Slow knowledge work – designing space and learning

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Even its slow tempo feels political. Cinema so badly needs to slow down and take stock these days.
Tom Charity writing about David Gordon Green's film 'George Washington'
Time Out, 24 September – 2nd October 2001

The phenomenon of globalization offers, among other things, a great opportunity for exchange and diffusion, but it does tend to level out differences and conceal the peculiar characteristics of single realities. In short, it proposes median models which belong to no one and inevitably generate mediocrity.
From the website Charter of the Slow Cities Movement started in Italy, 1999

Purpose
This paper reports on a decade of research and development in relation to the concept of slowness in management, specifically relating to the design of working spaces and learning methods for knowledge work. This study has fallen into two phases, reflected in the two parts of this paper. In the first, work on a series of action

research projects led to uncovering the importance of slowness in knowledge work, both as part of the action research process, and in the subsequent implementation processes (Ward, Holtham and Bohn, 2001; Holtham, Ward, and Bohn, 2002).

Following on from this, it was realised that most of the management education process, particularly but not exclusively within business schools, tended to emphasise action/fast, rather than reflection /slow. So a search began for educational methods, which would not only promote but even celebrate slowness as a vital ingredient in the formation of managers.

PART 1: SLOW IN DESIGN OF SPACES FOR KNOWLEDGE WORK

The context of the original work was on the design and redesign of office space for knowledge workers, which particularly took place from 1998-2004. This involved considerations of fast/slow in two orthogonal domains. The first was the design process for the space, and the second was how far the design of the actual space itself sufficiently reflected a balance between fast and slow activities and processes.

From the mid 1990's onwards at least some major organisations appeared to becoming increasingly disillusioned with what might be described as technocratic approaches to office space design, often tightly controlled between project managers, workspace planners and building architects. Consultation with end-users and even managers was often formulaic and statistical, rather than about knowledge work and the emotions of working effectively in any given space.

This opened up the possibility for a socio-technical or even humanistic approach to office space design and the need for more research and development into such approaches. A consultancy-academic partnership was created to advance such research and development and led to a number of innovative projects all of which emphasised slowness both within the design process and which led to appropriate consideration of slowness being embedded within the substantive office space designs themselves.

At the heart of these office design project process was a highly participative approach with front-line staff being engaged authentically in relation to their own

needs for space and facilities. One major project for a major media company involved no fewer than 29 workshops and a major parallel change management exercise.

In relation to the actual knowledge space designs themselves, these were almost invariably very heavily customised to the needs and emotional qualities of the specific organisation. There have been relatively few examples of the design of spaces to emphasise slowness. In the revamped Oticon Headquarters in Copenhagen (Eskerod and Darmer, 1994), there is a preoccupation with accidental meeting and discourse, for example through elaborately designed coffee stations, and double-width staircases, specifically designed to encourage oral conversation. In a company which also an early implementer of a paperless office, yet at the same time discouraged emails, this was in essence a “high-tech, high-touch”, “fast/slow” knowledge environment.

Broader evolution of thinking in slow knowledge and slow design

A key text in slow knowledge today is that of David Orr (2002), which perhaps because of its origins in biology and environment, has in fact only permeated quite slowly into the business knowledge management community today (Thorpe, 2004). Orr’s critique of fast knowledge, which corresponds to a significant amount of knowledge creation today in both physical and social sciences, remains ever relevant. He also places emphasis on traditional and indigenous knowledge of those without conventional power. In our own way, our own emphasis on authentically engaging those at all levels who would actually work in the new knowledge spaces have resonances with this, even though we were not aware of his work at the time.

Similarly, six principles of slow design have been put forward by Strauss and Fuad-Luke (2008). These have evolved from the pioneering work of Fuad-Luke (2002) onwards, and they also come relatively close to the kind of principles, which underpinned our own research and development work.

#1: Slow design reveals experiences in everyday life that are often missed or forgotten, including the materials and processes that can be easily overlooked in an artifact’s existence or creation.

#2: Slow design considers the real and potential "expressions" of artifacts and environments beyond their perceived functionalities, physical attributes and lifespans. (Our own work uncovered a particularly important role for artifacts, both within the design process and also in the implementation (Ward and Holtham, 2000)).

#3: Slow Design artifacts/environments/experiences induce contemplation and what slowLab has coined 'reflective consumption.

#4: Slow Design processes are open-source and collaborative, relying on sharing, co-operation and transparency of information so that designs may continue to evolve into the future.

