimization, a society cannot be defined as a community with shared values and interests, but as a community which is constantly in conflict over them (Castells, 2009, p. 14).

An important aspect related to discourse as a power forming mechanism and trust as main power source for states is Castells’ remark that what is valuable in the respective network is always defined by who is in power (Castells, 2009, p. 28). Hence, the network society is characterised by a set of networks with “different logics of value-making” (Castells, 2009, p. 28). The common culture<sup>1</sup> of the network society as Castells envisions it, “is a culture of protocols of communication enabling communication between different cultures on the basis not of shared values but of the sharing of the value of communication” (Castells, 2009, p. 38).

The network enterprise is the economic counterpart of the network society. It is made up either of firms or their segments and/or of internal segmentation of firms (Castells, 2009, p. 32). In order to gain productivity growth nowadays, innovation is a key factor (Castells, 2009, p. 32). It can be provided by self-programmable labour as opposed to generic labour. Self-programmable labour “counts for any organization in control of resources” (Castells, 2009, p. 30), while generic labour is disposable.

Castells distinguishes three strategies with which nation-states can turn into network states which are characterised by “shared sovereignty and responsibility between different states and

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<sup>1</sup> Castells defines culture as: “set of values and beliefs that inform, guide, and motivate people’s behaviour” (Castells, 2009, p. 36)

levels of government; flexibility of governance procedures; and greater diversity of times and spaces in the relationship between governments and citizens compared to the preceding nation-state" (Castells, 2009, p. 40). The first of these is forming networks of states, "some of them multipurpose and sharing sovereignty, [...] others single-purpose" (Castells, 2009, p. 39). The second strategy is extending international and supranational activities (Castells, 2009, p. 40). Third, is the devolution of power to lower government levels and stimulating participation (Castells, 2009, p. 40).

However, according to Castells, network states have to cope with several types of problems (Castells, 2009, p. 41). Organizationally, if an institution wants to seal itself off, it would seek to make cooperation as difficult as possible by instating different protocols and procedures. Technically, institutions seem to have difficulties with the introduction of networking technologies, because this puts them in the danger of losing part of their "control over their bureaucratic turf" (Castells, 2009, p. 41). Politically, institutions often do not only have to network with other institutions on a horizontal plane, but there are also vertical responsibilities. Ideologically, the network state will have difficulties in agreeing on common policies, if they do not agree on a distinct "common language and a set of shared values" (Castells, 2009, p. 41). Geopolitically, Castells' observes the tendency towards pursuing national interests in network state structures, instead of endeavouring to cooperate with the common good as a result (Castells, 2009, p. 41).

In order to locate sources and capacities of power in networks, Castells distinguishes between four different forms of power in networks: networking power, network power, networked power and network-making power. Networking power is held by core nodes of the global network society and means the ability to include actors or organisations in or exclude them from the network (Castells, 2009, p. 42). Network power is the power of the protocols of communication installed in the network over the network components. It is, hence, an expression of the power of a "specific set of social actors at the source of network formation", i.e. core nodes. Networked power shows who is in charge in the network and this differs per network and is dependent on the programmed goals of the network (Castells, 2009, p. 44). Network-making power is made up of two mechanisms. First, there are human actors capable of creating and programming networks, which are called programmers (Castells, 2009, p. 45). Second, those in charge of connecting to other networks and ensuring cooperation, but also fighting off influences from other networks are called switchers (Castells, 2009, p. 45). According to Castells, power in networks may often not be attributed to single persons, but is itself distributed in networks of programmers and switchers (Castells, 2009, p. 45).

## *Evaluation*

With Castells, in order to gain more control over their everyday lives, individuals must seek to increase their network-making power. Furthermore, being a node in any given network, individuals – either as themselves or as part of an institution or organisation – have to develop their information storage and processing capacities so as to become more important nodes within their respective networks. Having network-making power and being a centre in a network increases the network predictability for the individual, due to being able to better control the orientation of the network. Being in power in a network, however, also brings with it the need to maintain acceptance among those with less power in the network. Hence, individuals need to develop their communicative skills to give out as well as receive information. This produces a cycle in which the central node of a network fortifies its position as a powerful part of the network and thus stabilises the manageability of his/her daily life.

### **2.1.3 Adding Complexity to Networks**

The realization that political, but not least social problems are not (all) as easily manageable as was thought in the period of simple or first modernity, has led Urry to suggest that problems should be looked at from a more complexity-oriented perspective. If certain policy fields indeed turn out not to behave according to conceptions of the political system with well-organized phases or cycles, then bringing in chaos as a relevant factor might explain why some political actions primarily result in side effects and do not or only partially reach the desired goal(s). Hence, according to Urry, the reason why political problems do not respond to political instruments as orderly as expected or desired is, because they do not develop as orderly as has in the past been hoped for by theorists and practitioners likewise. Minuscule changes in the surrounding of and within the issue at hand were thought to be negligible and would not change the overall picture. From a complexity perspective the opposite is true. Small changes can produce bifurcations and result in so-called positive feedback, which does not stabilize but perturb a system. And every time such a small change brings forth positive feedback, the system develops iteratively and will deviate from a standardized pre-conceived track. Thus, standardized pre-conceived political responses to complex issues must come to nothing, from a complexity standpoint.

Besides bringing in the complexity standpoint, Urry wants to introduce a new metaphor capturing the newly perceived configurations of the global. For this reason and as a critique on previous accounts of globalization which – in his opinion – deal with the spatiality of global processes too vaguely, Urry advocates a distinction between regions, networks and fluids as concepts explaining different spatial configurations of (global/social/political?) relations. Thus,

the region is the 'old' territorially bound view on global relations including international law and the nation state. It also means visualizing the global as a region with which other regions – e.g. every nation-state separately – could maintain diplomatic relations. Although networks are unbound from some national territory, they are still rather consistent in their relations and have a low rate of change concerning the participants and outcomes of the network. The most independent of the three is the concept of fluid. While still a network, it is not bound to (national) territory, nor must the participants in the network be consistent over time. A fluid is not spatially confined, but may move through space incorporating new relations where it passes and burning bridges behind it.

Adapted to the needs of a global analysis, Urry reconceptualizes networks as Globally Integrated Networks (GINs) and fluids as Global Fluids (GFs). The concept of regions seems to be discarded, possibly as dated, and possibly because it suggests too stable, inflexible and dichotomous a relation between actors for the global situation.

GINs are deterritorialised networks, stable in character and produce consistent, predictable outcomes. Urry specifies GINs primarily for companies and lists a number of them with McDonalds as case in point. In principle, these networks should be easy to govern by governments, due to the predictability in procedures and outcomes. Their transnational character, on the other hand, would rather obstruct this target. Although business-GINs usually have their home base in a territorially confined state, their deterritorialised and hence – from a nation-state perspective – also denationalized network character will make direct governance difficult. If a state tries to regulate the nodes of a GIN on its territory, the GIN may – in cases that regulation restricts the GIN and will not increase its competitiveness – “choose” to relocate nodes into other countries or make its nodes less important. Avoiding this relocation would necessitate the regulation to apply for the whole GIN. In the traditional nation state system this task could only be taken up by an institution legitimized by the international community which has led to problems relating to stalemates due to veto-powers and underrepresentation of smaller/economically less powerful countries (e.g. United Nations). Although not international, but supra-national, the European Union is a case in point. Being an economic community in the first place, protecting, but also regulating the domestic economy in order to reach productivity and subsequently also competitiveness gains was one of the most original targets of the European Union/Community. Thus, by surrendering part of its sovereignty to the Community, the economy of every Member state is expected to gain advantages on the market.

Another question which is not touched upon by Urry, is whether state governments or inter-/transnational governing institutions can be viewed as GINs. Maybe Urry negligently puts these

in the category of regions. On the one hand, there are already inter-/transnational governing institutions which can be called GINs. On the other hand, governing institutions develop into GINs more and more, which is also reflected in the discussion about and the development from “government to governance”. The former category is represented by the UN, the aforementioned EU and similar unions around the globe. These networks have standardized processes of decision-making (comitology in the EU; also adds to intricacy of procedures) and have a limited range of instruments to their disposal. State governments as the latter category – and slowly coming out of their ‘region’ shell – increase cooperation with other state governments, non-governmental organisations and economic actors which need not be based within the same territory. Although the range of instruments still is limited, the cooperation with non-state actors expands this range with voluntary measures. Furthermore, political instruments such as the Clean Development Mechanism<sup>2</sup> and more traditional kinds of development aid are intrinsically directed at producing relations with other governments or organizations and result in what could be called a development network.

The Global Fluid is also envisaged as a network, but its predictability is much lower than that of GINs. GFs are less predictable than GINs, because they are not institutionalized networks. The strength of a GIN lies in the rigidity of relations and procedures in order to come to the same outcome over and over whereas the advantage of GFs, on the contrary, is their flexibility. Their outcomes are not pre-defined and even if they were, procedures to get to them would not be fixed. In a GF, other than in a GIN, nodes are (easily?) exchangeable.

In GINs, the nodes of the network are intentionally put together in order to reach desirable outcomes in a cost-/energy-efficient way. They work together directly and every node is as important as the other. GFs behave differently. This difference is the intentionality of the network. A *collectively* desired outcome is the result of a GIN with the returns coming back to the GIN itself. A GF, however, is the materialization of similar *individual* intentions using the same pathways, but with the returns for the individuals. The massive, simultaneous pursuit of individual intentions, while making use of existing networks, makes all single movements form one virtual collective. The fact that single movements within that virtual collective may cease at one end of the “network”, while others may join at other ends, gives this type of network its

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<sup>2</sup> “The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), defined in Article 12 of the Protocol, allows a country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol (Annex B Party) to implement an emission-reduction project in developing countries. Such projects can earn saleable certified emission reduction (CER) credits, each equivalent to one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>, which can be counted towards meeting Kyoto targets” (Southerton, 2003).

fluidity, flexibility (and seeming inadvertency). Hence, the fluidity of GFs is itself an emergent property of the inadvertent coordination of large amounts of single movements.

Perhaps, the components of GFs cannot even be called nodes, as the outcome of the network is not intentionally collective and hence, the components are not “really” connecting to a network. To bring in another metaphor: From a chemistry perspective, the components of GFs are not connected through chemical covalent bonds but through hydrogen bonds as in water which results in merely weak attraction and much less compelling relations than in GINs.

Relying on Appadurai’s scapes (Appadurai, 1996), the GF as a network displays emergent properties where it appears and is partially structured by existing networks such as technology, organizations etc. One of the emergent properties is the ability of GFs to break out of the paths existing networks lay out and blaze new trails of their own. This adds to the flexibility of the network as it may make use of existing network structures, but is not dependent on them. Urry lists a number of examples of GFs which range from economic topics such as World money or Global brands or logos via social problems (Travelling peoples and social movements), knowledge and information to natural resource problems (Environmental and health hazards & World oceans).

The existence of a GF itself could be seen as an emergent property of countless components, i.e. travellers, money streams, etc., which have similar individual intentions and take advantage of similar existing networks, but do not intend to cooperate in the first place. This also means that components can easily drop out and in consequence the fluid diverts. GFs make use of existing structures/networks such as communication or transportation networks. Hence, rather than creating new networks for its purpose (as happens in a GIN), a GF cooperates symbiotically with existing networks.

Notwithstanding the conceptualization as GFs, Urry’s examples could also be called “traditional” policy fields of state politics. The new complexity which is added to these topics by Urry is their organization in networks as well as the ephemerality of the existence of and the participation in such networks.

Due to their impalpability, GFs are more difficult to govern than GINs. It is impossible to predict when and where a GF emerges. This is in part, because it is not known, which nodes a future network about a certain topic will include. Furthermore, GFs may dissolve as fast as they materialize. Finally, the speed and mobility of a GF are difficult to grasp. If social networks are conceptualized as GINs or GFs, this has consequences for the manageability of GINs and GFs by individuals. The predictability is a crucial factor for a node in order to know which knowledge to

obtain, keep and pass on. If a node wants to become and stay a centre of a network, low predictability may increase the transaction costs of doing so.

