



Time wealth

Working paper on the definition of time wealth in the research project
ReZeitKon

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November 2019



Abstract

In this paper, we provide a definition of time wealth for the social-ecological research project “Time Rebound, Time Wealth and Sustainable Consumption” (ReZeitKon) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. After a general introduction to the current debate on time wealth (mainly in Germany), we provide an overview on existing definitions of time wealth. Based on this outline, we propose and explain a definition of time wealth including five dimensions: tempo, plannability, synchronisation, time sovereignty and free time.

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1 Introduction

Previous work on time use and sustainability has mainly focused on the possible positive effects of a reduction in working hours on environmental consumption (Druckman et al. 2012; Hayden 1999; Kallis et al. 2013; King & van den Bergh 2017; Knight et al. 2013; Paech 2012; Reisch & Bietz 2014; Rosnick & Weisbrot 2007). From a macroeconomic perspective, a lower work volume goes hand in hand with a lower level of production, income, consumption and thus also resource use, all other factors held constant. Since rising productivity makes economic growth necessary in order to avoid an increase in unemployment, a reduction in working hours could reduce this growth pressure, thereby contributing to ecological relief. If a reduction in working hours at the individual level is accompanied with a loss of income, consumption and thus resource use might decrease. Productivity gains channelled into shorter working hours instead of higher incomes could also interrupt the so-called work-and-spend cycle (Schor 1993). This describes a situation in which employees are dependent on long working hours to maintain their level of consumption, which in turn creates additional consumption, for example in the form of compensatory consumption or time-efficient consumption. In addition, positive ecological effects are also conceivable as a result of more free time (Devetter & Rousseau 2011; Reisch 2001; Reisch & Bietz 2014; Schor 2005, 2016). This assumes that a sustainable lifestyle requires a certain amount of free time (e.g. for environmentally friendly mobility, informed purchasing decisions, repair work, collaborative consumption or greater self-sufficiency).

The strong focus on the expansion of free time, however, is criticized by some. Foster, for example, stresses the importance of meaningful work and the quality of work (Foster 2017). Rinderspacher (2017) also argues that a reduction in working hours does not necessarily result in a sustainable lifestyle. In particular, it would be problematic to consider all employees equally. Rinderspacher argues to rather take into consideration the specific working conditions regarding their ecological effects. In addition, a greater amount of free time can also have negative environmental effects, in case the additional free time is used for resource-intensive consumption (Buhl 2016; Buhl & Acosta 2016; Druckman et al. 2012; Jalas 2002). These aspects suggest that the previously dominant focus on working-time reduction might be too narrow.

2 Existing definitions of time wealth

Rinderspacher contrasts the focus on shorter working hours with the concept of time wealth ("Zeitwohlstand"), which he defines based on four dimensions: "sufficient time, sufficient common time, self-determined time, as uncondensed as possible" (Rinderspacher 2012: 21; own translation). This concept focuses less on a quantitative increase in leisure time, but rather on a different qualitative perspective on time, both regarding work time and other spheres of life.

Claassen (2012) advocates a double sufficientarian standard that defines both a minimum and a maximum amount of time for various socially necessary activities. The lower limit considers that work – understood more broadly as socially necessary activities – also creates social wealth and thus requires a certain minimum of work performed. On an individual level, an excessive expansion of free time can also undermine the time sovereignty of others. The upper limit should ensure that working time does not increase indefinitely as a result of a "tyranny of workaholics" in order to ensure a certain amount of free time.

Reisch mentions a chronometric dimension (duration), a chronological dimension (time situation) as well as time sovereignty as necessary conditions for determining individual time wealth (Reisch 2002). With reference to Scherhorn (1995), "it is those living in time wealth who can decide for themselves on their temporal lifestyle, because based on material security, one has sufficient time per activity – at the right moment, according to one's own social and biological rhythms" (Scherhorn according to Reisch & Bietz 2014: 45 f.; own translation).

