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Social time, leisure time: which local time planning policy ?

Committee on Social Cohesion
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Summary

Time is a key aspect of citizens' daily quality of life as well as a major factor of inequality.

Therefore an increasing number of local authorities establish time planning policies, which complement spatial planning policies, attuning the organisation of public and private services more to changes in living patterns.

The implementation of these integrated policies gives rise to new forms of institutions, local governance and communication.

The Congress draft resolution and recommendation aim at the adoption of time policies by local authorities everywhere in Europe and encourage the setting up of time offices, which are key instruments of these innovative policies.

¹ L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress
EPP/CD: European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group of the Congress
NR: Members not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress



A. DRAFT RESOLUTION²

1. With “policies on times of the city”, a new form of public action and a new way of looking at spatial management emerged in Europe³ in the early nineties. This approach to urban and spatial planning takes time as a focal point for application, analysis and action.

2. New spatial planning practices and rampant urban development, as well as increasingly flexible working hours, changes in the labour market, increased non-working time, changes in lifestyles and in uses of time and space, and upheavals in family structure are leading to tremendous growth in mobility and generating conflict, tension and inequality with regard to land use.

3. The quality of the management and regulation of time is becoming a key factor in the spatial development process. Space and time are interdependent and time planning is a core element of spatial planning.

4. The aim of local time planning policies also known as time policies is to help to improve quality of life and work towards greater social cohesion. Their development requires a comprehensive, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach.

5. New forms of institution such as “time offices” and “time agencies” have led to the emergence of new methods for analysing and developing public urban planning policies and have given rise to a new form of local governance based on participatory democracy.

6. Because time is a key aspect of the quality of daily life and a major factor in inequality, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities takes note of the emergence of local time policies, wishes to promote them in Europe at all levels of governance and agrees to incorporate the time factor into its own activities, particularly those related to urban planning.

7. It refers to the European Urban Charter II,⁴ which emphasises the essential role of the urban citizen at the heart of urban policies and speaks of the need for new models of mobility and the need to make urban areas more comfortable, more accessible and livelier for their inhabitants, whatever their social background, age or state of health.

8. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress calls on urban authorities, intermunicipal bodies and intermediate tiers of governance:

a. to raise citizens’ awareness about the organisation of time in their families and their immediate environment and the advisability of making adjustments to it and working with civil society to devise a new form of organisation to meet the challenges of modern society;

b. to ascertain to what extent time issues and time conflicts represent a concern for citizens and businesses in the local context;

² Preliminary draft resolution and recommendation approved by the Committee on Social Cohesion of the Chamber of Local Authorities on 16 March 2010.

Members of the committee :

V. Rogov (President), *B.-M. Lövgren* (Vice-President), *S. Aliyeva*, *A. Antosova*, *S. Barnes*, *B. Belin*, *S. Bohatyrchuk-Kryvko*, *L. Chunaeva*, *Jetty Eugster-Van Bergeijk*, *P. Filippou*, *S. Geirsson*, *I. Henttonen*, *G. Horvath*, *A. Kordfelder*, *I. Kuret*, *E. Maurer*, *A. Mimenov*, *K. Ölcenoglu*, *R. Roperio Mancera*, *J. Smyla*, *C. Tascon-Mennetrier*, *A. Toader*, *E. Van Vaerenbergh* (alternate : *J. Michaux*), *F. Wagner*, *John Warmisham* (alternate : *V. Churchman*).

NB: The names of members who took part in the vote are in italics.

Secretariat of the committee : D. Rios and M. Grimmeissen

³ In Italy.

⁴ Adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in May 2008.

c. to set up time offices, which are key elements of local time policies, to align time supply and demand, take and co-ordinate initiatives to optimise timetables and improve the availability of public services in order to facilitate citizens' daily lives;

d. to conduct a cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary study on ways and means of promoting time policies in a local setting;

e. to seek to harmonise urban time and social time to meet demands for time adjustments between day-to-day obligations and the spatial and temporal accessibility of urban facilities and services; these efforts must also promote solidarity, combat social exclusion and foster cohesion;

f. to incorporate the time dimension into all their policies;

g. to apply the concepts and make use of the instruments available for the implementation of these policies while ensuring that they are relevant; to establish new forms of participation (joint planning bodies, societal dialogue) and new types of tools for interpreting and representing an area's spatial and temporal reality (chronotopical analyses and maps);

h. to exchange best practices with other authorities at national and international level so as to initiate or enhance learning processes in this sphere.

