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Time Management and Self-Organisation in Academia

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Time Management and Self-Organisation in Academia

Developing a self-directed and balanced life

facultas

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Content

How This Book Will Help You

Do you face questions such as: Can I be a successful scholar and also have a fulfilling and happy life? Do the usual time-management techniques help achieve this goal? How should these techniques be adapted in order to provide appropriate help with the very different tasks involved in research, teaching, student support, administration, and leadership? What tools can I use in a specific situation to plan the many tasks, set priorities for work, and then evaluate my progress? How can I successfully use the opportunities offered by academic freedom?

These issues emerge when facing the specific challenges in academia. Established methods of managing time and projects must be modified to prevent stress, increase motivation, and plan self-development. This involves developing some new tools. At the same time, the chosen methods must be adjusted to individual situations and personalities.

We take a holistic approach, which means that we consider possibilities that go beyond an academic lifestyle and work ethic narrowly based on the criterion of 100% career success. We make the fundamental assumption that a scholarly life can be fully satisfactory.

The challenge is that many factors influence time management: your own situation and position, personal values and behavioural preferences, private life, and much more. As a result, this book will cover many things: the specific challenges in the life of a scholar and in the cultures of various academic disciplines; the influence of individual factors resulting from the particular living

situation, external conditions, work styles, and personality structure. (When it comes to the every-changing technical possibilities of the internet and the digital world, you should consult other experts offering the latest techniques.) This book will help in the fundamental questions that require reflection on one's own life, goals, environment, interpersonal communication and cooperation skills, and ability to practically implement proven methods.

We carefully selected a range of important topics. The basic goal is to awaken an understanding of the complexity of your specific situation in academia, of the many influential factors (institutional or external and individual, i.e. internal). We offer questions, which only you can answer, and will help you to choose from the wide array of professional methods and practical ideas that you can implement. You should try them out, evaluate them at a predetermined time, and then continue to adapt them to your circumstances. Our goal is to encourage critical self-reflection and reorganisation, so that you achieve the highest possible level of self-reliance, success, and satisfaction with life.

All those working in academia can benefit from this book: the experienced professor who has just become dean, as well as the newly hired assistant with a temporary part-time contract. For example, those who still have limited experience and who struggle with a qualification requirement will benefit from the explanations on project management. The suggestions for the writers of a doctoral dissertation will also apply for people working on master's theses.

Younger academics, however, have the advantage that their organisational practices are not yet strongly influenced by their institution's common approach to work. This is because every organisational culture is inherently infectious and exerts pressure to adapt. If you use the relative freedom of the introductory phase to develop your

own working style that fits your goals, values, personality, and living conditions, you will lay a very good foundation for your entire academic career. Especially in the empirical sciences and medicine, special situations may challenge you to customise the proposed instruments.

This book is about thoughtful and practical solutions, not about whining and complaining over suboptimal situations. On almost any issue, one could debate the policies in higher education. This debate should occur—but elsewhere. This book will help the scholar to cope and to succeed under the existing conditions.

The advice is backed by rich experience from many trainings, workshops, and individual coaching sessions at universities, especially in Austria, as well as insights from the specialised literature. Everyone can also benefit from personnel development services, at most universities, that offer training, coaching, and mentoring programmes.

Guide to this book

Key chapters are designed so that they can be read separately. Each case will refer to information from other sections that may be important for understanding or further work. Those who are primarily interested in methods can start with Chapter IV. If you are looking for support in mastering a particular scholarly challenge, you can start with the appropriate section in Chapter VI.

