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| <b>Institution:</b> University of Chichester  |                                  |  |
| <b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27: English Language and Literature  |                                  |  |
| <b>Title of case study:</b> Accelerated Times? Transforming Public Understanding of Technological and Social Change   |                                  |  |
| <b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010-2018  |                                  |  |
| <b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>  |                                  |  |
| <b>Name(s):</b>   | <b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> | <b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> |
| Benjamin Noys   | Professor of Critical Theory     | 15.1.2000-present                            |
| <b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020   |                                  |  |
| <b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N  |                                  |  |
| <p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Benjamin Noys coined the term 'accelerationism' in 2010 to define and challenge a way of thinking that expresses the desire to escape the insecurity of work by integrating humans with technology. Since its coinage, accelerationism has initiated significant global debate, informing and catalysing a new cultural movement. Noys, a major critic of the contemporary resurgence of accelerationism, has produced the first comprehensive survey of its historical iterations. This research has transformed public debate by revealing the dangers and seduction of accelerationism, challenging popular cultural fantasies of integration with the technological, and criticising how accelerationism treats issues of social and technological change as artistic rather than as social and political.</p>   |                                  |  |
| <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Noys first defined the term accelerationism in his monograph <i>The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory</i> (2010) [R1], in particular as a criticism of philosophical positions of the 1970s that aimed to accelerate market forces in contemporary capitalism to push capitalism into crisis. This research has since resulted in the widespread circulation of the term, from blog debates in which Noys participated, to mainstream media discussion. Accelerationism became the first theoretical movement to fully embrace social media and was claimed by the political left in 2013 by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams in their '#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics' (available <a href="#">here</a>) as a positive programme for accelerating technological change.</p> <p>In response, Noys published the book <i>Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism</i> with Zero Books in 2014 in their series of critical interventions for a wider intellectual public [R2]. The book opposed the adoption of accelerationism as a positive term. Noys argued that while accelerationism drew attention to the insecurity of contemporary work, it nonetheless still treated that problem as susceptible to a technological solution – a notion that can lead towards exclusionary political and aesthetic practices. David Cunningham, in <i>Radical Philosophy</i> 191 (2015), writes how 'the excellent <i>Malign Velocities</i>, ..., while directly engaging Williams and Srnicek's appropriation of his originally critical term in its conclusion, can also be read as offering a certain prehistory of its own'. <i>Malign Velocities</i> provided a critical prehistory of accelerationism by tracing the desire to escape the insecurity of work through integration with the machine and the technological in the avant-garde and revolutionary moments of the twentieth century, from the Italian Futurists to techno dance music. This integration of human and machine, Noys argued, failed fully to grasp the problem of work insecurity, and instead produced cultural fantasies of speed dependent on a masculine conception of the 'hard' body. In contrast, Noys proposed, it was vital to address these fantasies politically through a conception of democratic and collective engagement with technology.</p> |                                  |  |

In tandem with the impact work detailed below, Noys also developed academic research using accelerationism as a critical heuristic to analyse cultural forms and representations of contemporary politics, popular culture, and art. This included exploring unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) as sites of real and imaginary fusions between humans and lethal technologies of violence [R3], criticising the embrace of drugs as a means to accelerate experience by contemporary theorists [R4], and considering how Britain's decision to leave the European Union ('Brexit') was conditioned by a fantasy of escaping European inertia and embracing an accelerated modernity [R5]. This last strand of research is continuing to explore far-right appropriations of technology and acceleration for a future project. Finally, Noys has returned to consider accelerationism as a cultural movement, arguing that it is best understood primarily as an aesthetic phenomenon [R6]. It is not only that accelerationism is influential among artists, but that accelerationism is itself a turning of politics into art that disables critical understanding in exchange for cultural celebration of technology and speed. Noys's research demonstrates how literary and theoretical research is not detached from the real world, but vital for grasping the central role cultural fantasies play in framing contemporary anxieties concerning technological and social change.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh University Press 2010), 224pp. ISBN: 9780748638635 (Hb). 2012 ISBN: 9780748649044 (Pb).

Peer-reviewed research monograph entered in REF2014.

#### Reviews:

Baylee Brits, 'Review Article: Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010)', *Parrhesia* 9 (2010): 1–17: [http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia12/parrhesia12\\_brits.pdf](http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia12/parrhesia12_brits.pdf)

Knox Peden, 'The better half', *Radical Philosophy* 168 (2011): 51–54:

[https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files\\_mf/rp168\\_reviews13.pdf](https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files_mf/rp168_reviews13.pdf)

Tom Bunyard, 'The Persistence of the Negative Review' *Marx & Philosophy Review of Books*, 7 February 2011: [https://marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviews/7617\\_the-persistence-of-the-negative-review-by-tom-bunyard/](https://marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviews/7617_the-persistence-of-the-negative-review-by-tom-bunyard/)

Tom Eysers, 'Think Negative!', *Mute Magazine*, 7 April 2011:

<http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/think-negative>

[R2] Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* (Zero 2014), 117pp. ISBN: 978-1-78279-300-7 (Pb).