9. Lastly, the Congress instructs its Committee on Social Cohesion to explore the possibility of promoting knowledge of these policies in Europe and exchanging best practices in co-operation with the relevant Council of Europe bodies, particularly the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS).

B. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION⁵

1. In their search for time equality, increasing numbers of European local and regional authorities are adopting time-based approaches and setting up time offices with a view to improving their citizens' quality of life by attuning the organisation of public and private services more to changes in living patterns.

2. This new approach to urban and spatial management seeks to reconcile urban time with social time in the light of the lifestyle changes brought about by changes in working patterns and social attitudes.

3. Time planning policies view time both as a resource and as a cultural medium, and call traditional spatial planning mechanisms into question. They have resulted in the development of new forms of institution (time offices) and new forms of local participation and co-operation (such as local civil dialogue and public-private partnerships).

4. These policies must be implemented at local level, but states can play a major role in publicising them and establishing them. Some pioneering countries⁶ have even adopted national and regional legislation making time offices and time-use planning obligatory.

5. The Council of Europe, for its part, has been dealing implicitly with time policies for many years through its European Social Charter (1961), its revised European Social Charter (1996)⁷ and the work of the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) on reconciling work and private life.

⁵ See footnote 2

⁶ Italy

⁷ Article 22 – The right to take part in the determination and improvement of the working conditions and working environment, Article 23 – The right of elderly persons to social protection, Article 26 - The right to dignity at work, Article 27 - The right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment.

6. Being aware of the inequalities that can result from the distribution of time, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities believes that the Council of Europe should acknowledge the emergence of time policies and promote their establishment.

7. Accordingly, it recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe call on member states:

- a. to foster increased awareness of changes in the pattern of urban life, including through the media;
- b. to promote time planning policies at local level and encourage their adoption everywhere;
- c. to pursue policies encouraging authorities to set up time offices in urban areas, promote practical measures and support private undertakings adopting time planning policies;
- d. to take full advantage of existing knowledge and skills and set up centres of excellence, which local authorities can use as reference points;
- e. to disseminate best practices and encourage networking;
- f. to identify the tools and instruments for setting up and supporting time policies which are available at national level and in other countries, foster their development and encourage scientific evaluation thereof;
- g. to promote research in this field, particularly by creating specific academic subjects and “time laboratories”.

8. Lastly, the Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to take account of the “right to time”. It recommends that it call on the relevant Council of Europe bodies, particularly those dealing with gender equality and social cohesion, to address time policies explicitly and incorporate time management into their activities, along with the concepts of “time welfare” and “temporal quality of life”.

C. EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM⁸

1. Context, historical background

Within two decades, local time policies have spread rapidly in a number of territories in Europe.⁹ They have progressed most in their country of origin, Italy, where time offices and time-use planning became obligatory in 2000. Important time policy projects have also been conducted in France and Germany. Similar approaches can be found in the Netherlands, Finland, Spain and Ireland.

In this explanatory memorandum “local time planning policies”, “local time policies”, and “urban time policies” are used as equivalent phrases. The latter term is closer to the Italian origin “tempi della città”; “time planning policies” and “local time policies” refer to the *territory* rather than to the *city* and include *urban* and *rural* areas. Most of the fields of application point at urban everyday life patterns, but many merit application both in rural and agricultural areas (e.g. accessibility of services, education, health care, culture, availability of public transport, means of telecommunication). The fact that the “time of the city” movement and research have both emerged and developed in urban and metropolitan areas is equally reflected.

In addition to time policy real life experiments, at least Italy, Germany and France have national associations where science, civil society, economy and politics deal together with time policy and the time policy approach is developing further both theoretically and practically.

⁸ Prepared with the contribution of Ulrich Mückenberger, Professor of the Economy and Social Sciences Department, University of Hamburg.