#5: Slow Design encourages users to become active participants in the design process, embracing ideas of conviviality and exchange to foster social accountability and enhance communities. (This was almost identical to our own written manifesto for space design work)

#6: Slow Design recognizes that richer experiences can emerge from the dynamic maturation of artifacts, environments and systems over time. Looking beyond the needs and circumstances of the present day, slow designs are (behavioural) change agents.

Some general principles

Our starting hypothesis is that knowledge work generally requires the passage of time, and that the application of tools and artefacts to ''speed up' knowledge work may therefore actually be harmful to the quality of that work. Indeed in a world where fastness is endemic, we may well need explicitly to design processes which deliberately delay (procrastinate) knowledge work in order to allow the passage of time for reflection and to ensure completeness of information. Jeremy Rifkin recently praised the virtue of writing books long hand because

> *"..you have to compose a thought slowly. Efficiency is always at the expense*

of sustainability."

Seeley Brown and Duguid (2000) in their book 'The Social Life of Information' see knowledge as needing time:

> *"..one reason knowledge may be so hard to give and receive is that knowledge seems to require more by way of assimilation. Knowledge is something we digest rather than merely hold. It entails the knower's understanding and some degree of commitment."*

People rarely accept or reject knowledge in an instant; what happens in most cases is what Bruno Latour calls a 'process of translation' (Latour, 1991) - knowledge evolving through interaction with people and objects over time, meaning being continually negotiated. Brand (1999) argues for the importance of knowledge absorbed:

> *"I know field biologists who can look at a hillside and 'see' the advance of scrub growth over railing meadow; look at a wide valley and see the river lashing like a snake within its floodplain, the meander loops progressing downstream and flicking off oxbow slues to either side; look at a terminal moraine like Cape Cod and see the glacial ice advance and then withdraw over the landscape to a one-hundred-thousand-year beat. That kind of ability is made of knowledge absorbed until it becomes perception."*

In *Systems of Survival*, Jane Jacobs (1993) identifies two and only two cultures which operate in human groups: guardian cultures and commercial cultures. The values of each around speed and slowness are almost exactly, and (says Jacobs) irreconcilably opposed:

GUARDIAN CULTURE (slow)

- Stable, defensive, conservative
- Resistant to change,
- Governed by ritual, pattern and

COMMERCIAL CULTURE (fast)

- Opportunistic, pioneering
- Entrepreneurial
- Regard rules and provisional

habit

♦ Conserve and protect	♦ Exploit and develop
♦ Respect the past and protect the future	♦ Strong loyalties to local tribe rather than institution
♦ Take a long term view	♦ Transient, temporary time frame
♦ Risk averse	♦ Tolerant of risk – failure as necessary to learn

In ‘The Evolution of Cooperation’ Axelrod (1984) argues to the need for time in which to build knowledge, understanding and trust. He also identifies the importance of lengthening the shadow of the future over the present, in such a way that present actions and decisions take increasing account of their future implications.

Many companies are trying to ‘optimise’ procedures and processes that are time consuming. But local optimisations, for example, that ignore global performance issues can be meaningless. And first-order effects (total time spent in collecting data, speed of access to the internet, for example), may not be the long-term effects.

Implicit in the design of processes, spaces and objects which frame our working lives, there may often be a witting, or unwitting, design of speeding up or slowing down of information exchange, or knowledge prompts. Latour (1991) describes the embedding of instructions into objects to prompt behavioural change (for example the hotel key with the heavy metal weight to remind you not to take it out with you). Global organisations have started to experiment with ‘third spaces’, cafes and canteens where the social exchange of information, knowledge and insight is recognised as work which is as valid as time dedicated to explicit processing of company business. This brings an associated challenge of ownership of slow time: if it’s authorized organizational time and space, as opposed to private time and space seized by the individual, does this affect the quality of the thinking, for better or for worse?

Often, however, the rituals of engagement (welcomes, questions, listening, farewells), which punctuate everyday life, are missing in the workplace (Ward and Sbarcea 2001), or more specifically in work. The demands of office life in the 20th

and 21st centuries have led to a kind of permanent urgency which means that episodes, experiences and narratives which are worth paying attention to are lost in the elision of one activity into another, in the collision of deadlines and demands which characterises Fast Company.