### *Evaluation*

If Urry is right and conditions of complexity prevail in reflexive modernity, this has impacts on how people can live their everyday lives, too. If people's (social) networks are envisaged as fluids, the predictability of future developments is low, and adaptation to such situations of uncertainty is necessary. It means that 'things' just do not go the way they always used to go, anymore. It necessitates people, who are open-minded, flexible enough to easily adapt to new and unexpected situations and who are not stuck in patterns of everyday life which they are unable to break through. People will have to (be able to) change their coping strategies with which they deal with daily tasks and time arrangements.

In consequence, the development of the world risk society, the fluidisation of social processes and the coming about of timeless time has had considerable influence on the way in which individuals can and have to manage their lives in second modernity. Among others, these effects comprise acceleration of processes on different levels of time and situationality of social life. The next section will elaborate on these problems falling back on thoughts developed by Rosa (2005).

## **2.2 Part II: Acceleration theory – Ephemerality and Eternity**

As the evaluations have shown, modernity theories are not only situated on the macro-level, but also have repercussions on the level of everyday life. In Beck's transnationalisation perspective, individuals can steer their state government and influence the world-economic actors by consuming politically. If people increase their importance in a network, with Castells, they have more control and power over the activity of the network. And in complex conditions, people will have to learn how to cope with unpredictability and uncertainty more easily, as Urry would suggest. These are all aspects of social change as it reveals itself in reflexive modernity and touches upon several aspects of everyday life. Hartmut Rosa's acceleration theory then adds to this set of modernity theories an improved understanding of time as a vehicle of change which comprises all facets of social life and a more specific elaboration of the effects of accelerative processes of reflexive modernity on the everyday lives of people. This section will therefore narrow down from the general theory of acceleration via the macro-effects to the effects of accelerative processes on the everyday lives of people.

### 2.2.1 Time and its three levels of acceleration

Other than in previous types of societies, “late” modernity is characterised by a functionally differentiated society. In this society, the understanding of history is linear, while the future is open-ended (Rosa, 2005, p. 27). One often-heard complaint about time is that life ends faster and faster, while life expectancy increases constantly. Among others, this leads Rosa to the proposition of a “time crisis” instead of a “time of crisis”. According to Rosa, acceleration and desynchronisation problems are central to this time crisis.

As categories of analysis, Rosa distinguishes three different scales of perception of time which all have an acceleration component nowadays: technical acceleration, acceleration of social change and the acceleration of the speed of life. The first, technical acceleration comprises the “intentionale, technische und vor allem technologische (d.h.maschinelle) Beschleunigung zielgerichteter Prozesse” (Rosa, 2005, p. 124). Of the three categories this is the one easiest to measure positivistically. It applies to all fields of everyday life in which technology plays a role. For one thing, in transport, “die Raumerfahrung ist in erheblichem Maße eine Funktion der Zeitdauer, deren es zu seiner Durchquerung bedarf” (Rosa, 2005, p. 125). With an increasing transport velocity, the speed of production also increases. In consequence, due to increased production velocities, the pace of distribution and consumption equally grow (Rosa, 2005, p. 128). In addition to velocities of transport, production, distribution and consumption, technical acceleration also includes the acceleration of organizational, decisional, administrative and control processes.

The second aspect – acceleration of social change – can be seen strictly different from technical acceleration from an analytical point of view, although they have historically often gone hand in hand (Rosa, 2005, p. 129). It is defined as the speed “mit dem sich Praxisformen und Handlungsorientierungen einerseits und Assoziationsstrukturen und Beziehungsmuster andererseits verändern” (Rosa, 2005, p. 129). This is a definition including an acceleration aspect as it is about the velocities with which rates of change alter. Rosa claims that the acceleration of social change is not (purely) a result of technical acceleration and that there are still efforts to be undertaken to improve the definition of social change (Rosa, 2005, p. 130). With Lübbe and Luhmann, everyday life in second modernity is marked by a “shrinking of the present”, where the “present” is understood as a timeframe of duration or stability, in which the space of experience and the horizon of expectation are unmodified and hence congruent (Rosa, 2005, p. 131). Rosa then deduces the following definition of acceleration of social change:

*“Beschleunigung des sozialen Wandels lässt sich damit definieren als Steigerung der Verfallsraten von handlungsorientierten Erfahrungen und Erwartungen und als*

*Verkürzung der für die jeweiligen Funktions-, Wert-, und Handlungssphären als Gegenwart zu bestimmenden Zeiträume“ (Rosa, 2005, p. 133).*

Plainly, if the congruency of the space of experience and the horizon of expectation declines, social change speeds up.

Acceleration of the speed of life is the intensification of episodes of action and experience per unit of time which is attained either through the increase of the speed of execution of actions or through the compression of actions (Rosa, 2005, p. 135).

Rosa states that *“die soziale Beschleunigung in der Moderne zu einem sich selbst antreibenden Prozess geworden ist, der in gleichsam zirkulärer Form die drei Beschleunigungsbereiche in ein wechselseitiges Steigerungsverhältnis setzt”* (Rosa, 2005, p. 243, emphasis in the original). Simply put, the scarcer time resources become, the more the demand for acceleration techniques and technologies grows. This circular process works as follows. As described, human relation to space and time changes as a result of technical acceleration of target-oriented processes, in turn, however, this also means that forms of subjectivity alter (Rosa, 2005, p. 247). The subsequent onset of the slipping slope syndrome, characterised by the expansion of the efforts rendered for adaptation, causes the acceleration of the speed of everyday life. And in order to decrease the pressure in everyday life, technical acceleration is driven forward. Rosa points out this last link between the acceleration of the speed of everyday life and technical acceleration as the most yielding starting point for the interruption of the circle of acceleration. Nevertheless, interruption can only be achieved, if the effort is collective and hence initiated by politics, as individual attempts would more likely end in desynchronisation.

### 2.2.2 Processes countering acceleration

Arguing from the rule of action and reaction, processes of acceleration must entail processes of inertia. Rosa lists five of them. First, there are the natural limits to speed including *“(geo)physikalische, biologische und anthropologische Geschwindigkeitsgrenzen”* (Rosa, 2005, p. 139). Second, islands of deceleration are *“sowohl territorial als auch soziale oder kulturelle Nischen oder ‘Entschleunigungssoasen’, die von den akzelerierenden Modernisierungsprozessen bisher ganz oder teilweise ausgenommen waren”* (Rosa, 2005, p. 143). Third, there can be situations in which slowdown is a dysfunctional side-effect, e.g. traffic jams, economic depression, exclusion from the production process, but also acceleration-caused phenomena of desynchronisation such as latency times, *“wo hochakzelerierte Vorgänge auf ‘rückständige’ Systeme treffen”* (Rosa, 2005, p. 145). The last two decelerational processes are intentional: deceleration as an ideology and as a strategy of acceleration. The former is the expression of a

fundamental criticism of modernity and a basic protest against (further) modernization (Rosa, 2005, p. 146). The latter intends the achievement of “Erwartungssicherheiten, Planungsstabilität und Berechenbarkeiten [...], die als Grundlage der wirtschaftlichen, technischen und wissenschaftlichen Beschleunigung, vielleicht aber auch einer beschleunigten individuellen Lebensführung betrachtet werden müssen” (Rosa, 2005, p. 150).

### 2.2.3 Culture and politics in times of acceleration

The cultural driver for acceleration is a deduction of the early modern Christian belief in the fear for damnation and the promise of eternal salvation. These were combined with the principles of time efficiency and the associated acceleration (Rosa, 2005, p. 284). This happened, because social acceleration seems to provide a possibility to live eternal life while still alive and this is why, according to Rosa, social acceleration can be understood as “*die Antwort der Moderne auf das unvermeidliche große Kulturproblem der menschlichen Endlichkeit, den Tod*” (Rosa, 2005, p. 287, emphasis in the original). As a consequence, ‘living the fast life’ or ‘live fast, die young’ become targets in order to savour all worldly options (Rosa, 2005, p. 289). Furthermore, the fast life is a response to the perception of the falling apart of world and life time:

*“Weil sich umso mehr Möglichkeiten realisieren lassen, je schneller die einzelnen Stationen, Episoden oder Ereignisse durchlaufen werden, stellt Beschleunigung die aussichtsreichste, ja die einzige Strategie dar, Weltzeit und Lebenszeit tendenziell einander anzunähern” (Rosa, 2005, p. 291, emphasis in the original).*

The current problem of politics has two major facets. First, function and legitimation of political decisions are to a large extent dependent on how far they reach into the future (Rosa, 2005, p. 393). Secondly, “eine partizipative und deliberative Willensbildung unter Einbeziehung einer weitgefassten demokratischen Öffentlichkeit [ist] nur unter spezifischen sozialen Bedingungen und nur sehr beschränkt beschleunigungsfähig” (Rosa, 2005, p. 395). This means that politics is highly in danger of desynchronising vis-à-vis economy and society which are better capable of accelerating. Due to the lower speeds and low capability for acceleration, it is no wonder that strategies of muddling through have largely taken the place of visionary political conceptions (Rosa, 2005, p. 417). Long-term political strategies have, thus, made way for short-term operating and this form of situational politics may be viewed as the collective correlate to situational identity. Finally, “Geschichte wird nicht länger als ein gerichteter, politisch beschleunigbarer (oder auch zu verzögernder), dynamischer Prozess erfahren, sondern sie nimmt wieder die Form eines nahezu ‚statischen‘ Raumes von nach- und nebeneinander sich abspielenden *Geschichten* an” (Rosa, 2005, p. 419, emphasis in the original).

### 2.2.4 Acceleration in everyday life

For individuals, the three processes of acceleration have led to various changes in their realities. A major consequence of the sustained technical acceleration is the destruction of space, as, it has become a mere function of time (Rosa, 2005, p. 164). As an example, “der modern Reisende kämpft mit der Uhr, weil er Anschlüsse erreichen und Termine einhalten muss, nicht mehr mit den Widrigkeiten des Raumes” (Rosa, 2005, p. 165). Hence, a development can be observed that reduces the unilinear, orienting character of time, “weil sich der Zusammenhang von Sequenzen und Chronologien progressiv aufzulösen scheint” (Rosa, 2005, p. 168). It is important to note, that technical acceleration is merely the material basis and an enabling condition for the diversity of other social processes of acceleration (Rosa, 2005, p. 174). Regarding the acceleration of social change, Rosa adapts the idea of “slippery slopes” to the metaphor of “slipping slopes”. This conception is explained as follows:

*“Die Handlung- und Selektionsbedingungen selbst ändern sich multidimensional und beständig, sodas es keine Ruheposition mehr gibt, von der aus Operation und Anschlüsse ‘in Ruhe’ sondiert werden könnten” (Rosa, 2005, p. 191).*

This means that different parts of everyday life change at different paces as well, which results in a constant redefinition of the space of decisions. This connects to the idea of the shrinking present, as the period for which *ceteris paribus*, stabilizing conditions of action, holds, is generally decreasing (Rosa, 2005, p. 184). Examples for this phenomenon are “serial monogamy” and work of short duration and high mobility (Rosa, 2005, pp. 181, 183 resp.).

Moreover, Rosa observes the creeping in of a “temporalisation of complexity” (Rosa, 2005, p. 297) in people’s lives. It is the “Versuch, durch Sequenzierung von Entscheidungen ‘im Nacheinander mehr Relationen zu aktualisieren, als zugleich möglich gewesen wären’ und ‘Wahlhandlungen aufzuschieben und die gegenwärtige Zukunft als eine Art Reservoir für später zu treffende Entscheidungen zu benutzen’” (Luhmann in: Rosa, 2005, p. 297). It is another way of saying that the different tasks of individuals fight each other in daily time management (Rosa, 2005, p. 300). For the individual, however, this constant conflict of tasks vs. time requires a “hohes Maß an individueller Zeitsouveränität” (Rosa, 2005, p. 306).

Finally, Rosa notes the transformation of identity in second modernity into a situational identity. Nowadays, “zentrale wie periphere Identitätsbausteine [sind] nahezu frei kombinierbar und tendenziell beliebig revidierbar” (Rosa, 2005, p. 363, emphasis in the original). This, in combination with the temporalisation of complexity means that options, contingencies, surprises, imponderabilities and sudden changes in situations are inevitable (Rosa, 2005, p. 368).