Mückenberger approaches the concept of time wealth from two angles: On the one hand, time wealth is obstructed by the fact that individual or collective time use is not self-determined, socially excluding and structurally unequally distributed between groups of persons. In contrast, time wealth is characterized by the possibility of collective times with others as well as sufficient time for oneself (leisure, education, sport, etc.) (Mückenberger 2002). Garhammer also stresses the relevance of plannability and the feeling of security for temporal wealth, which can be established through temporal institutions such as normal employment relationships (Garhammer 2002).

While the literature mentioned so far deals primarily with time wealth on a conceptual level, Kasser and Sheldon (2009) provide an empirical analysis on the connection between time and life satisfaction. The authors show that "time affluence", understood as sufficient time for oneself and an appropriate pace, positively influences subjective well-being. In their empirical studies they found that more time for oneself also increases the well-being of those with more accelerated lifestyles. Time wealth therefore seems to benefit not only people with decelerated lifestyles but contributes to well-being in general.

3 Working definition of time wealth in ReZeitKon

In the light of the existing debate, we are following the definition of Rinderspacher (2012), which we extend by the aspect of plannability mentioned by Garhammer (2002). For the project ReZeitKon, we thus propose the following definition of time wealth:

Time wealth means

- 1] sufficient time per activity (tempo) with
 - 2] a sufficiently stable horizon of expectation (plannability) and
 - 3] satisfactory coordination of different timing requirements (synchronisation) under
 - 4] sufficiently self-determined conditions (time sovereignty) and
 - 5] a reasonable amount of free time (free time).
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By determining a "sufficient" pace, a "sufficiently" stable horizon of expectation, "satisfactory" coordination of temporal requirements, "sufficiently" self-determined conditions and a "reasonable" amount of free time, a perspective of time wealth emerges that advocates a sufficient use of time. Instead of using time as efficiently as possible, time wealth means using time sufficiently, i.e. asking for the appropriate extent. This does not always mean deceleration, but a better adaptation to the respective rhythms of the fellow world, the environment and the inner world (Reheis 2019). In the following we will briefly discuss the five dimensions of our definition of time wealth:

[1] Tempo

Physically, tempo describes the ratio of a distance covered within a certain time. It therefore increases when either the distance covered increases while keeping time constant or the same distance is covered in a shorter time. Applied to everyday life, Rosa understands the pace of life as the "number of episodes of action or experience per unit of time" (Rosa 2014: 27; own translation). This dimension of time wealth can, for example, be measured by indicators such as subjectively perceived lack of time, or time pressure at work, leisure or school. Objectively, the tempo of the working environment could refer to working intensity, measured by countable units per working hour (piecework, clients in social work) or the teaching content per school year in the field of education (e.g. debate on shortening high school time from 9 to 8 years in Germany).

[2] Plannability

By plannability, we understand sufficiently stable horizons of expectation regarding time processes in the future. These include both long-term and short-term horizons in professional and private life. In work life, indicators of employment security (e.g. fear about job loss, fixed-term employment contracts) or early information about changes in work procedures as well as availability outside normal working hours can be used to measure plannability. For private life, stable horizons of expectation are reflected in family status, the duration of social relationships or the family constellation. Relevant expectation horizons can become unstable as a result of modern means of communication such as smartphones, as short-term changes in appointments become more common.

[3] Synchronisation

The dimension of synchronisation refers to the possibility of synchronising different spheres of life such as work, family, unpaid work or leisure time with each other and with one's own biological, social and natural rhythms. A satisfying synchronisation also includes the chance to participate in collective rhythms such as free weekends. For a satisfying synchronisation, the timing of work (e.g. at night or on weekends) or the compatibility of work and private life could be decisive. The satisfying synchronisation of external temporal requirements with the biological chronotype of people, i.e. the times of peak performance over the course of the day (Nowack & van der Meer 2013), could be measured by comparing it with the actual timing of work or school time.

