

Bad Money vs. Good Times? The Reconceptualization of Wealth and the Moral Economy of Time in Late Modernity.

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This study explores the relation between the temporal orientation of urban citizens in Sweden and the political economy of the late modern welfare state. The main focus lies upon the evaluation of different time-uses in order to approach a better understanding of the normative value of time in late modernity and the moral economy of time with its distinctions between expensive or “good time” and cheap or “bad time”. The study is based upon qualitative in-depth interviews with 49 inhabitants of Stockholm conducted in 2004. The interviewees were asked to consider two options for the future of welfare politics in Sweden: increasing wages combined with the same work hours as today or a substantial decrease in working hours accompanied by stagnating wages. Nearly all interviewees consider time scarcity and temporal welfare to be very important issues that need to be integrated into the traditional concept of welfare. Some interviewees even try to outline a time-politics that could lead to the institutionalization of new social temporal arrangements, e.g. a time bank for parents or time-out from work. A common feature of these new evaluations of time and the new temporal arrangements under discussion is that they articulate a counterpicture to the commodified concept of time according to which the value of time is solely determined by work and economic aspects. Put together, the results of this study on the temporal life-worlds of the urban citizens implicate that the achievement of temporal welfare requires a more conscious time-politics that challenges traditional conceptions of which time-uses that are worth being paid for.

Key words: temporal welfare, value of time, moral economy of time.

Introduction

Confronted with increasing difficulties to balance the temporal demands of family, work and leisure a growing number of citizens in Western Europe’s modern welfare states feel that the traditional concept of welfare has to be reconsidered and broadened in order to still have relevance for their everyday lives (see for example the results of several recent surveys presented in Garhammar 2001 and 2002; Gershuny 2002, Hallberg & Klevmarken 2003, Rydenstam 2002, SCB 2003 and 2004; and Sullivan & Gershuny, 2001). According to this view, the established welfare politics in most of Europe’s welfare states is too narrowly focused upon the economic aspects of welfare. If public welfare is to stay a politically viable objective the material dimension of welfare, although still of major importance, has to be completed with a more

qualitative understanding of the growing problems to balance the demands of employment, family life and social and personal activities in everyday life.

The experience of “time-famine” and its actual causes in many welfare states constitute a much debated problem in contemporary research on time-use and social time. Some researchers argue that this time-famine to a large extent is caused by ongoing transformations of both the family structure and the labour market in Western Europe’s late modern societies (Brannen 2005; Fitzpatrick 2004; Jacobs & Gerson 1998; Lash & Urry 1994:241-250; Rubery et. al. 2005; and Warren 2004). Others call attention to that most surveys of time-use in Western Europe during the last two decades indicate that the average amount of time spent in paid and unpaid work actually is quite constant or even slightly decreasing (Gershuny 1992 and 2000; Robinson & Godbey 1996; SCB 2003 and 2004). But even the authors who point out these seemingly paradoxical results (more available time for leisure in combination with an increasing experience of time-famine) emphasize the need for a more qualitative understanding of our ways to experience and evaluate time (Gershuny & Sullivan 2003; Rydenstam 2002).

The aim of this paper is to explore the relation between the temporal orientation of urban citizens and the political and moral economy of time in the contemporary Swedish society from a phenomenological perspective. One central question is how urban citizens of today think about, experience and evaluate time and different uses of time (for example paid work and leisure). Another point of interest is how the commodification of time is experienced in everyday life (Jarvis 2005; see also Jarvis et. al. 2001). In which particular areas of everyday life is time perceived of as a quantifiable and scarce resource with an external and economically determined, fixed value, that is as commodified and standardized time, for example the form of time used in Becker’s theory of how households allocate time (Becker 1965). And when is time more likely to be seen as possessing a contextually defined value that is inherent to a person’s (or even a group’s) actions, as an inalienable personal possession not measurable by, or even comparable to, money?

The concept and analysis of social time

The growing experience of time-famine and the contemporary trend to re-examine and re-evaluate time as a sociologically interesting dimension of everyday life is a good illustration of what Sorokin and Merton in a now classical article have called the social dimension of time: time gets its meaning through our activities and the social evaluation of these activities (Sorokin & Merton 1937, see also Sorokin 1943). According to Sorokin & Merton, as well as many other social scientists concerned with the study of time and its theoretical implications for social analysis,¹ the point of departure for such an examination of the significance of time in everyday life is the concept of time as a fundamentally social phenomenon, which implies that the every experience of time as well as the evaluation of time and norms for different moral regimes of time use are social constructions.² Consequently, social time can be described as a fundamental means of orientation in any social formation that in a dynamic process is confirmed by, and confirms, all of the social interactions that take place in this formation.³ Together with space, time therefore constitutes the given setting for individuals' everyday life and enables, as well as limits, their different projects (such as production, consumption, sociability or recreation).⁴

When it comes to the actual analysis of time as a social phenomenon, or social time, it is important to differentiate between the quantitative aspect of time, i.e. time as a useful, measurable resource of action in everyday life on the one hand and the qualitative aspect of time, i.e. the symbolic dimension of time on the other hand. Both the concrete use of time and the symbolic meanings ascribed to time, including the evaluation of different uses or periods of time, differ considerably between various cultures, social groups or periods in history. Since this study is primarily concerned with the temporal life-worlds of contemporary urban citizens in Sweden, i.e. the varying meanings that they ascribe to specific periods of time and activities, the analysis presented later on focuses upon the qualitative, symbolic dimension of time as it is interpreted and expressed by the interviewees partaking in our study.

