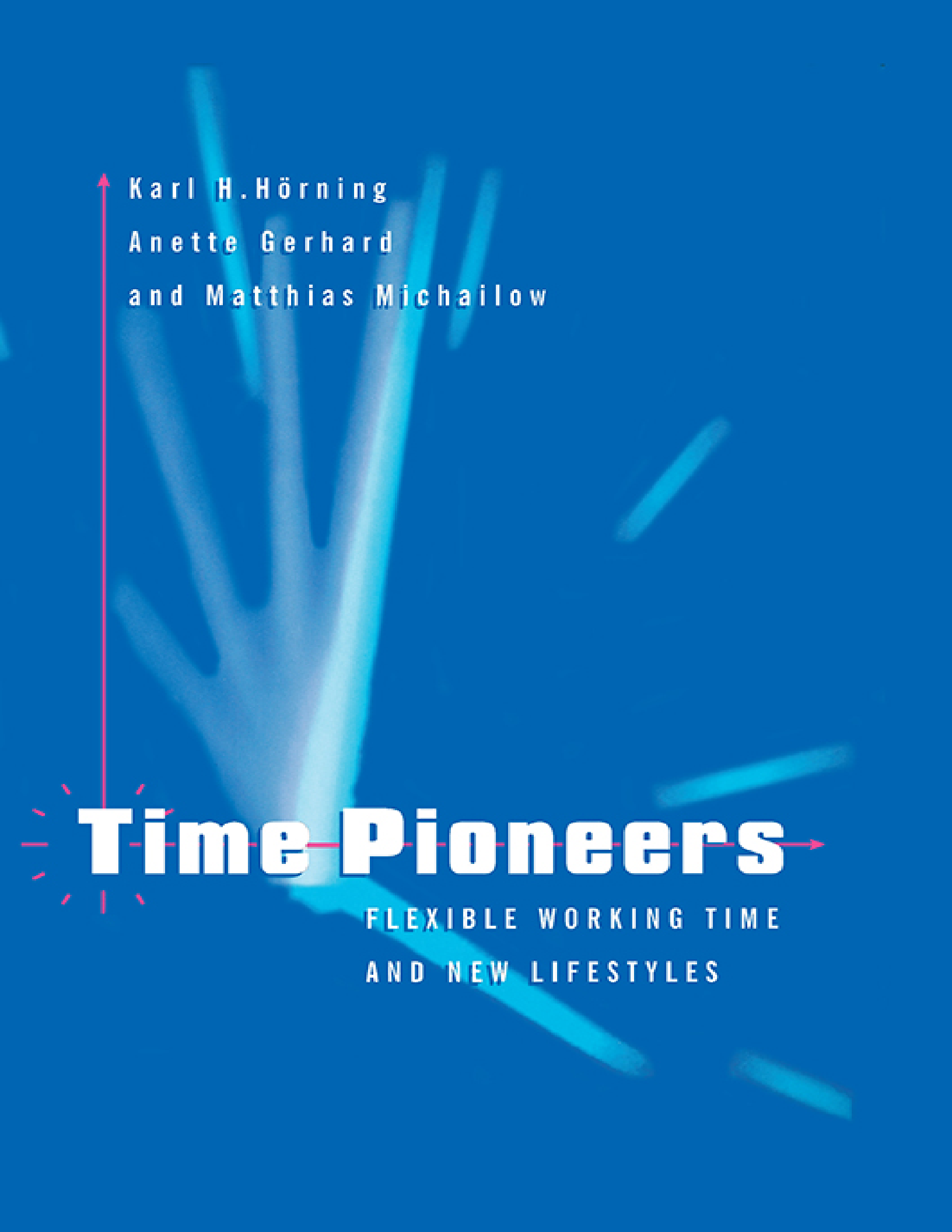




Karl H. Hörning
Anette Gerhard
and Matthias Michailow

Time Pioneers

FLEXIBLE WORKING TIME
AND NEW LIFESTYLES

Contents

Foreword to the English Edition

Acknowledgements

Introduction

1 Lifestyles and Time Relations in Flux

1.1 The abandonment of old thought models

1.2 Lifestyle as an analytical concept

1.3 Time as the thematic core of lifestyle

1.4 Flexibilization in the context of working time policy

1.5 The research group of 'time pioneers'

2 Flexible Working Time - New Perspectives and Traditional Forms of Opposition

2.1 The relevance of flexible working time to the time pioneers

2.2 The motives behind flexibilization

2.3 Obstacles to the individual implementation of flexible working time

2.4 Problems with flexible working at the workplace

3 The Revision of Interpretive Schemata - Commitment and Dissociation

3.1 The time pioneers' high degree of job commitment

3.2 Dissociation from the cultural paradigm of the employment society

3.3 Conflicts at work resulting from different cultural perspectives

4 The Changed Relationship between Money and Time

4.1 The complex role of reduced income

4.2 The reorganization of household management

4.3 Dissociation from the dominant dictates of money and time

4.4 The resistance to change of ingrained consumption models

5 The Time Structures of the New Lifestyle

5.1 Restructuring everyday time patterns

5.2 Changed time allocation techniques

5.3 The time pioneers' perception of time

5.4 The gain in temporal affluence

6 The Dynamic of the New Lifestyle

7 Future Prospects

Notes

Bibliography

Index

Time Pioneers

*Flexible Working Time and
New Lifestyles*

KARL H. HÖRNING,
ANETTE GERHARD
MATTHIAS MICHAILOW

Translated by Anthony Williams

Polity Press

English translation © Polity Press 1995

First published in German as *Zeitpioniere: flexible Arbeitszeiten - neuer Lebensstil* © Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main, 1990

Published with the financial support of Inter Nationes, Bonn

This translation first published in 1995 by Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd

2468107531

Editorial office:

Polity Press

65 Bridge Street

Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Marketing and production:

Blackwell Publishers Ltd

108 Cowley Road

Oxford OX4 1JF, UK

Blackwell Publishers Inc.

238 Main Street

Cambridge, MA 02142, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without

a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN-0-7456-10765

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library and the Library of Congress

Foreword to the English Edition

Many stories are told about time. Those told by men are frequently different from those told by women, those told by managers different from those told by blue-collar workers, those told by philosophers different from those told by sociologists. This book describes a system of time as perceived and contested by a group of our contemporaries. The curious features of the German debate on working time may surprise English-speaking readers, but beyond these peculiarities, they