

MAKING TIME EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS



For people struggling to reconcile their working and their private lives, time is the most precious commodity. Territorial time policies like those that have been established by the Development Partnership (DP) "Rennes Egalité des Temps" see the daily race against the clock not only as a problem for people juggling jobs, careers and families, but also as the legitimate concern of public authorities, enterprises, social partners and NGOs. When EQUAL started in Rennes in 2002, it came very timely to boost the [Time Bureau](#) recently set up by the town authorities to "harmonise the times of the city" and give it a transnational dimension. Starting with the public transport schedules, but including also the opening hours of public administrations, shops, childcare facilities, schools and other service providers, the project was based on research which showed that irregular and atypical working times become the daily reality of an increasing number of people. Moreover, it appeared that women, who in most cases have to bear the brunt of care and other family tasks, were suffering more than men from the time pressures caused by this lack of articulation.

A KEY ROLE FOR THE TOWN HALL

Combating inequalities in different forms had been a policy objective of the municipality of Rennes for several decades, starting within its own 4000 employees and reaching all its citizens. The issue of time(s) had been identified as both a good indicator of social inequality – related to gender, but also to the level of education, the availability of leisure, the type and location of housing, etc – and a tool to promote more equality in access to employment and services. At the 2008 Open Days of the European Week of Cities and Regions, Michelle Kergoat, the project's evaluator, pointed out that *"in addition to its urban planning responsibility, the City is a major employer and service provider; this means that it has to play a leading role and show the example to the rest of the community"*. The first step was a complete reassessment of the work patterns of the municipal employees, leading to a new organisation better suited to the needs of both the staff and the users, 60% of which are women.



REORGANISING THE CLEANING SERVICES

The city government decided to pilot a new scheme that it hoped would set an example of family-friendly working time arrangements to other employers. The scheme succeeded in dismantling the "broken shifts" system that was the usual pattern for the cleaning of all municipal buildings. To make enough income, the predominantly female staff had to work two shifts, one in the early morning and another at night. However with the help of this scheme, they now have full-time jobs and can either opt for a schedule from 7.30 to 15.30 or from 10.45 to 18.45. Team work is a key element in this new model. Whilst in the past, one person had been responsible for a certain number of square metres; two women now share the work of cleaning a larger area. The rota for cleaning certain items and parts within this floor area is calculated in such a way that one cleaner can replace the other in case of absence. Moreover, the new scheme has enabled women to swap workplaces so that some now live closer to work and need less time to commute. These reorganisations also lead to more full-time jobs and an improved administrative status. Training was developed to raise the profile of the jobs. As a result of all the changes brought about by the DP, job satisfaction has risen above 70% and absenteeism has dropped by 30%. Evaluation a year later confirmed the success of the project. *"If these City initiatives are successful, it is because they are built on a strong policy base, with the necessary resources, and a collective and participative approach. Ideas are discussed at length and tested on the ground: this may seem a slow process, but in the end the reforms are made on solid foundations"* said Danièle Touchard, in charge of the [Time Bureau](#) of the city of Rennes.

MINDS CAN CHANGE, TOO

Rennes was very aware that if there is to be more equality in the use of time, then the traditional gender roles of men and women have to be overturned and the stereotypes that might still be harboured by employers and the general public have to be destroyed. To trigger an open debate on these issues a partnership was forged with the Rennes TV station. This channel produced five documentaries, portraying people tackling the reconciliation of their different life times and responsibilities: time for work, time for home and family, time to study, time "for the others" and time for oneself. These 26-minute films were broadcast in autumn 2004, followed by a debate with a journalist and two experts. In addition, lectures and meetings were organised that focused on different aspects of the use of time; hundreds of people joined these discussions.



And advisory board "Women in the city" was set up to bring together elected women, voluntary organisations, feminist groups, women's associations and public bodies all concerned by the integration of women in the life of the city.

The EQUAL project supported a joint initiative of the municipality and the Information Centre on Women's Rights (CIDF) to organise two competitions. The "egal'temps" (equal'time) game proposed a quiz on the perception and use of time by women and men: [the first prize](#) – won by a man – was a week-end for two in Tuscany. "Dessina'temps" (draw'time), a cartoons competition on role sharing in household tasks, attracted many talents.

And, last but not least, in Rennes the international women's day on March 8 lasts... the whole month of March: conferences, shows, and exhibitions in all neighbourhoods have become a standing feature of the local life.

