Where do all the hours go?

Time use and resource consumption

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Presenter:
Dr Henrike Rau, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI, Galway
www.consensus.ie

Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

NUI Galway
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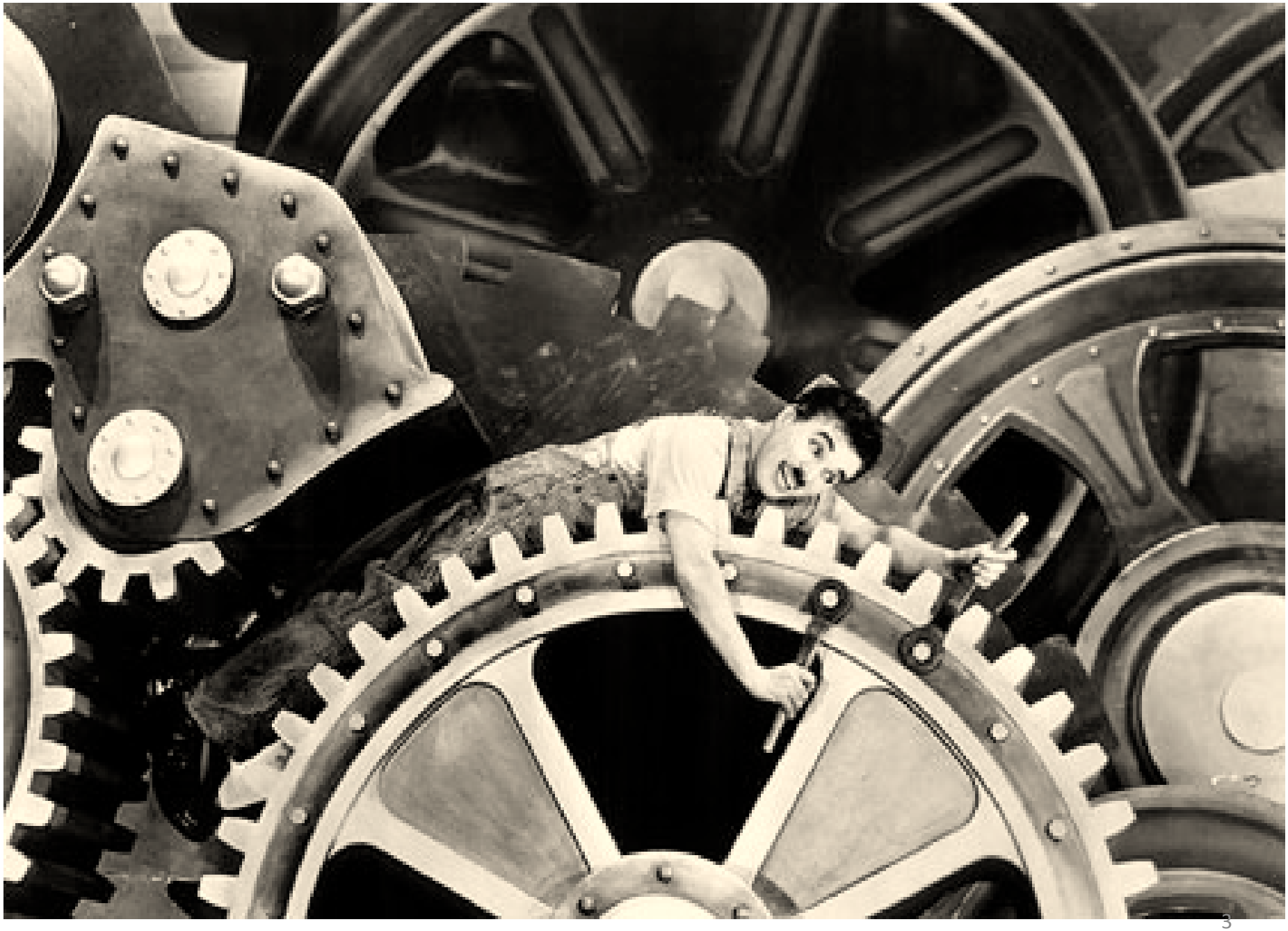
Introduction