will quickly realize that they are familiar with the cultural backdrop against which the debate is taking place. Like all good stories, this one has no ending: its heroes are distrustful of visions and utopias. All their attention is focused on the present. The flexibilization of their working time is intended to secure them the maximum degree of flexibility at this point in time. They have no desire to arrange and plan everything; on the contrary, they wish to be able to react swiftly to changing circumstances. To this end, they want to 'have more time'. Thus, this book focuses on the 'presence of time'. For those who perceive that the main problem with time lies in 'time' and orientate themselves accordingly, the timescale of activity is the present.

However, although the book is about pioneers, it is not an heroic story. Their actions are directed against a life model which promises to elevate to the status of 'master of all things' those who, via a process of rationalization, achieve an heroic victory over time and the 'wastage' of time. In the eyes of the time pioneers, this is a futile struggle, since the sum total of that which has been achieved this century is not more, but less time. The time system which, following a

great deal of effort, obtains today is characterized by a scarcity rather than a surplus of time. And as, so to speak, a 'perverse' side effect of equality between the sexes, this 'lack of time' also affects women.

Thus, it is not time control which becomes the key issue for the - male and female - time pioneers, but rather careful and independent time management. The flexibilization of working time is an essential prerequisite of such time management, yet on its own it is far from adequate, since the time gained can easily result in boredom. Although new forms of working time flexibility augment the dispositional freedom of the individual, they also abrogate certain collective rhythms of the time system which for so many people are a source of guidance and support.

It is possible to relax the rigid time systems of social life. Whether or not the resulting opportunities are exploited depends on the ability of individuals to develop time systems of their own which are able to overcome the exacerbated problems of coordination and self-discipline. This is due to the fact that in post-industrial society the task of constructing a life over time and in time is becoming increasingly complex and imposes great demands upon the individual.

One of the most puzzling findings of this sociological study is that the time pioneers do not (wish to) know what to do with the increased amount of free time on their hands. The purpose of their struggle was not to obtain more time off work, but more free time. They secured greater room for manoeuvre for the purpose of managing their time and themselves more effectively. They do not regard free time as a vacuum calling for rapid utilization and occupation. They wish to 'disencumber' time, not pack it full of activities again. Ultimately, they take the view that time should be utilized for the purpose of shaping their own lives.