The first two chapters deal with the personal challenges facing scholars: first, the specific external conditions facing scholars in an academic institution (Chapter I), then the individual factors influencing you that must be considered so that you have criteria to select, adapt, and personalise methods for yourself. Reflecting on individual behavioural preferences (Subchapter II.1) and on the strengths and weaknesses of personal values and roles (Subchapter II.2)

will reveal crucial internal determinants for a satisfied life. In addition, Subchapter II.3 identifies broader social and life circumstances that should be considered: current and hoped-for future career opportunities, income potential, as well as private plans and desires. A role analysis and longer-term planning of all areas of life make it possible to integrate professional time management into the horizon of the whole life. Self-organisation also includes careful and effective management of one's own energies. Chapter III explains how to move from distress to eustress and flow.

The large Chapter IV expands the contents of the time-management toolbox, its subchapters build on each other. We recommend working through them in the given order and to read supplementary Chapter V for better self-organisation in terms of information management, work location, and order at the workplace.

Chapter VI applies the tools to the most important fields of scholarly activity and supplements them with specific methods, additional ideas, and references. For a deeper understanding, we recommend consulting Chapters I and II.

In the references, you will not only find further help, but also the exact bibliographical details of the citations and references, which are listed in footnotes with short titles only. However, texts mentioned only once are already cited in full in the respective note.

At the beginning of the chapters or subchapters, you will find a preview in italics of the topics that follow.

In these kinds of boxes, you will find many practical tips and hints.

- Questions set in blue font will help you select the methods that are appropriate for your situation. As you

work through the questions, you will thereby individualise and adapt the tools. We highly recommend that you stop and write down your own insights, questions, and conclusions as you read. There are also a few blank pages at the end of the book for this purpose.

We are convinced that scholarly work is a beautiful, exciting, and fulfilling profession. We hope that this guidebook and workbook will also help you personally with its challenges. Good luck!

I. Specific Challenges in Academic Life—Institutional Factors

What it's about:

Every profession brings with it typical challenges that must be recognised in order to adapt the overall methods of time management. Compared to other professions, scholarly work frequently offers greater freedom and opportunities, but these themselves result in new challenges. This chapter will help you understand the external factors that positively and negatively, challenge and foster your work. Finally, when considering how scholarship normally functions under typical institutional conditions, the chapter identifies some initial implications for time management.

Do external things distract you? Then make time for yourself to learn something worthwhile; stop letting yourself be pulled in all directions. But make sure you guard against the other kind of confusion. People who labour all their lives but have no purpose to direct every thought and impulse toward are wasting their time—even when hard at work.

Marcus Aurelius: Meditations II,7 (transl. Gregory Hays, 2002)

Freedoms

Academic work usually allows above-average freedom and more personal creative space—both in terms of content and time management. This applies to research and to some extent still to teaching. For some, freedom was a motive to go into academia, and for some it is a motive to stay, despite opportunities to switch to a corporate or public service career (such as a government agency).

During their student days, many people became used to determining their daily routine largely by themselves, to being able to work mostly at home, to taking care of errands, doctor’s appointments or other things during the week in exchange for working in the evenings or on weekends, and to having few scheduled meetings during the lecture-free months. They may find it difficult to cope with core working hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., compulsory presence in the office, daily commutes at rush hours and keeping count of every free day.[1] Since this freedom regarding time means that days, weeks, and months have little external structure, with little control and feedback on effective use of time, this flexibility often becomes a trap, especially for young scholars. We will soon discuss the very high requirements associated with effective self-organisation and personal responsibility.

In many cases, a great deal of freedom is still given when choosing a topic to research. For example, in some humanities or the arts, dissertation supervisors or similar advisors only offer minimal assistance in finding and formulating a feasible research topic. Despite the efforts of many universities to better structure doctoral studies and professionalise supervision, a lot of time is often already lost at this stage. In contrast, the natural science, economics, technical, and medical disciplines often specify possible and desired topics for qualification theses and dissertations, especially when this involves funding, such as with third-party grants. Professors and department chairs enjoy greater freedom and, for their part, shape the freedom available to young academics.

