

Time-rich and Time-poor Living Conditions: Balancing Time and Income in Everyday Life

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This article focuses on the division of work and private life in a Swedish community. An interview study sheds some light on the diversity of time frames experienced by people living inside and outside the labour market. It examines in which way this duality is paving the way for new patterns of inequality. The purpose is to explore the living conditions of two groups in society: the *time-poor* who are established in the labour force that experience great demands on their efficiency and educational level and the *time-rich* who do not have a natural place in the labour market. People experience an unbalanced division of time and resources not only in work situations but also in everyday life in the home and in leisure time. The time-rich can experience having small margins partly due to a lack of social networks and social recognition, while the time-poor experience it due to multiple and unwieldy social roles in and outside labour market. Society has tried to cope with these two different problems in completely different ways, although both problems are related to income, one through salaried work and the other through income support. The results do not only exhibit the polarizing tendencies in terms of time and income. There are also similar differences concerning social participation. Time-rich people have a hard time finding alternative social networks outside the labour market. At the same time, many life course changes that require both a lot of time and a lot of money occur in time-poor living conditions. A restriction analyses, inspired by the time geographical approach, shows a diversity of time patterns and timespace restrictions between different life forms in everyday life. When the individuals' whole life situation is taken into consideration, the diversity of time patterns creates restrictions that oppose strategies for work/life balance in everyday life.

Introduction

From a historical perspective, negotiations between parties in the labour market have improved the redistribution of working time and increased individual well-being. However, today, while welfare arrangements are able to solve many problems in regard to material shortcomings, workers seem to be unable to cope with a constant lack of time. With the inclusion of women and particularly mothers in the labour market, household working hours have increased (Timmermans et al. 2002). In this way, a “work society” is created as the working week is tied to paid work and policies essential to life which determines one’s social position (Sanne 1995). In loyalty to the employer, conflicts can appear when it comes to other responsibilities and commitments outside the labour market. So how do people manage to bring different roles together in everyday life as a worker, parent, husband/wife, child to ageing parents, house owner, sport practiser, politically engaged – at home, work, sports ground, school, hospital and club premises? In the long run, narrow limits can be established that make it hard to live up to the expectations in everyday life. The impact of flexible labour market demands, in relation to work times, work places and private life, is one of many factors behind an imbalance between time and income that poses questions about the organisation of everyday life.

- This article is about the difficult life problem faced by hard-working individuals at the peak of their careers, who are trying to balance work and their personal life. It’s about the “time-poor” that have been at the centre of the recent decades changing working life with increasing demands on qualifications, performance and dependency upon paid labour in time and identification. Although a pleasurable working life with long working hours can be a positive personal experience, many people fit work and life in an undesired way. In those cases, working life has become a straitjacket that tends to control and restrict other domains in everyday life. At the same time, a different problem emerges in “time-rich” ways of life with limited resources outside the labour market. It’s about citizens of working age with no access to important domains in society who experience another type of unbalance. In spite of periods of low unemployment rates, there are persistently high numbers of people outside the labour market. Among the people of working age which are not asked for in a changing working life, we find in particular low-educated young people, older workers and immigrants. These time-rich individuals are at risk to finding themselves dependent on allowances of social benefit systems.

Both the “time-poor” and the “time-rich” are facing conflicts and stressful living conditions when individual expectations are not in phase with the demands of society. Attempts to handle the tight time frames of the insiders and the scantiness of the outsiders have not limited the problems. The political inability to handle these late-modern unbalances of time and income can in reality reinforce the unbalanced division of those who have and those who have not enough self-experienced time, economic resources and social influence. Time is often taken for granted and looked upon as unproblematic, ignoring the diversity of temporal aspects (Held 2001; Reisch 2001; Fitzpatrick 2004). This upholds a framework where citizens’ ability to determine a flexible working life only has occurred to a limited extent (Furåker et al. 2007). In the article individual experiences of time and to what extent individual influence over one’s own time is possible will be investigated, both in the short and in the long run.

