

## ARTICLE

# Failing without Failure in the Design Rationale of an Accelerated Society

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This article explores the consequences of discourses of “boundless receptivity to failure” in advanced digital capitalism, as illustrated by the Silicon Valley mantras “fail often” and “safe to fail” on the individual-subject formation. The article highlights issues related to the temporal dimension in grappling with personal experiences of failure – as a transitional moment between past, present and future – by drawing on Hartmut Rosa’s theory of the structural modifications of our relationship to time in late modernity, specifically our perception of the “speeding up of life,” and its consequences for subjective forms of selfhood. How has the peculiar relationship to temporality at stake in the subject’s experience of failure been re-shaped by structural modifications of the “materiality of time?” I first argue that the modern-day agenda for fast recovery *pathologizes* residual emotional attachments associated with the necessary process of “working out a narrative of failure,” as explored by sociologist Richard Sennett. This in turn triggers a greater need to “fix” failure through digital technical procedures. Second, I point to a new design model, the “lean principle,” as a paragon of structural modifications of the “materiality of time.” I show that this new design paradigm, which has been spreading beyond the industrial sector in which it originates to fuel new modes of thinking and subjectivities, strips the experience of failure out from its temporal dimension. Failure can no longer be represented as a *temporal rupture* between the present and the future. Such a de-temporalized and renewed signification of failure eludes any subjective libidinal engagement in dealing with “unmet expectations” (i.e., failure).

**Keywords:** Failure; Social Acceleration; Design; Identity; Temporality

## Introduction

Since sociologist Richard Sennett first grappled with failure as one of the *Personal consequences of work in the New Capitalism* in his book written 20 years ago, the “great modern taboo”<sup>1</sup> surrounding failure in popular literature that is overwhelmingly focused on disseminating advice about success has by now been largely unveiled. In the wake of discourses on resilience and empowerment, managers, entrepreneurs and start-ups alike are invited to give testimony of their failures in joint celebration during corporate events. CIOs enumerate in TED talks their countless numbers of failed attempts at setting up their business before they eventually succeeded. Beyond these examples arising from the zeitgeist of advanced, digital capitalism, failure has also recently become an area of study for sociologists and anthropologists.<sup>2</sup> At stake in the examination of failure is the task of providing “material” (ethnographic and empirical) to go against the grain of a tendency to “move on” and “wash away failure.” A recently published volume addresses the *Material Culture of Failure* (2017) to show that “each fail-

ures [...] is productive of something” and through its analysis, “the full pragmatics – material, social and political – of the end of the world may be known.”<sup>3</sup> To broaden an account of failure and look at how objects are engaged in failing rather than solely a specific interest in “material failure” (i.e., how objects fail) Carroll et al. locate failure “within the *relational capacity* of the person and the power dynamic of subject/object”<sup>4</sup> (italics added). The present article contributes to this theoretical venture in interrogating failure not from the view of the materiality of designed things, but the way failure impacts the individual-subject formation.

To that end, I take as a point of departure Sennett’s scrutiny of what it feels like to fail in a career in the corporate world in the 90s and how it is possible to come to grips with the experience of failure, namely through narratives. I revisit Sennett’s account of coping with failure which he originally made within the context of the individual’s increasing perception of the “speeding up of life” in advanced digital capitalism and object of theoretical study, called social acceleration. Amongst well-established scholarly works on

social acceleration,<sup>5</sup> German sociologist and social theorist Hartmut Rosa takes prominence. For Rosa, social acceleration articulates three fundamental processes characteristic of our late modernity: 1) technological acceleration (i.e., “the speeding up of intentional, goal-directed processes of transport, communication, and production”) 2) the acceleration of social change, in line with philosopher Lùbbe’s theory of “the contraction of the present”<sup>6</sup> and 3) the acceleration of the pace of life (i.e., the speed and compression of actions and experiences in everyday life).<sup>7</sup> Contemplating these three processes all together, Rosa points out how post-modern individuals’ relationship to time is that of a *paradox*. How can it be possible that individuals experience a perception of scarcity of their free time, or time *tout court* – workers, parents, or business leaders all bemoan the difficulty of accomplishing their daily activities in just the 24 hours of the day – whereas technological acceleration should enable individuals and groups to achieve their goals in less time, thereby enjoying more time free from constraint. For Rosa, the perception that everything goes too fast, this “time-pressure paradox,” is not accidental, yet constitutes the experience of modern human beings.

What interests me is a theoretical development of Rosa’s account of social acceleration that has been rather less commented on, one that regards the consequences of this phenomenon for the construction of personal identity and the formation of the self.<sup>8</sup> Namely, I will pay attention to the chapter in Rosa’s seminal book, *Social Acceleration: a new theory of modernity*,<sup>9</sup> dedicated to the figure of the “Drifters and Players:” a new kind of anthropological man borne out of “the acceleration in the temporal structures of modern society”<sup>10</sup> and well-suited to an experience of time that has become discontinuous in new advanced capitalist societies. For Rosa, these new forms of subjective engagement with time illustrated with the “Drifters and Players” solve a crucial problem: the incompatibility between, on the one hand, individuals’ primary need to unfold their life along a narrative, and, on the other hand, the postmodern experience of disjointed time. Lippmann, at the beginning of the First World War, had already warned of the gap between “conducting a career” and the postmodern human’s erratic and drifting experience of time,<sup>11</sup> while Richard Sennett also brings this dilemma into focus as he elaborates on the “working out of the narrative of failure” in the corporate world.

The present article further explores this problem that is intrinsic to the accelerated logic of postmodernity. My overarching aim is to show that current discourses about failure in the design of digital technology seemingly succeed in overcoming the tension between negotiating a transitional, uncertain, lived-experience surrounding failure, and the speeding up of postmodern digital life; not only because new subjective forms of selfhood and identity are well-suited to the new “materiality of time” as sustained by Rosa, but because the very signification of failure in relation to temporality has been radically transformed through

new temporal paradigms sustained by design models and digitalized procedures. Tina Seelig, Executive Director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program, encourages her audience to “fail fast, frequently, and cheaply. That is, to use quick, rapid, prototypes.”<sup>12</sup> I seek to demonstrate that, in this context, it becomes possible to embrace the culture of failure, as long as the temporal scope of failure – the transition between past, present and future, that which the individual-subject negotiates to produce new forms of investments into further projects and objects – is fundamentally recast.