In order to investigate these subjective constructions of temporal provinces of meaning, this study employs an empirical phenomenological approach⁵ that embraces both the subjective dimension of temporal life-worlds and their social and cultural contexts. The symbolic dimension of time, particularly subjective temporal

perception, has traditionally been one of the major fields of research in phenomenological philosophy (Husserl 1966), but neither Husserl nor his followers were especially interested in the social determination of subjective temporal first-order constructs (i.e. individuals seemingly natural attitude towards time). Accordingly, they concentrated on individual temporal experiences and temporal ordering and neglected the social value system for the assessment of specific periods of time or activities. In this study I will try to describe and analyse the temporal evaluation-system of urban citizens and their temporal taxonomies in order to approach a better understanding of the normative value of time in our society.

The commodification of time

In order to understand the contemporary taxonomy of time and its different normative values it is important to examine the historical development of these values and meanings ascribed to different social times, or sociotemporal structures, such as paid and unpaid work, leisure or time for contemplation etc. (Cross 1993). According to Weber the changing perception of time that simultaneously emerged in several pious protestant movements (with the Calvinists as the maybe most well-known example) has to be seen as one of the main causes of the dynamic development of capitalistic production. Calvinistic doctrine was particularly concerned with man's finite time on earth, which should be used as rationally and effectively as possible in order to honour God. This emerging, new time-rationality particularly embraced economic activities and work. The morally charged distinction between two separate spheres of social life, the temporal and the economic, slowly dissolved when wage work gradually replaced farming and craftsmanship as predominant means of supply. Ironically, this new way to worship god through hard work and an ascetic everyday-life resulted in the gradual secularization of time. Time, formerly a divine resource lent by the gods to individuals for personal use, was transformed into an impersonal economic commodity that could be bought and sold (Hohn 1984). The value of time was no longer embedded in the household economy and the social relations of everyday life, but defined by the demands of the labour market. Time is evaluated differently in accordance with the social sphere where it is put to use (e.g. work, leisure or consumption) and as Adams (1995) points out, in this new taxonomy of time wage work, or commodified time, is clearly more privileged than other forms of time, for example time spent in social relations.⁶

A great number of examples from the early history of capitalism and industrialization during the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century give evidence that the strivings of the growing capitalistic economy to transform time into an object for economic calculation was met by considerable and widespread resistance from workers, craftsmen and farmers alike (Hohn 1984:138ff). Max Weber described this long drawn-out battle against an economically rational time discipline as one of the leitmotifs of pre- and proto-capitalistic labour (Weber 1920:45). Working-hours and tasks were not yet associated with short-term economic profit but with security, social status, prestige, craftsmanship and professional pride. The opponents of the capitalistic, economical evaluation of time for a long time held on to what Thompson has called a "product- or task-oriented" time (Thompson 1967:60, cf. Julkunen 1977:9f).

In accordance to this task-oriented perception of the relation between time and work, the nature and value of working-hours is primarily determined by the task at hand and the quality of the product, whereas economic considerations, especially in the abstract form of profit per invested unit of time, are absent or of minor importance. In many European countries the production and output of craftsmen was until the beginning of the 18th century strictly regulated by craft-guilds in order to avoid competition with wages or prices (Lundmark 1989:28f). At the same time, free time and leisure was valued higher than a potential rise in wages and a large part of the work-force during the early years of industrialization has been described as voluntarily under-employed (Coleman 1956:290).⁷ Given their pre-capitalistic work ethic and outspoken preference for leisure, the temporal maxim of capitalism, as it is summarized in the famous words of Benjamin Franklin who stated that "time is money", appeared to be quite irrational for most of these workers.

Thompson describes the distinction between the "employer's time" and the workers "own time" as fundamental to the temporal logic of capitalism. In order to get the most out of the time bought from workers (i.e. the employer's time), the precise measurement of time spent in the both the work place and on different work tasks became a highly prioritized concern of capitalistic production, which gave rise to different temporal control devices such as the time clock or the time and motion regulations prescribed by Taylor's "Scientific Management" (Taylor 1997[1911]).

According to Marx, this struggle about time and working-hours reflects the fundamental opposition between immediate, living work and the alienated, dead work under capitalism (Marx 1983:119f, 716).⁸ The obliteration of the traditional view upon time and working-hours required a prolonged disciplination in prison-like work camps, house of correction, schools and factories. The workers gradually lost sovereignty over their time because the rationalized organization of work in industrialism prescribed exactly the duration of working hours as well as the pace of work. Labour time is at the same time transformed into a fictitious commodity and the personality of the worker reduced to mere manpower.⁹ Marx' theoretical conclusion is that time constitutes the most fundamental and contested dimension in capitalistic economies since surplus labour time potentially liberated from work by means of rationalization and job splitting can be put to use in different ways: either in material production or in intellectual activities.¹⁰

In today's industrialized societies this perception of time as a quantitative and scarce resource with an economically determined value is almost universally prevalent. However, we already saw that the establishment and dispersion of this quantitative view upon time took long time and that today's near hegemonic dominance has been preceded by many centuries of struggle about both the essence and the value of time. This expansion can somewhat simplified be divided into three different stages: during the early years of capitalism the main focus of struggle was the economical value of time in working life and only gainfully employed individuals were directly involved in this temporal power struggle. Secondly, the rapidly increasing proportion of gainfully employed women during the 1960s (a development found in many industrialized countries at this time but especially noticeable in Sweden) implied that more members of each household were directly subjected to the quantitative time-rationality prevalent in capitalistic production. In the last, contemporary stage, the commodification of time extends to the domain of leisure which to an increasing extent is colonized by the rationality of the growing leisure industry.