Aims and research questions

This article sheds some light on the aforementioned duality between time-rich and time-poor (Lindskog 2002) living conditions and examines in which way this duality/polarisation is paving the way for new patterns of inequality. The purpose is to explore the living conditions of two groups in society: those who are well-established in the labour market and who experience great demands on their efficiency and educational level, and those who do not have a natural place in the labour market. This poses questions about working life and support, living conditions, domestic work and leisure time and what we do to maintain balance in paid work and private life. The aim is to understand what citizens do to have influence on their disposal of everyday life. The question is what kind of strategies time-rich and time-poor individuals use in order to establish/maintain a life in balance? Is it possible to find empirical evidence for a polarisation of resources? The study maps the division of time and income and discusses why specific ways of life and strategies are preferred to others. The selection procedure is related to an individual perspective where working life is investigated alongside with other dimensions of everyday life.

Method

To document experiences of time restrictions in private households, an approach of semi-structured interviews is used. Twenty four interviews were carried out with inhabitants of a small Swedish community in order to increase knowledge about the individual's time-use in relation to economic resources. During the first six weeks of the field work, meetings with people representing the community, social services, trade unions, working places and newspaper offices were scheduled. Hanging around, talking to people around the small city centre about my project was a way of getting in contact with conceivable interviewees, as well as putting up notes at the local supermarket, work agency and regional social insurance office. All in all, it was quite easy to find people who wanted to talk about their balance or imbalance between work and private life. I just had to make sure that the selection of respondents corresponded to the aim of my study. To get a broad representation of various experiences, both time-rich and time-poor living conditions had to be represented in the interviews, as well as men and women with varying social and cultural backgrounds and different resources and living conditions. When balance in life is to be studied and discussed, the economic resources and differences in income are important. Individual differences and experienced (im)balances in the division of time and income are the lines along which new patterns of stratification are to be investigated.

In order to analyse and categorise the interviews, the life form concept is used as an analytical method. This concept is used to categorize regular patterns of behaviour in a given situation in everyday life. The life form concept specifically pays attention to qualitative cultural differences between ways of life in society. These differences are by no means random, but a consequence of social structures, fundamental for society as such. The life forms constitute basic social motives and the life form analysis can explain the appearance of social phenomena, individual attitudes and structural processes (Jacobsen & Karlsson 1993: 13-25). The life form concept can disclose contrasts between different social groups' way of living (Tyrkkö 1999) and is a method in search of different life forms' needs and demands towards society (Jacobsen & Karlsson 1993). It has also been used as a complement to the time geographical approach (Friberg 1990).

Its original purpose is to describe what is characteristic to a specific life form in everyday life, in terms of eating, sleeping, working, relaxing and so forth (Höjrup 1983). Life form analysis examines contradictions and conflicts between different social groups. The purpose is to find environmental factors of strategical importance and what influence the life forms have on positions in the stratified structure of society. In this article, the concept will describe

differences in the social structures of a local community. A problem is that the original life form analysis focuses on different forms of paid work. Inspired by life form analysis, this article will also include people who do not have an active relation to the labour market. Taking the aim of the article into consideration, these peoples' needs and demands on time and income – which they have more or less access to in interplay with the local community – are as important as the living conditions with stable connections to the labour market. The strategies of the interviewed are expressed in their stories of everyday life. In the analysis, five ways are discovered that reveals relational positions in the division of time and income. The categories are used to discuss individual problems and strategies. The life form categories are based on the interviews and the individual representations is a part of the analyse process. The categories do not constitute a theoretical model to be tested. The discovered life forms are temporary; an individual's position can for instance be explained by age and is related to the life course. It is only people of working age who are represented in the study.

Five life forms in the division of time and income

Time and economic recourses are two principals of differentiation of individual positions in society. In that respect, people in one life form may have enough money to overcome economical restrictions, but at the same time experience time strains in everyday life. People in another life form have time to participate in several domains in society during a day or week, but does not have the economic or social conditions to utilize this possibility. At first sight, these time-rich/income-poor and the time-poor/income-rich living conditions are two main ways of life that can be seen, but this is only one part of the whole picture. The analysis reveals five ways to cope with the division of time and income among the participants. These are: (1) the careerists (time-poor/income-rich), (2) the unwanted (time-rich/income-poor), (3) the independent (time-rich/income-rich), (4) the caretakers (time-poor/income-poor) and (5) the balanced (Enokson 2009).