In order to throw light on this *tour de force* of the rational design of new discourses so as to embrace failure, since they bypass the “working out of the narrative of failure” as developed by Sennett, I look at the experience of grappling with failure by drawing on the psychoanalytically infused concept of *mourning*. Mourning, the process of coming to terms with the loss of a loved one (or of an ideal or a project) shares with failure a similar feature. They are both transitional states, and central in their development is the temporal dimension. Likely, Freud’s two successive formulations of mourning and its distinguishing features in comparison to melancholia is a heuristic tool to formulate my argument. I first argue that in the context of a “high-speed” and digital society, failure is understood as *successfully* coming to term with grief opposed to an unsuccessful one. Such an exclusive version of mourning as failure pathologizes emotional attachments in dealing with failure, and consequently triggers a greater need to “fix” failure through technical procedures.

Furthermore, mourning is a rich conceptual tool to point to the libidinal dimension, which plays an important role in the ability of the individual-subject to detach from the lost object and re-invest in new objects. I then point to a new design paradigm, the “lean model,” since, in my view, this to a large extent substantiates modifications of the temporal structures, radically transforming our relationship to the future, and to failure. I point out the consequence for the subject of how a new temporal paradigm introduced by the “lean model”<sup>13</sup> narrows down the temporal scope of failure. I argue that any libidinal engagement associated with “unmet expectations” (i.e., failure) no longer holds the experience of failure. Indeed, the temporal rupture, characteristic of failure and traditionally a prerequisite for a work of mourning to begin, is dissolved in a *liminal* temporal space where the future is fundamentally “unknown.”<sup>14</sup> One may therefore understand how the mantras “safe to fail” and “failing often” can be easily replicated. Yet such a new *de-temporalized* relationship to failure is costly.

This article straddles the disciplines of design technologies, exemplified here with the case of the “lean model,” and theories of subjective individual experiences of failure, which I explore through the lens of the psychodynamic concept of mourning originating in Freudian theory. In the literature on designed objects and new technologies, it is now commonly shared that design does not only produce things, crafted objects or assemblages; it partakes in creating

a network of meanings and webs of significations. Design objects and emerging technologies are enmeshed with our way of memorizing, our cognitive processes, capacity to imagine and to desire. The subtitle of Adam Greenfield's book *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life*,<sup>15</sup> is telling of the intermingled relationship between designed digital objects, such as smartphones, cryptocurrency, or augmented reality devices, and the self and other, as "to transform the very ground of our social being in a particular inimical way."<sup>16</sup> Greenfield, in line with other new critical voices<sup>17</sup> raising the seductive logic of technologies, begs for a pause in the relentless production of new assemblages in order to ponder on the implications – political, cultural, subjective – of the way new smart design objects produce a body of practices and powerfully fuel socio-imaginaries that are "pushing back the bounds of the possible."<sup>18</sup> In resituating the problematic of failure within a theoretical scrutiny of the modifications of the "materiality of time," and by drawing on Cameron Tonkinwise's critical analysis of the temporal paradigmatic shift of the "lean design model,"<sup>19</sup> this article attempts to contribute to this pause from the "self-reinforcing momentum" of ever-emerging "cleverly" designed objects, whose body of practices suffuses the way the subject/object relationship to failure might be discursively reframed. Furthermore, in specifically pointing out the dimension of libidinal investment, this article is in the same vein of work as contemporary French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, who is indebted to the Freudian theory of libidinal energy and desire. Stiegler takes on the question of the "liquidation of desire"<sup>20</sup> and the weakening of the libidinal dimension as a characteristic of the crisis of hyper-industrialized economies.

### How drifters and Players navigate in an Accelerated Society

In the following part I examine Hartmut Rosa's notion of "situational identity" exemplified in the figure of "Drifters and Players:" a pattern of personal identity traits that, according to Rosa, accounts for the changes of paradigm in temporal structure between modernity and late modernity, whereby time is now experienced as discontinuous and "temporalized."

#### "Temporalization of time" and "situational identity"

Two dimensions constitutive of personal identity – time and space – have, for Rosa, undergone substantial changes with the advent of the "accelerated logic of modernity." To begin with, while defining identity as a "function of our relationship to space, time, fellow human beings and the objects of our environment (or to our action and experience)"<sup>21</sup> Rosa emphasizes the *narrative* regime of identity through the notion of "temporalization of life." In modern societies, people construct their life along standard biographical patterns such as childhood, education, work life, retirement and old age; "a temporal project [that] unfolds in a day-to-day conduct of life."<sup>22</sup> Individuals' subjective formation in

the modern period is thus a matter of "identity-constituting time horizons"<sup>23</sup> that serve to bring about two important and interrelated characteristics of the personality trait of modern selfhood. Individuals can build a sense of responsibility "for what one's life becomes"<sup>24</sup> while the "temporalization of life" anchors individuals' identity into a temporality that projects them into possible futures, in the vein of Norbert Elias's idea of a growing "compulsion of foresight." Disenfranchising him/herself from the traditional social structures, obligatory traditions, rigid and pre-given roles of the pre-modern society, the modern *individualized* self takes back control over the process of leading his/her own life, while nonetheless still thinking that his/her future remains underpinned by/sustained by the representation of a "foreseeable course of events."<sup>25</sup>

Contrariwise, high-speed societies throw the late modern self into a *temporalized time* that makes the course of life of the late modern self an unpredictable journey. The "time horizon" against which personal identity unfolds in modern societies, simply vanishes. Time-compression and the acceleration of the pace of life in late modernity undermines the "representation of *duration* as to organize oneself along a line that stretches from the past into the future with identifiable temporal patterns."<sup>26</sup> Rosa questions whether it even remains possible for the late modern self to form an identity with a narrative thread when individuals more than ever face major life-changes in the course of their lives. The multiplication of career changes, of expatriation in new countries or change in families such as divorces continuously reshape the narrative thread of one's course of life. All these *unforeseeable* events afford to identity "only an extremely limited temporal consistency" underlines D'Ambrosio<sup>27</sup> when exploring Rosa's situational identity. Probably, whilst the modern project of the self was to find one's place or one's role, along with life-models available in society, in the accelerated logic of late modernity, coherence and stability are no longer bases around which identities are formed. Given the "increase of possible choices with respect to the shaping of one's biography,"<sup>28</sup> as Rosa asserts, and the heightened possibility of differentiating oneself regarding religion, residence, family, sexuality, nationality and so on, it has become increasingly normal to perceive the contingency of life's roles. An illustration of this can be found, for Rosa, in the use of verbal expressions such as "*working as a baker*" or "*living with Mary*" during people's casual talk; instead, "being a baker," or "being Mary's husband," generally used in modern societies, convey the permanence of the individual's representation of their life's roles. In line with Luhmann's pessimist view of the loss of place, Beck's notions of "polygamy of place" or Bauman's "liquefying world,"<sup>29</sup> for Rosa, the dilution of the time-space dimension of identity results in a "multiplicity of selfhood," a self without any core. No longer grounded into places and biographical time frame, personal identity has become "situational," individuals' decisions are taken from "time to time" according to contextual needs and desires.