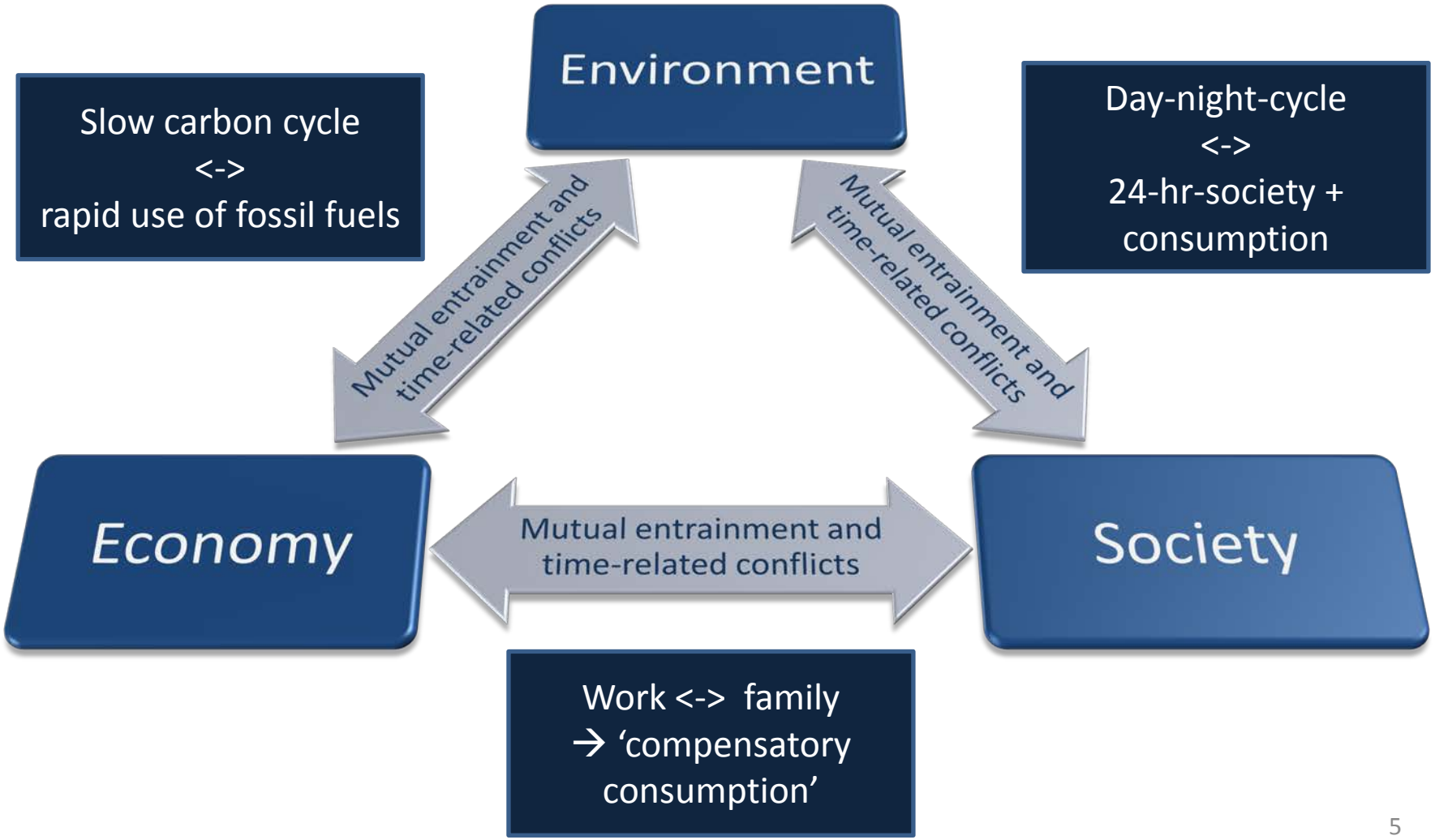
- Transition from pre-modern to modern era radically transformed people's view and use of time
- Linkages between paid work (production) and (over)consumption in modern societies
- Working hours – major area of contestation
  - e.g. labour movement; voluntary simplicity and degrowth movements



(Un)sustainable times?

