

Time and work

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ABSTRACT

The cry is heard in many of walks of life that we do not have enough time to do everything we want. There are the pressures of paid work and need of many to juggle employment with household demands, volunteer work and leisure. We are witnessing an intense “space-time compression” due to faster transportation, the internet, communication satellites and the increasing speed of money markets. Against the background of these concerns, this paper explores the issues of time and work. There are many different types of time and that humanity has shaped the perception of time. People designed the hours, days and months. Historians also classify past time into eras.

The paper focuses on two temporal dimensions of work - temporal boundary and temporal content. There temporal boundaries of work are the lines that divide work from leisure and paid work from unpaid work. How many hours or days do we work for payment in a week? How much annual leave and how many holidays? How unpaid work at home is divided on the basis of gender and class? The temporal content of work is the way in which work is organised on a temporal basis. What is the speed of work? How do workers overcome a perception of slow moving time at work?

Finally, the paper explores temporal frames of reference. There is a focus on the past, present and future – historicism, “presentism” and futurism. At its worse historicism is antiquarianism which focuses on history for its own sake and denies any link to the present or future concerns. Historians can also ignore the context in which events occur. Similarly “presentism” denies the relevance of the past, while futurism becomes pure fantasy with no grounding in past or present experiences. Despite these divisions, the three temporal frames of reference are linked. The paper will explore these frames of reference by examining the issue of industrial democracy or employee democracy.