Situational identity, the new dominant form of personal identity in late modernity, appears, at first glance, to be an opportunity for individuals to navigate on an even keel in an accelerated society. Terms like Players, Drifters or Gamblers, which Hörning, Ahrens and Gerhard<sup>30</sup> use to categorize the new pattern of personality traits, are telling denominations of the quasi-instrumental relationship to discontinuous time. Rosa looks at the way the postmodern individual orientates him/herself when dealing with time schedules (e.g., meetings with friends, engaging in social events), with the aim of maximizing opportunities out of the contingencies of the time schedule. In particular, Rosa draws on Hörning, Ahrens and Gerhard's description of the Players' particular way of relating to others and to events in relation to time planning and management. Driven by an "event-oriented time praxis," rather than planning and time calculation, Hörning, Ahrens and Gerhard show that the gambler's main concern is to "avoid rigid time routines and established time engagements"<sup>31</sup> whereas "temporal references can be kept variable and combined in new ways."<sup>32</sup> Facebook's functionality of "maybe," added to the usual binary choice – "yes" or "no" – to inform friends or event organizers of whether one will attend an upcoming social event, strikingly illustrates *lack of choice* as an essentialized attribute (i.e., uncertainty about attending an event is brought to the same level of certitude as yes or no) and this exemplifies well Rosa's definition of a "situational" relationship to engagement and time; one that is utterly contingent.

While "gamblers and players" are seemingly at ease in dealing with the *temporalization of time*, this comes at the expense of their relationship to the other dimension of authenticity: a dimension which, as I briefly explore in the paragraph below with Paul Ricoeur's account of narrative identity, is as crucial to identity as the time-space dimension. Rosa's take on the Players and Drifters borrows from Richard Sennett's key finding of a correlation between experiencing disjointed time in late capitalism and the "time-juggling player's" tendency to relinquish the "aspiration of reflexively controlling and actively *leading a life*"<sup>33</sup> utters Rosa. Sennett was himself inspired by Lippmann's diagnosis in 1914 of people's *drifting* lives in the context of the new economy, which Sennett illustrates in *The Corrosion of Character* through long interviews he conducted with workers who struggle to hold on to their lives in the face of the meaningless experience arising from the flexible management of corporations. For instance, in an interview with "Rico," a worker who had lost his job and was mulling over what he would be able to pass on to his children, Sennett points out a major consequence in Rico's<sup>34</sup> struggle to keep authority while his own life was subsumed within feelings of drift. The experience of discontinuous time compels individuals to free themselves from emotional attachments to timeless values of commitment, trust, and purpose in life, leading to some resolution. As Rosa reiterates, Sennett's seminal quote "No 'longer term' disorients action over the long term, loosens bonds of trust and commitment, and divorces will from

behaviour" (Sennett, 1998, p.31) is a consequence of the "inability of people to form their character into sustained narratives."<sup>35</sup>

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity interestingly articulates the notion of commitment and trust in the context of identity. For Ricoeur, narratives are not merely a means to recollect one's own memories of the past; they are an expression of the inter-relationship between self and other, entangled in stories. Here, two poles constitute one's own identity. *Idem*, the pole of sameness, corresponds to innate and acquired attitudes. *Iipse*, the pole of selfhood, involves the engagement of the self with the other; that is, trustworthiness and faithfulness despite the transformations that mark the path of life. Herein, narrative identity is deployed around the engagement of the self with the other, one that is of an ethical kind. The self identifies "with the place from which the other tells his/her story" posits Ricoeur.<sup>36</sup> What does Ricoeur teach us here? The more the self orientates him/herself depending on situational benefits to maximize various life opportunities at the expense of committing to another, the more the pole of *Iipse*, the relationship to others engaged through the re-telling of stories with others, a pole constitutive of identity, diminishes. What remains is a dis-balance between the side of *Iipse* and *Idem*, an identity turned towards the reproduction of acquired attitudes, a reproduction of the same: self-centered yet impoverished.

As we have seen throughout this first part, offering an account of the ways in which changes in temporal structures (namely the acceleration of the pace of life) affect people's experience of a *temporalized time*, a haunting question arises for authors concerned with identity, such as Rosa, Lippmann and Sennett. The difficulty of maintaining a representation of oneself into a "sustained narrative" when micro-planning, the emergence of de-synchronized time, and the multiplication of choices and opportunities all fundamentally *disrupt* the representation of such "sustained narrative." Importantly, however, and as we will see in the following, according to Sennett, this struggle for a narrative affords to individuals a way to overcome failure. In the next part, I present Sennett's notion of "working out the narrative of failure," which, as I show, mirrors Ricoeur's understanding of the "labour of narrative." The detour through Ricoeur's notion enables us to introduce Freud's concept of mourning connected with the process of "working-through." Then, a detailed scrutiny of the evolution in Freud's definition of mourning as opposed to melancholia leads us to present the first argument of this article.

### **Failure and mourning as a "struggle" of narrative**

Richard Sennett's scrutiny of failure in the competitive market of flexible capitalism shares similar features with Ricoeur's venture to account for the mourning process as a narrative. For both, the "struggle" (with Sennett) and "labour" (with Ricoeur) of narrative is the only path to dealing with failure and sorrow. In the *Corrosion of Character*, Sennett

recounts a gathering at a café in New York of middle-aged male programmers who had recently lost their jobs at their company (IBM). Sennett mentions three stages in the men's attempt at making sense of failing to keep their job: from initial feelings of having been betrayed by their company, through finding the cause of their plight in external and foreign forces of the global economy, to, eventually, acknowledging their own lack of insight and will to prospect further career development and make change long before they were fired. Importantly for Sennett, what enabled the programmers to break out of a sense of aimlessness and impotence was the "narrative form": the programmers' active re-working of themselves towards instantiating their own place, recovering a sense of exerting themselves as actors amidst the overall story of their company, from the figure of victimized workers, to regain a "solid authorial 'I.'"<sup>37</sup> As Sennett argues: "The healing of narrative comes from precisely that engagement with difficulty. [...] A good narrative acknowledges and probes the reality of all the wrong ways life can and does turn out."<sup>38</sup>