⁹ Boulin, J.-Y., 2008: Villes et politiques temporelles. Collection “Villes et société”, coordinatrice de l’ouvrage Clotilde Tascon-Mennetrier, La Documentation française, Paris.

New trends challenge social cohesion and quality of life, which are taken into account by spatial policies (territorial planning, city-dwelling etc.):

- globalisation is causing an interdependent political, economic, social and cultural upheaval;
- gender and generation relations are in rapid change due to the increasing integration of women in the labour market and to demographic developments (decrease of fertility rate and aging population);
- the increasing need for sustainable development challenges everyday modes and patterns of work, life, transport, energy and consumption.

The aim of time planning policies is to improve people's quality of life and strengthen social cohesion. It is time for an integrated policy encompassing space and time in order to meet the needs of modernizing everyday life and its particular requirements for social cohesion.

Time planning policies are of local as well as of global relevance. Locally, specific measures of a time political nature are taken (e.g. with respect to childcare, mobility, urban and district development, etc). Globally, time policy concepts are developed, exchanges of experience with a view to best practice are enabled and instruments developed and evaluated scientifically.

Regarding local time policy organisation, two basic experiences have been collected:

i. Local time policies require a balanced combination of specified targets and resources ("top-down") and immediate stakeholder participation ("bottom-up"). A top-down approach (Netherlands) comes to an end when political programmes run out. A merely bottom-up approach (Germany) gains neither continuity nor sustainability. Italy has found a middle course with its national law and the numerous regional laws it entailed as well as a high level of participation by citizens and civil society in communities and communal networks.

ii. Time policy projects require a cross-departmental transversal organisation in communities and regions. Public offices in charge of local development, economy, equal opportunity, family and social matters have to co-operate on a continuous basis. In contrast, departments and resources are organized departmentally within the regional authorities. Therefore, time policies are at risk of becoming "departmentalised". In Germany, for instance, time policy has led to the formation of numerous local "alliances to support families" rooted in family policy and work-family conciliation policy. These are concerned with local childcare and family-oriented time organisation and are successful in their field but have hardly any cross-departmental links, e.g. with local or district development. The result of this with respect to time policy is a dangerous "volatility".

1.1 A genealogical outline

A new climate of "uncertainty" and a "need for legitimisation" has been created in cities, districts, factories, schools, administrative agencies and for service providers which challenges old routines and activates new attitudes and openness. The role played by universities has been important. The investigation of time, everyday life, work and gender has reached a high level of professionalism as well as a wealth of results. Research in the fields of cities and regions and the wealth of social theoretical "material" surrounding human everyday life have also contributed immensely to this new field.

The "times of the city" approach requires a synthesis of knowledge and everyday life. On the one hand, actual everyday conditions (and therefore time) become more important. How and when is public childcare available? Which mobility does the territory offer to its inhabitants and guests? How and when are goods and services available? How safe and accessible is the city, at which times and for whom? To what extent is the public space our public space? On the other hand, public space can no longer be developed without the participation of the stakeholders. The needs are diverse and complex so that decisions can no longer be made uniformly and top-down by an authority.

In many countries, new actors have entered the territorial arena and new actor constellations have been created. In Modena, a “mobility pact” regulated in 1994 a bundle of questions regarding transport within the city and the surroundings involving 30 associations (public transport providers, taxi drivers, users, unions). The pact was a new civil instrument intended to re-organize a matter of public interest by involving all stakeholders. It was the expression of a new form of governance which was no longer merely a bureaucratic agreement of enterprises and policy-makers but consisted of a new, interactive, civil society/economy/politicians triangle using a language comprehensible by all and which led to new forms of communication.

1.2 A European learning process

We have to distinguish between explicit time policies which have mainly taken place in Western Europe and implicit ones, which have taken place everywhere in Europe.

a. Explicit time policies

Italy was (and is) the leader in the field of “times of the city”. In Germany and France these policies have rather become apparent in the area of modernisation of state, administration and industrial relations. Time policy first emerged on the Italian academic scene, in the women’s movement and within unions and the political sphere. This time approach gradually generated resonance in Mid- and Northern Europe.