The “Kohärenz und Kontinuität des Selbst werden somit kontextabhängig, flexibel konstruiert, seine Stabilität beruht nicht mehr auf substanziellen Identifikationen” (Rosa, 2005, p. 372). This situation entails the fragmentation, pluralisation and multiplication of the self (Rosa, 2005, p. 372). With this trait called ‘drift’, however, life loses its direction and cannot anymore be understood as directed motion (Rosa, 2005, pp. 383, 384). “Das Leben bewegt sich nirgendwo hin, es tritt letztlich mit hohem (Veränderungs-)tempo auf der Stelle” (Rosa, 2005, p. 384). Racing stagnation is the result. In addition, the temporalisation of time entails the detemporalisation of life (Rosa, 2005, p. 384).

The immediate consequences of the acceleration of the speed of everyday life for the realities of people are twofold. Thus, objectively, a compression of episodes of action and experience can be observed, while there is also, subjectively, a change in the time experience of everyday life, expressed in the experience of stress, time pressure, and ‘racing’ time (Rosa, 2005, p. 198). This stress and time pressure, or time-squeeze, is neatly captured in Southerton’s concept of harriedness (Southerton, 2003, 2006; Southerton & Tomlinson, 2005).

### 2.3 Theory roundup

The account of social acceleration theory shows that there are numerous links to the everyday life of individuals. It is also clear that there is a chance that social acceleration produces problems with regard to people’s everyday time management. The factors on Rosa’s individual level within the scope of this study consist of the reversed colonisation of the life-world, the desire of living life to the fullest and the situative identity. Being a negative feeling, the concept of harriedness can function as an extra filter to check whether the perception of a loss of control over one’s time management is indeed, as Southerton claims, a negative effect of social acceleration. It seems, however, that a little more is necessary for Rosa’s social acceleration theory to be operationalized. This bridging will be done by introducing the concept of ‘social practice’ as a translation of Rosa’s theory into a feasible research instrument. Nevertheless, the literature base on Rosa’s acceleration theory is rather narrow, so it is not possible for the research instrument to draw from previous results and restricts the types of method which may be devised here.

### 3 Conceptual model

As has been said previously, the loose links to everyday life presented by social acceleration theory, which are within this study's scope, are there, the connection, however, is still missing. Moreover, in order to increase the literature base in the field of social acceleration theory – quantitative research is yet out of reach – an explorative, qualitative approach is taken. The research design deployed in this study is of a descriptive, cross-sectional character. This allows collecting preliminary qualitative data about the contemporary experience of societal acceleration by individuals, whether this experience coincides with feelings of harriedness and what they do about time shortages in their own lives. Before the link is made between theory and practice, the conceptual model as devised here will be explained.

#### 3.1 Conceptual model

This section intends to clarify the conceptual model. First, a simple conceptual model is drawn up, which helps to get a general overview of the causal relationship under scrutiny. The following operationalization of societal acceleration leads to the development of an extended conceptual model which also incorporates the important aspects of Rosa's individual level acceleration factors. Subsequently, these are again operationalized in detail. This subsection will end with the operationalization of the intervening variable of harriedness and the dependent variable of coping strategies.

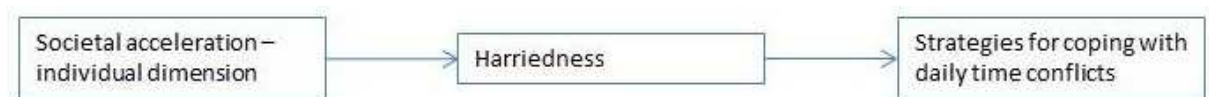


Figure 1 Simple conceptual model

The conceptual model particularly incorporates notions brought forward by Rosa (2005), but the concept of 'harriedness' is seen as a valuable addition to the scheme. The explanation of the various variables will be followed by an elaboration of the data gathering method.

The conceptual model utilized here is composed of "societal acceleration" as the independent variable and its effect on "Strategies for coping with daily time conflicts" as the dependent variable (cf. Figure 1). However, for the effect of a part of the conceptualization of societal acceleration on the dependent variable, the intervening variable "harriedness" has been interposed. Hence, in the following, the variables are operationalized.

##### 3.1.1 Societal acceleration

Acceleration is in general defined as the "rate at which velocity changes with time, in terms of both speed and direction" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2012). This increase or decrease of velocity

per unit of time is a process of intensification or the opposite. According to Rosa, societal acceleration is such a process of intensification revealing itself in three dimensions, namely the technological, the social and the individual dimension. Hence, with Rosa (2005), societal acceleration in these three dimensions is defined as:

- Technological: continuously increasing and intensifying production processes,
- Social: the rate of change of norms and values is increasing thereby shrinking the time for which a certain set of norms and values is valid and thus for which they can be clung to without being desynchronised,
- Individual: intensification of episodes of action and experience per unit of time.

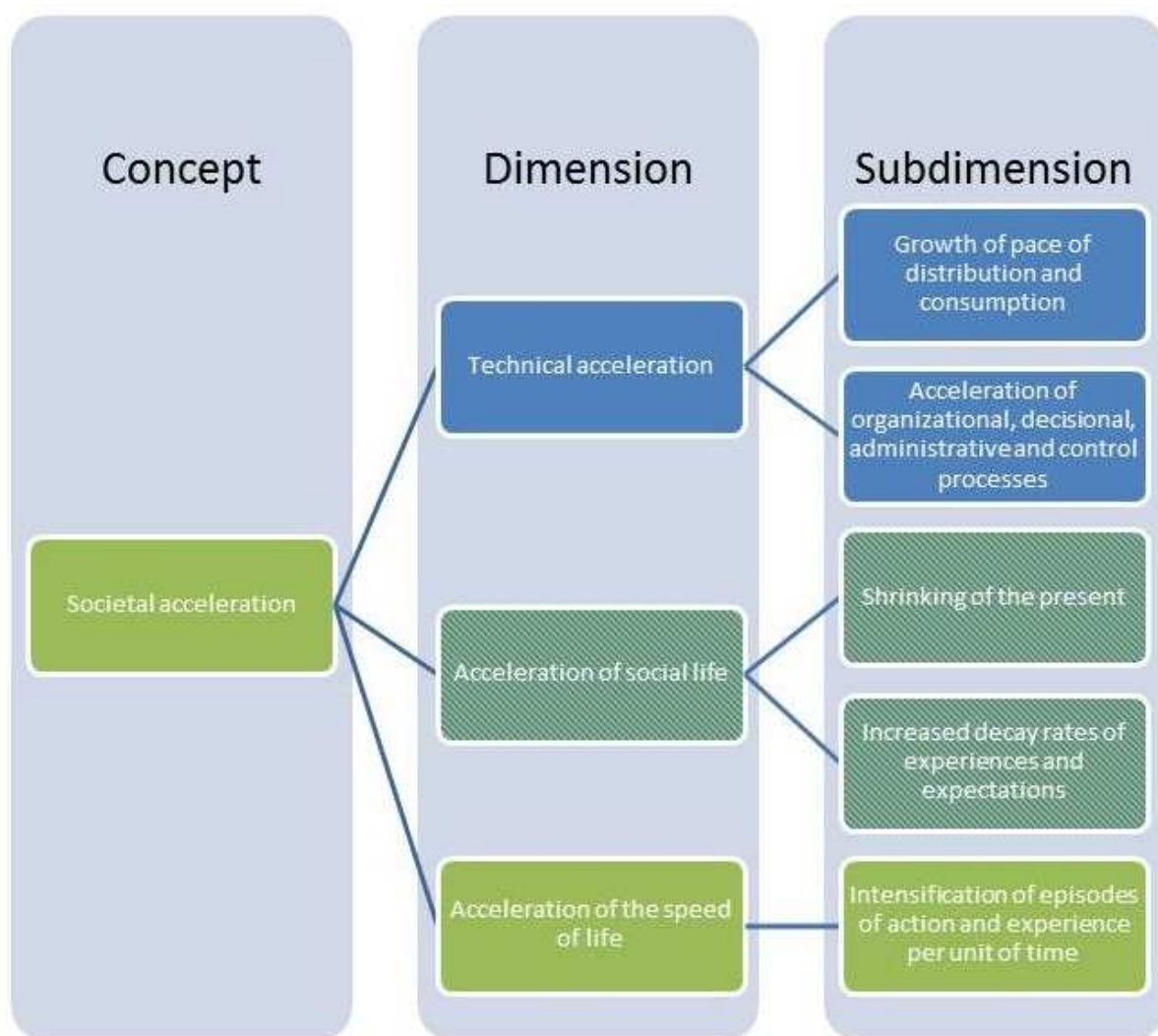


Figure 2 Conceptualisation of societal acceleration

This conceptualization of societal acceleration is illustrated in Figure 2. Notwithstanding, the mentioning of the technological and social dimension of societal acceleration, focus will be put upon the individual dimension and the subdimensions of acceleration of social life which are relevant to the individual experience. In Figure 2, the elements of societal acceleration relevant

for this study are highlighted green, while those only indirectly relevant are shaded blue and green.

In practice, societal acceleration may become visible in the lives of individuals through general increased time pressure with – as an extreme result – negative feelings of stress. In addition, hurrying from one task to the next, including multi-tasking, is becoming near-normal. A result of the shrinking of the present in the lives of individuals through the filling up of one's days with activities is the perception of the passing by of days in faster and faster a fashion.

### 3.1.2 Elements of societal acceleration

The individual dimension of societal acceleration can be decomposed into several components, as depicted in the extended conceptual model (Figure 3). In addition, the extended conceptual model clarifies the insertion of an intervening variable for part of the components of societal acceleration on the individual level. Initially, no signs of the development of feelings of harriedness through the construction of a situational identity are assumed. The pressure inspired by the other three components is assumed to be more prone to lead to harriedness. Furthermore, the facets of the individual dimension of societal acceleration as listed in the extended conceptual model are all mechanisms of intensification of episodes of action and experience per unit of time, thus linking to the general conceptualisation of societal acceleration.

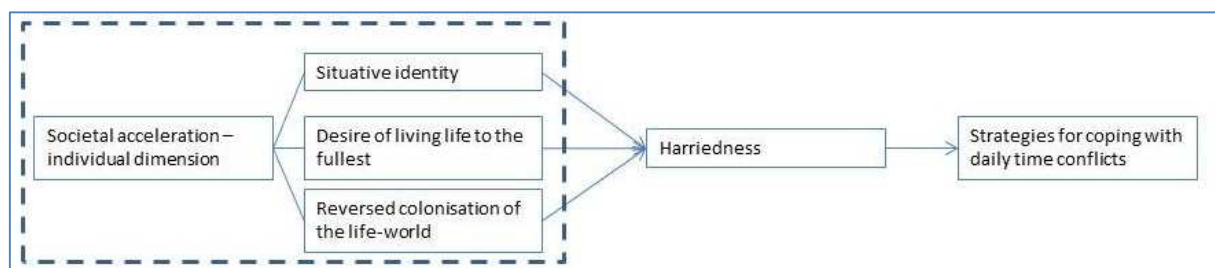


Figure 3 Extended conceptual model of the individual dimension of societal acceleration

Having a *situative identity* means that the self is being fragmented, pluralised and multiplied. This entails that individuals can very easily construct their lives from existing building blocks, e.g. the supply of different types of hobbies, eating habits, beliefs etc. Switching to another hobby, converting to another belief or changing one's food patterns is as simple as never before, due to the availability of facilities and the supply of a wide variety of food on the one hand and the – at least superficial – acceptance of being different on the other hand. This also means that the coherence and continuity of the Self become context dependent and flexibly construed. According to Rosa (2005), this loose and uncommitting combination of identity modules leads to the at least implicit understanding that life has lost direction and cannot anymore be understood

as a directed motion. The term Rosa (2005) has coined for this phenomenon is the “drift” of society and its members.

Individuals may notice this in their daily lives from a number of facts. First, they might have the profound perception that life has lost its meaning. At least, nowadays, this meaning is not pre-defined as it has been in the Middle Ages for example. Individuals now need to construct this meaning by themselves. Social norms and values as potential guidelines for this search are so fluid, that holding on to them too long leads to desynchronisation rather than confirmation. In order to do so, individuals may seek to deal with this problem consciously, either through literature on self-help or the participation in organised contemplation weeks or weekends. Secondly, daily tasks and activities have lost their connection. Besides work, individuals may be engaged social, political, cultural and other associations increasing the amount of appointments throughout the week and putting pressure on time schedules. Hence, it rather seems that people live different lives at the same time instead of all parts of life contributing to the whole.