The fact that time thus becomes a problem and an issue for individuals means that they begin to reflect upon time references: they gradually develop a 'reflexive time consciousness'. Thus, they are constantly aware of 'time'. They utilize the time which they have gained as a result of the flexibilization of their working time for the purpose of initiating a process of time management, and thus of self-management. Therefore, they are not simply time pioneers, but also pioneers of self-centred time. They take the time to reflect upon time, and thus also upon themselves in time, and to discuss the matter with others.

In so doing, they not only seek to escape the perils of harassment and lack of time, but also to learn more about themselves. Whether or not they will be successful in this quest is rather uncertain. The experiment is underway: some are in the process of abandoning it, others are in the process of telling new stories.

K. H. H., A. G. and M. M.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks are due to a great many people. However, we are particularly indebted to Theo Bardmann, who was instrumental in originating this project. Susanne Bode-Weissenberg provided assistance during the revision of the manuscript.

K. H. H., A. G. and M. M.
Aachen, May 1990

Introduction

In human experience, time is a scarce commodity, and this scarcity of time is a millstone around our necks. Indeed, everyone complains of having too little time. Though not exactly egoists, nor heroes, people who consciously appropriate some time *for themselves* are something akin to explorers. Such people set their own time standards, while others, possessing no such standards, squander time because they do not realize that they actually have any time in the first place. These explorers adopt a different approach towards time management, and thus they are pioneers who, possessing time, have less need for other possessions.

Studies of the contemporary world consistently reveal that an independent approach towards time management would seem set to become one of the major questions of our age, and one which has already been the object of much theoretical deliberation and speculation. However, hitherto the actual opportunities for and possible forms of such an approach to time management have been largely ignored. 'Time pioneers' are people who strive to realize their conceptions of time at work and in their everyday private lives, in the process of which they confront obstacles and interruptions and develop independent forms of time management. On the one hand, they endeavour to introduce some degree of flexibility into their working time, thus distancing themselves from the ideals of the employment society. On the other, they couple these aspirations to flexibility with demands 'for more time for themselves', thus bringing into play the entire fabric of the way in which they fashion their lives.

The point of departure for our analysis is the flexibilization of working time. This was secured by the personal efforts of the time pioneers. They work much shorter hours and, where possible, gear their working time towards their own preferences. However, for the time pioneers, the additional time which this creates is not simply leisure time – it is ‘free’ time, time which they endeavour to manage as prudently as possible in order that it should not become immediately reoccupied with responsibilities and commitments. It is our hypothesis that, during the course of their independent struggle against the prevailing time structures, the behavioural and interpretive practices of the time pioneers increasingly assume the characteristics of an independent lifestyle.

In this respect, our analysis is fundamentally different from previous empirical studies. Such studies either investigate the problems of flexible working time to the exclusion of the accompanying social changes in the structures of working and private time, or they concentrate exclusively upon the question of changed attitudes towards time, time preferences, thus losing sight of the formative social force represented by changes in awareness. In contrast, we pose the question of how certain radical changes in the social conditions of work and time are absorbed by the time pioneers and become assimilated in their behavioural and interpretive practices. It is our opinion that these upheavals become particularly concentrated in the lifestyle of the time pioneers.

A full appreciation of this viewpoint requires the abandonment of conventional interpretive schemata inadequate to the task of explaining the processes of change which this analysis identifies, indeed, which portray such processes in the wrong light. A case in point is the fundamental question of the changing importance of work. Studies of the contemporary world are too precipitate in

excluding from the work- and achievement-orientated society people whose 'only' ambition is to change it rather than to reject it outright. The time pioneers do not at all regard employment as a necessary evil. Quite the contrary: in fulfilling their responsibilities, they display motivation, willingness and commitment. Nevertheless, in order to avoid becoming appropriated by the demands imposed upon them by their employers, they harbour their own concepts with regard to the organization of their work. Their interest lies in gaining more time for themselves by adopting certain methods of organizing their working and private lives, rather than in the separation, overlapping and compensation of working and free time. In rejecting the established working time standard, they adopt a position outside the universally accepted cultural model of the conduct of life.