Developments in France took place within the Eurexcter-context. In Holland these started with an explorative study in Germany and Italy and continued through the activity of the National Commission for the Shaping of the Times of the Day and the large-scale project backed by the state. Connections with French and German projects and cities were established and there were spontaneous spillovers to countries like Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Finland, Great Britain frequently coinciding with developments in working time, family and gender policies.

In Italy, the municipal reform bill in 1990 made it possible to establish time offices in 60 to 80 cities along with other time policy projects. In 2000, a bill committed cities to establishing time offices and implementing “time-orientation-plans”, which was the first integrated space-time-policy. It enabled regions to support time policy projects by providing financial incentives. Implementation laws deal with issues concerning time policy, incentive systems, quality criteria for a good project practice, etc.

b. Implicit time policies

The Nordic countries practice a successful policy-mix of family, labour and gender policies, which achieves a sort of “time welfare” comparable to the achievements of explicit time policies. Equally, many other European countries implement policies (e.g. those dealing with reconciliation between work and family) which, in their practical outcome, resemble local time policies. This is why a closer “coupling” of these policies with the concept and practices of local time policies seems desirable.

The background is that local time policies frequently deal with subject matters that highlight the problems of modernisation of European societies. The following fields of local time policies have been established: coordination of school and child-care times, coordination of working, transport and social times, revitalisation of centers and sub-centers through coordination of opening hours, alignment of the times of public administration and services with user needs, better accessibility of certain urban spaces in the evening and during the night; mixed use in district in order to avoid unwanted traffic and synchronisation or de-synchronisation of mobility flows in order to avoid unwanted external effects (traffic jams, queues, etc.).

Further examples could be given in the fields of working time flexibilisation, work-life-balance and childcare arrangements.

2. Local time policies: rationale and existing assessments

The approach of local time policies is to focus on people's everyday lives when looking at the social and/or communal institutions surrounding them – be it on a spatial, constructional, bureaucratic or any other given level – and not (or as a secondary step) to concentrate on the intrinsic logic – the creative chances or limitations – of these institutions. This is based on the assumption that public administrations, childcare providers, transport agents do not derive their legitimacy from the mere fact of their existence, but from the requirements of those who use them.

2.1 *Social times are a construct, not a fact*

Everyday life – working, communicating, loving, caring, relaxing – takes place within time. Therefore a good life and social cohesion may be also determined by their time-related framework. Is that “my” time? Do my times fit in with each other? Do my times make sense?

Despite the general preconception that “there are 24 hours in each day”, time is distributed unevenly quantitatively and qualitatively when it comes to everyday use and an increasing number of “time conflicts” arise. One example is the difference between the average time budgets of men and women. Another is the time value that is different for older people or the unemployed. One should have a look at the time theft in public offices, waiting rooms and traffic jams, think about the different time structures between industrial and service districts and about the ignorance of certain investors, politicians and planners with respect to everyday life.

Times itself is, therefore, subject to distribution processes and conflicts as well as diverging assessment criteria of social justice. Social “time” is a construct rather than an ontological entity. This marks the birth of time policy, that is the birth of the social organisation of time distribution and the solution of time conflicts according to standards of equity.

2.2 *In search of time equity*

Time policy may be seen as an emanation of a second generation social state. Whereas the first generation welfare state mainly created and (re-)distributed wealth, the second generation welfare state organises and (re-)distributes time. Time is not merely viewed (quantitatively) as a resource, but also (qualitatively) as a cultural medium of social well-being and cohesion. Time management keeps social and economic parameters of time organisation untouched and makes the individual responsible for properly “handling” his/her everyday life. As against that time policy critically considers these social and economic parameters and, if necessary, tries to modify and amend them collectively, via public reasoning and policies.

Time is a necessary resource of welfare and freedom in addition to and independently from money and discretionary time is a new objective of the welfare state. Along the same lines, suggestions for the implementation of standards of justice are made.