Reflecting upon the resource of narrative as a way of dealing with fragmented experiences such as the trauma of the Holocaust, or a more ordinary sorrow such as grief over the death of a loved one, Ricoeur's approach of narrative is in tune with Sennett's idea of the "the narrative *working out of failure*"<sup>39</sup> (italics added) illustrated above. Ricoeur proposes an understanding of narratives as not only recounting the past, but also encompassing the capacity to "endure" to "bear." This does not mean that narrating provides people with greater courage and strength to undergo the plight of sorrow. For Ricoeur, it is a matter of regaining fully one's own existence as a "capable man." Instead of grounding his argument in the representation of the "fallible man," Ricoeur engages with the notion of "ability." Namely, the philosopher emphasizes the very first ability, language, even though he is aware of differences between social classes, cultivated people and less capable persons, in making use of the tool of language to defend their interests. *Giving an account* through trying to narrate a path in some way counters inequalities and power relations in the face of the primary ability – language – by instantiating the person as "accountable." In locating the ability to narrate as the prerequisite to feeling accountable, Ricoeur mirrors Sennett's view of the outcome of the programmers' discussion, for whom "simply declaring one's will to endure will not suffice."<sup>40</sup> By facing the clarifying, defining moment that they were not merely victims of their companies, nor of the global economy at large, yet actively took part in their fate by their prior unwillingness to act towards other career paths, the programmers became accountable for their own story. As Sennett puts it: "the preservation of one's own active voice is the only way to make failure bearable."<sup>41</sup>

Ricoeur's peculiar approach of narrative, like Sennett's interpretation of the "narrative *working out of failure*," needs a more detailed scrutiny of the "resources of the story that make sorrow bearable." What resources of the story

allow for regaining one's own authority over hardship? Here, Ricoeur provides a conceptualization of narratives that combines two of Freud's seminal texts: *Mourning and Melancholia* and *Remembering, Repeating, Working-Through*. In doing so, Ricoeur develops the idea of the "work of narrative" since it also takes place within a work of memory, connected to resistant processes set up against remembering past events. First, sorrow, like grief, calls for mourning. Drawing on Freud's definition, Ricoeur understands mourning as "the test of reality showed that the loved object ceased existing and the entire libido is commanded to give up the bond which attached it to this object. It is against this that there is an understandable revolt."<sup>42</sup> In using the expression "understandable revolt" Freud reckons that the mood in experiencing mourning is a "painful" one which triggers "complaints," for the libido is bound to the reality order. Difficult feelings and emotions arise from facing the gap between the persistence of the loved object in psychic intimacy and its disappearance in reality. For Ricoeur, the work of mourning precisely amounts to re-telling differently these "complaints" through narratives. And narrating is a "struggle" since it takes place within the process of going back and forth between the compulsion to repeat (i.e., the resistance against the complete withdrawal of the libido from the lost object) and letting go. Eventually *working-through* this struggle and complaints by enabling the subject to set free the lost object from the libido, Ricoeur posits that mourning brings about "reconciliation" with the lost object, which is interiorized as "a kind of internal icon."<sup>43</sup> In focusing on the dimension of "working-through" resistances at play in "narrating otherwise" (i.e., the steering of the subject's engagement with his/her own struggles), Ricoeur throws light on the "*materiality of time*" – to borrow Wajcman's expression<sup>44</sup> – made up of "the existence of the lost object [which is] psychically prolonged."<sup>45</sup> It is needless to say that the work of mourning is a "long and patient travail" recalls Ricoeur.<sup>46</sup> Freud also points out how the conflict between complying (i.e., "the obedience of the libido"<sup>47</sup>) to the orders of reality and clinging to past emotional attachments to the lost object [characteristic of the mourning process], "is carried out at (a) great expense of time and cathectic energy."<sup>48</sup> It is a step by step process, "carried out piecemeal" over a long time.

The very idea, in mourning, of lingering emotional attachments to the lost object ascribes to temporality a key role. Here it must be underlined that in a second text, *The Ego and the Id*, written six years later in 1923, and absent from Ricoeur's approach to mourning, Freud does not tie the successful realization of mourning with the subject's ability to set him/herself totally free from past emotional attachment. Freud's first formulation of mourning, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, which Ricoeur refers to, opposed a normal working out of grief (i.e., when the mourner succeeds in relinquishing their previous emotional lingering related to the lost object in the name of forming new attachments), to an abnormal one in which the pathological condition

of the melancholic structure of the response to the loss reveals the subject's inability to cleave from the lost-object in order to find consolation in the form of a substitute for what has been lost. The inability to mourn puts at risk the subject's psychic well-being. In Freud's second formulation in *The Ego and the Id*, however, the stark distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" work of mourning becomes inoperative; Freud rehabilitates melancholia as part of a normal process of grief. The mourner is no longer immune to the ambivalence of the clinging to the past, although he can work towards forming new bonds with new objects. Even when the mourner does not manage entirely to "free his libido from the lost object" says Freud<sup>49</sup> in the *Ego and Id*, this does not stop the mourner from re-investing a libidinal attachment towards new objects. This does not mean that there is no more pathological response to the loss, but lingering emotional attachments do not prevent the mourner from re-investing towards new objects, and this affords some "materiality" to the temporal dimension of the past. This gives room to think of the notion of nostalgia, not as a pathologic feature of our relationship to the past, but as potentially positively constitutive of historical narratives. Looking at the ethical and consolatory work of elegiac poetry in offering a personal way of thinking through the meaning of urgent suffering as people grieve, Jahan Ramazani<sup>50</sup> takes up Freud's second formulation, with the notion of "melancholic mourning." The latter, for Ramazani, is best suited to account for the multiple layers of memory work and historical complexities of societies.

### Discontinuous time and pathologizing lingering emotions: the urge to "fix" failure

After the illuminating outcome of the ex-IBM programmers' narratives, coming to an awareness that "their own actions matter to the story" of their "failure" in being fired, Sennett's conclusion of the chapter entails a rather pessimistic overtone. How is it possible to believe in a "narrative working out of failure" when, at the same time, one subscribes to Lippmann's view on the metaphor of *drift*, Taylor and Bauman's critique of discontinuous time that prevents the self from getting a sense of continuity in life? "There is little room for understanding the breakdown of a career, if you believe that all life history is just an assemblage of fragments"<sup>51</sup> concludes Sennett (p.133). Or, could it be that in the context of the acceleration of the pace of life, of the *temporalization of time* as presented in the first part of this article, there is no better-suited personality trait than the Gambler, Player, or Drifter to make the best of the experience of failure? For these types of personality trait, failure does not amount to a struggle of narrative, since central to her/his "situational identity" is a natural inclination towards discontinuity and temporal structures left open rather than careful planning. For instance, as young people are increasingly oriented towards the present and are less and less pursuing long-term goals,<sup>52</sup> it is possible to suggest that a "situational identity" goes along with a higher propensity to cut

off from emotional lingering over the past. Gamblers and Players do not linger on painful experience; they switch off another career opportunity, making use of their advantages, and adjusting with flexible market demands.