To some degree, this study is an examination of a new stage in the conflicts over working time policy. Employees are rebelling against the unreasonable behavioural expectations imposed by inflexible, standardized working time. They are consciously and deliberately adopting an independent position and opposing such expectations with their own concepts of the relationship between 'work and living'. However, as a result, they now find themselves 'between the devil and the deep blue sea', sandwiched between the great antipodes. As yet, working time policy has no place for them. Employers are only willing to sanction flexibilization on their own terms, and the trade unions, fearful of employees forfeiting any employment protection rights, have hitherto consistently rejected flexibilization on this basis. Thus, the time pioneers are left to their own resources. They acquire their free time at the cost of a plurality of disadvantages, primarily labour intensification. Thus do opportunities and risks become personalized!

We encountered time pioneers in a wide variety of occupations and positions. They are middle-income salaried employees in commercial, administrative, engineering, social and teaching professions. Our target group comprises men and women in approximately equal numbers; a small proportion of them live alone, and a third have non-adult children. Their work is altogether different from that associated with typical part-time employment.

We conducted a detailed study into the motives behind the desire for changes in working time, how individuals secured the flexibilization of their working time and the consequences which they faced at the workplace as a result. It became apparent that the primary obstacle to the practical implementation of new working time arrangements are traditional conceptions of employment in the enterprise. The dispute concerning flexible working time is exposed as a cultural conflict at the workplace, a clash of incompatible cultural perspectives between employer and employee. We discovered that the cultural paradigm of the employment society, the paradigm with which the time pioneers are at loggerheads, still remains very strong.

This situation poses a serious dilemma for the time pioneers: from the standpoint of job content, they take their work seriously and approach the performance of their tasks with commitment, but they have no desire to become appropriated by the temporal, organizational, and particularly normative, demands of their employers. This attitude brings obvious disadvantages and assessment deficits in its train. Employers are not so easily persuaded to accept such a rejection of the prevailing cultural paradigm of the employment society. The time pioneers do not adopt an instrumental attitude towards work: in other words, they do not constitute the drop-outs of a leisure and consumer society for whom employment is nothing more than an end to a private means. However, in the interpretive schemata

of the time pioneers, the meaning of life is linked to certain forms of work: through the restructuring of the relationship between work and life, time assumes central thematic importance. Time pioneers desire interesting and skilled work, but also more time for themselves. However, it is not their intention that such free time should immediately become recondensed with other tasks and commitments. It becomes quite clear that their reorientation is not governed by 'another side', such as free time. New priorities are evolving *vis-à-vis* the way in which people conduct their lives, priorities which envisage a changed balance between work and life, thus undermining the strict segregation that exists between work and free time. These incipient independent interpretive schemata reveal some of the central elements of an independent 'lifestyle'.

This lifestyle is primarily characterized by two typical changes: the changed relationship between time and money, and the reordering of daily time schemata. Consequent upon their changed working time, involving in many cases a reduction in hours of up to 50 per cent *vis-à-vis* full-time employment, time pioneers suffer a drop in income level. They make strenuous efforts to determine for themselves the correct relationship between certain income levels and the time which is gained. They make no attempt to compensate for loss of income – in order to maintain living standards – by intensifying their levels of involvement in domestic work, consumption-related work or the black economy. Inveterate consumption patterns militate against the implementation of changes in the way in which they conduct their lives necessitated by the reductions in their income levels. From this perspective, time pioneers scrutinize and re-evaluate the role of money and consumption. Time enters into competition with money: it is employed as a means of increasing affluence; and, from a certain standard of living upwards, temporal affluence

competes against material affluence. This is an attempt on the part of the time pioneers to distance themselves from the money-time dictate prevailing in the economic sector.

Our empirical analysis of the reordering of daily time schemata breaks new ground. Hitherto, the debate on working time has completely failed to examine this question, and the burgeoning number of time theories also avoids testing them empirically. In contrast, our analysis focuses upon the changed time allocation practices and the changed interpretive schemata of time. By reorganizing everyday life in terms of time, the time pioneers acquire the ability to assume sole responsibility for time management, and thus opportunities to develop a new awareness of time. This is primarily geared towards achieving a lifestyle predicated upon flexible and disposable time structures in order to create 'more time for themselves'.