Translated into Spanish: *Velocidades malignas* (Materia Oscura Editorial, 2018):

<https://www.amazon.es/Velocidades-malignas-Benjamin-Noys/dp/8494394568>

Long-listed for the Bread and Roses prize 2015:

<https://breadandrosesprize.wordpress.com/2015/02/25/the-bread-roses-longlist-2015/>

#### Reviews:

Brian Willems, 'Every which way but loose', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 21 November 2014: <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/every-way-loose/#!>

David Cunningham, 'A Marxist heresy? Accelerationism and its discontents', *Radical Philosophy* 191 (2015): 29–38: [https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files\\_mf/rp191\\_article1\\_cunningham\\_amarxistheresy.pdf](https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files_mf/rp191_article1_cunningham_amarxistheresy.pdf)

John Hutnyk, Review, in *The New Cross Review of Books*, 28 February 2015:

<https://newcrossreviewofbooks.wordpress.com/2015/02/28/malign-velocities-acceleration-and-capitalism/>

Fred Turner, 'On Accelerationism', *Public Books*, 9 January 2016:

<https://www.publicbooks.org/on-accelerationism/>

Jason Barker, 'Slow Down: On Benjamin Noys's Critique of Accelerationism', *Angelaki* 21.2 (2016): 227–235, DOI: 10.1080/0969725X.2016.1182743

Peter Robson, 'Capitalism's last wild ride — Noys' book dissects accelerationism', *Green Left Weekly* 1161, November 13 2017: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/capitalisms-last-wild-ride-%E2%80%94-noys-book-dissects-accelerationism>

[R3] Benjamin Noys, 'Drone Metaphysics', 'Drone Culture' Special Issue, ed. Rob Coley and Dean Lockwood, *Culture Machine* 16 (2015):  
<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/595/602>;  
<http://eprints.chi.ac.uk/id/eprint/1508/>  
 Peer-reviewed journal article.

[R4] 'Intoxication and Acceleration: The Politics of Immanence', in *Literature and Intoxication: Writing, Politics and the Experience of Excess*, ed. Eugene Brennan and Russell Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 185–201.  
 Peer-reviewed chapter in edited collection.

[R5] 'Arguments within English Theory: Accelerationism, Brexit and the Problem of 'Englishness'', *Third Text* 32.6 (2018): 1–7,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2018.1558645>; <http://eprints.chi.ac.uk/id/eprint/4101/>  
 Peer-reviewed article.

[R6] 'Accelerationism as Will and Representation', in *The Future of the New: Artistic Innovation in Times of Social Acceleration*, ed. Thijs Lijster (Antennae Arts in Society, Valiz Amsterdam, 2018), pp. 83–97.  
 Peer-reviewed chapter in edited collection.

**All outputs can be supplied by the HEI on request.**

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Noys's research has been a critical voice at the centre of the global debate on accelerationism since Noys defined the term in his research monograph *The Persistence of the Negative* in 2010 [R1]. This definition was already informed by blog debates in which Noys participated and this has been public research both in conception and in process. In his 2017 'long read' on accelerationism for *The Guardian* (6 mentions; 3,686 online views; average print circulation of 114,168) [C1], Andy Beckett points out the central role of Noys's research [R1 and R2] in launching and shaping the debate: 'The label has only been in regular use since 2010, when it was borrowed ... by Benjamin Noys, a strong critic of the movement.' Noys's research is confirmed as the origin of accelerationism in a 2016 article in *The New Statesman* (1 mention, average print circulation of 36,591) [C2]. Noys developed the critical public intervention *Malign Velocities* (2014) [R2], published in the Zero Books series defined by Mark Fisher as offering 'another kind of discourse – intellectual without being academic, popular without being populist'. *Malign Velocities* has since sold over 4,000 copies (as of 10 February 2020) [C3], been translated into Spanish, and been widely reviewed in both academic and non-academic outlets [R2]. Noys's research also explored the resonances and circulations of accelerationism, especially as they have taken place in political debates about technology [R4], in popular culture [R2], and among artists [R6]. Without Noys's research and interventions, accelerationism would have been uncritically celebrated as offering technological solutions that have at their heart problematic gendered cultural fantasies of speed and the machine.