The *desire of living life to the fullest* is rooted in the idea that societal acceleration may provide a solution to the inevitable, great cultural problem of human finiteness, or death. By constantly intensifying one’s time use and the experience gained from the activities, individuals achieve a feeling of self-fulfilment. The downside may however lie in the pressure created by the expectation and hope of having a fulfilled life. Individuals may thus fear not to get out of life what they expect to get out of it. Furthermore, they may be actively looking for, longing for and embracing new challenges, food, places to go and activities to do. In doing so, individuals accept a two-edged sword filling their life with action, but on the other hand they also accept the pressure to deliver the goods.

The previously sharp differentiation of work and free time is becoming more and more permeable, resulting in the diffusion of work-related issues into free time and vice versa. This phenomenon is called *reversed colonisation of the life-world*, alluding to Habermas’ work.

The use of internet-capable mobile phones and pc’s at home enables people to stay in touch the whole day. Besides connection to social media, this also makes availability for work-related issues possible and hence increases the diffusion of work-related issues into non-work-time. This availability of connectivity means that expectations of work behaviour start changing twofold. First, one may begin to expect of oneself to be available all the time. Secondly, colleagues may begin to expect that one is available, also outside working hours.

### 3.1.3 Harriedness

*Harriedness* is the synaeresis of the two words “harassed” and “worried”. It stands for “feeling strained as a result of having demands persistently made on one; harassed” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012). Originally introduced into the debate on time in modernity by Dale Southerton, the term describes “anxiety over whether tasks would be completed within designated time frames and the creation of haste to keep within personal schedules” (Southerton, 2003, p. 9). According to Southerton, this anxiety is not the result of an absolute increase in the amount of tasks to be done. It rather denotes the “degree of control over schedules and the allocation of practices within them” (Southerton, 2003, p. 17). As a consequence, the necessity to intensify the amount of tasks per unit of time, i.e. increased parallel execution of several tasks (multi-tasking), is a source of this feeling of harriedness, according to Southerton (Southerton, 2003, p. 13). In terms of time, harriedness is a fear of becoming desynchronised with one’s (social) environment, if certain tasks are not carried out in the right time frame and slot or not carried out at all. Hence, having a general feeling of a shortage of time and feeling an uncomfortable necessity of having to multi-task may be indications of harriedness (Southerton, 2003, p. 13; Southerton & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 221).

A practical advantage of the widespread release of social time structures such as designating certain days of the week for washing clothes or a specific type of food has left individuals with the freedom to completely organise their own time. In addition to this freedom, the range of activities increases due to mechanisms of time-space compression and the nearness of otherness through communication devices and media. Harriedness represents the downside of this freedom to organise one’s own ever increasing amount of possible activities/tasks. Especially people, who not only need to organise their own lives, but who are also responsible for the smooth running of the lives of others, such as parents of young children or people who care for their elderly parents, are susceptible to feelings of harriedness. In such cases, the coordination of large amounts of tasks might threaten to blow up the time frame of the day. These threats include unfinished tasks and that expectations by people themselves, but also by other people may not be met. One option for people brought forward by Southerton is that instead of spreading activities evenly over the available time, they begin cramming as many activities into a set time frame in order to create time windows of intensive rest and relaxation: the production of hot and cold spots. On the other hand, people might feel relieved when they can participate in their social activities, while not having to organise these. For a change and at times, being organised by others might slightly relieve the pressure during the remainder of daily life.

### 3.1.4 Strategies for coping with daily time conflicts

A *coping strategy* may be defined as the manner in which individuals try to organise their time. These strategies are more or less explicit and may simply be geared towards optimising one's time management with regard to an everyday practice, but may also be necessary to prevent/minimise feelings of harriedness. These strategies are the behavioural expression of an individual's lifestyle with regard to a social practice in question (cf. Spaargaren & Oosterveer, 2010).

A list of exemplary strategies for coping with daily time conflicts is provided by Southerton (Southerton, 2003, p. 18). Thus, more efficient time management and reduction of time pressure may be reached by making "fixed household socio-temporal routines", "personal lists", "shared diaries and schedulers" and by using "coordinating devices" and "time saving and shifting devices". Besides, people may also attempt to artificially 'create' more time to be able to cope with the daily tasks by getting up earlier and/or going to bed later, thereby exacting a heavy toll from their bodies. This time creation is artificial, because it has to be compensated for in the short term. Delaying this compensation into the mid or long term may result in severe bodily complaints. Hence, failing to deal with the mental stress of harriedness, e.g. by structurally changing one's pattern of activity, can lead to the transformation of the mental stress into physical stress.

## 3.2 Practices as the 'missing link'

As announced, social practices have been singled out as a useful tool to connect the theory and the practice with each other. As previously noted, the links to everyday life are there, but they still have to be connected. This is the function of social practices. Hence, with Southerton (2012, p. 62), "to understand fully the re-ordering of temporal rhythms it is therefore necessary to examine how the temporalities of social practices change".

### 3.2.1 The concept of practice

The definition of practices which is used here understands practices as a "type of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales and at different points of time and is carried out by different body/minds" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250 in: Shove, 2009, p. 18).

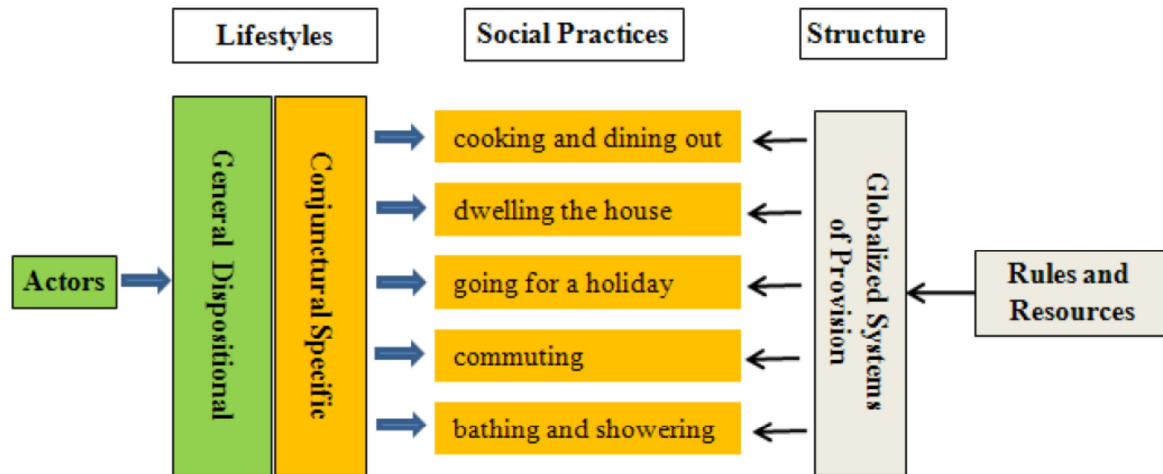


Figure 4 General dispositional and conjunctural specific elements of lifestyles (Spaargaren & Oosterveer, 2010, p. 1895)

This means that practices shift into the focus as the objects of study in order to be able to come to conclusions about the changing temporalities of second modernity. Practices and their acceleration aspect will be researched following the conceptual model which is more explicit of the “behaving” part of Shove’s definition of practices (Spaargaren & Oosterveer, 2010, p. 1895). This model unifies the structural and individual psychological aspect of practices. It states that the way in which individuals cope with practices depends on the external structure of the rules and resources of the system of provision and on the internal structure of the lifestyle of an individual. Hence, the model reflects the trend towards individualisation of society. It shows that individuals conform their lives less and less to collective rites, but nowadays pick and choose their strategies for coping with practices based on an amalgamation of their own lifestyle in addition to the collectively accepted strategies. This allows for the combination of unique sets of coping strategies per individual and is related to Rosa’s idea of situative identity through the important factor of lifestyle (Rosa, 2005).

In the model, a lifestyle is in turn composed of a “general dispositional” factor and a “conjunctural, specific” factor. The former can be summarized as the basic attitude of individuals towards life’s aspects. The conjunctural, specific factor of a lifestyle comprises the actual coping strategies devised to deal with the issues posed by practices. This, however, does not foreclose the possibility that practices are transformed in interaction with other actors (Spaargaren & Oosterveer, 2010, p. 1896). This means that coping strategies directed at a certain practice may be offered by the system of provision; they may be the logical result of one’s attitude towards a certain sphere of daily life and the specific set of practices; and it may be a combination of both. This model is summarized visually in Figure 4. Southerton has already listed a number of coping

strategies which can serve as an initial indication of what can be expected to be mentioned by respondents. This list includes “fixed household socio-temporal routines”, “personal lists”, “shared diaries and schedulers”, “use of coordinating devices” and “use of time saving and shifting devices” (Southerton, 2003, p. 18).

### 3.2.2 Why Practices?

The choice for practices as a tool to research acceleration among people is based on the fact that they are a linking factor in three dimensions. They build a bridge between

- (a) A theory-driven and an empirically driven approach,
- (b) The metaphor of the slipping slopes and everyday life and
- (c) The core sociological divide of structure and agency.

Subsequently, these bridging capabilities will be made explicit. First, practices are the link between a theory-driven and an empirically driven approach, because they enable the crystallization of the acceleration theory in sets of activities as well as ordering the data. Practices link the deductive character of a top-down approach with the inductive character of an empirical approach.

Secondly, practices are suitable to translate Rosa’s metaphor of the slipping slopes into a workable frame for everyday life. In Rosa’s conception, the slopes, depicting the parts of peoples’ lives, challenge the individual to put an effort in combining the different speeds existent in these slopes. Studying practices gives the slopes a name and unravels the points at which competition between them is visible and how people deal with that competition. Hence, practices can help to come to conclusions about the balancing act which the slipping slopes produce. Moreover, practices make it possible to study different parts of peoples’ everyday lives in order to find differences and developments in them over time which may lead to evidence on Rosa’s concept of the situative identity.

Thirdly and finally, as Figure 4 indicates, practices contribute to overcoming the long-standing sociological discussion about such fundamental a concept as social structure. The model of practices combines social structure as well as its competitor – actors and their lifestyles – into one model and explains how both act on the same practices in different ways. On the one hand, the globalized systems of provision provide a social habitat into which people are born. Structuralists would argue that practices are the outcome only of coping strategies superimposed by society or other social structures; that people learn to do things “how everyone always does them”, as it were. As theorists following this stream would argue, “there are certain basic and environmentally determined conditions to which society has to adapt in

order for social life to be possible” (Walsh, 1998, p. 11). This cluster of ideas of a domination of structure over agency is confronted by the other extreme, namely the claim that there is nothing social about a society purely seen as a structure. Rather, members of society “can and do make themselves into what they are; they are able to take charge of their own lives and to shape the social world into form which meet their own needs” (Walsh, 1998, p. 12). Although the aforementioned hints at a completely free world in which everything is determined at the moment, scholars in this line of thought also acknowledge structured social activity (ibid.), e.g. the production of routines etc. A crucial difference as opposed to the structuralist approach is, nevertheless, that this structuring “takes place from the inside and is not imposed from the outside” (ibid.) and that people therefore are still in full charge of changing the structure if desired. The gap created by this theoretical dispute has never been consensually closed, but efforts have been made to overcome it.

Some of these are the phenomenological approach by Alfred Schutz and the theory of structuration by Anthony Giddens. Schutz main point is that “action is subjectively meaningful and [that] society is organized through intersubjective and shared meanings” (Walsh, 1998, p. 25). The intersubjectivity makes, however that the actions always have to be calibrated with regard to existing ideas, which in its accumulation produces a “common consciousness” (Walsh, 1998, p. 26). Giddens on the other hand intends to “unify sociological theory through the concept of the duality of structure through which it becomes possible to analyse human practices as both action and structure” (Swingewood, 1999, p. 67, emphasis in the original). In this conception,

*“structure is not theorized as a fixed and inert property of a social system but is ‘carried’ in reproduced practices embedded in time and space: it is both the medium for, and outcome of, social action.” (Swingewood, 1999, p. 67)*

Thus, for Giddens, the structure of social life comes from the repetition and routines produced and reproduced in social practices (Adam, 1990). This means that the model used here is a further development of Giddens’ ideas on structure and agency which include a psychological – in the factors constituting lifestyles – as well as a sociological facet. So, by using the concept of practices, this study attempts to avoid either one of the battling camps and acknowledge that nowadays people acting on their own behalf and making their own decisions thereby reproduce certain patterns of action which have proven successful without changing the structure being foreclosed.