In turn, the availability of disposable time triggers a self-reflective process in the time pioneers: they now have the time on their hands to reflect upon time. The result is judicious time management, the foremost objective of which is the avoidance from the outset of occupying time or allowing it to be occupied. The time pioneers are convinced that this will facilitate the realization of their subjective aspirations in life. The new time management techniques and interpretive schemata largely bear the hallmark of this subject-centring.

Our analysis extends far beyond the issue of the flexibilization of working time. It is our opinion that far-reaching changes are discernible in the lifestyle of the time pioneers, changes which are particularly manifested in the problem of structuring time: time is now representative of something more. 'Time' symbolizes a different lifestyle, a lifestyle which is less subordinate to the unilaterally imposed demands of the industrial society and makes greater efforts to establish independent patterns.

Using the flexibilization of working time, this study introduces a research perspective which analyses the specific conceptions of life behind these changes. Without such an examination of these lifestyles, which exert so much formative influence and hence are themselves subject to such influence, it is impossible to fathom the underlying processes of this social change. Flexible forms of working are an expression of the upheavals occurring in the world of work and its industrial time regime. Our interest in forms of working time secured on an individual basis points beyond the narrow confines of flexibilization to the existence of an enhanced level of awareness of the phenomenon of time *per se*. The lifestyle of the time pioneers demonstrates that within the framework of the socio-cultural environment conceptions of life develop in whose interpretive schemata the problem of time is identified as a central theme. The time pioneers adopt an independently critical stance towards the prevailing time relations, which are manifested as scarcity and shortage of time and are concentrated in the characteristic topos of a 'society with no time'. They react to society's surplus production of temporal demands, they keep these temporal directives in check and they endeavour to enhance the level of harmony between different time references.

By the manner in which the time pioneers assimilate certain upheavals in social time structures and develop changed time management techniques, they acquire a perception of time which ultimately fosters a lifestyle based on 'temporal affluence'. They still retain a 'pioneering' reputation as individualists and outsiders, and this reputation is repeatedly subject to confirmation and reinforcement, particularly in their working lives. However, in their own eyes, they are distinguished from the overwhelming majority of their colleagues less by being special or different in any way than by the conviction that

the way in which they organize their lives constitutes an improvement in the quality of life over that which they enjoyed prior to securing flexibilization.

They prove themselves to be true pioneers by virtue of the fact that, in the face of great opposition, they establish new schemata in respect of the relationship between work and living, discover ways out of the crisis of the employment society via their form of participation in employment and gear the way in which they organize their lives, and their interpretive schemata, towards the constructive reappropriation of time for themselves.

1

Lifestyles and Time Relations in Flux

A different approach to time management is not the sole distinguishing feature of the time pioneers at the centre of this study: their lifestyle also provides a particularly striking indication of the radical changes currently taking place in modern society. In terms of numbers, the time pioneers are still rather thin on the ground, and can be investigated only by means of a systematic case study. Nevertheless, it is beyond question that they perform a pioneering role. Their participation in employment is marked by a flexible attitude towards time. This attitude can serve as a model in which changed aspirations and new interpretations, open to adequate explanation only against the backdrop of a general process of social transformation, assume definite shape.

Sociology is reluctant to provide the appropriate analytical tools which such an explanation requires. For this reason, the following chapter is devoted to expounding the theoretical and empirical basis of our study, and introducing the context of working time policy which is of such crucial importance.

1.1 The abandonment of old thought models

Sociology professes to investigate social reality by means of theoretically sound categories. This claim is being increasingly called into question by the realization that central sociological thought models no longer permit an adequate grasp of significant changes in modern society. Sociology is harbouring growing doubts about the validity of some massive concepts from its nineteenth-century traditions. In problematizing 'work' and the 'employment society', for example, sociology has challenged the validity of a social model in which employment was crucial as the central category and the driving force behind a dynamic process of development. Modern research into inequality is similarly casting serious doubt upon the analytical explanatory power of the class and strata model.

All this has undermined key sociological categories which hitherto have spearheaded the analysis of social differentiation and integration almost as a matter of course. Widespread theoretical uncertainty is generating numerous exploratory attempts. The preliminary results of such attempts are still somewhat unsatisfactory, and it is therefore essential to examine them critically and to develop our own theoretical frame of reference as a basis for this study.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the category of 'work' was toppled from the pedestal upon which it had stood largely unchallenged for more than a century. This process initiated a debate on the 'crisis of the employment society', during the course of which employment forfeited its status as the structural centre of society, to which it had long been automatically assigned. For sociology, work was the axis about which all else revolved: from this standpoint, each and every sphere of life was organized in accordance with the requirements of employment; work overshadowed everything else, and its 'long arm' reached into every last nook and cranny of society.