Larger research projects, which of course also include dissertations, usually have little internal time structure. Where you do not work in well-organised teams, but mainly alone, where there are no limited and fixed times in the laboratory, you must structure sensibly the long period of

multiple semesters or years, break down your project into substeps and subgoals, set target dates, and organise your weekly working hours. You can often make your own appointments for regular feedback to supervisors or colleagues and postpone them easily because they are seldom annoyed when a meeting is cancelled.

Teaching at a university used to be done with considerable freedom, the professor would proclaim his (or more rarely her) sovereign ‘decisions’ on the topics of their seminars or lectures. This has changed very much; the Bologna Process requirements to standardise degree programmes into modules resulted in predetermining most course content in all semesters. Even if the expansion of compulsory courses restricts opportunities for special lectures, new seminars, or alternative exercises, you can often exchange courses with lecturers within the institute or repeat courses that have already been held—possibly with different emphases. However, great creative freedom still remains with regard to the methods and didactics: structuring the material to be presented over the semester, deciding when to go in-depth or only survey a subject, choosing examples, selecting literature or other teaching aids, including methods of e-learning, partner or group work, giving space for discussions, etc.

These freedoms, which require a high degree of self-discipline, can inspire and motivate, but also disorientate. In part, other factors influence them.

- How free am I in my research, teaching, and time management?
- In which areas do I feel somewhat unfree?
- How important are my freedoms, what are they worth to me?

Challenges

Specific challenges for those working in academia follow directly from the previously outlined freedoms. An initial consequence is the difficulty of estimating the specific returns on investments of time and energy, which raises these kinds of questions:

- What difference will it make to the learning success of students if I thoroughly rework my lecture X or that course Y?
- How important is it to publish an essay or paper on a topic that is new to me and thus show broader competence? Is there any point in writing another paper on a topic I published on already?
- Is it worthwhile to get involved in a side topic of my dissertation, or does it tend to distract me from the essentials?
- Can I, for example, make an impact as a representative of the mid-level faculty in my department that would be reasonably proportional to the time spent on these extra efforts?
- How should I balance my research, teaching, and other commitments?

The success of individual activities in both research and teaching often becomes apparent only later, perhaps after years—while it also common knowledge that the most important factor in scholarly success is investing time. Therefore, it is important to set criteria for deciding on priorities and not become discouraged while waiting for signs of success. The less positive feedback you receive from outside, the less that academic work is externally motivated (such as by above-average salaries), the more important it becomes to cultivate, on the one hand, your intrinsic motivation and, on the other hand, to ensure that external incentives arrive regularly.

- What does ‘success’ mean to me in research, teaching, and administrative work?
- How can I measure it?
- When do I get feedback ‘along the way’ that I am on the right path and making progress?
- Where can I build in additional encouragement stations like these?

For large projects and tasks, define partial goals that you review at predefined dates in order to raise awareness and to celebrate partial successes (see Chapter IV for more detail, especially under ‘Achieving goals’ and ‘Evaluation’)!

Frequently, an obstacle is that other people’s expectations and quality requirements are not quite clear, so that you do not know when your research or teaching can be considered successful. Many working on a master’s or magister thesis, and many doctoral candidates, are unsure if their writing is meeting the relevant criteria for a good text in their field. Without a doctoral group or something similar, collegial feedback is rare, or one does not dare to ask continually for comments.

What qualifies as a good lecture or a successful seminar is somewhat clearer, and meanwhile more emphasis is placed on regular teaching evaluations that provide a guideline. Nevertheless, the question remains of realistic targets beyond the students’ expectations and your own ideal image of a university lecturer or instructor: How do you prepare for and complete teaching obligations while having enough time and energy for your other tasks?

You must answer these questions yourself—especially if you face too many or even contradictory expectations. If you feel left alone due to a lack of feedback and assessment

of your work by others, you should specifically ask for a response and not grope in the dark full of self-doubt.

A certain amount of trial and error seems to be part of academic freedom, and trying new things has value: subjectively, insofar as it is enjoyable, and objectively, as it generates innovation. But also see the limits: Routine tasks can be done following proven patterns and criteria. Do not strain your creativity and time in areas where the experience of others can make your work easier.