### 3.2.3 Practice Selection

As described in the previous section, this study visualises everyday life as a collection of practices which in interplay give temporal order to people's lives. Hence, the concept of practices is a suitable tool to find out about at what speed these practices go, how they have developed over the years and how people feel about them. Furthermore, they present a set of concrete activities with which strategies for coping with the limited day-time are devised. All aspects of Rosa's acceleration concept and subsequently the conceptual model as distilled for this study can be translated into questions about practices. The following sections expand on the formulation of the list of questions (see also Appendix 1: Questionnaire).

The set of practices which is scrutinized in this study includes (a) the food chain, (b) commuter traffic and (c) low-season holidays. The rules and resources of the three practices are governed by differently composed systems of provision. A brief overview of the practices will follow.

- (a) Food represents a basic need and has to be organised every day for a couple of times. It can differ in composition every day and requires considerable planning especially when more people are involved. The fact that it is a basic need gives it a strong position in time conflicts vis-à-vis other practices. Nevertheless, acceleration in the production of food and in the supply of pre-prepared food enables a large room for manoeuvre with regard to the time needed to prepare food. Including the food chain in the study and not confining this practice to the individual preparation and consumption of food makes it possible to see whether accelerative processes in the whole food chain have impacts on individuals' time management with regard to time invested for choice of food etc.
- (b) Commuter traffic is a practice similarly frequent as food, but is usually less subject to change as most employees have a standard means of transport. Thus, this practice is carried out very frequently but is defined by more long-term choices.
- (c) Low-season holidays were chosen, because their occurrence is much less frequent as compared to the previous two practices and happens on a different time scale. Low-season holidays, as opposed to high-season 'normal' holiday times, are generally seen to increase during the past decades. Whether this is also a perception among people can be verified in this study. Furthermore, motivations to avoid main holidays and feelings can be examined.

The choice for these practices is furthermore motivated by the fact that their commonness should presumably enable everyone to recount their story.

## 4 Methodology

For data collection, the research instrument of in-depth interviews has been chosen. It provides detailed information about the time management of individuals and their feelings about it. Furthermore, it supplies evidence for further quantitative research about the topic. It is chosen to rely mainly on open-ended question in order for the respondents to have their say. If necessary, however, closed-ended questions will be listed to find out whether pre-supposed experiences with the topic are pervasive among the study population. This section deals with the structure of the interview and the relation of the separate interview sections with the concepts in the conceptual model.

### 4.1 Interview structure

Before the interview begins, an introduction to the theory is read to the respondent. This introduction is structured starting with the more abstract general, societal and academic context of the acceleration theory. It then goes on to briefly present the three dimensions of the acceleration theory with a focus on the individual dimension. Attention is also drawn to novel technologies which may aid the management of time and hence add to coping strategies. Afterwards, the three practices of “food”, “commuting” and “holidays in the low season” are introduced as topics which the questions will revolve around. As a threefold aim of the interview, the introduction states:

“to find out which *changes* in terms of time management your life has undergone,  
which *strategies* you have developed to cope with these changes and  
which *feelings* these changes trigger with you”.

After having made clear that the interview does not target an objective view of societal acceleration, but specifically the individual, subjective view of the respondent, the introductory text ends with three obligatory questions, including whether the interview may be recorded, whether the minutes of the interview may be sent to the respondent afterwards for checking and whether the respondent wishes to receive the results of the interview. For the detailed interview introduction, see the Appendix 1: Questionnaire.

The interview is composed of five sections (see Appendix 1: Questionnaire). Every subsection of the interview is furnished with a topical introduction clarifying the specific field of interest to which the following questions are related. These sections are in order of appearance:

- Acceleration in general
- Acceleration on the individual scale

- Food
- Commuting
- Holidays in the low season
- Feelings about time (statements, Likert scale)
- Strategies and technologies for coping with acceleration and feelings
- Background

This order is chosen to produce a development within the interview from an abstract, societal level and zooming in to the personal, smaller scale level. Hence, the first section deals not yet with the perceived acceleration in personal life, but explicitly with acceleration in society in general. This is devised to get a glimpse of whether the phenomenon of acceleration is perceivable in general. This section is followed by the section about the perception of acceleration in the daily life of the respondents. This section is subdivided according to the selected practices.

Beginning with the practice of Food, the respondent is at first made aware that food is produced in a production chain in order to make sure that they think of all these aspects of the practice, when responding. At the start, the respondents are asked to sketch their own daily time allocation to food, in order to get a basic understanding of their daily time zoning for food. Besides the perception of acceleration in the production chain, the respondent is asked to reflect on the position and importance of food within their own daily time. It is also asked whether the respondents know of food trends, what they think of them and whether they participate in any, whether that is willingly or unwillingly, wittingly or unwittingly. Further questions are asked about the criteria of food choice and what the respondent's ideal would be regarding the time available for preparing and consuming food. The latter enables to contrast the actual pattern with the ideal and see whether a possible discrepancy might be a source of hurriedness. Finally, the respondent is asked whether his/her behaviour with regard to food has changed over the past ten years and whether this change meant that the practice of food has become faster or slower over the years.

The section on Commuting deals with the possibilities of carrying out more tasks than travelling. This entails, for example, whether travel time is seen as work time or free time and whether there are differences between way to and from work. In addition, the respondents are asked to reflect on societal trends in commuting and the level of control they have over their time during commuting. Again, there is a question about changes in commuting behaviour over the past ten years.

The third practice of tasks having to do with holidays in the low season, takes off with an inventory of the current behaviour with regard to this practice. These questions are succeeded by the experience of these holidays while they are still in the future and whether this looking forward has effects on the perception of the passing of time on forehand. Then, the respondent should indicate, whether holidays outside the high season – including short (weekend) trips – are experienced any different from those in the high season. Again, a question about trends in this practice is posed. This is followed by a series of questions about how it is chosen when to go for a holiday and based on which criteria the destination and modes of transport are determined. At the end of the section, the respondent is supposed to think about whether he/she has changed in behaviour over the past ten years with regard to holidays outside the high season.

These three sections about the practices are followed by a list of statements about the feelings that these practices may evoke with the respondent. These statements can be judged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Not at all” to “Very much”. The formulation of the statements is done as such that there is a variety of positive and negative formulations, preferably alternating and not too often two or more about the same practice in a row. Furthermore, the statements are formulated from the perspective of the respondent in “I”-form in order to maximize the possibility of identification (or the opposite for that matter).

The second last section of the interview then deals with the manner(s) in which respondents organise their time in general and the more or less concrete strategies with which they attempt to overcome temporal bottlenecks in their daily life. There is, again, a question about the ideal time management which people would like to stick to and whether this differs from the ideal of people in their surroundings, thereby possibly creating friction with other people’s time management.

Finally, the respondent is asked to grade a number of statements specifically put up to get a rough idea of the person’s characteristics. Emphasis is put on properties relevant to time management and harriedness, such as curiosity about new things, social preferences (necessity of people around one, frequency of meeting other people, care about other people etc.) and the importance of work in relation to free time (cf. Appendix 1: Questionnaire). As a conclusion of the interview, the respondent is asked to fill in background information about him-/herself. This includes gender, marital status (and whether respondent has children or not), occupation (preferably education and current employment), age, income per year (€, in categories), name and e-mail address for additional correspondence.

The interview is drafted in Dutch as well as English enabling the sampling of foreign people. An extra selection criterion for foreigners, however, is either having lived in the Netherlands for at least a year or, if the time of stay is less, than the intention to stay for a longer period of time. This is necessary to ensure that people have experienced Dutch societal acceleration for an amount of time roughly long enough to notice difference.

Finally, the interview has been reviewed after several interviews to refocus and specify the questions. This included the reformulation of questions which turned out not to be self-explaining and the addition of questions which concerned topics brought up during the first set of interviews and which had not yet been considered before.

## 4.2 Sampling

The sample is acquired by sending e-mails to potential respondents and devising the snowball method by asking them for other potential respondents. It is attempted to roughly keep an age representation of the Dutch society. However, because qualitative research intends to gather information about specifics, instead of general trends, which is more ascribed to quantitative research, this representativity is attempted so as not to miss out on relevant time experiences, rather than achieving statistical representativity. If one age group turns out to be especially interesting with regard to their time management, the number of respondents in this group will be extended. Hence, it is possible that age representation will become somewhat distorted.

## 4.3 Choices and weaknesses

A few pitfalls regarding operationalization and the research instrument should be borne in mind. With respect to the operationalization of the concept of social acceleration, it must be noted that Rosa includes a few more subdimensions into his conceptual model. Omitting these may decrease the explanatory value of the current study. However, the choice to do so was made, due to feasibility reasons. On the other hand, as Rosa's acceleration concept includes so many dimensions, decreasing the scope of the study also benefits the focus and improves the depth of the study. Nevertheless, the individual segment of Rosa's acceleration circle should never be taken out of it completely. The relations to the other two acceleration clusters – technological and societal – should always be remembered.

The choice of practices had to be restricted to three for the scope and time available for this study. In advocacy of this approach, examining a broader range of practices would have contributed to a more superficial result with respect to every practice separately. Furthermore, respondents would be confronted with a plethora of activities which they would have to think about. Nevertheless, practices are selected as a vehicle for the study of acceleration in

individuals' everyday life. And as everyday life is a concatenation and parallel execution of different practices, the choice of only three practices can lead to an oversimplification of the whole picture, as well. Hence, it would be fruitful to extend the range of practices as well as intensify the study of separate practices in order to gain an overview of practices which are prone to acceleration and find out between which practices the time squeeze is especially evident.

There are also comments to be made regarding the research instrument. Although the saturation point has presumably been reached, it is not sure whether all perspectives are included in the results. First, due to feasibility reasons, the final interview could not be done which was supposed to be the verification that saturation was indeed achieved. Second, the achieved saturation is only valid for the group of highly educated parents. There is certainly a bias towards this social group in the results, therefore diminishing the external validity of the instrument. This can only be corrected for by extending the sample in studies to come. Furthermore, the revised interview schedule was only used with the last three respondents. This was not intended, as the revision of the interview was supposed to be at half-time break, but nevertheless happened, because of time constraints.

## 5 Interview Results: Individuals on societal acceleration

This section presents the results of the in-depth interviews. In total, this section relies on the answers of 11 respondents. A range of different backgrounds has been sought including: students (1), starters (2), parents with young children (4), parents with older children which are or are just not living by themselves (3) and retired people (1). Selecting more parents – with younger or older children – is motivated by the fact that they have to manage several time schedules and are, therefore, in the frontline when it comes to changes in time patterns. Furthermore, harriedness and other time-related feelings may be more expressed in this group. In this section, a subdivision of the results is made according to the research questions which leads from the more general topics of the individual perception of societal acceleration and the more specific accounts relating to practices to feelings about that acceleration and in what way people cope with acceleration and possible feelings. The results presented here also follow the sections of the interview, which was subdivided into parts about acceleration in general and concerning the social practices (Section 5.1), the feelings that certain acceleration situations triggered with them (Section 5.2) and the coping strategies which were deployed by individuals (Section 5.3). This means that results regarding social practices are mainly encapsulated in the first subsection, while the other two subsections deal with feelings and coping strategies on a more general level. This approach has been chosen, because the results regarding feelings about social practices were not as pronounced as was expected and coping strategies are more related to how available time is being manipulated for the social practices and hence deals with the tools used to organize everyday life.

### 5.1 Observing

This subsection deals with the observations of the respondents with regard to acceleration in general and the acceleration which is observed by the respondents in the respective fields of the practices. This subsection thus represents all effects of social acceleration which are outside the individual.