Industrial sociologists were particularly disconcerted by this collapse. They found it hard to have to recognize the existence of social changes which fundamentally questioned the decisive influence of employment. Their analytical tools were not geared towards adequately recording forms of experience and sociation other than work, nor towards relating these forms to employment. Thus the claims about the 'decline in the significance of work' came as a serious shock to their system, and it was some time before they were in a position to redefine their research subjects (Hörning 1989).

Claus Offe (1983) in particular had appointed himself advocate of the 'crisis of the employment society'. He assembled a large number of indicators pointing towards the fact that employment had forfeited some of its determining force. In opposition to the concept of a standard form of employment, Offe maintains that individual employment circumstances are subject to such variation in respect of earnings, qualifications, security, social visibility and recognition, workload, promotion prospects, communication opportunities and autonomy that salaried employment as such can no longer claim 'precise and shared significance for those in work for the perception of their social interests, for their consciousness or for their organizational and political behaviour' (Offe 1983: 45). 'It has now become practically [impossible]' for employee status 'as such to become the starting point for the formation of cultural, organizational and political aggregates and collective interpretation' (1983: 45). The validity of the concept of a standard form of work has been negated by important structural changes, such as the segmentation of the labour market, the dualization of work into a formal and an informal sector, and the growing difference between the organization of work in the manufacturing and service

industries, and such concepts should therefore be abandoned.

Posing the question of the 'subjective valency and centrality of work for the employee' increases the doubts about the dominant significance of work. Ralf Dahrendorf regards our society as having reached the end of an era in which 'work as the radiating force of life cemented together the remaining aspects of the social construction of life' (Dahrendorf 1980: 756) and, similarly, Claus Offe takes as his point of departure the 'decentralization of the sphere of work *vis-à-vis* other aspects of life' (1983: 50). The theory of the dominant significance of paid work is no longer tenable at the level of either social or system integration.

In Offe's view, the status of work both as a moral obligation and as a structural necessity has undergone a transformation. Most work situations no longer allow 'employees to act, to function, to affirm themselves, or to achieve recognition as people acting morally as bearers of responsibilities' (1983: 51). The 'de-professionalization of work' is leading to the disappearance of the occupational ethos and of pride in production, and to a decline in occupational responsibilities and aspirations. Offe attributes the 'moral alienation and subjective meaninglessness of the sphere of work' to the dissolution of specifically proletarian social milieus (1983: 52). Further causal factors for Offe are discontinuous employment histories and a reduction in the proportion of adult life engaged in work, both of which reduce the subjective centrality of work. Under these circumstances, work becomes one concern among many others, thus forfeiting its function as the sole point of orientation for the development of personal and social identities.

The second major theme developed out of research into inequality. This research emphasizes the fact that the unilinear and vertical class structure based on work and

occupational category is declining in relevance and is becoming increasingly unsuited for capturing modern relations of social inequality. Although it is true that, despite all efforts and all reforming impulses based on the welfare state, the class and stratification system of the Federal Republic of Germany is distinguished by a relatively high level of stability (Beck 1983: 35; Hradil 1987: 28; Kreckel 1983), nevertheless, this chiefly applies to the level of distribution. The fact that, despite the continued existence of clear distributional inequality, political conflicts have declined is attributable to social changes, which Ulrich Beck terms individualization processes (1983). According to Beck, shifts in social living standards and subjective aspirations have initiated 'a process of social and cultural erosion' which 'is dissolving the sub-cultural existential basis of class in terms of reality and experience' (1983: 53) and resulting in the diversification and individualization of life situations and ways of life. Consequent upon changed living conditions, which exercise a correspondingly formative influence upon subjective frames of reference and social and biographical starting points, the basis in the lifeworld for experiencing class- and stratum-specific relations of inequality (Berger 1987; Mooser 1983; Zapfet al. 1987) subsequently dissolves. This process is caused by greater economic prosperity and the security provided by welfare state benefits, by mobility, by increases in the length of vocational training courses, the creation of internal company hierarchies, the intensification of competitive pressure, and particularly by the dynamics of the labour market.