Framework Developed for Analysis

Cilliers (2006) argues:

> *"a "slow" strategy is not a backwards-looking one. If a somewhat slower tempo allows a system to develop a richer and more reflective memory, it will allow the system to deal with surprises in its environment* ***better****. The argument of slowness is actually an argument for appropriate speed."*

This idea of appropriate speed came through very clearly from our study of knowledge work, and we developed the framework in Figure 1 to begin to analyse how "appropriate" might be assessed. We found that a relevant approach was to distinguish between the externally driven "market" tempo and the internally generated "organisation" tempo. There is no necessary need for these to equate – for example in a major investment deal there may be relatively little elapsed time available, which can and does conflict with the need for due diligence which is relatively slow. Our major research study was into the fire and rescue services, where there is a very striking contrast between the speed of processes during the actual management of a live emergency. This is fast in almost all respects, but there still needs to be slowing down explicitly at times for safety reasons and to analyse information. On the other hand, for most of the time, the fire and rescue services spend huge amounts of time on slow processes – learning, rehearsing, anticipating and making sense of the meticulous collection of data and information relating to risks.

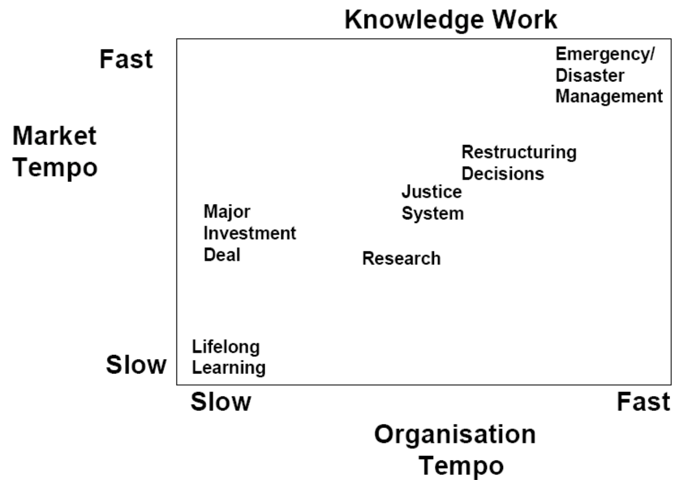

Figure 1 Different market and internal tempo

Team Debriefing

Debriefing is a process that is carried out across a very wide spectrum of organisations, in widely different ways, and we have specifically examined examples of team debriefing in the emergency services, by contrast to approaches used in professional service firms. Some interesting emerging approaches (Colardelle & Wybo, 2000) suggest how technology can be married to improved non-technological knowledge processes to improve debriefing and the associated organisational learning. But it is essential to avoid an inappropriate emphasis on speeding up such processes. Schein (1992) identified the importance of making time for learning, of not being obsessed only short-term coping and adapting:

> *"Lean and mean is not a good prescription for learning"*

We were also studying knowledge management in a large professional services firm. Since the second world war, this firm has, like all its competitors diversified from its orginal professional base to build up a diverse range of specialisms, several of which could be dealing with a single client firm in parallel. This firm has invested significant sums in its information technology, specifically its intranet, in order to enable rapid debriefing across the whole firm about any given client. Yet this intranet lies substantially unused, the province of only a few "enthusiast" users.

On further investigation, it appears that one major problem is that this firm was late to

the implementation of office automation, and unlike competitors who developed their collaboration around shared databases, this firm developed an e-mail culture. E-mail is in many ways the epitome of the "fast company" mindset – send any amount of information rapidly to as many people as needed globally if necessary. E-mail is a form of unstructured and unclassified information publishing, with modest guarantee of persistence. (While the first telegram from the 19th century has been preserved forever, the first e-mail from the 20th century has already been lost).

But apart from having opted in an unplanned way for a technology unsuited in many ways to debriefing, there is an equal problem of trust. Many of the experts involved with a single client do not know each other personally. They are often reluctant to share what they regard as privileged and sensitive information even with work colleagues servicing the same client. Older practitioners reflected back on the way they had learnt about both professional content and relationships:

> *"When we studied we were called articled clerks. We were in effect apprentices attached to a partner. Our desks were right there in the partner's office. Much of the way we learnt was by overhearing what was going on in the partner's dealings with clients and colleagues. Today's trainees are sent away for formal training and never slowly develop insights into how to build trust."*

So here is a professional services firm, heavily knowledge-based, which has been unable to develop a satisfactory form of debriefing, despite considerable expenditure on technology. Examples of successful project debriefing in professional firms are surprisingly few (Cross and Baird, 2000; Wolf, 2000). Perhaps not surprisingly, one highly successful expert at debriefing was Thomas Edison (Fisher and Fisher, 1998)