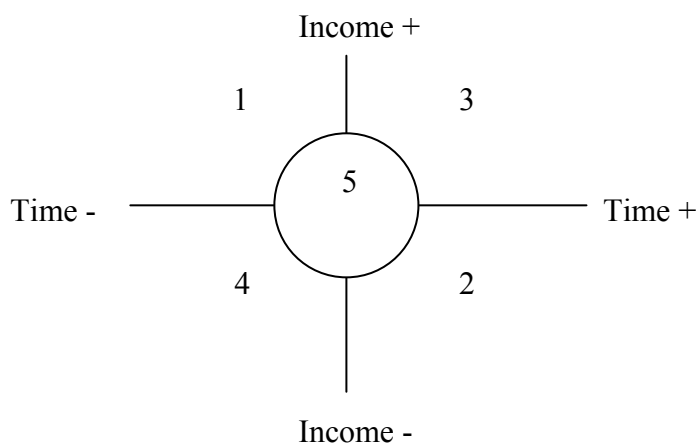


Figure 1: Five ways in coping with the division of time and income.

To categorize the interviews in such a way is not problem-free. One problem with life form categorization is that compartmentalizing people can hide important information and make us blind for new knowledge (Tilly 2000). To be restricted to patterns of explanations rather than more stable generalizations of the empiric material can be understood as a problem. The elasticity of the life forms in late-modern societies is a methodological weakness, but at the same time a condition as the individuals are not representing homogenous groups of people. The purpose in using categorization in life forms, depending on the division of time and economic recourses, is to explore and investigate a rather new field of research. With such a

starting position, the method can be used to get a general view and find out more about a research field that can be further explored.

The careerists

The careerists, who are time-poor but have relatively good access to economic resources, are forced to give up certain activities because of the time-consuming activities at work and in their private lives. Stretched time frames must be coped with by using temporary and occasional structures and processes in everyday life. More time is spent at work than the official duties require, overtime is often unpaid, and it is difficult to know what and how much is expected during a working day. Some time effective transfers and moments are possible to make, both at work and in private life. But leisure time is easily affected in the process, especially if there are small children in the household. The blurred boundaries between work and private life are described as being stressful and the psychological strains make them live on the limit of what is possible. Involving family members, for instance, in the working day is an unorthodox strategy for keeping work and private relationships together.

Erik: “At this job, I don’t have any working hours. It’s about doing it. Trying to be good at it [...] it’s no end to it; it’s always about finding new things to do. Especially at weekends”.

On the other hand, most careerists are pleased with their wages and what they can consume. Enjoying work has also opened doors towards self fulfilment in the career in terms of climbing the social ladder, achieving high social status and high positions in companies and organizations. They are all well paid and time strain can sometimes be compensated by consumption of individual solutions, e.g. household services. The possibilities for rationalisation in household work are, however, limited. The situation comes to a deadlock when duties at work, in the household and the needs of a functioning leisure time create an unbalanced time hardship that traps the individual into a lifestyle without time margins.

The unwanted

The unwanted are time-rich, but have at the same time a difficult economic situation. The unwanted are stigmatized by unemployment or labour market absence due to ill health and subsequent early retirement. They do not have a regular or firm base in the labour market as their resources are not demanded. All the interviewed in this category are dependent on unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, other social benefits or early retirement pensions in order to provide for basic needs. They are constantly reminded of their economic shortcomings and limited means in their everyday lives. There is a great frustration about the inefficiency of unemployment policy strategies to make people “ready for work” and able to return to a dignified social life. These are people who once were a part of the core labour force, but have not been able to adjust to a changed labour market with its demands for flexibility, education and high work rate. At the same time, there are young people and immigrants who have never had the possibility to establish themselves in the labour market. The life pattern of the unwanted is explained in terms of meaninglessness and a humdrum existence without possibility for change. Loneliness in unbalanced living conditions corrodes their self-confidence, and limited margins leads to frustration. This forms a vicious circle that restricts individual actions in everyday life. Single householders dominate this category.

