

Social Space¹

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Mothers are very often trapped in a vicious circle of child-feeding, nappy-changing and sleepless nights (My general practitioner says to them, “*YOU will understand why sleep deprivation is barred under the Geneva Convention*”). They are a good example of always-doing-not-much-time-for-being. Sometimes this period of their life becomes a-social (!) with baby-talk occupying much of daily airtime. Their need for ‘space’ is often translated not into need for sleep, isolation and tranquillity as you would have expected, although those are, of course, also very welcome! But into the opposite: opportunity to talk to other adults, socialise and recover a sense of connection with the world!

Also, people mistake this issue of protecting time and space with the famous ‘work-life balance’. It is often assumed by people that a work-intensive environment with not much flexibility for those protections must surely be compensated by a non-work one full of ‘space’ and ‘time’. (Watch the language! We call ‘life’ the other side of ‘work’ in the work-life balance, which says a lot about our concept of work.) But being trapped in an environment with perhaps reasonable ‘place’ but no ‘space’ and ‘no’ time is not exclusive to work. Family life with its commitments and challenges (and not only for mothers!) may equally be one of non-space, and the same principles apply. So, let’s not get this wrong. Space is not necessarily about solitude!

I make no apologies for my insistence on the protection-of time-and-space despite the fact that, statistically, only some privileged managers, executives, leaders, employers or employees have access to mechanisms such as the ones that create or protect them. Many people are trapped in jobs and levels of freedom and autonomy where their flexibility to seek a protection of space is limited. If they read this, they would think that you and I - lucky fellows who could still craft some spaces of freedom - are...well, just lucky! But everyone at every level should – and can - work at protecting whatever little time and space they can!

¹ Initially posted on www.theleaderwith7faces.com, January 2008

You can read more about this dimension (Time and Space) by choosing from this list:

- [It's time, stupid!](#)
- [Protecting time](#)
- [The 'always on' leader](#)
- [Leadership and the end of time](#)
- [Leadership is creating spaces](#)
- [Sitting quietly alone](#)
- [But I never heard the builders](#)
- [100K investment lost](#)
- [Intrapreneurs at the gates](#)

You can also read more about the other two dimensions by choosing from this list:

2. [Homes](#)
3. [Legacy](#)

If you want to read more about leadership or want to continue reading from the above, you can read it all in my book [*The Leader with Seven Faces: finding your own ways to practice leadership in today's organization.*](#)