In a recently published article, Svend Brinkmann<sup>53</sup> notes that contemporary societies leave no room for people to grieve and connect with the past, when the "socially constructed" emotions of individual and the collective processes of grief embedded in cultural practices, norms, and social scripts play a central role in the constitution of society itself. Focusing on the way the diagnosis of complicated grief in recent manuals of psychiatry edited in the US have identified a number of new norms concerning grief, Brinkmann points to a "possible pathologization of a fundamental human emotion such as grief."<sup>54</sup> For instance, the American manuals of psychiatry contain an entirely new category of Persistent complex bereavement-related disorder, and Brinkmann argues that this encourages a tendency toward over-diagnosis and over-treatment. In line with this, I argue that addressing failure in a way to suit with "situational identity" *trained* to avoid clinging to residual emotional attachments to the past fits well with Freud's first and exclusive formulation of mourning. In *Mourning and Melancholia* a pre-condition for a normal working out of grief is that the subject is able to relinquish *completely* their past emotional attachments from the lost object. Yet, although such a representation of failure is better suited to account for a shortened present-time-span, it runs the risk of pathologizing emotions and feelings of hardship.

What is the risk of narrowing down the experience of failure to an exclusive version of mourning? In Freud's first formulation of mourning, residual libidinal attachments towards the lost object/past experience are considered, not only as unsuccessful mourning, but as tantamount to the pathologic condition of melancholia. Amongst the mental features of melancholia, such as "profound dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world,"<sup>55</sup> one outstanding feature that distinguishes melancholia from mourning is "the lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revealing, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment"<sup>56</sup> depicts Freud. Melancholia is above all ego-loss, while feelings of "guilt," "punishment," and "accusations" fuel the melancholic patient's mood. Using these characteristics of the pathological structure of melancholia to reflect upon our earlier discussion on "situational identity" vs. Ricoeur's account of narrative identity as entailing two poles, *Idem* and *Ipse*, we can understand how melancholia, as complete withdrawal from the world and from the other, corresponds to a retrieval from the pole of *Ipse*, the inability to unfold a story with another. As we also argue, however, the less temporal leaning there is to engage with the mourning process, the more there is a need for protection from the pathological structure of melancholia and its associated ego-loss. "The picture of a delusion of (mainly moral) inferiority"<sup>57</sup> as described by Freud is far more threatening for the subject

than the mourning process. It is therefore possible to suggest that the personality traits of the Gamblers, Players, and Drifters, narrowed down to the pole of *Idem* at the expense of *Ipse*, the other, call for even greater sheltering from a pathological response to grief in which mourning is eluded, when there is simply no time to reflect upon and understand failure.

An exclusive version of failure, understood as the necessarily successful mourning needed to adjust to the shrinking of time-spans, may require a psychic-symbolic bulwark to be built between what is deemed “normal” and “pathologic” in dealing with failure. The multiplication of procedures relying on technological devices may be indicative of the need to be sheltered from the “pathologic.” This suggestion finds some basis in the spread of the development of a “solutionist” tendency in the digital technological realm and an associated obsessive concern to *fix* problems. In his thought-provoking book *To Save Everything, Click Here*, Evgeny Morozov<sup>58</sup> uses the term “solutionism” to denounce the way proponents of the tracking culture and the Quantified Self movement in digital health, and the companies of Silicon Valley that are at the vanguard of digitalism, legitimize over-simplified ways to break down complex problems into neat, fixed, computable solutions through technologies. For instance, Morozov recounts the case of an engineer’s quest to achieving an empowered-self, from generating statistics to “taming inefficiency and unfaithfulness of human memory.”<sup>59</sup> With a small camera able to snap a picture every twenty seconds attached behind his neck, engineer Gordon Bell aimed to record a lifetime: “I feel much freer about remembering something now. I’ve got this machine, this slave, that does it. It gives you this cleanliness,”<sup>60</sup> he says.

Having thrown light on the risk of pathologizing lingering attachments in the experience of failure when the latter is understood as an exclusive version of mourning and having signaled the digital technologies’ movement that preempts potential failure and inefficiency through various digital apps, I will move on to the last part of this article. Returning to Richard Sennett’s caveat regarding the possibility of narrating experiences of failure, the sociologist adds “there is no room for gravity and pain of failure, if failure is just another incident”<sup>61</sup> in our late modern fragmented existences. As I will show in the next part, my point in furthering Sennett’s quote is to suggest that, in the context of the design rationale of an accelerated society, failure is not even an incident at all since the signification of failure as “unmet expectation” has *no raison d’être*.

### **Libidinal detachment in failure as a prerequisite for an un-foreseeable future**

In order to position failure as a mourning process in relation to the future dimension of temporality, I will start the last part of this article with a few basic statements. In the mourning process, the libidinal dimension is intrinsically related to the temporal one. At stake is the subject’s capacity to retrieve his/her libidinal investment from the lost

object, redirect the libido towards new objects, and create new bonds in the future. Equally, as one deals with failure, one does not only grapple with a painful situation that happened in the past, although the very act of narrating is indicative of our retrospective engagement with failure (e.g., the ex-IBM programmers can only recount the experience of being fired by their company *a posteriori*). However, failure is also defined in relation with “expectation.” As we fail, we mourn the possibility to rejoice at the fulfilment of a project, upon which was attached a libidinal investment oriented towards the future. What the IBM programmers failed at and were working out through their narratives was beyond the fact that they had been made redundant, the potentiality to step in new positions in their company, acquire a new social status, and gain a symbolic capital and recognition from their peers. Said differently, with failure we mourn a potentiality and the libidinal dimension associated with it that is never going to come into being according to the expected, imagined, or dreamed-of represented form. What failure causes us to experience, therefore, is also a *temporal rupture* between the present and future, the bond between which is made up of libidinal investment. The temporal rupture, as a prerequisite for a work of mourning to begin is also a characteristic of failure as Carroll et al. claim, while describing the *Material Culture of Failure*. For the authors, failure is “a moment of recognising a gap that has opened between the subject’s anticipation of how ‘their’ object will behave and the object’s actual behaviour.”<sup>62</sup> Later on, they also define failure as “the moment when the previous hope and action in the world starts to crumble, and the next action has not yet been made.” Failure is a pause before alterity (that is, a change in the subject/self), incommensurability (a state of stasis or a standoff between subject and object) or re-objectification (a change in the object position of the object). In the following, I will examine these views by drawing on Cameron Tonkinwise’s scrutiny of a paradigm shift in conceiving failure in the design industry, published in a special issue on Failure in the *Social Research Journal: International Quarterly*.<sup>63</sup>