According to this viewpoint, the labour market processes in democratic welfare states in particular have set in motion historically specific processes of individualization. There 'is a tendency towards the emergence of individualized forms and bases of existence which in turn - for the sake of their

own survival – are now compelled to place themselves ever more emphatically and exclusively at the centre of their own planning and conduct of life’ (Beck 1983: 41). In this context, Beck regards individualization as a historically specific contradictory process of sociation: ‘individualization is taking place under the conditions of the organized labour market based on the principle of the welfare state, and in this sense it is thus the product of social conditions, and in turn results in a specific conflictual method of sociation, in other words, in a collectively individualized form of existence’ (1983: 42).

According to this interpretation, these fundamental social changes assume the character of a double and apparently paradoxical process: the homogenization of situations in life on the one hand, and the individualization of forms of existence on the other. On the one side, social welfare benefits and economic prosperity have become firmly established; on the other, and this represents the reverse side of the coin, the price of these increases in living standards is not only that the individual member of society becomes dependent upon these welfare benefits, but also the fact that the social, non-bureaucratic institutions of social welfare become de-functionalized. Risks and potential dangers exercise a more direct and immediate effect on the individual life situations.

Without wishing to dispute the importance of the socio-structural and labour market processes established by Beck, the fact remains that at core his arguments are too narrowly defined. His attempt at interpreting the above-mentioned processes of social transformation by means of the theory of individualization results in the scenario of a completely atomized society in which the individual becomes both the largest and the smallest sociation unit, and in which individualization in the shape of growing fragmentation into isolated individual existence becomes absolute. Beck’s

individualization theory prevents him from recognizing the existence of intermediate forms of sociation. He abandons, so to speak, the individual who has been liberated from traditional social ties, without being able to recognize any new forms of sociation. In concentrating his attention on structural processes, Beck embarks upon a one-sided expansion of the theoretical diagnosis of individualization, which he precipitately regards as *the* sociation model *per se*. He must therefore stand accused of employing a one-sided, namely, a structural-determinist concept of individualization which, in the sense of de-traditionalization, ultimately and inevitably results in the atomization of the individual.

Both themes clearly demonstrate that although class differences undoubtedly persist, they no longer constitute the central component of the identity of this society. Membership of a class-related, economically conditioned group is no longer the determining factor in shaping the conduct of life. Similarly, it is no longer possible to regard work and its social organization as the model of integration governing everything else. In consequence a sociation of individuals supporting the social structure has also become a problem, the analysis of which requires a correspondingly different frame of reference categories.

In conclusion, we can state, firstly, that the importance of employment as the analytical focal point of our society is increasingly being undermined. Secondly, although it is true that the dissolution of milieubound classes is being forced apace by processes of individualization, this does not imply that society is disintegrating, as in Beck's interpretation. For this reason, the next section develops the analytical concept of 'lifestyle', by means of which we conceptualize a method of sociation capable of the integration of the individual.

1.2 Lifestyle as an analytical concept

If taken seriously, the breach in the well-established conceptual structure of sociology consequent upon social development poses new and serious theoretical problems, notably with the assertion that the centrality of employment is declining. This mainly affects the problem of sociation. How is social integration to be sociologically comprehended if concepts of the social organization of employment, social integration through the division of labour, and sociation through work (on this point, see Beck 1984; Dahrendorf 1980, 1983) are no longer sustainable? We attempt to find an answer to this question by means of the analytical concept of 'lifestyle'. However, an explanation of some basic assumptions of differentiation theory is required in order to facilitate the adequate development of this concept.

In contrast to the social model of the 'employment society', in which society 'revolves' around work, from the standpoint of differentiation theory, it is necessary to start by assuming that in modern society no social functional system is able to lay claim to a position exceeding the scope of its own function. Each functional system operates in relative autonomy, though, as a result of the emphasis on addressing one particular social problem only, it is dependent upon the successful performance of the other functional systems. In this case, the claims to dominance of, for example, the economy, politics, science or religion can simply be regarded as the self-hypostatization of the individual functional systems. From this standpoint, the 'crisis of the employment society' can be seen as a by-product of functional social differentiation revealing the absolutist pretensions on the part of the economic system to be a case of selfoverreach (Luhmann 1988).