#### Impact on Political Debates

In a series of public interventions, Noys's research has significantly influenced popular political debates, demonstrating how accelerationism offers a politics that is both too reliant on technology and that fails to consider the need for public debate and collective action. Peter Robson, in the Australian online-review and weekly newspaper for environmental activists, *Green Left* (13 November 2017), summarises how *Malign Velocities* goes beyond accelerationism and the alternative counter-movements that call us to slow down, 'in favour of [a] more nuanced approach, an approach that is more fundamentally political' [C4]. This political approach makes the insecurity of work central to the debate around accelerationism and criticises accelerationist claims that integrating humans with technology will resolve that insecurity [R2 and R3]. The impact of these arguments has been explored in the Royal Society of Arts podcast 'The Seductive Dangers of Speed' on Resonance FM, a 24-hour London radio

station with a core audience of 500,000 (9 July 2017); in public debate and discussion with the theorist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (the [YouTube video](#) has 7,200 views (June 2019)); and in debate with the leading proponents of accelerationism at the Kaai Theatre in Brussels (22 October 2016) at a live-streamed event (video available [here](#)). In each case, Noys's research has offered a political understanding of the shaping effects of work and labour as crucial problems obscured by accelerationism.

### Impact on Popular Culture

Noys's research has established the cultural dimension of accelerationism, especially as it is expressed in cultural fantasies of integration with the machine. *Malign Velocities* has featured as a source for Ales Kot's graphic novel *Material* [C5], published in 2015 by Image Comics, one of the world's largest graphic novel publishers. The graphic novel explores contemporary anxieties surrounding the 'war on terror' and digital surveillance, citing *Malign Velocities* as a critical interrogation of technological speed. The writer and graphic novelist Warren Ellis, whose work explores technological and human fusions, described *Malign Velocities* as 'a superb and largely non-technical exploration of a very interesting space', and accelerationism as a 'as Science Fiction Condition philosophical enterprise' [C6]. Noys was invited to present research challenging the accelerationist assumption that techno music is simply the expression of its cultural fantasies at the Nordberg Techno Festival, Sweden (28 July 2017), an event held at a former factory site, and at the 'Digging the Global South' Symposium and Music Festival, Akademie der Künste der Welt, Cologne (2 November 2017).

### Impact on Artistic Practice

Noys's critique of accelerationism has been richly explored within the arts and artistic practice. Dan Byrne-Smith (Whitechapel Gallery) writes: 'Benjamin Noys's original work in *Malign Velocities* on the concepts of accelerationism and 'cyberpunk futurism' have been widely influential on a new generation of contemporary artists today and are an indispensable contribution' [C7]. Professor Fred Turner, discussing *Malign Velocities* in *Public Books* (9 January 2016), points out that 'Noys is not content to attack accelerationism as a philosophy. He also takes its aesthetics to task', which is 'a fantasy of becoming one with machine systems, of giving over their agency and taking pleasure in complete submission' [C8]. The [award-winning](#) artist Dean Kenning's cover image for *Malign Velocities*, inspired by the book's critique of accelerationist aesthetics, has become a signature image in accelerationist discourse. *Malign Velocities* has also 'continued to inform' Kenning's artistic practice in a broader sense, in media as diverse as anti-techno-utopian [kinetic sculpture](#), and images and animations he has contributed towards the [Capital Drawing Group](#) [C9]. The independent curator and designer Benjamin Fallon has described Noys 'as a marked influence on a younger generation of artists who are thinking through our implication with technology—providing an important critical ballast to the more breathless embrace of other thinkers' [C10].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

**C1** Andy Beckett, 'Accelerationism: How a fringe philosophy predicted the future we live in', *The Guardian*, 11 May 2017: 25–27:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/11/accelerationism-how-a-fringe-philosophy-predicted-the-future-we-live-in>

**C2** 'What is Accelerationism?', *The New Statesman*, 5 August 2016:

<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/08/what-accelerationism>

**C3** Sales figures from Zero Books, 10 February 2020.

**C4** Peter Robson, 'Capitalism's Last Wild Ride – Noys's book dissects accelerationism', *Green Left* 1161, 13 November 2017:

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/capitalisms-last-wild-ride-%E2%80%94-noys-book-dissects-accelerationism>

**C5** Image of the page from *Material* referencing *Malign Velocities*.

**C6** Warren Ellis, 'Malign Velocities', 26 August 2019, <https://warrenellis.ltd/books/malign-velocities/>

**C7** Statement by Dan Byrne-Smith, Whitechapel Gallery & Guest Editor (Chelsea College of Art), 24 October 2019.

**C8** Fred Turner, 'On Accelerationism', *Public Books*, 9 January 2016: <https://www.publicbooks.org/on-accelerationism/>

**C9** Artist statement by Dean Kenning, 24 May 2020.

**C10** Curator statement by Benjamin Fallon, 26 January 2021.