It is interesting to contrast the ineffective experiences of debriefing in this large firm, with those involved in "critical incidents", typically the emergency services and the military. In some environments, there is a vital imperative for fast debriefing, perhaps above all in bomb disposal. A bombing campaign may be carried out near-simultaneously in several cities or even countries, and may possible involve bomb devices never before seen. It is therefore vital to be highly effective in communicating experiences from the location of the first bomb as near instantly as possible, and

today this will also involve both still and moving images. But in the second phase - the forensic investigation of the bombing, there will be a tremendous emphasis on carrying out the task thoroughly rather than fast (Technical Working Group for Bombing Scene Investigation, 2000).

We have observed similar behaviour in dealing with fire incidents – speed of information and knowledge exchange at the fire-fighting phase, contrasted with systematic, and what many would regard as slow, debriefing after the event. In our earlier paper (Ward, Holtham and Bohn, 2001), we used the example of an intrinsic desire by many firefighters operationally to react immediately to threats, but without sufficient information and as a result take greater risks or make wrong decisions. In the military environment a very similar situation is faced in guerrilla warfare. Whether in a jungle or urban area, one well-known guerrilla tactic is to set up an immediate primary threat, hoping to lure the patrol into a much more threatening secondary threat. In this context, it is vital for the patrol to suppress their normal instincts to deal with the primary threat, and in effect to pause to take stock. This has proved to be a very difficult skill to train, since it runs so counter to our normal human instincts, and needs considerable amounts of practice and simulation to master. Indeed in the real world the position is even more complex than summarised above, as there can even also be tertiary threats. So even here, faced with an extreme life and death situation, it is still essential to slow down the process in order to take stock. It's also necessary to be willing to trust the instinctive, the unthought known (Klein 1998, Bollas, 1987) – deep slow unthinking knowledge acquired from years of experience and insight.

The business world often appears to be surprisingly reluctant to learn from the experiences of the emergency services and military, even though one might assume that knowledge-sharing processes forged out of the traumas of life and death might as a result have evolved under pressure rather more extensively than in office environment where the lack of biscuits with coffee may be seen as deprivation. Some rightly urge caution in over-emphasising the wider messages from emergency service debriefing (Elliott, Smith, and McGuinness, 2000), yet there are many areas of almost direct relevance, such as the US Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) (Baird, Henderson, & Watts, 1997).

One example provided to us in the military environment of effective debriefing was where four different infantry groups need to meet together during battle. Each was plugged into separate radio networks, and information needed to be taken into and fed back into those three separate networks. So the commanders reversed their trucks to form a plus sign shape, with the back of the trucks facing onto the hollow square at the center. Apart from producing an element of both privacy and quiet, of vital significance was that the radio operators were in the back of each truck as “back row participants”, and could immediately receive and send information and orders.

Art and artefacts

The role of objects in intensifying or extending the time spent in reflection, or in creation of rituals to deepen understanding, has a direct impact on tempo, and multiples serves as a metaphor for ways to create scaleable communication, while maintaining the integrity of message. Another dimension of artefacts comes from archaeological digs, where the process of unearthing and ordering objects is an explicit process, which can become the product.

In 1999, Mark Dion undertook a dig on the banks of the river Thames by the Tate in a project which had three parts and an appendix – the collection, cleaning and identification, then classification and presentation of found objects in a cabinet of curiosities (‘Wunderkammer’). The appendix was a series of events and lectures during the summer of 1999. The result was a series of contexts, each reflecting the river differently. In his essay about Mark Dion’s digs (Dion, ‘Archaeology’ 2000), Robert Williams writes:

> *“Consequently, the project should be viewed as a practice where the process encompassing the whole range of activities, becomes the artefact. The process is, itself, analogous to a stratification, it has many different levels to encounter, to explore and to study in each context. The experience of which in its final stage, is as much an archaeological excavation as the methodology and language of the project itself.”*

Archaeology includes essays on three digs by Mark Dion. They describe the story of the process, classification diagrams, sketches, and pictures, which, in the Tate

Thames dig, include pictures of the whole team. These, along with the classified artefacts, also formed part of the exhibit on display at the Tate. The exhibit itself was also designed to be interactive, inviting viewers to browse and to excavate contents. Without labelling or interpretative text (except for details of dig locations) the viewer was invited to read and interpret the organisation of the objects in their own way.