In one way or another there is acceleration. It becomes evident in various situations, but the media, communication and the related technology can be singled out as the main accelerating social aspect. Highlighted aspects of media and communication include increased speed, amount and intensity of media coverage in general, the omnipresence of Social Media and the pervasiveness of mobile phones. Hence, the “stream of media coverage is simply larger and faster than 5 years, 10 years or even 20 years ago” (Dellen, 2012).

With respect to the amount of activities people partake in, days seem to be becoming fuller and fuller which is reflected in the lament that “people’s agendas are simply full” when one tries to make an appointment (Sijbers, 2012). This development – the tendency of people to do more and more in the same amount of time – is narrowly interwoven with the existence and distribution of mobile phones, as “everything is now faster or more available” (Jurak, 2012).

However, the idea prevails that acceleration as a form of social change is not inevitable. Rather, society is *perceived* as accelerating rather than that it is actually accelerating. Hence, “people are driving each other mad and everyone tries to keep up with each other” (Dorst, 2012). But this seems to be very much an issue in the Netherlands while other in other parts of the world, “people very much try to stick to the own traditional principles” (Gabriël, 2012). Besides these more society-wide observations, it may well be possible for the individual to influence acceleration, as “you still have influence on that acceleration yourself and whether you participate in it or not depends on yourself” (Hulst, 2012).

It is not clear whether there is a difference between the speed of the work sphere and the free time/private life sphere, as there is disagreement about this among the respondents. The intensity of the acceleration – whether expressed by a difference between spheres of life or a general parallel acceleration in all spheres of life – may be traced back to the degree of contact with communication technology in people’s work and their lives in general.

The manner in which work and non-work entangle is very much dependent on the type of employment and the accessibility of mobile communication networks. As part-time worker, it is, hence, possible to make a clear distinction between work time and non-work time. Similarly, physician jobs with a high emergency situation potential are very much bound to opening hours, while regularly, administrative work for this kind of professions snatches off time from non-work time. Thus,

*“In a family practice, the practice is open or not and when it is open you are permanently available [...]. And outside these opening hours [...] it is not so much the colleagues but the patients who expect something from you.” (Miessen, 2012)*

The diffusion of work-related issues and the domination of one’s time schedule are much more intense when one is self-employed or works in laboratories, where the time management is guided by the duration of an experiment. Besides, the self-employed have the disadvantage that work is “always in my head, and when I am chopping wood I am still working” (Dorst, 2012). Nevertheless, a less rigid distinction between work and non-work time also gives leeway to changes in employees’ work attitude, because nowadays it is not possible anymore to say that

one did not finish a task at the end of the day, but that other things have to wait until a task has been completed.

When public transport is the means of transport for commuting, diffusion of work issues into officially non-work time can be observed. There are indications that time in the train is always used, either for studying for university or work. Besides de facto working or studying on the train, the time on the train may also be used simply to have a first glance at the e-mail on the smartphone in order to know what can be expected at work. Contrary to the use of the smartphone as a device for work, it may just as well be used as an aid to maintain a clear-cut division between work and non-work matters.

### 5.1.1 The food chain

This section will first reflect on the changes in the personal food domain and will subsequently zoom out and list some of the observed changes in trends and the production of food.

In the personal field, freshly cooked dinner seems to be the rule and fast food the exception. However, time frames for food differ compared to some time ago. There is no clear trend visible in the reactions. Nevertheless, with the transition to working life, the time available for cooking and eating has become more extreme, i.e. one time more time is taken to cook during the week and the other time it has to be shorter. The transition to children also makes a change in lives. On the one hand, parents want to consciously take more time for food and make it a social event, but on the other hand children are too impatient for long meals. Another aspect is, that preparation and consumption time should be in balance with each other. It seems, furthermore, that it is difficult to say, whether food defines (part of) one's identity<sup>3</sup>. Taking pot luck is also a regularly-heard attitude towards food.

The main observation about food trends is that the diversity in types of food has increased significantly. This includes country-specific cuisine as well as an increase in types of take away such as healthy take away, microwave meals, ready-to-eat salads, sandwiches, noodles, soup, stews or wok. There are "more and more finger food, fast food and tapas, where you can take small meals and where you can change, choose and vary more" (Miessen, 2012). Also food preparation at home has changed due to innovations in food characteristics. These include the appealing packaging, pre-packed, pre-cut and pre-washed vegetables and the availability of products throughout the year. It is noted that "the kale which you had to cut yourself earlier is now simply chopped, cut and you can throw it into the pan ready-to-use" (Miessen, 2012). Some of the respondents clearly state that they prefer products with clear and nearby origins. On the

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<sup>3</sup> „Je bent wat je eet" is a Dutch saying meaning „You are what you eat“.

other hand, food production “has become more industrialised and in some ways also bitter” due to the “pressure put on that process by the commercial power distribution” (Laeven, 2012). Other trends comprise the wild-growth of cooking programme’s on television and slow and eco-food trends. On the other hand, one respondent also notes that simple vegetables, meat, potato meals are out and people expect more complicated food.

Finally, the restaurant business increasingly tries to distinguish itself by presenting food more and more as an experience. This means reinstating “homemade” and fair-trade foods as well as more courses with smaller portions. Furthermore, specialisation and also the combination of different kinds of food in one restaurant are in trend. Nevertheless, also food in restaurants is subject to fashion, because food habits are also constantly evolving:

*“It is nearly the same as with reading, or music, or consuming art. [...] Just because you constantly discover new books or music all the time, it does not mean that you will never listen to an old record or read an old book or an author that you already know.” (Dellen, 2012)*

### 5.1.2 Commuter traffic

The discussion about commuting is very much dominated by the opposition of car and public transport. A clear trend with regard to the choice of means of transport cannot be discerned. While the car is still a popular means to go to work, a whole range of combinations of means of transport is also growing, also incorporating public transport and bike. Sometimes the other types of transport are used for different types of activities and sometimes various means of transport are combined to optimize commuting trajectories. The usual, most-heard reasons for the choice of transport are speed and independence. Nevertheless, healthiness and environmental friendliness seem to play role, too, now and again. Another advantage of having a considerable commuting time may be that one might be “more productive in the morning when I have been in the car for an hour” (Sijbers, 2012).

Society-wide, two contrary movements with regard to commuting are observable. On the one hand, “it is a trend that people are so tired of commuting that they move closer-by” – at least for one of the two earners (Manderveld, 2012). On the other hand, “at this moment, people rather choose to live somewhere and subsequently adjust their work to that than vice versa” (Miessen, 2012). Such a choice may be motivated by the desire to live at a specific place and, thus, a longer commuting time is plainly accepted. In one’s social environment, such a choice may evoke bewildered reactions. In the Netherlands it looks as though it is a trend that people have to

commute at all. “This has to do with the housing market and finding a cheap home in the randstad<sup>4</sup> is difficult, so you invest in the travel time” (Sijbers, 2012).

The relation between commuting and the interference of work-related issues has already been reported above (see section 5.1).

### 5.1.3 Low-season holidays

Nowadays, low-season holidays are popular and the opinion about these holidays is cautiously positive. Often, lower costs and greater relaxation are put forward as reasons to go for holidays in the low-season. However, on such holidays, one may paradoxically feel like being on a holiday while one is not supposed to be. This experience does not lead to a clearly negative feeling, but it is “still different than if you are really free in the high-season” (Jellema, 2012). The low prices of flights are nevertheless also reason for more or less serious concerns, because they are not in proportion with other services with the same costs. However, short trips to closer destinations – without the plane – are viewed much more positive. And there are also people who do not plan their holidays in times when prices are low as “when I feel I need a holiday, I will take it, no matter the price of the ticket” (Jurak, 2012).

Over the past years it has also become more common in Dutch society in general to go on holiday more often than only during high-season. Agreement can be sensed, that cheap air and bus tickets have led to an increase in the amount of people leaving for holidays in the low-season. An advantage of this development may be that it can lead to a desirable and better distribution of travellers over the year. This trend might however be limited at least to the Netherlands as this development of increasing amounts of low-season holidays is not so much visible on the Balkan. At least, this holds when holiday is defined as a trip longer than one day, as day trips are generally on the rise in Croatia.

Finally, some people prefer going for a holiday more often in one year, but decreasing the duration: “I prefer going for a holiday six times for one week than twice for three weeks or once for four weeks... I like that very much” (Dellen, 2012). Hence, more, shorter holidays may be preferred over less, longer holidays. It is, contrarily, questioned, whether it is necessary to have to go on holiday so often in one year. On the other hand, the society-wide acceptance of intensive relaxation “is a kind of compensation for hard work and intensive living: you may as well enjoy intensely” (Manderveld, 2012).

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<sup>4</sup> The randstad is the most urbanised area in the Netherlands in which a number of large cities are connected to each other.

## 5.2 Feeling

This section compiles the information about the feelings regarding acceleration. They include answers to open-ended questions as well as the qualitative translation of the scores on statements. The answers to the open-ended questions and the statements are more of a general kind, because they were not as pronounced as expected. At least, variation was very low. Hence, this section recounts those feelings coupled to harriedness and the desire of living life to the fullest.

The speed of life of individuals may very well differ from the speed of the lives of friends and family. This seems to partially depend on the degree to which these social contacts are included in the communication technology network. On the other hand, the feeling can persist that the speed of life chosen by individuals or their family members creates friction between them and others. In any case, the feeling of having a lot – or even too much – to do in the day is very common:

*“I do have the idea that I do a lot more than average [...]. I often hear people who say they are so busy and then I hear that they have one thing to do in the weekend. Well, what are we talking about?” (Gabriël, 2012)*

Sometimes, though, individuals may not be so convinced to do a lot/too much, but people in their social environment. This also correlates with the fear that one may not be able to complete all the set tasks in a day. Indeed, staying up to date with social contacts appears not to be simple due to a lack of time for that.

Seven respondents are more or less happy with their time management, while four agree that they could do with a better or increased grip on their time. Three of them even think that they are being lived at times, i.e. that people other than themselves are in control of their time. Some even indicate that they are actually worried about their time management. Not being worried about it, does nevertheless not mean that one's time management is not stressful: “It is something that you are just so immersed in that you do not worry or concern yourself, it is rather something you just grow into and which is simply normal” (Ferket, 2012). However, actually being under pressure is only confirmed by few. Thus, “if you speak of truly efficient time management, I could probably still learn something, but I do not know whether I want that, as long as it works out and I still have the feeling that all is going well” (Dellen, 2012). Three respondents at maximum declare to be under pressure now and again while preparing food, when commuting and when going for a holiday. Similarly, only few state not to get to relax as much as desired.

Those who were asked about the satisfaction they got out of life answered affirmatively and were not extremely eager to try out a lot more things. Two of these three even thought that they were more or less getting the best out of life.

### 5.3 Adapting

This subsection deals with the tools with which individuals try to plan their practices in a day and with which they prevent and overcome time conflicts. These tools are more on a meta-level and are hence not related to a specific practice. They can however be applied at least to every one of the social practices under scrutiny here.

As has come to the fore, the necessity to adapt to accelerating situations depends on the amount of activities one is engaged in and the degree to which one is in contact with technology during these activities. In order to make appointments with social contacts, novel communication technologies surely have a share, but not one technology can be singled out as prevalent. Neither are non-electronic ways excluded. Thus, all combinations on the range between using “only a smartphone” and “only a paper calendar” are heard. It also depends on the type of activity whether it is put in the paper calendar or smartphone, e.g. work and free time. In any case, “you have to display a high degree of discipline, if you use something like that, because functionality gets out of hand and that can cost you much more than you save with it” (Laeven, 2012).

A number of different ways in which to organise time and release time pressure have been mentioned:

- Assigning tasks to others,
- Planning data together, e.g. with household members,
- Making to-do-lists,
- Noting appointments precisely and frequent viewing of calendars,
- Rescheduling activities if too many,
- Preparing well for activities,
- Keeping one’s head cool,
- Taking a break,
- Getting up earlier and going to bed later,
- Speeding up working speed.

Besides these mechanisms to organize one’s activities in general, conscious compensation during non-work time is another way of dealing with the speed and acceleration at work. Such endeavours may range from pausing when it becomes too much – “I like to keep my private life

calm and when it becomes rash, then I simply do not do things” (Jurak, 2012) – and consciously decelerating to “bringing back the life of a long time ago” (Dorst, 2012). This deceleration may be achieved by defining and spending time slots more clearly and consciously. Another way could be to try and reduce the necessity of planning during non-work time and bring in more spontaneity, but this approach is also dependent on how one’s social environment approaches their time management. In any case, cramming a lot of activities in little time to have virtually free time seems to be a more or less conscious and active alternative to experience intensive relaxation.