This implies new political planning, negotiation and participation processes that – with and due to the involvement of the citizens as stakeholders – leads or contributes to a local time organisation which is more appropriate with respect to the everyday conditions and articulations of city users (and their temporal self-determination). This local time organisation ranges from a more citizen-friendly organisation of services and opening hours (daycare, libraries, public transport, citizen service centers) to the integration of user interests (“voice”) in planning processes, the development of new urban development concepts such as dynamic construction permits and the integration of a time-plan into local land-use planning (e.g. the Italian “*piani regolatori dei tempi e degli orari*” - time-use plans).

2.3 *Time policy methodology and instruments*

Progress has been made in the last 20 years with respect to instruments and tools to establish and support time policies.

i. **Research on time budgets** has made a great deal of progress (Germany, France). In most cases it remains at a general, highly aggregated level and provides findings regarding everyday work, care activities and mobility along with their specifics with respect to gender or age group. However,

neither precise information and expertise that would accommodate the transversal nature of the everyday experience of time nor practical methods to deal with time conflicts can be extrapolated from that.

ii. In Italy, scientists are working on “**chronotope research**”. Certain places have “inscribed” time structures – e. g. highways, parks, districts offering a lot of gastronomy, etc. What is being developed currently, is an understanding of how such chronotopes might be described, which combinations and points of contact they enable and what inherent normative force aiming at preservation or change, they contain.

iii. The “**chronomaps**” invented in Italy are being further developed and are used in France and Germany. A quantum leap has been made through the level of electronic representation achieved in Milan, Belfort, Bremen and Hamburg. Apart from the technical possibilities, however, it is still necessary to complete the participatory and political-creative application context of this representative method.

iv. The methods, which have also progressed, enable the consideration of the **users’** interests within social planning processes (“voice”). Planning cells and future workshops (“future labs”) have been used for a while. With respect to time policy they have been condensed into innovative processes involving both the “Choice-Work Method” and the “Three-Sided Mediation (users/employees/management)”. Research on the long-term impact on the quality of everyday life of such forms of participation and on which concept of “temporal quality of life” they may be normatively based has been carried out in an evaluative research project at the University of Hamburg.

v. Whereas land-use planning can operate within a complete technical and legal framework, time planning has only been partially discovered (Germany and France in contrast to Italy).

There is intensive activity and considerable know-how and potential in this area in different European countries. However, the tendency towards “departmentalisation” within the local authorities leads to a certain volatility which has to be remedied.

2.4 An overview of existing assessments

Local time policies as an approach and as an issue of transnational policy transfer and comparison are relatively well-documented. Historically, there are three layers of assessments¹⁰.

i. In the beginning there were the Italian concepts contained in the referendum initiative of Milano.

ii. The first wave of practical experiments, projects and instruments has been documented in Italy¹¹, Germany, France and the Netherlands. From the beginning, the European level played a role via “*EUREXCTER – excellence territoriale en Europe*” – an action-research project financed by the EEC. A first comparative report of the Dublin European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was published¹² and showed the transnational character of the times of the city approach.

iii. A third layer of documentation shows the state of the art in Italy,¹³ Germany,¹⁴ France and Spain.¹⁵ While concentrating on certain territories and projects, these documents point at the simultaneous and mutually empowering developments in other European countries. Despite some encouraging preliminary findings, the empirical expertise on the effective achievements of local time policies is very limited.

As to implicit temporal measures and their outcome for the quality of life some empirical evaluative research has been carried out in Nordic countries which summarises existing evaluations and advances statistical evidence for different levels of discretionary time of the citizens in different countries. They evaluate these commonalities and differences according to the various welfare,

¹⁰ For an overview cf. Boulin 2008 ; Mückenberger 2004/07 – see note 6.

¹¹ Bonfiglioli, S./Mareggi, M., 1997 : Il tempo e la città fra natura e storia. Atlante di progetti sui tempi della città. Urbanistica Quaderni. Collana dell’Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica. Anno III. Rom.

¹² Boulin, J.-Y.; Mückenberger, U., 1999: Times of the City and Quality of Life. Best European Studies in Time.

¹³ Zedda, R., 2009: Tempi della città. Metodi per l’analisi urbana. Milano.

¹⁴ Mückenberger, U., 2004/2007 – see note 6.