Many scholars also see their profession as a vocation, insofar as their work corresponds to their intrinsic interests and talents and to what they want to realise in life. This is matched by the relatively high degree of self-determination, which is why people gladly accept that they must work at home, in the evenings, and on weekends. The trap, however, is that work and private life intertwine too much without maintaining a rhythm of time conducive to a healthy life. The ‘home office’ no longer has a noticeable distinction (only ‘office’, no longer ‘home’). Women scholars with children come under extra pressure in this context, but so do couples who both work at a university. Life relationships and children suffer as well as friendships, health, and recreation. The 2020 pandemic and the countermeasures exacerbated the situation for many people.

- How do I set the boundaries between work and private life?
- Do I feel a distinction between my various roles?
- What rhythms—especially daily and weekly—do I maintain?

So far, we have thought about challenges arising from academic freedoms. But then this profession also has specific difficulties and constraints directly opposed to these freedoms.

In theory, you are self-directed and personally responsible for your work, but in practice you must submit to the person guiding you or your research team. Or, external factors dictate your schedule, such as vegetation cycles in biology.

If you have an assistantship position supporting the completion of your doctorate, then your main task is writing your dissertation; however, at the same time your doctoral advisor and first examiner may serve as your supervisor at the institute and demand too much of your time for cooperating and assisting with many other tasks (called ‘burning out your assistants’). Such dual commitments can be fatal if you fear falling out of favour and being judged less positively by saying ‘no’. Language also expresses this lack of freedom: Strictly speaking, you can neither independently write a dissertation nor promote yourself to a doctoral title, but you can only be granted a doctorate. In general, both official and unofficial hierarchies call into question many aspects of freedom.

Tension results from your different roles: Towards students and as a member of the international ‘scholarly community’, you need to appear independent, confident, and self-assured—but structurally and legally you are often treated as dependent and without autonomy, sometimes having to prove yourself constantly.[2] Even those who have made it through this phase need additional skills and legal knowledge, especially for negotiations. The struggle to acquire these skills will take time and can result in stress.

Younger scholars in the qualification phase often have less freedom because they must pursue other activities to earn a living. Above all, medical practitioners have several

‘jobs’ in research and teaching, clinical practice, and working or substituting in a surgery.

In a very competitive environment, with constant evaluations and appraisals of your projects and results, your career can feel like a one-way street with many stop signs. You can no longer turn around, but every crossroads has the risk of not extending a fixed-term contract and of ending your career. The many temporary contracts without the prospect of tenure or tenure-track status (which has generally been abolished in Austria) have led to an academic precariat.[3] The freedom then consists in being ‘freely and fully released’, perhaps after only a few years. Those who finally make it to a professorship do so at an average age of about 40 years in Germany—so the time to become established is extremely long. Where uncertainties about the professional future become widespread, motivation begins to falter.

After all, the fundamental self-determination of when and what to write and publish faces a soft but constant time pressure: no one can escape the de facto principle of ‘publish or perish’. Deadlines for submitting written papers or contributions to anthologies and journals as well as reviews often lie more than a year in the future. This leads to careless and unplanned commitments that cause stress when the deadline approaches.

List the institutional and external factors that limit your freedom! Consider external constraints due to teamwork, dual commitments, several simultaneous jobs, pressure due to constant evaluations, time contracts, perceived compulsion to publish, …

Consequences

The academic freedoms, their internal problems as well as the typical constraints outlined previously, result in an enormous demand for personal responsibility—perhaps more than in any other profession. You can and must select, develop, and structure projects, define quality benchmarks, set priorities, and implement all this with a great deal of perseverance and discipline and often with little support. The planning horizon covers several years, during which you must not lose your intrinsic motivation.