The personal responsibility to actively shape our everyday lives has been elevated into the fundamental moral imperative of late modern society: experience your life, do something with it, and do it now! (Giddens 1991) In this individualized hunt for happiness the everyday life world is arranged in accordance with an accelerated

version of the principle of utility maximization: optimal impressions and experiences can be attained without delays by means of the scrupulous control of both the personal use of time and external factors, for example other persons' or organizations' schedules.¹¹ However, there is no time to hesitate in order to ponder upon alternative time-uses. In the event centers of the emerging non-stop society weekday evenings are transformed into an accelerated version of weekends and weekends are transformed into micro holidays (Adam et. al. 1998). Contemporaneous with this – paradoxically hedonistic – sacralization of the profane everyday life emerges a growing impatience. The time-limits for expectation and waiting are steadily shrinking and lengthy periods of time for contemplation and afterthought are deemed as much too expensive.

What are the possible consequences of these new patterns of time-use and the altered perception of leisure and work time for the formation and reproduction of everyday life? Thompson puts forward two conceivable paths of development. At the end of the first path we find the increasing commodification of time where the all-embracing concern is how the scarce resource of time can be exploited maximally by the leisure (or experience) industry. The other path implies a decommodification of time which bears the potential to entail a less compulsive time-use and more qualitative and satisfying social relations.¹²

Toward a partial decommodification of time: temporal welfare

In view of the far-reaching commodification of the temporal structures of everyday life several researchers have put forward the concept of temporal welfare during the last decade (Goodin et al. 2004; Reisch 2002, 2001, Rinderspacher 2002, Scherhorn 1995, 1999; and Swait et.al. 2004). The regulation of work time and annual paid vacation are two core components of temporal welfare that early on were incorporated in the agenda of the labour movements in most west European countries (SOU 2002:6 and 2002:22, se also Thompson 1967). These early time-political demands in the beginnings of the 20th century were closely related to participation in working life and quantitative aspects of time-use (e.g. the 8-hour workday) whereas the more contemporary definitions of temporal welfare try to integrate more qualitative aspects of time-use into the predominantly quantitative concept of public welfare. The principal goal of this turn to temporal issues is to impede the increasing

commodification of time in more aspects of everyday life than just paid work, important areas pointed out are for example unpaid work, child care or leisure activities. According to this decommodified model of time and time-use as described by Reisch (1999 and 2002) the following components are essential for the establishment and promotion of temporal welfare: a sufficient amount of time for processes of sociability and social reproduction (i.e. shared, cooperative time); the temporal freedom to establish individual rhythms and patterns of time use in different areas of everyday life (i.e. temporal autonomy); and a cultural and social multitude of temporal perceptions and logics with the potential to counterbalance the dominant capitalistic temporal logic according to which “time is money” (i.e. temporal diversity).

The concept of temporal welfare put forward by Reisch and other authors raises some important questions. To what extend is this theoretical concept supported by the citizens’ everyday evaluations of time and decisions concerning time-use? How do people experience, assess and weigh different aspects of temporal welfare, i.e. cooperative time, temporal autonomy and temporal diversity? How do they define wealth in time and how is this temporal wealth weighed against economic wealth? Is the prevalent experience of time shortage gainfully employed caused by an actual increase in work, both paid and unpaid, and family time and thus open to influence through political measures, e.g. parents insurance or legislation on working hours? Or should it rather be seen as an effect of the growing multitude of available choices in everyday life? In which ways is this evaluation of time imbued with economic or moralistic reasoning and which factors determine the moral economy of time, i.e. which different social contexts separate “expensive” or “good time” from “cheap” or “bad time”? How important is temporal autonomy (the availability of time for oneself) and uncommodified time for their perception of welfare? These are some of the questions I will try to illuminate in the following analysis how some inhabitants of Stockholm experience and think about the relevance of time in their everyday lives.

Data

This paper is based upon qualitative in-depth interviews carried out by a small team of researchers with 49 inhabitants (27 women and 22 men whose age varied between 38 and 59 years¹³) of the Greater City Area of Stockholm¹⁴ in 2003 and 2004 as part of a

follow-up of an earlier study. During the course of this earlier study conducted in 1999 a total number of 634 inhabitants of the Greater City Area of Stockholm were interviewed extensively on various issues such as household economy, daily routines, paid as well as unpaid work and leisure activities. The interviewees were also asked whether they agreed to further participation in our follow-up study. Due to this initial self-selection the follow-up study is based on a non-probability sample and the results presented in this paper are therefore not representative for a certain group of inhabitants of Stockholm.

Of the 542 interviewees who agreed to partake, 80 individuals were selected for follow-up interviews on the basis of their household's specific combination of economic and cultural capital. The interviews were carried out in the fall of 2002 and in 2003. The semi-structured interviews took between 45 minutes and three hours. One of the main topics of our follow-up interviews is the evaluation of time and temporal resources in relation to economical resources. The interviewees were specifically asked to consider in detail two options for the future of welfare distribution and politics in Sweden over the course of the next 50 years: on the one hand a scenario where the average amount of working-hours is roughly the same as today, combined with a substantial raise in wages (approximately 50% higher than today); and on the other hand a scenario where a substantial decrease in working hours (more than 10 hours less work time weekly) is accompanied by stagnating wages. In order to put the interviewees' hypothetical reasoning onto a more concrete ground they were asked to imagine themselves and the two scenarios 50 years ahead in time, but against the background of their actual age and family situation. Throughout the interview the interviewees were encouraged to freely consider the two alternatives. They were also questioned about likely (and desired) changes in everyday life in each of the two scenarios, for example if they would change their usual ways to prepare and eat food, or if they would change their patterns of travel in everyday life.

The interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. They were subsequently coded with the help of a computer program for the qualitative analysis of texts (Nud*ist). The coding included firstly an array of background factors (age, gender, place of birth, education, occupation, income, patterns and means of daily travel, average

hours in paid work per week, household structure, phase in life-cycle and housing situation) and secondly codes for economical and temporal practices as well as perceptions and values (for example both concrete economic situation and perception of luxury and necessity or actual use of time and evaluation of different periods of time). Since this study is primarily concerned with the temporal life-worlds of urban citizens, i.e. their evaluation of time and the varying meanings that they ascribe to specific periods of time and activities, the analysis presented in this paper focuses upon the qualitative, symbolic dimension of time and its different uses as interpreted and expressed by our interviewees.

Results - In search of lost time

One of the main objectives of our study was to find out what our interviewees considered being the most beneficial choice for their everyday life: more money (in form of higher wages) or more spare time (less paid work). This choice was set against the background of our respondents' own definition of a good life, and what they feel they are lacking the most in their actual everyday lives. Regarding this concrete choice between time and money the results of our study are quite clear: the great majority of our interviewees choose time instead of money.¹⁵ This result is not too surprising given the results of recent studies which indicate that the general level of temporal welfare is quite low in Sweden in comparison to many other OECD-countries, especially in Western Europe (Garhammar 2002 and 2001). A closer inspection shows that the preference for more time is the same throughout different groups included in our study, there are for example no systematic differences between women or men, younger and older respondents, low-wage or high-wage earners or between respondents with different levels of education, even if the reasons given for the actual choice differ considerably.

Our results correspond with the findings of many contemporary studies of time and values in both Western Europe and the USA: a large proportion of the workforce would prefer reduced working-hours to higher wages (see for example Robinson & Godbey 1996 for the similar results of the 1991 Hilton Time Values Project). This desire for reduced work time is by no means a new phenomenon and the reduction of work time has been an important goal for the European labour movement during most of the 20th century, as described in this papers discussion of temporal welfare. In a

Swedish study which was part of an official investigation of working-hours from 1956, the majority of respondents stated that they would prefer shorter work days to higher wages. But in contrast to the 1950ies our respondents show a considerable uncertainty regarding the final goal of reduced working-hours. 50 years ago the possibility of more spare time and thus more leisure was the obvious goal of reduced working-hours, but for the urban citizens interviewed in our study things are not quite as clear cut. Many of them are skeptical to the recreational value of contemporary leisure activities, which are described as just as much stressful as work. They do not only desire more spare time but another, calmer pace in everyday life, and that desire applies to the whole of everyday life, to leisure and work alike.

Regarding the value of time, the findings of our study are ambiguous. Many interviewees expressed a marked distinction between priceless individual and family time on the one hand, and on the other hand time and time-uses that can be measured according to economical reasoning, mostly wage work but also some forms of unpaid work or even leisure activities (for example golf played during work-hours or individual studies like languages, both described as part of the interviewees work duties). But our study also includes a substantial number of respondents who question if this division still is meaningful because the value of time according to their apprehension ultimately is determined by money. Time and money are seen as an inseparable unity as expressed by the following respondent, a 46-year old women (cohabiting, no children, average income and average working hours¹⁶):

Interviewee: If I had more time it would most certainly cost more to live, so if I don't have more money, I don't need more time. All in all, this means that if I lack either money or time, I don't need the other, regardless of which end one starts with.

For this respondent the value of time and money are inseparably intertwined. Furthermore, activities that are free of charge are not something she considers in the first place. Instead, the only leisure activities worth taking into account are apparently the ones that cost money, i.e. commodified leisure. Asked to choose between more time and more money the respondent chose time nonetheless, because “.....more material assets without time after all seems to be the inferior deal”.

As mentioned earlier, not all respondents concur with this view of time and money as totally interchangeable. But even those interviewees who argue that the value of time

in some areas of life, for example time spent with family or friends, is essentially different from paid work's instrumental temporal rationality as manifested in employment contracts, have some difficulties in describing this distinction between commodified and uncommodified time. The modern, capitalistic conception of the value of time as being equivalent to the exact sum of money somebody else is willing to pay for the work done in this period of time, is so prevalent that it seems quite complicated to articulate a contrasting picture totally unaffected by the temporal logic of commodified time. This intricacy can be illustrated with the following example, taken from the interview with a 43 year old woman (married with 2 children, high income, above average working hours):

Interviewee: Between the alternative with more money and the one with more time, I would chose time, I really would. I mean, at the end of the day I sometimes ask myself, maybe on the way home or rushing to some recreational activities with my children, I ask myself if there is any way they [her company] could pay me enough for my time, it seems priceless at those moments. I like my work, I really do, and they pay me a lot. Actually, I'm not quite sure that I would want to reduce my working hours if I was to be the only one at my work place, like having a part-time job. That wouldn't be possible in my line of work anyway. /...../ But the nagging feeling is there, my time is running short and I give most of it to the company, not to my family. Maybe I should sell my time to the highest bidder and see what my family is willing to offer /....laughing/.

Even though this respondent describes her time as priceless she is aware of the fact that she indeed is selling it to the highest bidder regardless of the uneasy feeling this transaction leaves her with. The same respondent later on describes the temporal benefits of parental leave¹⁷:

Interviewee: I really enjoyed the time I could stay at home with my children. Of course, the money from the parental leave insurance was not comparable to my salary but I never felt too bad about that. It was worth it for me and my children. And I still think that you really need this much undivided time for children, and not just when they are small. This insight hurts sometimes, because as I said before, I really don't think that my children get all the attention they need. These days, time is more easily taken than given.