Eva: “It was just empty, it was nothing there. For a month, I read books and I didn’t remember what they were about and I forgot to eat, forgot time. I was just empty. There was nothing. No energy”.

The unwanted have the worst self-experienced living conditions of all the five categories. A strong need for recognition and social inclusion, together with difficulties in having influence on their own situation, provides a feeling of powerlessness when social recognition (Honneth 2003) is strongly dependent on and bound to the labour market. In spite of the fact that the unwanted' is a time-rich form of life, a lack of social networks makes everyday life fragile for a group of individuals who are already confronted with economic difficulties.

Exceptions can be found in social networks outside the labour market, mainly as “ambassadors” in a political struggle for people in the same exposed situation or through informal channels in the local environment. However overall, unemployment and long term sick leave comes as a chock and the small world the individual has at home in everyday life compensates for social structures that recently were accessible on the labour market.

The redistribution of temporary economic support from social security systems without any far-reaching change creates narrow margins for the unwanted. Furthermore, insecurity about economic support does not contribute to the development of social networks in everyday life.

The independents

The independents are in a position outside the labour market in spite of the fact that they are at a working age with relatively good access to both time and money. The position is a voluntary statement due to the fact that they all have worked hard with long working hours to reach their independent goals, supported with means from private insurances, sometimes combined with pensions. But the long-term goal of economic independence has a backside. The lack of a social network outside the labour market makes them think in terms of re-entering the labour market, at least part time. Not working is unnatural and creates an empty identity without sufficient social contacts.

Morgan: “Not working is unnatural. Work gives you an identity. I mean that work is very important [...] Not that I would like to work 100 % or get cracking in full speed, but in some way I would like to feel more needed”.

In other words, the independent might seem to live with a feeling of being well off, without problems of managing time and of having economic strains in everyday life. On the other hand, it seems difficult to make use of these advantages when experiencing a lack of social recognition. A lack of work and the accompanying social integration is overwhelming, despite having a secure economic situation. In order to be a part of society, voluntary work in the local environment could be a solution but this has not been carried out due to a lack of formal ways to do so.

The caretakers

The caretakers' living conditions include the work-related problems of the careerists and the lack of economic resources of the unwanted, with economic and time constraints that characterize everyday life. It is not in such a way that they are necessarily dependent on social support, but rather it is individuals in the local community who are dependent on the caretakers – as they have a caretaking profession, are single parents with children or caretakers of other family members. Examples of this are paid or unpaid occupations in the borderland of voluntary work. This borderland includes a type of “self-chosen” lack of time in projects financed by non-profit organizations. A contribution to society is thus being made with only receiving a little in return in terms of time or income. A way of life that includes values of helping others with worse opportunities in life motivates their work efforts and explains work attitudes.

Jesper: “Working time steals family time. I have non-profit work outside paid labour and it’s real hard to relax. If I could work less and get more time for hobbies, leisure time and family, to get all that [...] that’s what we are working on”.

The caretakers are in a position in the individual life course with a relatively low mean age. The picture of how life is supposed to be fails to correspond with reality, especially in the case of single-parent caretakers. This is an example of a fatalistic approach to the conditions under which they live and how they often explain to themselves their experiences of shortages. The time strain limits social initiatives, just as limited economic resources does. This category is extremely heterogeneous and the span of possible strategies of coping with everyday life is wide.

The balanced

A reasonable functional balance between time and income in everyday life is conceptualized by the balanced. If the careerists have a “careeristic” attitude to work and the caretakers a mission attitude, the balanced attitude towards work is to a greater extent an instrumental one. Experiences, or a sound knowledge, of a high work rate and its link to sickness in terms of a work overload have led to new priorities in the sense of a balanced life. The connection to the workplace suggests that individuals with “traditional” jobs in the manual and manufacturing industries have easier to find a work-life balance. The working hours of the balanced also correspond with the terms of employment. None of the interviewed in this category have voluntary or involuntary overtime duties. It is interesting to note that none of them have small children, something that otherwise demands contribution both in terms of time and economic resources. A capacity to adapt to situations, and modest claims and fulfilment during leisure time characterizes the balanced.