The learning involved here – about archaeology, the Thames, the process of work itself and the language used – is more than learning-by-interacting. It is a combined act of discovery and analysis, of understanding and meaning, and of experimenting as well as the development of routines (Sørensen 2000):

> *"In order to make an artefact work, it has to be placed, spatially, temporally, and mentally."*

The relationship between physical, virtual and psychological spaces which foster learning, and the emergence of art as a key agent for slowing things down and creating effective, and mnemonic, knowledge transfer in organisations seem to us to be fertile areas for further research. The notion, proposed by Dion, that the processes become the object, is a principle with far-reaching corporate application. This understanding was applied by us to a three year programme of action research into the relationship between museums, libraries, archives and businesses in London (Ward et al 2007 – 2010)

It seems to us that there is need to consider art and artefacts in work as having five important contributions to make:

1. Individually authored works such as poems can distill the essence of an experience with acute attention to the quality of language, and so provide a more memorable record than that to be found in most organisational documents.
2. The process of collaborating to make an artefact can both create a new, negotiated understanding, and a new community whose joint working creates social capital which is of future individual and organisational value (Ward and Holtham 2000).
3. The authoring of artistic objects can productively politicise the workplace and

create recognition, respect and influence, which results in a different organisational shape and power than that afforded by traditional hierarchies.

4. Experiences which might otherwise be ephemeral, and pass unnoticed, but which contain important insights, can be given their place in the official records of the company. (Ward and Holtham 1999, Ward and Sbarcea 2001)
5. The slowing down provided by the artistic process, and the surprise of finding these forms inside organisations both serve to interrupt people in a way which might cause them to think, and then to behave differently.

It is, in our view, rare that organisations put their art collections or sponsorship of artists or poets in residence to work in this way. However, we can point to two illustrations of organisations which have developed some understanding of this potential.

One French car manufacturer recruited an oral historian to create archives of the experiences of those who have worked for years in the design and production of windscreen wipers. This often uncovered the rationale for specific design features which had become lost, and even where the previously relevant rationale has long ceased to be important. There were also 'ideas ahead of their time' discarded because uneconomic or unreliable, which have now become viable. The project has been so successful that the historian is now moving on to create an oral history for car doors.

One British public sector entity has a museum as part of its library and knowledge management group, and has shown great imagination in commissioning oral histories from retired employees. These have been commissioned by the museum, but will be used by the library in the headquarters buildings to attract visitors, who might then form new relationships with each other and with the history of the organisation. The standards which are being developed for the oral histories are also being considered as possibly appropriate for developing internal storytelling approaches as part of the knowledge management programme.

The Knowledge Transfer Programme referred to earlier (Ward et al 2007 – 2010) is due to report this summer and will share more examples and evidence of the

promise in art and artefacts folded right into business strategy and practice, as opposed to the normal quarantine of corporate social responsibility or where relationships with cultural resources normally sit.

PART 2: DESIGNING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION METHODS FOR SLOW LEARNING

Designing slow management education experiences

Once the research and development work on spaces for knowledge work carried out up to 2004 was largely completed, we began to search for other vehicles through which slowness could be utilised and indeed promoted within management education. This led in particular to four themes which have been researched, developed and implemented from 2004 onwards:

1. Dialogue Sheets
2. Reflective journals
3. The dérive
4. Postcards
5. The respective merits of analogue and digital technologies in slow learning

These slow methods have been applied at all of MBA, MSc and BSc in Management levels, and reflective journals and derives have also been developed jointly with postgraduate teacher education faculty at the University of Chester.

In relation to reflective team working (Neville, 2008), we have drawn heavily on the work of the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, which introduced to higher education the “Dialogue Sheet” (Blomquist, 2006), which KTH had in turn derived from the work of a group of Danish management consultants (Trollestad, Larsson & Schou, 2000). The origins of the Dialogue Sheet lie in the World Café movement that grew out of work in the US and Denmark. The idea was to bring people together to debate a pre-agreed theme and set their own agenda. The events were hosted in meeting rooms or indeed in cafés. Participants were divided into table-groups of up to six people who then used the paper tablecloths to record points made. The dialogue sheet took this framework, but involved a pre-prepared sheet

which was particularly suited to, for example change management initiatives involving large numbers of participants. Dialogue sheets, an archetypal support to slow dialogue, have been introduced successful as part of our work, designed by both staff and students.