[4] Time sovereignty

In general, time sovereignty is understood as the self-determined use of one's own time. Regarding working time, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs defines this term as the possibility of determining the duration and situation of one's own working time. (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2016). Time sovereignty should also include the ability to influence the speed at which time is used. Regarding work, this dimension can be measured e.g. as the extent to which workers have a say in determining the amount of work, working time (timing, shift, flexibility) or the work schedule (breaks, sequence of activities). A distinction should be made between individual and collective forms of time sovereignty, the latter including e.g. so-called time councils, in which different time requirements are negotiated. Regarding time sovereignty outside of work, subjective indicators such as the satisfaction with one's own time use could be used. One should also consider the possibilities for shaping the time requirements of care activities. For school life, time sovereignty might include flexible starting times for pupils or optional courses.

[5] Free time

Our understanding of free time refers to the time that we can freely dispose of. According to Goodin et al. (2008), this is the time that remains after deducting the necessary time for gainful employment

(financial necessity), unpaid work (social necessity) and personal care (biological necessity). In practice, however, social norms and legal framework conditions (e.g. employment contracts) often make it difficult to work only those hours that are theoretically necessary. Free time, which is not accompanied by any obligatory tasks, is also an important prerequisite for leisure. Important indicators for free time are the amount of gainful employment (incl. the length of holidays), care duties (e.g. raising children or caring for others), personal care and the resulting amount of free time. School periods (weekly periods, including holidays), family commitments and voluntary leisure activities can be relevant indicators for pupils. The subjective perception of not having enough time for friends, family, hobbies, voluntary work or social contacts might also apply here for different age groups.

Interactions between the various dimensions of time wealth

The five dimensions of time wealth as discussed above are interrelated in many ways. First of all, a certain amount of free time is regarded as a key prerequisite for carrying out activities at an appropriate pace, for a sovereign temporal lifestyle and for synchronising different spheres of life. Holding free time constant, the expansion of one area of activity increases the tempos in the other, if activities are not completely cancelled or outsourced to third parties, which in turn places new synchronisation requirements. Furthermore, plannability, time sovereignty and synchronisation are interdependent: the more difficult it is to predict future activities and the less sovereign one is in planning one's time, the more difficult it is to synchronise different spheres of life. This is especially true if there is little free time as a buffer.

Individuals are embedded in a "network of time" within their everyday way of life (Herrmann 2009; Rinderspacher 1988). An individual's own time, such as his/her chronobiology or his/her respective time preferences, are interrelated to the time requirements of the working environment, the household or even society and nature. The adaptation process between these different time requirements can also lead to time conflicts (Nowotny 2012). In addition to different socio-economic conditions, also collective temporal infrastructures influence time wealth. Such temporal infrastructures include, for example, legislation on opening hours, Sundays and public holidays, the number of public holidays, overtime regulations, school start times, public transport operating hours or cultural customs (e.g. sleeping times). These temporal infrastructures often create an institutionalised, collective rhythm of life and "temporal biotopes" in which time wealth can be experienced together. At the same time, they reduce the synchronisation effort between different temporal requirements (Rinderspacher et al. 1987). Based on the empirical investigations within the framework of the ReZeitKon project, recommendations for action and policy advice will be developed concerning the extent to which these temporal framework conditions can be adapted in order to promote time wealth.

4 Time wealth as a subjective and objective indicator of a good life

According to Zapf (1984), who proposed four different welfare positions, these positions can also be distinguished for time wealth, depending on the relationship between objective (temporal) living conditions and subjective (temporal) well-being: On the one hand, one can imagine a state of **well-being** in which good objective temporal living conditions meet a high subjective temporal well-being. This state could clearly be described as time wealth. In contrast, a state of **deprivation** is characterized by both low objective conditions and low levels of subjective well-being. This state could be understood as time poverty. However, one could also identify a state of **adaptation**, in which a high level of subjective temporal well-being exists despite poor objective temporal conditions. In a state of **dissonance**,

good objective temporal conditions go hand in hand with low levels of subjective temporal well-being. It is subject to empirical investigation under which conditions good objective temporal conditions are not accompanied by subjective temporal well-being, or how subjective temporal well-being can be achieved despite poor objective temporal conditions. Whether good objective temporal conditions go hand in hand with a high subjective temporal well-being depends, of course, on further circumstances such as material wealth, freedom, social security, inclusion and competence in shaping time (Hatzelmann & Held 2010; Herrmann 2009).

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