Parental leave is just one of several examples of the sometimes unexpected temporal consequences of welfare politics accompanying, and sometimes contradicting, the more explicit political struggle for shorter working-hours during the whole of the 20th century.¹⁸ The question is if the establishment of state-controlled areas of temporal autonomy conduces to a gradual decommodification of time, or if it only contributes to the creation of insignificant temporal sanctuaries in the hegemonic domain of

capitalist production. Nevertheless, the widespread experience of time famine, discussions about the burnout syndrome and demands for more temporal welfare are definitely causing some disruption for the capitalist, commodified temporal logic. In the following part of this paper I will examine more closely how the interviewees in our study experience, assess and weigh the different components of temporal welfare mentioned before, i.e. cooperative time, temporal autonomy and temporal diversity.

Cooperative time

One of the peculiarities with time, and one of its biggest differences in comparison to money, is that we all, at least in the short perspective and on the daily level, have the same amount of time at our disposal (Brown 1970). This time has to cover different areas of everyday life like paid and unpaid work, family, friends, leisure etc. The concept of cooperative time stresses the importance of being able to spend a sufficient amount of time for processes of sociability and social reproduction, for example by meeting friends or by helping out in voluntary organizations. The constant shortage of time both at work and in their spare time experienced by our interviewees has noticeable consequences also when it comes to cooperative time. The following citation is taken from the interview with a 42 years old father of two children (married, high income and well above average working-hours):

Interviewee: I feel that I really have been wanting for time for quite some while now. I'm not able to manage my job thoroughly, actually, I don't get things done properly but everything is finished a little by halves, so to speak, I never complete anything to perfection. And I really think that this feeling of running round, round, round, without ever getting to conclude a task before I have to take on the next assignment and the one after that, this feeling is putting me down. And it's everything, from work to things to fix with our house to early morning parents' meetings at my children's day-care centre or helping out in our ice-hockey clubs cafeteria, I can't find the time.

Even though this respondent tries to take an active part in the public affairs of his local community, partly due to his children's leisure activities, he feels that he hasn't got enough time to make a sufficient effort. Interestingly enough this respondent, who clearly expresses his discomfort with the time famine that characterizes his everyday life, nevertheless chooses the alternative with more money instead of more time. In explanation of this choice he states that more money would mean that he and his wife could afford to buy more household services and thus have more time for the family. But more important, he would be able to give his undivided attention to his work and really get things done properly. Our interviewee is quite conscious of the fact that his

family would suffer in the long run, but the logic of his modern task-orientation towards time is quite stunning: a well done job has visible results and transforms the time put into the job into something valuable. At the same time, the demands of family life are described as limitless by him and several other respondents. Time spent with children has to be organized meticulously and is frequently experienced as more laborious than paid work, a result that confirms the findings of Hochschild's research on the relation between work, family and time in an American context (Hochschild 1996 and 1997).

The possibility to buy household services in order to reduce the arduous tasks of household labour and to attain more spare time is mentioned by several other respondents who would like to outsource some of the more strenuous and boring domestic chores, like the following respondent, a 39 year old man with two children, cohabiting, above average income and average working hours. He first chooses time, but then gets a little unsure of this choice:

Interviewee: More time, absolutely. But, come to think of it, maybe not. If you see it this way: more money creates more time, it's as simple as that.

Interviewer: Yes, exactly. But I thought that you just said that....

Interviewee: Well, I certainly did. Maybe I was a little too fast to come to a conclusion. Yes, perhaps the choice doesn't really matter. If you can buy yourself free from certain chores you get more time. I think the main difference would be the following: if we got more time we would buy ourselves free from the routine activities, for example household work. No more cleaning and similar duties, that would be fantastic. If we got more time, well, I at least would prefer a weekday off, for example Fridays, that would give me longer weekends to spend with my family and with friends. /.../ But it wouldn't have a big effect when it comes to other weekdays, it would still be difficult to keep up with everything. I wouldn't be able to attain freedom in the same way as with money. /..../ Anyway, after all this seems to be the smarter model. Strictly speaking we, who do so much household work, are quite stupid. It's just the traditional way of doing things that we are stuck with, mediated by our parents: clean this, manage that and do it on your own etc. It really is old fashioned, but hard to break with. But if we turn the argument around and put it this way: I don't feel that we need more money, we really would need more time. It only seems so much easier to buy more time. It's simple, more money gets me more time, and better time at that.

Even though this respondent wishes for more time with family and friends he arrives at the conclusion that more spare time plainly is not good enough, everyday life wouldn't change as much as he desires. More money, on the other hand, would allow him to free himself from tedious work in the household. According to this interviewee time shouldn't be de-commodified at all but rather turned into an even more integrated

part of capitalist economy, where he can sell his time in order to buy more personal time for leisure or cooperative time by means of professional housework services. And this bought time is worth more than time attained by working less, a viewpoint that gives us an indication not only of the temporal logic of capitalism but also of its great persuasive power.

Temporal autonomy

Having plenty of spare time is no guarantee for temporal welfare since it is equally important that this spare time is accompanied by temporal freedom, that is the freedom to establish individual rhythms and patterns of time use in different areas of everyday life, for example time for different activities as ordinary consumption, political commitment or taking care of oneself. Previous research on time use has uncovered a considerable gender gap when it comes to temporal autonomy. Women usually report more spare time than men, but also less temporal autonomy since their spare time to a higher extent than men's is spent in the household, taking care of household work and children. Women's spare time has been described as fragmented and marked by distinct emergency-character since they at all times have to be prepared to step in and take care. Gershuny and Fisher (2000:626) emphasize that the important difference between spare time and leisure is to be found at the level of experience, that is, to what extent time is experienced as free from obligations.