### **From anticipating failure to following the ‘flow’ of the product’s life cycle**

Exploring how design structures our experience of what it means to fail, Tonkinwise points out how new techniques, now dominant in the work of designers within the “tech industry,” are radically changing the meaning of the future. A shift from conventional trial-error methods to design-driven forms of production recast the future as a “space of sheer possibility”<sup>64</sup> opening up a new ontology of temporality. It also recasts the very signification of failure. First, Tonkinwise provides us with an interesting definition of human beings’ relationship to failure. With this we can grasp the purpose of design in connecting human beings with artefacts within natural, social and cultural milieu so as to minimize people’s interaction with failure. Taking up the image of the comparison with wild animals which can

repeatedly fail at catching a prey before eventually catching one in spite of those numerous failed experiences, the author argues that, contrariwise, for human beings the anticipation of failing generates “prompts;” that is, imagining greater failure before making the critical experience of failure. “Humans seem to feel failures in ways that prompt action in order to ensure subsequent avoidance of failure”<sup>65</sup> says Tonkinwise. And what Tonkinwise shows is how such resistance to failure translates into the “frozen scriptures,” which he also calls “designed things.” Conventional forms of products are precisely conceived in ways such that humans no longer fail to find the artefact usable. Designed things *imagine* subsequent failures that may occur when using products. To that end, designers anticipate micro-failures with particular techniques for negotiating these affective future failures. Imagining subsequent failures that may occur when using different products requires specific testing environments, such as labs and studios, and the use of prototypes to make decisions about the least fallible option. This is, for instance, the slow trial-and-error field-testing of craft.<sup>66</sup> Or, an interaction design will contain error messages and troubleshooting, while a service design will prefigure a recovery strategy to counter a lapse in some aspect of service provision. In sum: “good design of complex things anticipates breakdown”<sup>67</sup> explains Tonkinwise.

An entirely new model, the “lean principle” which originated in the Toyota Company in the 90s, has now spread widely across Western manufacturing companies and has been implemented steadily in sectors as diverse as the healthcare system or the start-up sector. The aim of “lean” processes is not merely building things correctly (e.g., avoiding shop-floor waste through efficient production techniques or avoiding product failure through more scrutinized production techniques) but building the right things, thereby avoiding the waste of having built the wrong things, even if done efficiently. “Lean isn’t simply about spending less money. Lean isn’t just about failing fast, failing cheap. It is about putting a *process*, a methodology around the development of a product.”<sup>68</sup> What allows such a process, this circular model of production, is the high degree of connectivity and interaction between devices and humans’ forms of practices, and the nearly immaterial quality of digital devices. Should the product deployment fail its test, systems can be quickly returned to the previous state; they are immediately remediable. “Lean” is implemented as follows: a minimum viable product (MVP) is built and introduced to the market in a process of real-life testing in order to be analyzed for the building of the next iteration. The lean principle is a “grand experiment” to which product designers and real customers contribute in a constant production flow, according to the methodology of the “build-measure-learn feedback loop.” In so doing, the “lean” principle “provides tools to test a vision continuously” as a proponent of the model asserts.<sup>69</sup> I provide below the five core principles for guiding the setting up of a lean model of production, to illustrate how design products and customers are intrinsically tied up for the sake of value creation.

1. Specify value from the standpoint of the end customer by product family.
2. Identify all the steps in the value stream for each product family, eliminating whenever possible those steps that do not create value.
3. Make the value-creating steps occur in tight sequence so the product will flow smoothly towards the customer.
4. As flow is introduced, let customers pull value from the next upstream activity.
5. As value is specified, value streams are identified, wasted steps are removed, and flow and pull are introduced, begin the process again and continue it until a state of perfection is reached in which perfect value is created with no waste.

Important consequences arise in the way both design products and customers are recast along with this new “lean” model. For Tonkinwise, the “durable” category of products is transforming into disposables ones. They are unfinished, and not in the sense that they are still on the way to perfection, but in the sense that they have no designed-for destination<sup>70</sup> (Tonkinwise 2005). Probably, as we can read above in the third and fourth “lean” principles, customers themselves partake in the “grand experiment” by continuously improving the process, “pulling the value” by validating an unfinished-product on the way to its never-ending improved form. Yet such a cultural shift also requires companies and employees to “transform everyone’s thinking into an experimentation mind-set,”<sup>71</sup> explains John Shook, founding member of the Lean Enterprise Institute.

What does introducing a “life-cycle” in product design through real-life testing tell us about our relationship to the future? When “the job of making is not to delimit the future to chosen options locked into material environments, but merely to try to keep up materially with the future as it emerges”<sup>72</sup> argues Tonkinwise, our relationship to the future becomes fundamentally unknowable. This holds that the unknowability of the future warrants the possibility that some risky initiatives may nevertheless have significant benefits at a scale that could offset any damage done by failures along the way. Lean principles in design offer a “positive version of ontology” suggesting that anything is possible. Failure is therefore no longer associated with a “discontinuous event” or temporal rupture, since the potential and anticipated damages of failures are diluted in the “flow” of the product’s life-cycle. We can therefore easily understand how the Silicon Valley’s mantra “fail often, fail better” can apply in a context where failure is minimized to the greatest extent.

### **Denial of the temporal rupture and the paradox of failing without failure**

The rise of workshops and conferences on how to develop our “design thinking” encourages us to take seriously the proponents of the “lean principle” who hold that although

“lean” started at Toyota,<sup>73</sup> “the lean transformation model is relevant for everyone.” In the same vein, the website Kanbanize<sup>74</sup> states that “lean is not a reserved territory for manufacturing or production companies. Lean is a way of seeing the world.” In the context of the spread of a model that recasts our relationship to the future, it is permitted to suggest that the “gambler” personality trait examined in the first part of this article is well-suited to design models casting an un-anticipatable failure. As Hörning, Ahrens, and Gerhard note: “s/he develops an approach that allows for inaccuracy and imprecision during the planning process, and thus preserves his/her ability to be flexible. [...] Discontinuities are considered to be normal and related in a flexible manner.”<sup>75</sup> In that sense, *reversible* solutions are preferred since they allow an adjustment to reality that may turn out differently to what was expected. In addition, the multiplication of options and possibilities, which are byproducts of the complexity and contingency related to the diagnosis of social acceleration formulated by Hartmut Rosa, reinforces a relationship to the future that becomes necessarily opened to the unknown. “In a world of incessant change it gets increasingly difficult to tell which options will eventually turn out to be valuable”<sup>76</sup> underlines Rosa. Proposing concrete and practical solutions to respond to existential questions, Paul Dolan’s advice in *Happiness by Design* shares striking common ground with the “lean principle.” For Dolan, finding purpose in everyday life is a matter of “going with the flow,” doing easy, small measurable steps, and eventually seeing the bigger picture of one’s longer term narrative. “We discover what we want to do, what our long-term goals are in giving it a try, doing small manageable steps,” asserts Dolan.<sup>77</sup> Even more, setting oneself long-term commitments is no help and rather counterproductive in reaching a life-career objective. Bite-size commitments are more effective than mouthfuls. [...] You are more likely going to complete your degree if you commit to going to class tomorrow as opposed to saying “I am going to complete my college education”<sup>78</sup> argues Dolan. We can see here how Dolan’s advice mirrors the late modern temporal structure presented in Rosa’s conceptualization of social acceleration: a fragmented and discontinuous time. The term Dolan employs in one instance, “right now goal,” encompasses two contradictory temporalities. The projection into the future (“goal”) seems to be frozen into the presentness of “right now,” an injunction that seizes the subject’s entire cognitive attention and emotional engagement towards the present.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the *tour de force* of the “lean” new design paradigm is to strip the signification of failure off from its temporal dimension, not merely due to the shortened time-span, but simply because it is no longer possible to identify failure as temporal rupture. By the same token, and more problematic, is that what is lost is also the libidinal investment intrinsically connected to the idea of expectation in the relationship to failure. One might therefore be