Finally, the life situation is very much important for this topic. Especially having children who have to go to school is a big factor in the temporary decrease in low-season holidays when seen over the whole life course. Having young children considerably reduces the amount of low-season holidays. This means in turn that “since we do not have children at home any more, for whom we have to stay at home, we can leave for a holiday more easily nowadays” (Dorst, 2012). Expanding on this, it is reported that it is very much dependent on the economic situation and the phase of life. Students – in their own account and from the perspective of young parents – nowadays have much more possibilities of going for holidays and also take these opportunities.

## 6 Discussion & Conclusions

This section discusses the results of the study and draws conclusions. At first the domains are considered against the backdrop of acceleration and harriedness. This will be followed by some of the methodological caveats that must be kept in mind when judging the conclusions. Finally, a brief discussion about the general outcomes on acceleration and harriedness will follow.

It should be taken into consideration that the afore-mentioned results are of qualitative kind and the data basis is by no means to be taken as representative. Hence, the following discussion can present some of the perceptions of acceleration by Dutch people which may be prevalent. The outcomes of this study can however not be seen in a generalized context. At most, the results serve as a platform from which to devise further inquiries into the more and more expressed phenomenon of social acceleration.

### 6.1 Discussion of observations

#### 6.1.1 Eating

All phases of the food chain show signs of acceleration. Shorter transport times, improved conservation methods and continuous modernisation of production techniques enable the intensification and custom-tailoring of food consumption, not only in terms of time needed, but also in the range of food available. Besides the fact that potatoes and vegetables come peeled, cut and washed which shortens the time necessary for the traditional Dutch dinner, the knowledge and the range of exotic food offered constantly increases the demand and stimulates consumption which as Rosa points out is linked to production in an accelerating feed-back loop. This production of demand is again increased by the media, i.e. a wild growth of cooking TV programme's. In addition, the novel presentation of food in the stores – i.e. pre-cut etc. – can also be the embodiment of a counter-movement to the “traditional”, rather unhealthy type of fast food. It might be the result of an increasing demand for a meal, which does not take too much time to make, but which is also healthy.

The afore-mentioned changes have also produced an extended range of food from fast in-between meals with a minimal level of social interaction to more conscious, more intensified social experience of food. Food as an “experience” as opposed to a functionalist approach towards food also comes to the fore. Hence, while there are still some people who regard food in its primary, nourishing way, food is increasingly becoming a factor in the desire to live life to the fullest.

While types of food are easily interchangeable, the results do not allow for conclusions about the influences of the type of food on individuals' identities. It is clear that most respondents know of and cook different types of country foods, but none have clearly valued certain types of food above others or expressed a fundamental, philosophical adversity towards certain ingredients other than taste. Maybe, the difference between country foods is too small to be distinctive for identity. One respondent has, however brought to the fore vegetarianism. On this level of basic choice – meat yes or no, dairy products yes or no etc. – this might be a way, in which different identities may be expressed. However, the current sample does not provide these views sufficiently.

The study has shown that food is not a typical domain in which work-related issues interfere. Meal times are rather a typical moment of compensation and calming down including a social aspect. Thus, shutting out all other domains and excluding multitasking could be called the production of a cold spot in Southerton's terms. Nevertheless, the current sample does not include professions which are known for their work lunches and dinners, so the picture might well be different in those branches.

Neither can it be said that the pressure put on the food domain by time demands of other domains results in clear-cut negative feelings of harriedness. Although it is acknowledged that quick meals are sometimes necessary, the time squeeze seems not to lead to harriedness. This might have to do with the fact that the time schedule is seen as controllable. Often, people *choose* to participate in other practices putting pressure on the food domain. According to Southerton, harriedness is also a product of being out of control of one's time. So, if people feel in control of their time, whether that means quick, time-squeezed meals or not, a feeling of harriedness will probably not kick in.

### 6.1.2 Commuting

Although speed and independence are adduced as main reasons for choice of mode of transport, there does not seem to be one "absolute" mode of transport which is fastest. Thus, all combinations of modes of transport are observable. The choice for which mode of transport to take is changing under constraints of congestion and also the aspects of healthiness and environmental friendliness are emerging. Hence, it can be assumed that the overcrowdedness of the Netherlands' roads raises awareness for other aspects than independence and reframes the perception of speed, travel efficiency and responsible travelling.

Compared to food, this domain is more sensitive for reversed colonisation of the life-world, especially and predominantly for people using public transport. Except for those people who do

not see commuting time as work time, technological acceleration through the proliferation of smartphones and increasingly tablet PC's enables very strong work-related influences. However, also analogous media such as books are still popular. In any case, it seems not done to do nothing. Hence, it can be concluded that commuting in public transport is a base for reversed colonisation of the life-world and also multitasking.

The dual tendency regarding choice of residential environment vice versa work place distinguished above shows clearly time's novel domination of space. It does not so much matter anymore, where people live as there are so many possibilities to bridge distances in a fair, feasible time. In addition to that, technology enables the filling of idle commuting time – whether that be telephones in the car or reading and writing on the public transport. In conclusion, commuting is a domain which is quite prone to the influence of accelerative processes.

Although accelerative processes can easily take hold in the domain of commuting, it does not seem that feelings of harriedness due to time pressure are very common. Actually, the responses confirming time pressure during commuting came from respondents who go by car or bike. This may corroborate Southerton's claim that multitasking as a coping strategy helps relieving negative feelings related to time squeeze. So, besides the expectation of possible delays on road and train track, the fact that multitasking is possible in the public transport makes it more resilient against harriedness than does commuting by car where carrying out other tasks than driving is much less possible.

### 6.1.3 Travelling

The domain of low-season holidays is a case in point for the aspect of the desire of living life to the fullest. Going on a holiday more often in a year seems to be a trend including a much wider choice of destinations and transport possibilities, as well as being more relaxing due to lower tourist amounts during low-season. The advantages are, up to now, large differences in costs and lower amounts of tourists. Furthermore, people become freer in choosing when to go for a holiday and how long they go. These advantages enable them to tailor their own holidays and, thus, becoming more independent from collective time frames. Part of this transitional phase towards more freedom in holidays is also the funny feeling coming up going for a holiday when this is not during a collective consensus period.

Notwithstanding, people liking the development towards a better-distributed holiday density over the year, going for a holiday in the low-season will stay possible only for people in the right

economic situation as well as life phase. As many recognize, the school system as it is, prevents parents very much to engage in many holidays, due to their responsibilities.

Low-season holidays could also serve as a showcase for the situative identity, because in destinations and choice of transport can mirror personal preferences very much. Their change over time (or not) can indicate changes in identity and the speed of succession may tell about the fluctuation in different identities.

Feeling harried is not a dominant issue when going for a holiday. The planned character of holidays – whether low or high-season – may increase the feeling of control so considerably that harriedness is not an issue.

#### 6.1.4 Coping

Social acceleration has not yet led to the use of only new communication technology to organize one's time. On the contrary, although both digital and analogous coordinating devices are used, the list of coping strategies to organise time compiled in this study seems to be an extended, more detailed list of the one brought forward by Southerton except that the use of coordinating devices does not have such a dominant role. Two contrary reasons for this may be adduced. Either, people do not yet realize the place that novel communication devices have in their lives, or novel communication devices have already become so all-encompassing that they have unconsciously taken up a role without which working life and social communication seems to be unthinkable. Only, if the internet or the phone network breaks down do people realize how much communication technology has become part of their lives. It also seems that there seems to be a generation gap with regard to the synchronisation to the speed of life between younger and older people, as younger people are in general more "connected".

Hot and cold spots, or the conscious contrasting of speeds in different spheres of life, are, however, very pervasive. As has been said about food as a social event, people tend to consciously slow down at chosen times in order to compensate for other times with higher speeds. Indeed, consciously trying to carry out many activities in a shorter time in order to have more relaxation later is a known option. Nevertheless, the domains under scrutiny in this study do not seem to be practices which are part of hot spots, but precisely cold spots. Only commuting has traces of hot spotting in it, as work and study tasks carried out during travel reduce the amount or density of tasks at work later.

## 6.2 Theoretical remarks

The discussion about harriedness previously showcased must be supplemented with the fact that there is no necessity for people who have a lot or too much to do to feel harried. This is

probably, because they still feel they have control over the organisation of their activities. Neither has clear evidence been found for the synchronisation efforts necessary to keep the slipping slopes of one's life workable.

Furthermore, contrary to Rosa's idea that technology is merely the material base and enabling condition for the diversity of other social processes of acceleration, for the society-wide picture the (social) media and related technology are pinpointed as large factors of acceleration. They seem to enable, support and intensify the degree of acceleration. This also explains why the degree of contact with communication technology also determines the degree of acceleration which people are subject to and hence also the (de-) synchronisation between people with different levels of communication technology contact. Hence, Rosa may have a point in claiming that the technological part of the acceleration feed-back loop is crucial, a very important factor in the initialisation of the acceleration cycle and the easiest point for intervention. This means that depending on the intention, technological development can be influenced to help synchronise individuals society-wide whether that is through slowing down the faster or speeding up the slower.

Regarding the influence of individuals on the level of acceleration they experience, the perception prevails that it is possible for individuals to influence the speed of their lives. Among Rosa and Southerton, this would stimulate discussion. Several times, Rosa claims that attempts by individuals to slow down acceleration will lead to their desynchronisation, because the process has reached such dimensions that only collective efforts can slow it down. Southerton's hot and cold spots on the other hand clearly assume the possibility for individuals to speed up and slow down speeds in their lives. Hence, it might be appropriate not to speak of speed but average speed. Hot and cold spotting would then not decrease the average speed of life, but compensate slower speeds with temporarily higher speeds. This perspective would bring together Rosa's collectivity approach, Southerton's hot and cold spots and the respondents' perception that they truly can influence acceleration.

It can be concluded that acceleration is truly noticeable in people's lives. This is for a large part due to the developments in communication technology and their advantages in the work and private sphere. As not everyone is yet comfortable with using these and advantages as well as disadvantages are distinguished, it is possible to state that this is merely a transitional phase, as there seems to be a generational gap. Similar to the way in which some people nowadays have always lived with personal computers, there is a completely mobile generation growing which will not know how life was in slow(er) modernisation. The proposed feeling of harriedness can, nevertheless, not be confirmed as much as is done by Southerton. While it is a central concept

to his theoretical outlook, this study can only agree that harriedness may kick in when people lose control of their time management. Due to the fact that the people in the sample in this study were mostly alright with their time management and truly negative feelings about their time management were rare, it can be said that harriedness is the flipside of a coin, which is either not so prevalent or is a much more unconscious phenomenon in need of closer more specific study. However, if it turns out that harriedness is a prevalent feeling among individuals, it represents also the negative side of unrestricted modernist tendencies.

The range of coping strategies for improving time management and prioritizing practices is not surprising. It is however remarkable that communication technology more and more becomes the means with which to carry out coping strategies. Furthermore, hot and cold spots can be categorised as a dominant way of organising one's time. The prominent role of technology in the accounts of respondents however presses the point that it is difficult to detach the individual scale from the technological and the societal scale of Rosa's acceleration model. All three levels of acceleration are interconnected and, if one is taken out for closer examination, the links to the others need to be borne in mind.

Finally, social acceleration theory can, if combined with social practice theory, be applied to individuals' time problems, including feelings of harriedness. By analysing which practices are in conflict with each other with regard to time, such as overlapping or snatching off more and more time from other practices, time management problems of individuals can be solved.

## 7 Recommendations and Outlook

The fact that acceleration is indeed noticed on the individual level and that several factors discerned by Rosa and Southerton have posed are in some way discernible, gives acceleration theory a tentative spot among the other senior theories of social organisation and change. However, acceleration theory needs more study on the aspect of acceleration on the individual level, also in relation to the other accelerative complexes, to consolidate its place. Social practices have proven to be a suitable tool to aid this aim.