Gerd: “I stressed all the time. I was here and there and everywhere, I didn’t listen to anyone. Now, I have a slower pace and feel better. And I think the other ones agree”.

The balanced have all participated in a meeting or political gathering in the last year and all have income from work. Yet, a widespread belief is that the socio-economic system in society favours time- and income-poor groups and that stability does not pay and that a considerable proportion of public expenditure does not benefit the balanced.

Time, income and social networks

An unbalanced division of time and resources does not only exist in work situations but also in everyday life at home and in leisure time. The time-rich can experience small margins partly due to a lack of social networks and social recognition, while the time-poor experience it due to multiple and unwieldy social roles inside and outside the labour market. The independents’ considerations of re-entering the labour market, even though they do not have the economic need to do so, reveals the importance of having a job in relation to identification and social recognition. At the same time, many careerists experience long working hours and several time and income consuming activities at the same time in their way of life. This then can create a risk for ill-health and marginalization, not only as a workplace problem, but in combination with a time demanding way of life as a whole. In other words: solving ill-health with labour market measures, rehabilitation treatment and occupational training might be counterproductive if not taking the individual’s whole life situation into consideration.

Nevertheless, the careerists’ position in the social structure can be rewarding. Social recognition and status can compensate the failings of time-poor living conditions. The unwanted, on the other hand, are victims of the same processes of individualisation. When success and failures are dependent on the individual, prosperity brings personal freedom

while misfortune is excluding. That limits patterns of behaviour, and restricts the margins, not only for outsiders, but also for careerists established in a hectic working life.

Principally, the strategies of the time-poor are adaption to a demanding pace of life. The strategies of the time-rich are often resignation, but also resistance. This variety of strategies or the lack of strategies in managing patterns of imbalances in everyday life shows that a one-sided debate about stressed time-poor in their careers does not present the whole picture. Unequal and unbalanced distribution of time and income is a problem, not only between different life forms' time use, but also because of the fact that many time consuming demands and activities occur at the same time in the life course. These findings open up for an analysis on restrictions, inspired by a time geographical perspective.

Restriction analysis

In the following, an analysis of constraints draws attention to environment structures in relation to individual needs of sleep, rest and meals. Practices and routines are established to get the "life-puzzle" together and balance work life with private life and domestic work. Sequences of needs and obligations make us dependent on certain ways of doing things in order to fit our lives into the structural organisation of everyday life, for example, opening hours at work, day-care and public authorities. Not to forget the couplings to other people that repeat movements in timespace¹, i.e. where you work out or where you and your friends drink your coffee. Hägerstrand (1991) points out that each individual follows a path in time-space and many individuals' paths taken together create web patterns in timespace. An individual's path through life is bounded by constraints (restrictions). Even if we plan everyday life and create routines in order to get past them, restrictions occur forcing individuals to do things in a different way, or if there are not enough resources to interact in important fields of life. These restrictions can have a location or extension in space and duration in time. There are three different types of restrictions (Hägerstrand 1991; Åquist 1992):

Capability constraints are those which limit the activities of the individual because of his/her biological construction and/or the tools he/she can command. The necessity to sleep a minimum number of hours a day and regular intervals of eating are of overwhelming importance. A restriction in mobility and communication appears as we are unable to travel from one place to another in no-time. We have to compromise between different solutions in timespace. If we, for instance, have access to a car or have the opportunity to go by train, we have an advantage in mobility compared to those who are limited to riding a bike or walking. Differences in capability between individuals or groups in the same local environment can be very large.

Coupling constraints visualize that we are dependent on a place during a certain time, frequently in interaction with others, in order to carry through different projects. Our paths are linked together with others in order to reach jointed goals, e.g. it can be connections for production at a workplace or consumption at the local supermarket. Individuals have to be at a certain place at a certain time, many times guided by schedules, opening hours or time clocks with limited individual freedom of action. As the project continues, individuals are restricted taking part in other activities. Telephone and the Internet allow people to have contact without requiring transportation in timespace. Coupling constraints can, besides entailing a lack of time and social networks, also consist of a lack of technical equipment.