FREING TIME FOR ALL

The Time Bureau seeks to accommodate the needs of men and women who are trying to strike a more satisfying balance between the different demands on their time. The starting point of the reflection was that after combining their working time, including transport, and their family responsibility and household tasks, women and men did not have the same amount of "free" time to devote to activities of their own choice, be it sport, further education, citizen's involvement, or more work if they wished. In addition, women have less use of the family car and spend more time in public transports. Action was therefore taken in two directions: making administrative services more user-friendly and bringing more flexibility and information in the public transport system. This involved close cooperation between different public authorities and private sector organisations.



A dedicated website, "[Tic Tac, le temps à la carte](#)" now provides real time information on all kinds of services in the city and a tool to track those that are most convenient to either the home or the workplace of the internet user. Details, including opening hours, maps and links to further information, are now provided on 1400 organisations as diverse as childcare, sport, churches, housing, employment, support for the elderly, health or culture to mention only a few.

In four city districts, all social services have been brought together under one roof, as one-stop-shops where families can find the various types of support to which they are entitled. Attached to the local antennae of the town hall, these local administrative centres help people save their precious time by catering for almost every type of demand from obtaining a copy of a birth certificate, through using health and social services, to setting up an appointment with a careers guidance or placement officer.

IMPROVING THE FLEXIBILITY OF CHILDCARE SERVICES

In Rennes, childcare provision has also been intensified and diversified to help not only parents with atypical working hours but also those in precarious employment with short term contracts, and those who have to be away from home for business trips. "Parendom" for instance has been set up to offer extra services, in the home of the child(ren), to bring emergency solutions outside the normal day-care opening hours. EQUAL was also instrumental in developing a public-private partnership to create "Calaïs", a childcare centre serving the employees from factories and plants in large industrial zone. This centre is subsidised by different companies and several municipalities and opens from 6:00 to 21:30. The children can stay for a maximum of ten hours per day and the fees are income-dependent. A small number of the places are always reserved for emergency use or ad hoc needs.

As part of the Local Education Plan, all schools take care of children between 7:30 and 18:30. And 23 leisure centres are opened to all children aged 2 to 12 on Wednesdays and during mid-term holidays: from 7:30 to 18:45 for the 2-6 year-olds and 8:00 to 18:00 for the others.

WIDENING THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION

The "Egalité des temps" DP was not only enabling women and men to achieve a better reconciliation between their duties at work and in the home, but also helping them to lead a fuller and more satisfying life. Such a life means time to socialise with friends and participate in cultural and civic activities and – at least now and again – time for oneself. A study carried out by the DP revealed that the timings and venues of cultural events almost entirely excluded people with care responsibilities or those living on the outskirts of the city from attending. Several ways of remedying this situation were tested. For instance, midday concerts were organised in an industrial complex for people who could not, or would not normally, attend evening performances of classical music. The offer was a package that included lunch and drinks, all for a reasonable sum of somewhere between 6 to 10 euro. Each concert was fully booked and 80 percent of the audience were female, whereas in terms of the overall workforce in this industrial zone women form only 20 percent. Other examples of these new cultural opportunities are the "Happy Hours" at the Rennes Theatre. These short performances take place between 18.00 and 20.00, so that people go to the theatre straight after work. A ticket costs only 3 euro and for that price, parents can also leave their offspring in the theatre's crèche.

EQUAL ACHIEVEMENTS GOING MAINSTREAM

To secure the mainstreaming and sustainability of its activities the DP established a committee whose work will continue after the lifespan of EQUAL. Members are political decision-makers, representatives of local associations, public authorities, hospitals, social partner organisations and major enterprises such as SNCF (the French Railway System), the Postal Services, and Peugeot-Citroën. Co-chaired by city counsellor Jocelyne Bougeard, this committee is in charge of developing further the time policies and practices so far adopted by the different territorial players. This process benefited also from transnational cooperation. Similar to the Rennes DP, local governments were playing a key role in both of its partner projects in [Italy](#) and [Spain](#) and some of their initiatives to improve the articulation of peoples' life times are being transferred and adapted. This is particularly true for a range of services successfully tested by the Italian partner: a childcare centre as a common venture of several enterprises operating in the same industrial zone; mail delivery to the workplace; car sharing and flexible transport services jointly organised and financed by the municipality and an employers' consortium.



The Time Bureau is now a standing feature of City government, with new projects after the end of the EQUAL Initiative: a University-based research on the effects on children of schools schedules and extra-curricular activities; and a series of interviews of public and private service providers to identify and better answer the needs of staff and companies regarding time management. Four times a year, a series of conference, entitled the "[Thursdays of time](#)", offers to a wide audience the opportunity to discuss time related issues such as "Values and perceptions of time for teen-agers", or "Parenting, working, feeling guilty: what sort of time for oneself?".

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