In relation to speeding up of decision-making and indeed pressures for “fast” action, speed is not always desirable, particularly in managerial areas where there are not simple algorithmic approaches to decision making. Therefore it is important to consider ways and means through which a slower and more reflective approach can be explicitly introduced into the formation of managers (Hedberg, 2008). From the point of view of individual reflection, particular emphasis has placed on the use of reflective journals, typically paper-based (Holtham, Owens, Roberts and Rogers, 2007), as lively and effective vehicles for representing and indeed sharing of formerly tacit managerial knowledge.

We have been concerned for some time that managers, under the pressure of high-tempo day-to-day activities, often fail to make time for slower reflective practice. Over several years Cass Business school has evolved a method of “reflective sketchbooks”, working in close conjunction with the School of Education at the University of Chester who had originally developed the method.

The aim is to use a disruptive method of expressing and communicating deeper emotions and emerging ideas. In a world where the everyday routine is almost wholly digital, most participants freely choose to use a paper sketchbook, typically an A5 artist’s sketchbook. An electronically created sketchbook may look slicker than a paper one, but they often seem to lack the authenticity and indeed diversity of what is put onto paper. Paper also has the huge advantage that it can be used literally anytime anywhere. Writing tools need only be modest – a pen and coloured pencils or crayons are fine, though some participants may add water colouring paint and brushes.

A reflective sketchbook is not a diary, is not a travel journal and is not a place to keep everyday notes. It is a place consciously to articulate half-formed ideas and ambitions (basic reflection), then slowly let them evolve, hopefully to a refined state

(deep reflection).

The sketchbook is not simply a place for banally formatted text, clip art or images from Google. It allows the opportunity to bring an aesthetic dimension to the workplace, including drawings, paintings, poems, design and decoration. In fact most adults have a great fear of drawing, painting etc. They associate this with lack of achievement at secondary school. But for adult reflection, the aim is NOT to produce a work of art. It is to express oneself in an unfamiliar non-text format. There should be no expectation that the book is to be filled up. The quality of reflection is key; the sheer volume of material is not.

It is good to make modest use of newspaper cuttings, digital photos, as these can be a natural stimulus to the creation of new knowledge. But such use needs to be judicious, to avoid page after page crammed with “managerial collage”.

Many people find starting the first page the most difficult task. There is literally a fear of the blank page and the perceived lack of skill and ambiguities in the task. Once that hurdle is overcome, the major problem is simply finding the right time and place to engage in reflection. As reflection continues, this often becomes less precise, increasingly divergent. However, hopefully eventually ideas begin to focus and in the later stages convergence of thinking takes place, and the real prize – the nuggets of deep reflection, start to emerge.

We have used sketchbooks with a wide variety of adult learners, and have developed an approach for their use in short executive courses, which actually begin with the delegates spending an hour or so physically assembling and preparing their own sketchbook.

It is probably fair to say that some participants never really warm to the act of reflection, and lack motivation to engage even in basic, let alone deep, reflection in the particularly unfamiliar medium of a sketchbook. On the other hand, the level of creativity and achievement reached by those who succeed in the reflective task are quite exceptional. It is inconceivable that this would be achieved by more traditional methods and traditional media (particularly the PC).

It is disappointing to see emphasis on electronic “brain training” for adults, when there is a very traditional reflective format that has successfully served artists, engineers, architects and many other professions for centuries, namely the reflective sketchbook. What we have demonstrated though our own initiatives, is that this traditional format in fact provides an effective method of moving towards deep reflection.

The ubiquity of digital representation of the organisation can lead to a situation where knowledge workers are skilled in perceiving the organisation through digital lens, but lack sufficient skills in the perceiving the physical actuality of the organisation. We have been exploring educational approaches, which can address this increasing area of risk, and improve the skills of managers in perception of the physical world. One of the most promising areas appears to be the dérive (Holtham and Owens, 2007), a term originally coined by Guy Debord (1958) and fellow Situationists, but which conceptually has more extensive historical predecessors. It is defined by Debord:

> *“One of the basic situationist practices is the dérive [literally:”drifting”], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Derives involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.” (Debord, 1958)”*

A dérive is a group-based slow “wandering” through typically an urban area, with an emphasis on close observation and recording of the physical actuality of that area (Jenks and Neves, 2001). It also emphasises the conversation and dialogue between the members of the group (Lee & Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008). Although Parkins (2004) has some reservations about Debord’s thinking on slowness, we report on extensive experiences with slow dérives in a variety of professional educational contexts, in both teacher and manager education programs.