From the standpoint of differentiation theory, individualization processes also appear in a different light. Functional specialization increases the susceptibility of the functional system to malfunction, and intensifies its need to exclude personality. The result is the growing independence and differentiation of the individual *vis-à-vis* the social systems, in other words, individualization. In the wake of functional differentiation, value and orientation models binding on the whole of society become de-functionalized. The individual experiences this process as the pluralization and relativization of values. Therefore, for individuals, social differentiation entails the problem that they no longer receive unilinear instruction, such as by means of generalized values or of processes of institutionalization binding on the whole of society. Instead, they are compelled to assume a relative degree of self-responsibility for the management of their own lives. They are now forced to pursue the selective utilization of the opportunities, rationality precepts and orientational facilities of different functional systems, for whose consistency there is no guarantee. These processes of differentiation ensure greater scope for individual development and impose varied selectivity in respect of the functional systems, and in consequence the subjective component available to individuals in the shaping of their own lives is increased. Members of society increasingly appear as the sole centre of their life planning.

However, differentiation can be seen not only at the level of system structures, but also at the level of socio-cultural processes, of the differentiation of lifeworlds.¹ For this reason, we believe that the system perspective can only be made sociologically fruitful if the problems which this system makes apparent are afforded adequate consideration from the standpoint of their socio-cultural integration and articulation. At the level of socio-cultural

processes, problem formulas are generated which cannot be reduced to problems of the system. System differentiation and pluralization of lifeworlds produce disparate and unique specific situations. This alters the approach to the problem of sociation. Our alternative theory for the interpretation of social changes and structural upheavals in modern society is not individualization in the sense of isolation – as propounded by Beck's individualization thesis (Beck 1983) – but *sociation via specific situations*.

If processes of social differentiation compel individuals to utilize and arrange the creative opportunities and latitude which are placed at their disposal by means of accepting personal selectional responsibility, then the mechanisms of sociation also undergo a transformation: increasingly they become unique and self-related. This is sociation via specific situations, adopting specific thematic forms around crystallizing points related not only to socio-cultural starting positions, but also to current problem situations of both an individual and a collective nature. In the case of the sociation mechanisms, the starting point should be social integration, which is systematically incorporated into the structurally diversified specific situations. The form of sociation which can be distinguished at this level is lifestyle.

Lifestyles constitute a systematic configuration of specific situations incorporating conditions, problem situations and prioritizations. Life-style is geared towards individual themes grouped around crystallizing points. The thematic cores are manifold, and not at all restricted to certain functional areas. Individual lifestyles subject them to different degrees of emphasis and problematization.

As an analytical concept, lifestyle affords consideration to the increased amount of scope (made available by the social differentiation process) for making subjective prioritizations and forming subjective interpretations of structural standards. As a result, the analytical perspective

is able to focus upon the scope available for shaping the conduct of life, rather than concentrating upon structurally determined restrictions. Given the fact that the general debilitation of the structural social determination of lifestyle and awareness enhances the status of the interpretive schemata and prioritizations of individual members of society, they are themselves incorporated into the systematic configuration of life as structural data.

This is a form of sociation which – to a far greater extent than is taken into account by the conceptions of stratification sociology – is dependent upon collective interpretive schemata and subjective prioritizations. We credit lifestyles with an inherently valuable reference niveau of social integration. They obtain a force of their own that has an intrinsic quality which is not the sole product of structural social conditions. This touches upon a sociological approach which stands in marked contrast to the conventional conceptions of lifestyle.

1 This interpretation of lifestyle as a form of social integration requires the term to be distinguished from its usage in everyday parlance in the sense of an individual existence technique ('healthy', 'reasonable' lifestyle). Instead, it should be regarded as a personal lifestyle which individuals demonstrate in public or during their leisuretime pursuits via consumer goods, or as an individual technique for coping with life such as those life management techniques at the centre of the 'Lifestyle Analysis' studies which take their point of departure from the individual psychologist Alfred Adler (for an overview, see Ansbacher 1967; Gilbert 1960; Gushurst 1971).

2 The sociology of leisure time equates lifestyle with leisure-time style (Attias-Donfut 1978; Tokarski and Uttitz 1985; Tokarski and Schmitz-Scherzer 1985: 251ff). In contrast, the objective of our concept of lifestyle is to overcome the classical dichotomy between working time