However, our study shows no apparent differences between the sexes when it comes to the experience of temporal autonomy. The probable explanation is the fact that there is no significant difference between women's and men's weekly hours spent in paid work, even if women still tend to have the main responsibility for household work and childcare (i.e. unpaid work). One form of time that many respondents in our study value highly is time of their own, time to take care of themselves. One respondent (48 years old, married mother of two children no longer living at home, average income and above average working-hours) weighs this form of time against economic assets in the following way:

Interviewee: ... of course you can buy expensive jewellery and such things. But I consider time being much more important. /.../Actually, I don't think that you have to do so many things. Just being and taking care of myself, I find that very comfortable.

Another interviewee (39 year old man with two children, cohabiting, above average income and average working hours) also expresses a wish for more spare time:

Interviewee: Well, I really don't seem to find the time to practise anymore. I used to work out earlier, and I jogged. /.../If I had more time, and if I would work say two hours less every day, there would definitely be more time to take care of myself. I know this sounds quite selfish, but it is something I really feel would give my life more quality, but right now there just isn't time. Well, OK, technically speaking there is time at the end of the day, but absolutely no energy left.

Helga Nowotny has described this longing for more personal time as characteristic for the temporal structures of late modernity (Nowotny 1993). Not at all accidental, this individual control over time emerged as one of the distinguishing elements of late modern identity formation in an age where social time is accelerating and the general feeling is that time is running short. The conspicuous consumption of leisure in the upper classes at the end of the 19th century, as described by Veblen (1970 [1899]), has today been substituted with the conspicuous display of harriedness, both at work and at home (e.g. Burenstam Linder 1970). For some respondents the value of time is tainted not only by constant stress, but also by the lack of control caused by this imperative to be busy, a feeling illustrated by the following respondent, a 42 years old father of two children, married, high income and well above average working-hours:

Interviewee: ...everything is so restrained by the lack of time, and stressful, everyday life is incredibly demanding. At the same time our whole society seems to be constructed in such a way that it would be difficult to live a different life. Everybody has a lot of scheduled activities ... and I suspect that if anything the scheduled leisure activities are increasing for everybody. The pace of life seems to be the same even if you get more spare time, you just get occupied by activities that take time other than work. You have to have a constant flow of experiences, both as child and adult, and this demand has become a matter of course in today's society. It is no longer socially acceptable not to be busy and pressed for time regardless of how much, or how little, you work.

Confronted with the fundamental imperative of late modern society, which is to experience one's life without delay, this respondent gives expression to the fundamental dilemma of the time saver described by Burenstam-Linder (1970) over thirty years ago. The rationality of time saving in work and its leisure leads to less (and not more) disposable time. Leisure is subjected to the rationale of maximising production by using more and more high-quality material assets per unit of time, but unfortunately this rationale isn't quite applicable to many leisure activities, an opera by Verdi takes three hours and it seems difficult to consume more than one opera

during this period of time or to speed up the production of the opera. The result is stress, the striving to instantaneously experience many things at once when many of them should be experienced slowly, one by one.

Temporal diversity

The concept of temporal diversity lies at the very heart of temporal welfare since it reflects the very necessity of alternatives to the commodified temporal logic of capitalism. If not all time is money, what could it be instead? A desire frequently expressed by our respondents is the wish for alternation, variation and spontaneity in everyday life. One interviewee (a women of 38 years, cohabiting, average income and average working-hours) calls this time “improvisation time”:

Interviewee: ...then I need time of my own just to do things I like. I don't know if this time is meant for a specific activity /..../ A time where I can choose what feels right to do at that moment, something I really want to do right then. Improvisation time /laughing/

When it comes to spontaneity in everyday life lack time isn't perceived as the only obstacle, economic means are mentioned by quite a few respondents, for example the following interviewee (women, 44 years old, married, 2 children, below average income, average working-hours):

Interviewer: Are there things or activities you can't afford at the moment?

Interviewee: Well, I haven't got enough money to take a holiday or to travel, I really would have to save money in order to be able to travel. Yes, and being able to do other things. Maybe going to the theatre at short notice, or something like that. It would work even today, but everything is so expensive.

For this interviewee it is the lack of money, not of time, that prevents a more spontaneous use of time. She also mentions holidays and travelling, which by and large seems to be the preferred domain for the different conceptions of temporal diversity as expressed by our respondents. For some the overall idea of vacation as time of from work seems to be the most important aspect of holidays, for example the following respondent (man, 39 years old, cohabiting, two children, average wage, average working-hours) who imagines himself taking time out during the weekend:

Interviewer: Are there other things or activities where you feel that you haven't got the time. You mentioned your children

Interviewee: That would be time for myself. No, I think that ... I don't know how to put that, but I feel that I sometimes almost loose myself. It is all so

much. It's work, and it's family, work and family. Sometimes, när Ullis [respondents partner) and the kids go away for a weekend, that is like a mini-vacation for me. I really consider it being a mini-vacation. On those occasions I can truly concentrate on doing absolutely nothing in our apartment. I just walk around the apartment and enjoy myself. I miss that part.

Other respondents have more elaborate, and expensive, schemes of trying to escape the temporal treadmill, at least for a while. The longing for distant places and experiences beyond the ordinary everyday life also embraces the notion of different temporal rationalities or ways to handle time abroad. The following citation is taken from the interview with a 43 year old woman (married with 2 children, high income, above average working hours):

Interviewee: In march [the month that the interview was conducted] we really look forward to this years vacation. We share a summer cottage with some relatives but usually we don't stay that long. It doesn't feel like a real vacation, the cottage is not far away from Stockholm and people are coming and leaving all the time. These last years, well, our kids are still small so we don't want to travel too far, and we have friend who helped us to rent a villa in a small village, Cogolin, near Saint Tropez. We have been there three times now and it is wonderful. And not at all stressful or busy, on the contrary. Well, the villa is quite secluded and our friends have a sailboat, we don't stay in Saint Tropez much. But it really feels like a time-travel backwards, the pace is totally different.