After accidentally initiating derives, these have subsequently been self-consciously constructed as a means of enabling our trainees and students to learn with their peers through drift. In concrete terms this means that as academics working in two

different fields we allocate periods of time to meet and learn together through a playful form of St Augustines (354-430 AD) "solvitur ambulando" , learning through walking about. To date we have derived together in and in between; London, Chester, Nottingham, York, Uttoxeter, Liverpool and Nuneaton.

We then individually use the documentation and theorization of this process to model these approaches to learning for our students together with the use of another time-honoured learning affordance, the reflective sketchbook (Holtham, Owens and Bogdanov 2008). We also provide a city-scape for the students to experiment in. For the MBA students this is the City of London, for the PGCE Trainees it has included; Venice, Florence, Prague, Amsterdam, and Barcelona. Time, place and space are created for a form of informal, critical learning not customarily valued in the self-pressurising technicist state of Initial Teacher education in England and Wales (Hill, 2007).

> *"In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there." (Debord, 1958).*

Following Debord's suggestion that the 'most fruitful numerical arrangement' to derive is 'several small groups of two or three people' (ibid), the PGCE trainees organise themselves in this way. In addition three of four whole group sessions are scheduled into the week to allow for intercultural and interdisciplinary encounters that deriving does not allow for. For example, a two hour workshop in a school in which forty drama and art PGCE 's work together with 40 senior school pupils whose first language is obviously not English and a practical session with an applied theatre professional looking at the ways in which drama operates in their cultural context.

Debord suggests that whilst the average duration of a dérive is one day it often takes place within a deliberately limited period of a few hours, or even fortuitously during fairly brief moments. The PGCE traines are encouraged to view the derive rather than the organised sessions as being core to the week and so select which of these they might attend. The emphasis is on educating reflective practitioners rather than training technicians which places this approach firmly in the learner-centred as

opposed to teacher-centred camp in the on-going debates about teacher quality and teacher education in many parts of the world (Zeichner and Ndimande, 2008).

The goal for tutors and students is not necessarily to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient ourselves, though as Debord (1955) suggests ‘these two aspects of dérives overlap in so many ways that it is impossible to isolate one of them in a pure state’.The effect to date has often been engender a form of ‘epistemelogical curiosity’ (Freire, 1998) where the everyday is made strange in a way that encourages a questioning of the taken for granted. Drama trainees recognise this as a form of creative alienation (Brecht in: Willet, 1964).

Whilst the goal of the dérive during the enrichment week is in Debord’s terms deliberately ‘delimited’ and ‘vague’ the trainees are clear that the ideas generated by this will directly inform their major subject assessment on the PGCE course. They know that, like the tutor, they will be keeping a reflective sketchbook, that from this they will create a drama workshop triggered by derives and that this will have an explicit research dimension.

For example, two students deriving in Barcelona (2008) suddenly came across a gaggle of geese guarding a memorial plaque to a martyred Catalunyan saint in a church in the heart of the city. They subsequently read about her life and created a parallel contemporary drama workshop exploring attitudes to non-aggressive resistance in violent times. This allowed for research into the spiritual and moral dimensions of the curriculum through a consideration of year 10 and 11 pupil participant views, attitudes and behaviours.

Of crucial significance at key points in this collaborative tutor and student venture is the initial specific lack of deeper purpose in the relationship and encounter with others and with places. Debord argues that the seemingly random nature of the derive may not be as aimless as it appears. This has led us to review and explore the potential of wide collaboration, supported by novel learning methods, in a university system that continues to demand explicit functional objectives.

Postcards

We carried out 4 case studies over a two year period in which postcards were explicitly used as an active device to reorganise organisational time, place and knowledge (Holtham, Colton, Ward and Dove, 2003). The purpose of the postcard, combined with display in some cases, was threefold. Firstly to find new ways to develop, secure and refresh shared meaning between individuals and the organisation. Secondly, to do this in such a way that it creates a kind of open architecture which can sustain itself. Thirdly to use the experience to make apparent the effect of dislocation in organisations, including loss of contact between the past and the present, lack of connection between the individual and the organisation, and loss of momentum through lack of attention to rhythm. More recently we've begun to explore the possibilities of the postcard in helping people visualize the future (Pang 2010).