better off, as Dolan proposes, to lower one’s expectations and make it easier by engaging an undifferentiated, liminal psychic space where failing equates success, as guided by the entrepreneurial mantra of “be safe to fail.” This condition is a libidinal dis-investment from the projection into the expected, imagined, dreamed-of representation associated with the “unmet expectation” towards which individuals are paradoxically called to display ever more stamina and drive. “Experimenting (i.e., the lean transformation) requires higher levels of energy and people won’t naturally do it. This requires a real cultural shift” says John Shook, founding member of the Lean Enterprise Institute. This cultural shift dilutes the failure’s temporal significance into a “flow,” thereby rendering mourning – a process that enables individual-subjects to re-invest libidinal energy into new objects – inoperative. As underlined at the beginning of this third part, however, failure is framed as “a moment of recognising a gap that has opened between the subject’s anticipation of how ‘their’ object will behave and the object’s actual behaviour.”<sup>79</sup> In the same way, failure is the moment when the previous hope and action in the world starts to crumble, and the next action has not yet been made. I could only agree with French philosopher Charles Pepin’s<sup>80</sup> endeavour to bring forth the philosophical tradition of Marc-Aurèle, Nietzsche, Bachelard or Sartre to praise “the Virtues of Failure” as serving to open up the path to genuine success, empowering the self to overcome obstacles and challenge reality. Yet, how to believe in the “Virtues of Failure” when the very “moment of recognising a gap that has opened between the subject’s anticipation of how ‘their’ object will behave and the object’s actual behaviour” is simply erased? We saw in this article that the cultural shift operating with digital new design paradigms, such as the “lean model,” denies the temporal rupture of failure. As a result, a void of libidinal investment relying on the “narrative working out of failure,” and the associated lack of a mourning process, precludes other important processes from taking place, such as hope and, foremost, imagination. Indeed, imagination is a crucial dimension that singles out the notion of failure from other terms such as error and deficiency. By and large, imagination is, in the work of philosopher and social theorist Cornelius Castoriadis, “the unceasing and essentially undetermined (social-historical and psychical) creation of figures/forms/images.”<sup>81</sup> Imagination, rooted both in the individual’s psyche and the social, is central to understand the conditions and the obstacles of societies and institutions. It is possible to suggest that at stake in the way the design technologies of the post-industrial West have steadily masked failure and the individual-subject’s libidinal re-investment into new objects (by denying the temporal rupture of failure) is also a politics of imagination, partaking in how societies auto-institute themselves, whereas digital technologies and new design paradigms have been increasingly taking charge of a politics of time.

Further reflection that might follow this concluding discussion could be focused on how discourses in digitalism

and design tend to encourage people's experience of fun, intermingled with smartness and pleasure. The latter sits at the interface between material design and objects (e.g., smart-phones, smart cars or even smart cities) and individuals' subjective formation. This could be interpreted as a means to compensate a libidinal dis-engagement with unmet "expectation" in the case of failure, when the libidinal dimension can no longer *lean on* an ontology of temporality that affords "the rupture" of the bond between the present and the future (i.e., being accountable for failure through narratives). Coincidentally the expression "to lean on," from which the new "lean" principle of design originates, is also a translation of the Freudian concept of *Anlehnung* central in his theory, for it signifies the two-fold movement of attachment, identification and divergence, essential in enabling the development of the individual-subject's autonomy through time.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: Norton & Company, 1998), 118.
- <sup>2</sup> See Carroll, T., D. Jeevendrampillai, A. Parkhurst, and J. Shackelford, eds. *The Material Culture of Failure: When Things Do Wrong* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.
- <sup>4</sup> See Timothy Carroll, David (Jeeva) Jeevendrampillai and Aaron Parkhurst, *Materiality of Research: The General Theory of Failure: Thoughts on the Material Culture of Failure*. In Review of Books blog of the London School of Economics, December 7th, 2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2018/12/07/materiality-of-research-the-general-theory-of-failure-thoughts-on-the-material-culture-of-failure>.
- <sup>5</sup> See Stephen Bertman, *Hyperculture: the human cost of speed* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1998); Ben Agger, *Speeding up fast capitalism* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004) and Micael St. Clair, *So much, so fast, so little time* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011).
- <sup>6</sup> See Lübbe, "The Contraction of the Present," in *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, Modernity*, edited by Hartmut Rosa and William Scheuerman (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 159–179. Lübbe warns against the shrinking of a time-span (the present) – the only dimension, contrary to the past and the future – within which *the horizons of experience and expectation coincide*. Only within these time-spans of relative stability can we draw on past experiences to orient our actions and infer conclusions from the past with regard to the future, providing a sense of certainty, orientation, evaluation and expectation.
- <sup>7</sup> Rosa echoes Max Weber by interpreting the acceleration of the pace of life as offering the eschatological promise of absolute wealth, remotely afforded through spiritual investment in religion to ensure the promise of eternal life.
- <sup>8</sup> Eric L. Hsu and Anthony Elliott, "Social Acceleration Theory and the Self," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 45, no. 4 (2014): 407.
- <sup>9</sup> See Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- <sup>10</sup> See Hartmut Rosa, "Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society," *Constellations*. 10, no. 1 (2003): 26.
- <sup>11</sup> See Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914).
- <sup>12</sup> See Tina Seelig, "Fail Fast and Frequently" in *The Art of Teaching Entrepreneurship and Innovation*. Talk, May 27, 2009. <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/fail-fast-and-frequently/>.
- <sup>13</sup> The 'lean principle' has been widely implemented, not only in the design industry and various other sectors, such as health, marketing or management, but has also been disseminating to ways of thinking, as it will be underlined in the last part of this article.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 602.
- <sup>15</sup> See Adam Greenfield. *Radical Technologies* (London: Verso, 201).
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.
- <sup>17</sup> See for instance Han Byung-Chul, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* (London: Verso, 2017).
- <sup>18</sup> Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies* (London: Verso, 2017), 313.
- <sup>19</sup> See Tonkinwise, "Failing to Sense the Future: From Design to the Proactionary Test Drive." *Social Research. An International Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2016): 597–624.
- <sup>20</sup> See Bernard Stiegler, "Suffocated desire, or how the cultural industry destroys the individual: contribution to a theory of mass consumption." Translated by Johann Rossouw. *Parrhesia* 13 (2011): 52–61.
- <sup>21</sup> Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 224.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 230. Here, Rosa draws on Martin Kohli's expression 'temporalization of life', arguing that identity becomes linked with a Bildungsroman, a coming-of-age novel or developmental narrative. See also Martin Kohli, "Die Institutalisierung des Lebenslaufs. Historische Befunde and theoretische Argumente," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 37 (1985): 1–29.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.
- <sup>25</sup> Elias, Norbert. *Time: An Essay*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
- <sup>26</sup> Hartmut Rosa "Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society," *Constellations*. 10, no. 1 (2003): 28.
- <sup>27</sup> Paul J. D'Ambrosio, "From present to presentation: A philosophical critique of Hartmut Rosa's "situational identity," *Time and Society* (July 2018).