For this respondent temporal diversity is no longer conceivable at home, not even at the traditional setting for the Swedish Summer vacation: the cottage. Instead, the solution lies in an exotic – and exclusive – time reserve abroad.

Conclusions

The majority of our interviewees consider time scarcity and temporal welfare to be very important issues that need to be integrated into the traditional concept of welfare. One major argument put forward by many interviewees was the urgent need to find more time for one's family and oneself, another frequent argument concerned the necessity to decouple the value of time from capitalistic, commodified temporal ethics according to which the value of time is set in relation to the demand for this time. This view is not surprisingly expressed most strongly by upper middle-class interviewees living in a dual breadwinner, high-income households with a notorious scarcity of time. The experience of time shortage was expressed even by respondents with average or below average working hours, who still described everyday life as burdened with too many choices and too many obligations. Some interviewees even

argue that modern welfare politics should be more aimed at the temporal dimension and needs of everyday life.

The three components of temporal welfare discussed in this paper, shared, cooperative time, temporal autonomy and temporal diversity were all shown to be valid for the way the majority our interviewees conceive of temporal welfare. A common feature of the new evaluation of time and the new temporal arrangements under discussion is that they articulate a counterpicture to the commodified concept of time according to which the value of time is solely determined by work and economic aspects. But the interviewees are also aware of the fact that the shortage of time to a great extend is the consequence of a growing complexity of aspirations, aims and possibilities in everyday life. The decommodification of time thus necessitates more than mere economical fixes (e.g. longer vacations or more generous regulations for parental leave), sooner or later it calls for a more radical break with traditional ideas of public welfare and wealth.

Put together, the results of this study on the temporal life-worlds of the urban citizens implicate the strong need for the inclusion of a temporal dimension in the traditional concept of public welfare. The achievement of temporal welfare requires a more conscious time-politics in order to decommodify time, for example a new evaluation of the time used for the upbringing of children, time spent in education or time for oneself. An even more radical approach would be the introduction of citizens' wage that would challenge traditional concepts of which time (and time-use) that is worth being paid for.

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Notes

¹ A very informative historical overview of the sociology of time is given by Pronovost (1989). The importance of time and the temporal dimension for social theory has been noticed and developed by many researchers, particularly from the 1970s onward; see for example the works of Adam 1990; Bergmann 1981; Elias 1988; Stanko & Ritsert 1994 and Wendorff 1985 and 1989.

² The notion that time in everyday life has to be conceived as a social construction is almost self-evident. What else could it be, naturally given? (cf. Aspers 2001b on the concept of social constructions in everyday life). Even the natural sciences need socially determined points of reference in order to grasp and define the “natural” flow of time (cf. Hawking 1988).

³ Cf. Elias 1988:IXf and 113f. Elias describes the experience and evaluation of time not only as symbols for an extensive synthesis on a high level of abstraction, but also as an emblem for the changed relations between individuals in modern society.

⁴ The complex relations between time, space and social action are examined more closely and put into an integrated theoretical form in Hägerstrands time-geography, which focuses especially on the restrictions that emanate from specific socio-temporal and spatial constellations (see Hägerstrand 1970 and 1972; see also see Giddens 1984:132-144).

⁵ A detailed outline of how such an empirical phenomenological approach might be applied in social sciences can be found in Aspers 2001a, especially in appendix A: “A Guide to Phenomenological Sociology”, pp.253-310; see also Kersten 1989.

⁶ Adam 1995:95 “Moreover, when there is a need to coordinate multiple times – the times, for example, of paid work, leisure, school, meals, shopping, caring and voluntary work commitments – then we begin to see that not all times are equal, that some times are clearly privileged and deemed more important than others. This different treatment of times becomes visible in the sequencing and prioritizing of certain times and in the compromises in time allocation that have to be achieved on a daily basis. Thus is it rarely questioned that work, school and organized leisure times (in that order of importance) take priority over shopping and mealtimes, that the times which are governed by commodified time take precedence over those outside the time economy of employment relations”.

⁷ “A further source of under-employment was that arising from the social habits of the community, i.e. voluntary under-employment and in particular a marked preference for leisure instead of higher earnings....”. (Coleman 1956:290)

⁸ See also Marx 1962[1867]:287: “Es kostet Jahrhunderte, bis der ‚freie‘ Arbeiter infolge entwickelter kapitalistischer Produktionsweise sich freiwillig dazu versteht, d. h. gesellschaftlich gezwungen ist, für den Preis seiner gewohnheitsmäßigen Lebensmittel seine ganze aktive Lebenszeit, ja seine Arbeitsfähigkeit selbst, seine Erstgeburt für ein Gericht Linsen zu verkaufen“.

English translation taken from the first English edition of 1887: “It takes centuries ere the "free" labourer, thanks to the development of capitalistic production, agrees, i.e., is compelled by social conditions, to sell the whole of his active life, his very capacity for work, for the price of the necessaries of life, his birth-right for a mess of pottage.” (Marx 1954[1867]:280).

⁹ Marx 1983:596: “Die Arbeitszeit als Maß des Reichtums setzt den Reichtum selbst als auf der Armut begründet und die disposable Zeit als existierend im und durch den Gegensatz zur Surplusarbeitszeit oder Setzen der ganzen Zeit eines Individuums als Arbeitszeit und Degradation desselben daher zum bloßen Arbeiter, Subsumtion unter die Arbeit.”