In many ways the postcard serves a powerful metaphoric role for key dimensions of knowledge management and of time:

- It is personal/private but at the same time both shareable and publishable via a noticeboard.
- It maintains its quality of having been individually authored, so the link to the originator stays explicit.
- It is light, compact, and highly portable.
- It is asynchronous, but interactive and annotatable
- It is an ideal vehicle for messaging
- It is time saving for the author.
- It is an early form of multimedia, allowing an almost infinite range of attached images

In modern organisations people feel both 'out of time' in the sense that they have no time, and they feel out of synch with what goes on, and 'out of place' in the sense that they do not belong. Our concern here is with how a postcard can be used, as an object with both real and metaphorical attributes, in ways which change an organisation's ability to see and hear itself, and introduce for the individual a new and meaningful sense of time and place.

Case One; postcards for atomisation and speed, and display to prompt congregation, conversation and the posting and sharing of sensitive intelligence

A public sector organisation. E-postcards and physical displays were piloted in a knowledge management programme as devices to create secure and speedy channels for news and congregation points for posting and sharing sensitive intelligence.

Case Two: postcards and dialogue for cultural change.

A law enforcement organisation cultural change programme. Postcards were used as a device to intermediate the move from conversation from action, from action to conversation and back again, and so create a rhythm which translated directly into individual and collective actions which could both be sustained and viewed over time.

Case Three: postcards, display and story for creating new spaces.

With healthworkers, where postcards were used to reorganise physical space and organisational hierarchy and as a means to weave personal memory and experience into the fabric of the design for a new integrated health centre.

Case Four: postcards and dialogue to bridge virtual and physical communities.

In a research project on knowledge and physical environments. A postcard was used to intermediate the transition from virtual (web based community of practice) to face to face (dialogue), and so act as a way to draw out concrete experiences through dialogue which would then form the basis of a further round of response and investigation.

Case Five: postcards for visioning the future Recently, postcards were used with participants in a visioning exercise with inhabitants of a mining town in Norway. The facilitator noted, in private email correspondence, the effect of the postcards as objects in slowing people down and allowing them to engage with each other and with the subject personally, and in an imaginative way.

Summarising the five case studies, in all of these, postcards and display were explicitly used to introduce private individual experience into public spaces in ways which would change the rhythm and actions of the organisation or project. In particular the goal of these exercises was to use analogue techniques to create

postings of small defining experiences and insights, in such a way that they could accumulate into patterns, an informative bricolage, where the future could be directly informed by past experience. We drew some conclusions about lessons to be drawn about how to use specific types of object such as postcards as signifiers - a means to bridge the virtual and the physical, the individual and the organisation, private and public spaces, word and image, and for strengthening the links between past, present and future in organisations going through change.

Finally, we have been particularly examining the relationship between digital and analogue media in management education (Holtham et al, 2006). On the whole we have tended to prioritise analogue over digital for much slow knowledge work. But there also benefits from examining creative ways in which technology can enhance rather than over-ride slow knowledge (DeMarco, 2001, Hallnäs and Redström (2001); Hallnäs, Jaksetic, Ljungstrand, Redström, and Skog (2001); Jones, 2006).

Contribution

Reflecting on a decade of work on slow knowledge enables some broader dimensions to be considered. None of this work set out to be part of a global movement, and although account was taken of "Slow Food", the first phase preceded the seminal work of Honore (2004). It was a localised response to everyday problems, firstly within business and public sector organisations, and with the second phase within educational institutions. However, it has become steadily clearer that the syndromes which stimulated the need for slowness are of a fairly generic nature (Eriksen, 2001; Cross, 2005). It is therefore likely that the approaches taken arising from local perceptions may be of more general relevance.

There is little doubt that despite the welcome growth of "slow", there are many other factors serving to reinforce almost all aspects of "fast", so continued research and development work is needed in almost every one of the sub-categories which are now emerging.

But this is also an ever-changing area. A century ago, postcards were at the very leading edge of "fast" society, virtually the text messaging of the time. Today by contrast they have become a valuable tool in slowness and one which formed part of

our knowledge space design work in particular. (Holtham, Colton, Dove and Ward, 2003)

Links to Theme/Sub-Theme

The work described in this paper is closely linked to the sub-theme, covering two areas (slow knowledge specifically slow office space design and slow education) that have received relatively little attention in the slow literature generally, yet complements and overlaps areas more explicitly covered in the call, including working slow, slow thinking and slow cities.

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