- Time-related conflicts between society, economy and environment central to unsustainability
- Consumption patterns reflect ‘triangle of unsustainability’

(Un)sustainability and time:
Between mutual entrainment and conflict?



Shifting time?
Proposals for a reduction in working time

- Proposals for **reduction in working time** as part of transition towards sustainability

1. NEF (2010) – 21 hours working week
2. Jackson (2009) – radical reduction in working hours to achieve 'prosperity without growth'
3. Schor (2010) – re-allocation of time for plenitude

21 hour working week

- Proposal by New Economics Foundation (NEF) to reduce working week to average 21 hours
- State-led policy intervention to initiate change in how people view and use (working) time
- Less work → less pay → need for equitable distribution of working time and income

Prosperity without growth
Jackson (2009)

- Changes in policy and governance to improve work-life balance for all
- Drastic reduction in working hours to break cycle of unsustainable production and consumption

'Reducing the working week is the simplest and most often cited structural solution to the challenge of maintaining full employment with non-increasing output' (Jackson 2009: 80)

Reallocation of time

Schor (2010)

- Shift towards 'plenitude' requires re-organisation of time use
- Bottom-up efforts by individuals and small groups ('invisible state')

'[R]eclaiming time is the common denominator of lifestyles at the cutting edge of the sustainability frontier' (Schor 2010: 104).

	Proposal	Direction of change	Key change agents	Core concepts
NEF - 21 hours	Shorter working week	Top down	State	Enhanced quality of life, less material-intensive production & consumption
Jackson – Prosperity without growth	Reform of work-time policies	Top down + bottom up	State + committed individuals	Lasting prosperity; quality of life & well-being; social cohesion, family and community; human flourishing
Schor – Plenitude	Re-allocation of time	Bottom up	Committed individuals + small groups	'Plenitude'; voluntary simplicity – material simplicity, human scale, self-determination, ecological awareness, personal growth

Shifting time?
Proposals for a reduction in working time

BUT:

- Reduced working hours may not suffice to escape 'treadmill of production and consumption'
- Broadening of future time-related sustainability debates to include:

1. **Resource intensity** of different forms of (un)paid work
2. Temporal **rebound** effects (Jalas 2002)
3. Social meanings of (un)paid work as part of wider **time culture**

1. Resource intensity

- Work – main tool in the 'colonisation of nature' (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl 1997)
- Different modes of work have very different resource implications
  - e.g. car manufacturing; software programming
- Claims about 'dematerialisation' of production premature (esp. globally)

1. Resource intensity

- Resource intensity of reproduction deserves attention
    - e.g. childcare, care for elderly
- Material impact of secondary/tertiary activities
    - e.g. concept of more-than-24-hours day (Kaufman, Lane and Lindquist 1991)
- Synchronisation of work and leisure across society creates peaks and troughs in resource demand

Example:

Daily time use patterns and domestic energy consumption

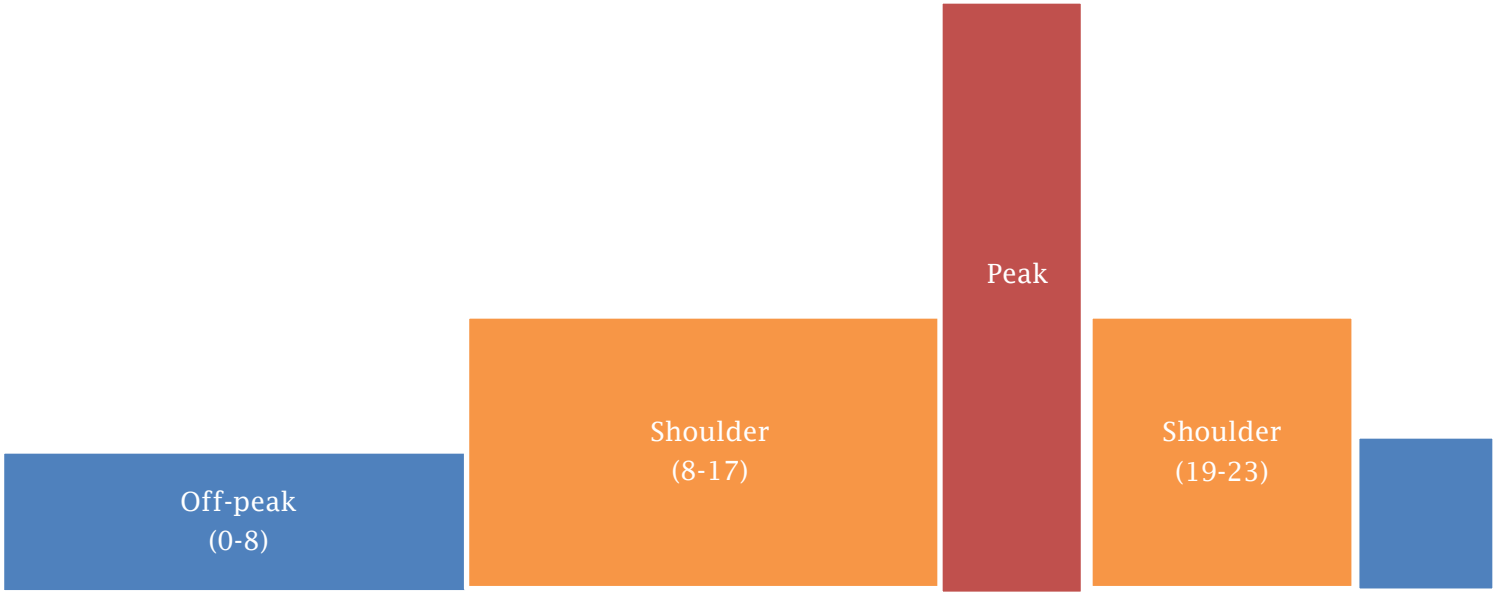


Figure 1: Demand Based Time Blocks for Domestic Energy Use in the Republic of Ireland

Source: Conlon, P. (2009) Development of Domestic and SME Time of Use Tariff Structures for a Smart Metering Program in Ireland. http://esbi.ie/news/pdf/White-Paper-Time-of-Use-Tariff-Structures.pdf (accessed 20 Aug 2014), p.2.

2. Temporal rebound effects

- How do people spent time they save? → question has never been satisfactorily answered
- Changes in time use patterns → various (un)intended consequences for society and the environment
- Temporal rebound effects (Jalas 2002)

3. Time cultures

- Work = central element of wider time culture
- Time cultures – ‘shared repertoires of time-related meanings and solutions to everyday problems’ (Rau 2014)
- Different time cultures produce different ‘ecological footprints’
- (Un)sustainable time cultures?

Discussion
Working less or working differently?

- All forms of work have resource implications that need to be understood
- ‘Saved’ hours from shorter working week spent elsewhere – how?
- Reduction in paid work brings (un)predictable consequences for society

Discussion
Working less or working differently?

- Time cultures cut across other socio-economic and cultural fault lines (e.g. class, gender, rural-urban divisions)
- Co-existence of more or less resource-intensive time cultures
- Towards sustainable time use? → social implications of transformation of time culture

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