1 Timespace is a limited resource where the scope to carry through certain projects is exposed to mutual competition. The struggle for existence then creates restrictions of what is possible to archive and constitutes the framework of everyday life (Hägerstrand 1991).

Authority constraints are relations of power in timespace control. Individuals, organizations and institutions are limiting the access to domains, such as a territory, labour markets or a club. Restrictions in getting residence permit in Sweden are, for instance, a controlling domain on a national level. Domains in everyday life can be work places, a favourite place in front of the television or a bench at the promenade.

The purpose of using an analysis of constraints is to investigate the restrictions behind the different strategies of the life forms. The method of analysis is used to find constraints in the time budget among the life forms, compare these constraints with social and economical power and in what way they are related to each other.

Competitive time patterns

The restrictions of the life forms focus on the critical importance of time and space when it comes to fitting people and things together in socio-economic systems. A person's biological construction is often taken for granted, but it has to be fit together with times at work, home and in the leisure time. The access to "stations" (Hägerstrand 2002), or places in timespace as the care-centre, the gym, day-care facilities and the supermarket are limited depending on access to resources. If you are, for instance, living in a family with small children, unable to get day-care during working hours, it would probably affect the whole family's allocation of resources. Or if two interesting events, for example a football tournament or a series of lectures, that you do not want to miss makes you want to restructure your time. But a reorganisation of the "life-puzzle" is only possible to a certain extent depending on what time-margins are available. Individual projects are restricted and time becomes a critical resource in timespace. At the same time; certain "projects" (Hägerstrand 1991) are sanctioned by society. Paid labour, as a dominant project, has priority in relation to other activities during the working week. Economically, the duration of parents' allowance and amount of compensation stimulate patterns of behaviour and makes it possible to calculate if time at the series of lectures is time well spent or if it is possible to withdraw from activities connected to paid work.

Based on the above we understand that the restrictions that appear are interplay between matter, time and space in a web of connections between the individual and the world around. The will to get back to work or to follow that football tournament may not be consistent with other activities. In the following, I will identify the restrictions in time-rich and time-poor ways of life and discuss the life of the balanced.

Restrictions among the time-poor

The time geographical approach can be helpful to explain an individual's restrictions and possibilities in the construction of everyday life. The restrictions in timespace are of great importance when identifying underlying necessities that appear in the everyday strategies of the life forms. The careerists' navigating in timespace is limited by their inability to move unimpeded for long distances. The dominating restriction that occurs is the capability constraints. The frame of everyday life can not be bent to include an unmanageable number of projects or stations and compromises have to be made at work and in the leisure time depending on our needs for rest and that travel between stations are more than blinks of the eye.

Capability constraints are also an obstacle for the caretakers as a limitation in mobility and communication. The human body's restricted geographical motion in timespace can be speeded up by access to fast transport methods, especially for those individuals with economic resources among the time-poor. There is of course a limit of geographical motion in timespace, which is not at least shown in the way adaption strategies are handled by the time-

poor. These adaption strategies of adjustment have few alternatives for changing the experienced shortage of time.

One strategy is, however, the careerists' ability to control resources in timespace due to their position at the labour market. Another way is to fall back on a gendered division of work; a male world of paid labour and a female world of unpaid housework. A third way is to reduce the time spent in dominant projects of paid labour. Household services, or a consumption of other people's time, constitute an economic opportunity to the time-poor/income-rich careerists. Time saving household machines, electronic communication or buying a second car are other examples. But again; in spite of having a privileged position in important domains of society, there is a capacity limitation in how that influence can be used.

The capability constraints make it difficult to co-ordinate demands and necessities in private and working life. For this reason, coupling constraints become a problem when the time-poor are interacting in different projects in timespace. That concerns both time-poor life forms. The ambition to be a part of, and have influence in, a variety of projects is limited by restrictions to co-ordinate time for full-time work, parenthood, house projects, a social life and leisure time activities.

Time shortage and limited influence on domains of power contribute to the caretakers' authority constraints. A lack of control over their own lives in, for society, an important nursing or caretaking position represents a type of work, often carried out on a voluntary basis, outside the careerist's traditional labour market regulations. It is an activity that is not rewarding; with no time to ease up the capacity constraints, nor for influencing important fields of authority. A reduction in working time is not a way out as long as the caretakers have so little income. Instead, coping with time strain is trying to do more on a shorter period of time. When the strategies of adjusting to narrow time limits do not correspond to the caretakers' needs for a balanced life, resignation is a response in the presence of social demands and time consuming duties, thus constituting restrictions in stress-related ways of life.