Nevertheless, it has certainly the potential to become a big player in the game of social change. It is not for nothing that time – how we spend it and what its effects are on our lives – increasingly pops up as a topic more and more. Besides other scientific efforts such as those by Juliet Schor on the “Overworked” and the “Overspent” American or Barbara Adam’s work on Time & Social Theory, time evolves into a problem acknowledged society-wide.

Acceleration theory might also have interesting insights for some of the other modernity theories to take up. With regard to Beck’s metagame, the discrepancy between the national state and the transnationalised economy might also be reconceptualised as a desynchronisation problem. And in a way, this is also what Beck does: The transnationalised economy is faster in its activities and the state lags behind. In terms of Rosa’s acceleration cycle, the nation state would need to either slow down the transnationalised economy or increase its own velocity. In Rosean terms this endeavour would however be unsuccessful if single states would engage in it: it would have to be a collective effort of resynchronisation. This problem has very much to do with Rosa’s societal aspect of acceleration as it seems that the transnationalised economy is flexible enough to deal with increased decay rates of experiences and expectations, while the national state is not. The increased decay rates of experiences and expectations may actually be a feeding ground for economic growth due to constant reorientations and the search for new experiences.

Acceleration theory may also have something to add when it comes to connecting desynchronised nodes or the management of multiple networks. On the other hand, social acceleration and complexity have things in common, as Rosa’s concept of social drift has chaotic characteristics: no choices are foreclosed and people may change as fast and as often as they desire.

Rosa’s idea of social drift and raging stagnation combined with a lack of direction are actually almost postmodernist thoughts. Although Rosa’s account starts off from a modernist view and results in this near-postmodernist perspective, he is still a modernist thinker, as there is still leverage for intervention and steering of acceleration in his eyes. In conclusion, despite its

youthfulness, acceleration theory seems to be a justified and helpful perspective on social change, which not only brings in a more solid, multidimensional concept of time, but which may also in combination with social practice theory deliver solutions to time problems in people's everyday lives as well as posing a critical note to unrestricted modernist tendencies. On the methodological side, the external validity of the results can be improved by extending the sample in a way that is representative for the study population. First, explorative base could be consolidated and subsequently the qualitative results can be translated into quantitative questionnaires which would allow for the examination of statistical trends in the study population.

Besides making the sample more representative and adding quantitative data to the qualitative, increasing the range of practices under scrutiny helps with gaining more insight in the interactions between practices with regard to their time conflicts and how these conflicts are solved. An example for such a study is the examination of the interaction between work and free time (although "free time" is a container for a number of practices). In this context, it is helpful to review existing literature bases with regard to nutrition and identity or the sociology of work. Studying practices can be done in two ways, i.e. by conducting overview studies and examining several practices at the same time to find patterns of acceleration – this would necessitate longitudinal studies. The second way would be focusing on few practices and exploring their borders with regard to in how far these borders are contested by other practices.

As Southerton has noted, harriedness occurs when people have the feeling to lose grip on their time management. In this study, the degree of control over time seemed to be felt as high, hence studies could be designed which are especially suited to study how and when people have the feeling to be out of control of their time. This could verify whether harriedness is a "way of life", whether it is a feeling of short duration or whether it is somewhere in between.

In order to complete the picture of acceleration, it might be useful to include the two other sites of acceleration proposed by Rosa, i.e. technological and societal, with respect to the practice under study, so that conclusions can be drawn with all the implications in mind.

On a more aggregate level, it is interesting to examine what the effects of different velocities are on societies. In such research, societal "drop-outs" could be studied. This would relate to the friction between different networks and the acceptance of otherness.

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

### Introduction

There are many ideas about how society works nowadays and how it develops. One of these ideas is that the development of society is speeding up all the time. According to this perspective, this acceleration occurs on the scales of technology, society and individual.

This interview will deal primarily with the individual scale. On the individual scale, for some time now, the way in which people organise their daily lives has been changing. Besides collective rhythms such as opening hours of shops, museums etc., individual time orders have more and more come into being. These individual time orders are a combination of the psychological attitude of a person and the influence of his/her social surroundings.

With the development of internet and subsequently mobile internet on different types of devices, the range of possibilities to develop individual time orders has only increased. Real-time coordination of appointments and shorter travel times due to faster transportation means lead to an acceleration which might be visible in every part of life.

In this interview, I would like to talk about how you experience acceleration in your own life and your social environment. The aim of this interview is, thus, to find out which changes in terms of time management your life has undergone, which strategies you have developed to cope with these changes and which feelings these changes trigger with you. This will be exemplified in three topics, namely food, commuting and holidays in the low season.

Some of the questions are open-ended and others are statements. You do not have to answer questions which you feel uncomfortable talking about. Furthermore, you do not have to answer the questions objectively, it is rather your personal opinion, which I am interested in.

Is it alright, if I record the interview? May I send you the minutes of the interview for checking afterwards? Do you wish to receive the results of the study afterwards? E-mail address?

### Interview questions

#### *Societal acceleration in general*

This part of the interview deals with your perception of the speed of society in general. The aim is to verify, whether acceleration is experienced as omnipresent. This also means that the following questions are not associated with a specific activity.

1. Do you think that life in society is continuously accelerating? Can you describe situation in which this (acceleration or deceleration) occurs?
2. When has this acceleration set in?
3. Would you say that the different parts of your life are at different speeds (e.g. work, free time, family time, sports, etc.)? Could you explain some examples?
4. In how much is “multitasking” applicable to your life?
5. Do you think that life has direction? Is this direction the same or does it differ for everyone?
6. Which type of activities do you participate in, i.e. social, political, cultural, sport etc.? Do you think that that is a lot?
7. How much do you change with regard to your hobbies, belief and food?
8. How have the expectations of friends and colleagues at work changes now that mobile devices make day and night availability possible?

### *Acceleration in individual life*

#### The food chain

Now, I would like to pose some questions about your experiences with acceleration in the field of food. The questions will be concerned with all aspects of food.

9. How has the time available for food changed in the past years?
10. How is that food usually prepared?
11. Which changes have you observed in the way in which food is produced in the past 10 years?
12. Do you know food trends? What do you think of them?
13. How has the range of restaurants changed the past years?
14. In how far does the type of food define who you are?
15. Which factors influence your choice of food?
16. What is your opinion about the ideal for food preparation and consumption?
17. How has your behaviour with regard to food changed the past 10 years?

#### Commuter traffic

Commuter traffic is an activity which is very dependent on technological innovation, because that determines the speed with which one can move. But if too many people choose the same means of transport this leads to congestion – whether on the road or the train – and this in turn results in the opposite of the desirable: slow down. Nevertheless, in some – often public – means of transport it is possible to concentrate on things other than the safe movement of the vehicle.

18. How do you get to work and back?
19. Why do you choose this means of transport?
20. Is your commuting time work time or free time? Is there a difference between the way to work and the return?

21. Do you recognize trends in commuting in your direct social environment and in general? Which are these?
22. Which feeling does the thought that you are at the mercy of the traffic density trigger, concerning the control you have over your own time?
23. Have you consciously changed your commuting habits in the past 10 years due to time reasons?

#### Low-season holidays

With the proliferation of cheap flights and the resulting mobility it has become more and more common and easier to go for a holiday more often than only during general holidays.

24. Has the number of holidays in the low-season increased, decreased or stayed the same in the past years?
25. How do you experience holidays in the low-season as opposed to holidays in the high-season with regard to duration, relaxation and intensity?
26. Have you noticed your direct social environment to go on low-season holidays more often in the past 10 years? How do you think that is in general? What do you think of that?
27. Have you developed a time-saving routine to pack your travel bag over the years?
28. How available are you for work-related issues during holidays in low-season? Is this more often the case than during high-season holidays?
29. Based on which criteria do you choose your destination and means of transport?
30. How much control do you have over how often and when to go for a holiday?
31. Have your habits to go for low-season holidays changed due to time reasons over the past 10 years?

#### *Strategies and technologies for coping with acceleration*

Technological innovation not only influences mobility, but also enables new alternatives with regard to time management. Wi-Fi everywhere and internet-ready smartphones and tablet-pc's have made new options for time management possible.

32. Do you use electronic devices such as smartphones or tablets to organise your time? How do you use them? What do you think of them?
33. How do you make appointments with social contacts?
34. Which work-related matters do you carry out during non-work time?
35. What is according to you the ideal time management?
36. How does this ideal conflict other ideas about time management?
37. Would you like to have more control over your time management?
38. How do you try to create more time, if that is necessary?
39. Which time routines exist in your family/household to deal with different schedules of family members?
40. How do you experience activities that your do not have to organise yourself and which you only have to participate in?
41. What do you do when you feel time pressure?

The changes in habits related to the three afore-mentioned themes which may be triggered by acceleration may have had influence on your feelings about the time available to you.

*Interviewer: Now the (background) statements!*

- Do you have supplementary stories or situations that express your feelings about time?

*Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time!*

*Feelings about time (statements, Likert scale)*

	Absolu tely not				Very much
I am afraid that I might not get my daily tasks done.					
I think that I have enough time to relax.					
I am under time pressure when preparing food.					
I feel more relaxed the more holidays I have in a year.					
I am under time pressure when I am on my way to work and back.					
I try to do as much as possible in a short time to have more free time later.					
I am under time pressure when I am going for a holiday.					
I experience the time to go to work as relaxing.					
I feel time pressure when I return from work.					
I am happy when I can carry out some final tasks during commuting time.					
I worry about my time management.					
I like short meals.					
I experience pressure to do the same activities as my friends and family.					
I like to finish things on time.					

I do not have enough time to keep my social contacts up to date.					
I need other holidays besides general holidays to maintain myself.					
My days pass by faster and faster.					
I have to do more and more in a day.					
I have the idea that my activities claim more and more time.					
I like to bring my laptop on holiday to be able to read and answer e-mails.					
I like to make appointments for work lunches and dinners to be able to use my meal times productively as well.					
I am always looking for new thrills and kicks.					
I am happy with the things I have done in my life.					
I try to minimise the number of times that I have to go to the shops as much as possible.					
I am happy, if I succeed in doing several things at the same time.					
I have the feeling that there are still a lot of things that I want to do before it is too late.					
I feel I get the best out of life.					

*Background (Statements, Likert scale)*

	Absolutely not				Very much
I follow trends.					
I always need people around me.					
I am individualistic.					
I often go out in the evenings/at night.					
I like to try new things.					

I care a lot about the opinion of my social environment.					
I dislike getting up early.					
I do not like having to make time to meet people.					
I care a lot about other people.					
I tend to eat unhealthily.					
I need a lot of sleep.					
I value work higher than free time.					

Gender:                      Male ☐                      Female ☐

Marital status:              Single ☐              Married ☐              Cohabiting ☐

Age of child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Job: \_\_\_\_\_

Age:                              21-30 ☐                              31-40 ☐                              41-50 ☐                              50-65 ☐                              65+ ☐

Income per year (€): 0-24.000 ☐              24.000-48.000 ☐              48.000< ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: List of participants

Nr.	Date of interview	Name	Age	Gender	Age of children	Education and profession	Revised interview schedule
1	24.02.2012	Dellen, Fons	50-65	Male		Higher professional education; Editor in chief for TV programmes	
2	12.02.2012	Dorst, Ron	50-65	Male		Professional education; self-employed optician	
3	21.02.2012	Ferket, Etiën	50-65	Male		Higher professional education; Estimate engineer	
4	02.02.2012	Gabriël, Jean-Pierre	31-40	Male		Higher education; Sound engineer & conductor	
5	17.04.2012	Hulst, Jessica van	31-40	Female	3 & 5	Higher professional education; client manager in health	x
6	05.03.2012	Jellema, Klaas Thomas	21-30	Male	--	Higher education; student	
7	01.02.2012	Jurak, Edita	21-30	Female	--	Higher education; PhD-student	
8	16.04.2012	Laeven, Hub	65+	Male	33, 37, 38	Higher education; retired	x
9	23.02.2012	Manderveld, Nienke	31-40	Female		Higher education; Self-employed consultant	
10	11.04.2012	Miessen, Raph	41-50	Male	9 & 11	Higher education; family doctor	x
11	28.02.2012	Sijbers, Jeroen	21-30	Male	--	Higher education; project leader education	