- <sup>28</sup> Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 231.
- <sup>29</sup> See Niklas Luhmann, *Politische Theorie im Wohlfahrtsstaat* (München/Wien: olzog, 1981); Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies," *Theory, Culture and Society* 19, no. 1/2 (2002): 17–44; and Zigmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (London: Blackwell, 2000).
- <sup>30</sup> See Karl H. Hörning, Daniela Ahrens, and A. Gerhard, "Do Technologies have Time? New Practices of Time and the Transformation of Communication Technologies," *Time and Society* 8 (1999): 293–308.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. 300.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid. 300.
- <sup>33</sup> Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 244.
- <sup>34</sup> For Sennett, at stake for Rico in raising his children is to "resist the acid erosion of those qualities of character." See Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1998), 76.
- <sup>35</sup> Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 245.
- <sup>36</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as another* (1990/1992): 6.
- <sup>37</sup> Richard Sennett, *The corrosion of Character*, 134.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. 135.
- <sup>39</sup> Richard Kearney, Anne Bernard, and Fabrizio Turolo, "A conversation with Paul Ricoeur." In *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*, edited by Richard Kearney (London: Ashgate, 2004), 370.
- <sup>40</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1998), 134.
- <sup>41</sup> Idem.
- <sup>42</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. James Strachey. Standard Edition, 14, 243–258. (London: Hogarth Press, 1957[1917]): 248.
- <sup>43</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi." *Janus Head* 8, no. 1 (2005): 24.
- <sup>44</sup> Judy Wajcman and Nigel Dodd eds., *The Sociology of Speed: Digital, Organizational, and Social Temporalities, on the materiality of time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2017), 2.
- <sup>45</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*. Trans. James Strachey. Standard Edition, 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957[1917]), 244.
- <sup>46</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi." *Janus Head*. Vol 8, no. 1 (2005): 23.
- <sup>47</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*. Trans. James Strachey. Standard Edition, 14, 243–258. (London: Hogarth Press, 1957[1917]).
- <sup>48</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 244.
- <sup>49</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*. Trans. James Strachey. Standard Edition, 19, (London: Hogarth Press, 1961[1923]), 27.
- <sup>50</sup> See Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- <sup>51</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, 133.
- <sup>52</sup> Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 244.
- <sup>53</sup> See Svend Brinkmann, "A society of sorrow: the constitution of society through grief," *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* (2018), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2018.1521339>
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., 10.
- <sup>55</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. James Strachey. Standard Edition, 14, 243–258. (London: Hogarth Press, 1957[1917]).
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 248.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., 245.
- <sup>58</sup> See Evgeny Morozov, *To save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 270.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., 269.
- <sup>61</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1998), 133.
- <sup>62</sup> See Timothy Carroll, David (Jeeva) Jeevendrampillai and Aaron Parkhurst, *Materiality of Research: The General Theory of Failure: Thoughts on the Material Culture of Failure*. In Review of Books blog of the London School of Economics, December 7th, 2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2018/12/07/materiality-of-research-the-general-theory-of-failure-thoughts-on-the-material-culture-of-failure>.
- <sup>63</sup> See Cameron Tonkinwise, "Failing to Sense the Future: From Design to the Proactionary Test Drive." *Social Research. An International Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2016): 597–624.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., 604.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., 605.
- <sup>66</sup> See John Chris Jones. *Design Methods*, 2nd edition (London: John Wiley & Sons.1992); and Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).
- <sup>67</sup> Cameron Tonkinwise, "Failing to Sense the Future: From Design to the Proactionary Test Drive." *Social Research. An International Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2016): 604.
- <sup>68</sup> See the Lean Startup Methodology website: <http://theleanstartup.com/principles>.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., <http://theleanstartup.com/principles>.
- <sup>70</sup> See Cameron Tonkinwise, "Is Design Finished?: Dematerialisation and Changing Things," *Design Philosophy Papers* 3, no. 2 (2005): 99–117.
- <sup>71</sup> See the website Kanbanize, dedicated to the implementation of the lean model through offering guidelines for a

- lean transformation. <https://kanbanize.com/lean-transformation/model/>.
- <sup>72</sup> Cameron Tonkinwise, "Failing to Sense the Future: From Design to the Proactionary Test Drive." *Social Research. An International Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2016): 608.
- <sup>73</sup> See <https://www.lean.org/WhoWeAre/> This is the Kanbanize website, which is dedicated to explaining to business leaders and managers alike the popular Lean Management tool's main principles (called Kanban) in line with models developed by The Lean Enterprise Institute (LEI). The Lean Enterprise Institute, founded in 1997, is a nonprofit organization based in Cambridge, MA, conducts research, teaches educational workshops, publishes books and ebooks, runs conferences, and shares practical information about lean thinking and practice.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> Karl H. Hörning, Daniela Ahrens, and A. Gerhard, "Do Technologies have Time? New Practices of Time and the Transformation of Communication Technologies," *Time and Society* 8 (1999): 300.
- <sup>76</sup> See Hartmut Rosa, "Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society," *Constellations* 10, no. 1 (2003): 23.
- <sup>77</sup> Paul Dolan, *Happiness by Design: Finding Pleasure and Purpose in Everyday Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 132.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., 132.
- <sup>79</sup> See again Timothy Carroll, David (Jeeva) Jeevendrampillai and Aaron Parkhurst, *Materiality of Research: The General Theory of Failure: Thoughts on the Material Culture of Failure*. In Review of Books blog of the London School of Economics, December 7th, 2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2018/12/07/materiality-of-research-the-general-theory-of-failure-thoughts-on-the-material-culture-of-failure>.
- <sup>80</sup> See Charles Pépin, *Les Vertus de l'Échec*. [Trans. The Virtues of Failure] (Paris: Allary Éditions, 2016).
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## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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