¹⁵ Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona, 2008: Temps i territori., Papers no. 49. Barcelona.

gender and household regimes in the different cases. From these findings, the category of “temporal welfare state” emerges – inclining, however, to enter into the realm of “time policies.”

As to explicit local time policies, generic evaluations do not yet exist. A first qualitative evaluative study by the Hamburg research time-lab concentrated on local personal services and their effects on the quality of life of providers and service users. Methodological and theoretical difficulties had to be mastered (e.g. invention of a scientifically-based notion of quality of life). As a result all cases studied showed a surplus of quality of life for users. The main conclusions were that an effective user- and citizen-friendly local time policy is feasible and local time policies do not necessarily involve time conflicts between providers and users of services.

3. An experiment at local level

Time offices have already been core institutions of a new type of local policy since the legislative reforms in Italy in the early 1990s and in 2000. In Germany, about 15 projects have so far emerged (among them Hanau, Hamburg, Bremen, Hannover). The time office of Bremen-Vegesack was the first attempt to establish an institution providing professionalism and consistency.

3.1 The time office of Bremen-Vegesack – A model project

The time office of Bremen-Vegesack was meant to mediate between the various everyday time needs of citizens and of local time providers: on the one hand it was supposed to keep a close eye on the life-world of citizens, on the other it was expected to cooperate with politically legitimised committees and local institutions and organise communication and negotiation processes. The intention was to involve institutional local actors from politics and administration in the creation of the local life environment relevant to everyday life and the aspect of time, but also to people and civil society (associations and federations).

Vegesack, a city district of about 35,000 inhabitants with a commercial catchment area of about 150,000 inhabitants, assumes the function of a middle-centre for the district Bremen-Nord as well as for the Lower Saxon hinterland. Due to the late incorporation of the formerly independent city, with respect to its public agencies, public facilities and retailers, the identity of its population as well as the land use patterns, Vegesack can be compared to a small town facing the consequences of the declining shipbuilding industry. Some 15 km from the city centre of Bremen, access to public transportation is an important topic with road networks, the train station as a central interface between trains and buses representing a junction for public transport in Bremen-Nord.

From the start, the discretionary authority of the project was placed with the scientific project leader (who attended the training course “Times and the Quality of the City” at Hamburg University) and not with the administration to emphasize the clear direction of the content.

The time office was given the following tasks:

- gather information in cooperation with significant “time providers” (retail, public transport, social and health care institutions, etc.) on the temporal access of private and public services and make it available to the public (“time supply”) with a focus on transparency;
- investigate the needs of citizens with respect to these times (including complaints, if necessary “time demand”) through round tables, street surveys, planning cells, workshops, citizen reports and other forms of participation;
- align time supply and demand without ignoring time conflicts through mediation, discussion forums and coordination among the involved actors (“local time coordination”) with the purpose of generating discourse among groups of individuals who share an interest in good/fair solutions but usually do not talk to each other about them. As the whole approach was based on participation, no precise implementation projects were determined beforehand.

The time office was designed for a period of two years from October 1997 and developed in three phases:

Phase 1: establishment of the time office, development of the structure, research and public relations. The most important step was the setting-up of the “Everyday-life-Friendly Vegesack Forum”, a network and a cooperation structure including important public and private service providers as well as civil society organisations. The forum, the central instrument of the project, combined various social aspects. It met on a regular basis. Its representatives, due to their knowledge of the area and expertise and with the help of the time office, identified deficits in the alignment of times, developed, accompanied and provided advice in alteration processes.

The forum’s main function was the creation of transversal networks. Concrete projects could be presented in a partially public fashion and along individually defined lines to the forum at different stages of their development and discussed from the perspective of the city district, that is of the participating organisations. This form of feedback strengthens the side of “time demand. The success of individual projects served as evidence for the feasibility of new time arrangements and therefore exerted implicit pressure for action on the actors of other creative fields.

Phase 2: practical exploration of potential creation projects and problem-related work.