Restrictions among the time-rich

The work/life balance has partly other restrictions in the time-rich ways of life. If the careerists have problems with coupling constraints due to a lack of time, time-rich life forms have the same problems due to a lack of social influence and recognition. The social networks outside the labour market are fragile, for the unwanted as well as for the independents. Common projects in timespace are difficult to carry out. The lack of joint life courses and social participation outside labour market keeps time-rich life forms outside the common timetables that reproduce society. One example is the strategies of liberation, accomplished by the independents. These strategies, when the independent leaves paid work, have contributed to new restrictions and a desire to return to the labour market. This can lead to feelings of resignation towards work as the dominant project in life.

Incomplete or fragmented timetables outside labour market are also a concern for the unwanted's authority constraints and they experience a lack of access to important domains in timespace as their resources are not in demand. Living in a position of dependence with no access to important projects, for example in the labour market, leads to the unwanted being passive and isolated from domains where the couplings of man and tools meet (Hägerstrand 1991). Social activities also demand transportation between different stations in timespace. Transportations require money and thus constitute a capability constraint that may increase the experience of being an outsider.

The time-rich demonstrate a lack of strategies to cope with the different constraints. The feelings of resignation are a reminder of individual failings and shortcomings. A strong desire to get a job and to do one's share among the unwanted and the independents point to the

significance of time spent in paid work and work as a dominant domain in the development of society.

The Balanced and the attitude towards work

The constraints have no considerable impact in the life of the balanced. Paradoxically, the lack of constraints is not always self-chosen. A long working life as a careerist ends up in an untenable situation. Stress and work under pressure with both capability constraints and coupling constraints can lead to long term sick-leaves and a long way back to working life. The fear of once again being stricken by illness and thinking about what is meaningful in life, makes them revalue life and the career ambitions. A way of understanding the change in experienced division of time is a matter of the attitude to paid labour and a perspective that concerns the value of work. In order to overcome the capability constraints and the coupling constraints, the price they have to pay is increased authority constraints and a step back from the social scene where the positions of power are distributed. That means that the balanced lose resources and influence in order to gain more time and a balanced life. Once again, results show how the labour market, as a dominating domain, has a great impact on individuals' experiences of timespace restrictions.

Conclusions

A community study reveals the currently existing difficulties in finding balance in everyday life with time-poor and time-rich living conditions and varying opportunities and strategies to cope with tight margins. Careerists in a hectic working life experience life as an iron-cage, with enough space for consumption but no time to recover in fear of being left behind. The unwanted, supported by marginalizing welfare benefits or activation programmes, wish to contribute in some way to get social recognition and are waiting to show what they could do if they had the chance. The independents want to re-enter the labour market in order to have a richer social life, but are surprisingly dependent on structured social networks in order to do so. The caretakers have a community responsibility for which no one is willing to pay, nor in time or income. What will happen if their informal work suddenly disappeared? The balanced have been able to remain attached or to re-enter the labour market, generally with priorities of a balanced social life and an instrumental attitude to work. Yet, they have a feeling of being in a non-favourable position compared with time-rich and time-poor living conditions in terms of social innovations.

The underlying hypothesis of time geography is that the restrictions interact with each other and intensify each other in concrete situations in timespace. The conclusion of the time geographical patterns of the life forms shows that the restrictions in everyday life have "spill-over" effects. The restriction analysis reveals links between restrictions and different strategies at an individual level. Furthermore, conflicting forces in timespace can come up against the same constraints, but because of very different reasons. Apparently, that is the case with the coupling constraints. The time-poor's lack of time and the time-rich's lack of economic resources and social networks obstruct interaction in order to accomplish joint projects in timespace. This is something that not only poses questions about the life forms' relation to each other, but also moves the perspective from imbalances in individual life courses to an imbalance between individual needs and the demands of society.

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