The English translation from the 1973 edition of *Grundrisse*: “The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time. Labour time as the measure of value posits wealth itself as founded on poverty, and disposable time as existing in and because of the antithesis to surplus labour time; or, the positing of an individual's entire time as labour time, and his degradation therefore to mere worker, subsumption under labour.” (Marx 1973[1858]:708).

¹⁰ Marx states in a well-known and often cited quotation that: “Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself”. In the original text this is expressed as follows: “Gemeinschaftliche Produktion vorausgesetzt, bleibt die Zeitbestimmung natürlich wesentlich. Je weniger Zeit die Gesellschaft bedarf, um Weizen, Vieh etc. zu produzieren, desto mehr Zeit gewinnt sie zu anderer Produktion, materieller oder geistiger. Wie bei einem einzelnen Individuum hängt die Allseitigkeit ihrer Entwicklung, ihres Genusses und ihrer Tätigkeit von Zeitersparung ab. *Ökonomie der Zeit, darin löst sich schließlich alle Ökonomie auf*. Ebenso muss die Gesellschaft ihre Zeit zweckmäßig einteilen, um eine ihren Gesamtbedürfnissen gemäße Produktion zu erzielen; wie der Einzelne seine Zeit richtig einteilen muss, um sich Kenntnisse in angemessenen Proportionen zu erwerben oder um den verschiedenen Anforderungen an seine Tätigkeit Genüge zu leisten. *Ökonomie der Zeit, sowohl wie planmäßige Verteilung der Arbeitszeit auf die verschiedenen Zweige der Produktion, bleibt also erstes ökonomisches Gesetz auf Grundlage der gemeinschaftlichen Produktion. Es wird sogar in viel höherem Grade Gesetz.*“ (Marx 1983[1858]:89, *my italics*).

The English translation from the 1973 edition of *Grundrisse*: “On the basis of communal production, the determination of time remains, of course, essential. The less time the society requires to produce wheat, cattle etc., the more time it wins for other production, material or mental. Just as in the case of an individual, the multiplicity of its development, its enjoyment and its activity depends on economization of time. *Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself*. Society likewise has to distribute its time in a purposeful way, in order to achieve a production adequate to its overall needs; just as the individual has to distribute his time correctly in order to achieve knowledge in proper proportions or in order to satisfy the various demands on his activity. Thus, economy of time, along with the planned distribution of labour time among the various branches of production, remains the first economic law on the basis of communal production. It becomes law, there, to an even higher degree.” (Marx 1973[1858]: 172-3).

¹¹ The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze (1992) argues in his study of the emerging “Experience Society” in Germany that experience value (*Erlebniswert*) is quickly replacing use- and monetary values in significance (see also Schulze 2000). As people in affluent Western societies have become economically secure and possess all the material commodities they desire, they are re-orientating their lives more and more towards experiences: to live and to experience have nearly come to mean the same thing. As a consequence, the market for experiences is expanding fast (cf. Pine & Gilmore 1999 for a similar study with an American focus). A vastly growing number of companies, organizations and institutions, from shopping malls to universities, from theme parks to Greenpeace, all are now offering experiences rather than just goods or services to their clientele.

¹² Thompson 1967:95: “If we maintain a Puritan time-valuation, a commodity valuation, then it is a question of how this time is put to use, or how it is exploited by the leisure industries. But if the

purposive notation of time-use becomes less compulsive, then men might have to re-learn some of the arts of living lost in the industrial revolution: how to fill the interstices of their days with enriched, more leisurely, personal and social relations; how to break down once more the barriers between work and life.”

¹³ This rather narrow age interval is due to the research design of the previous study of 1999. The population of this study was restricted to inhabitants of Greater Stockholm between 35 and 54 years of age in order to get the desired information on the environmental impact of household consumption. People in this particular age group can be assumed to have well established housing and consumption patterns.

¹⁴ The Greater City Area corresponds with Stockholm County, excluding some rural areas to the far south and north of the city and most of the island in the Stockholm archipelago.

¹⁵ The great majority being 40 out of 49 interviewees. Due to the non-probability nature of the studies' sample no shares or percentages are given in the text in order to avoid an imaginary impression of statistical generality. This does not mean that it would be wrong to interpret the tendencies found in our study as general tendencies, only that we cannot draw conclusions as to the precise proportions in the population of this study (Inhabitants of the Greater City Area of Stockholm between the ages of 38 and 59).

¹⁶ The average for working hours per week in our sample was 43 hours (paid work only). This comparatively high number accentuates the fact that gainfully employed, active persons presumably are overrepresented in our study, due to the constricted age interval of the original sample and the low unemployment rates in the Greater City Area of Stockholm. The average income was 23 000 SEK (appr. 3300\$ in 2004) which lies above the average in Sweden but is quite close to the average income in the Greater City Area of Stockholm.

¹⁷ In Sweden, in the year 2004 the parents of a newborn child could dispose of 450 days of paid parental leave (to distribute among themselves almost as they like, one month is reserved for either parent). For 360 of these days the Social Insurance Fund pays 80% of the wages of the parent on parental leave (up to a certain level, approximately 23000 SEK (3300 \$) in 2003, above this wage limit the compensation is fixed at 80% of the limit). For the remaining 90 days the Social Insurance Fund pays a fixed amount of about 15\$ a day. These days are at the parents' disposal until the child reaches the age of eight, i.e. normally the child's second year in elementary school.

¹⁸ This paper unfortunately leaves no space to discuss parental leave, or more generally temporal welfare, from a gender perspective, an issue that would call for a paper of its own (cf. Lausten & Sjørup 2003). Although there are no obvious gender differences regarding the choice between money and time, a closer examination of women's and men's different ways to think about and evaluate time in our material has yet to be conducted.