The “circle of service providers” was constituted bringing together the heads of the major public service providers within the city district in the cross-departmental circle. This circle developed an exemplary local time compromise: the innovative city district-related concept of the “citizen day” as a shared time with consistent opening hours (Thursdays 8 am - 6 pm). The time office created connections between different departments within the administration and other non-communal public service providers and, in the form of a new service quality, turned them into a fruitful asset for the city district. The starting point of this project was constituted by the confusing opening hours of different institutions, the time inconsistency with respect to other city time suppliers with a high relevance for everyday life (vegetable market, retailers) as well as the partially insufficient compatibility of work and visits to public authorities from the citizens’ point of view.

The cross departmental approach – which is based on a local level and therefore on the citizens’ life-world field of reference and not on otherwise common departmental logic – went along with a participation-oriented approach. The time office conducted a citizen survey in close cooperation with the “circle of service providers” through the local press and childcare facilities in order not to make any plans without the involvement of the citizens. An evaluation survey concerning the citizen day was performed showing that the uniform citizen day was regarded and welcomed as a considerable aid in the organisation of everyday life by a majority of those who had been surveyed (80%). Equally the shop stewards and the equal opportunity officers in the different agencies were involved in order to represent the interests of the employees.

Within the context of the “circle of service providers”, it was also possible to implement a transfer of forms among the agencies according to aspects regarding the life situations of citizens. Furthermore, a comprehensive citizens information brochure was developed in order to increase transparency (a lack of knowledge regarding opening times is often the cause of everyday time trouble), the frame of reference of which, in turn, was the city district.

Phase 3: initiation of further projects and implementation.

In cooperation with the major public transport providers, the time office started a public initiative in the city district in the form of a mobility exchange bringing together all relevant local transport providers and mobility projects. The purpose was to improve the traffic situation from the users’ point of view, especially with respect to the environment-friendly “mix” of transport means offering several opportunities to visitors. Taking a clear awareness of the deficits as a starting point, concrete projects were initiated in co-operation with actors concerned: the setting-up of a bicycle station at the local train station, a shopping delivery service and a mobility centre providing comprehensive consulting.

Another project was the “Dialogue for Reliable Childcare in Bremen-North”. The time office supported forms of co-operation that contribute to reliable basic childcare as well as in emergencies. A productive communication and co-operation process between three “poles” (schools, after-school childcare facilities, parents/city district) started in connection to this.

In addition, in cooperation with the major cultural institutions the time office encouraged the presentation of the exhibition “Times of the City” in the district and public lecture programmes on the subject of time and time creation. The articles “Time Diagnoses” in the local press triggered a public discourse.

3.2 Evaluative remarks

The concept of time office incorporates the expectation that it might be possible to grasp the time policy interests of citizens and civil society and to “agglomerate” them into a time-aware political organ of everyday effectiveness in relation to the locally dominant economic and political actors.

In the Bremen-Vegesack case, time policy proved to be of political relevance. However, the configuration in which it became effective in some respects differed from the expectations:

- Local political and economic actors had to be granted a determining position with respect to decisions on matters to be addressed and processes to be initiated right from the constitution phase of the project;
- From the very start the involvement of civil interests took place on a representative level only. Participation of citizens was rather a side effect than the basis and motivation of time political projects;
- Time political matters were not granted the status to force political and economic actors to accept a subordinate position in the process. Rather, these actors always stayed in control of the identification of time policy problems as well as of the determination of possible solutions.

In order for local time creation to work with the help of a local time office, two factors are essential:

1. Initiation by and support of the decision-makers in politics and administration “from above”, willingness to co-operate and an involvement aiming at the common good within the institutions as well as with the citizens themselves. In Bremen, this support is provided by the mayor and president of the citizens’ council in the Bremen “laboratory of perspectives” which is headed by the mayor and by civil actors from the chambers, unions, church, transport companies, equal opportunity policies, etc. within the Times of the City Forum.

2. Local time conflicts – especially those without a legal basis – can only be solved by consensus and require that the local actors and citizens involved invest both time and commitment. This creates legitimisation problems for the representatives of local organisations within their own institution because cooperation in local time policy is often regarded as an extra task to one’s core duties.

An increasing level of popularisation of the approach as well as a possible legal implementation could create a more clearly defined basis for effectiveness.