There are three levels of motivation: The basic level consists of the need to survive and to acquire the necessary means for survival. The second level, namely external motivation through punishments and rewards (milder forms include criticism and praise or recognition), is in the long run not sufficient for getting through the lengthy qualification phase. Ultimately, one depends on other people's goodwill, acceptance, and fairness.

The highest motivational level is self-motivation due to mastery, autonomy, and meaning.[4] On these three factors, scholarly activity scores quite well: After all, scholarship is based on knowledge and its application; moreover, despite all institutional and informal constraints, scholars are allowed an above-average measure of self-definition. However, this motivational factor of autonomy does not ensure achieving an appropriate, stable, growth-conducive place within the system. As far as the third intrinsic factor is concerned, beyond Bachelor's, Magister's, or Master's degrees, people choose scholarship as a profession because they recognise a meaning that goes beyond immediate usefulness—whether it be, classically speaking, the finding of truth, the identification of beauty, or the promotion of good.

- What originally motivated me to choose a scholarly career?
- What motivates me to stay with it today?

- What can I do to strengthen my intrinsic motivation?

Surely, while thinking about the factors that help condition your personal situation, you have ideas or demands for improving the external conditions. These are important and you should fight for them together with others. However, you will be able to engage in this struggle only if you are successful with your own academic projects and tasks with the help of good time management. Since only a few academic administrators in German-speaking universities have limited research and teaching duties, the possibility of improving the system depends on remaining in the system through your research and teaching and also on acquiring a reputation in your discipline.

Only if you yourself are reasonably successful under the given conditions without becoming cynical—in other words, if you advance in a psychologically healthy and liveable way—then you can work for long-term improvement of these conditions.

That is why our book starts with you as an individual, to first optimise your self-organisation within academia. In doing so, we look at your entire life so that you can develop sustainable methods, habits, and rhythms that fit your personal situation. Motivating yourself to achieve top performance at the cost of other important areas and goals in life only works sometimes and rarely in the long run—even less so in academia than in industry with its frequently more effective monetary and other incentives.

This has large- and small-scale consequences, especially in the field of research.

1. In looking at your whole life, also in the long run, you yourself are responsible for your career and life planning. As is well known, it is no longer the case that after a good doctoral dissertation, you can expect an assistantship where you can stay until your post-doctoral qualification

(or habilitation) and/or tenure, while the professor feels a moral obligation to ‘place’ his ‘disciples’ somewhere. Of course, it is also no longer the case as it was for Immanuel Kant at the end of the 18th century that ten years without publications seemed acceptable, during which an ‘opus magnum’ like the ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ could be worked out. You must know when you will take which career steps and what you want to do if, at a certain point, the chosen career path turns out to be a dead end. This means that at an early stage you should think about career alternatives and how to prepare for them. You must be aware of the price you are willing to pay for the precarious freedom of a life dedicated to scholarship. (See especially Subchapter II.3 on these big questions.)

Especially in the doctoral phase, many people in their late twenties pursue the strategy of first obtaining their doctorate and then seeing if any doors open. This comes at a high price: the risk of having to completely reorient oneself in the fourth decade of life or in midlife, while one is already considered overqualified, too specialised, or simply too old on the job market.
If you are not sufficiently sure that your academic career will work out: Develop at least one alternative life plan, ideally also in discussion with a trusted person or a coach. This will enable you to make provisions at an early stage by adding other professional qualifications and networks and will prevent you from feeling later that you have driven your life into a dead end.

2. Life and career planning involves time management with a long-term perspective, but also inspires and influences the day-to-day organisation and use of time. In the planning horizons of month, week, and day, you must not

lose sight of your long-term goals and alternative scenarios. If you allow yourself to be driven by whatever is pushing at you, you no longer decide for yourself what to do. Think and plan from top to bottom, from the important to the urgent, from the values to the deadlines, from the big projects to the small tasks. Create space and regular blocks of time in your time management for self-reflection and planning, and, before anything else, the bigger and long-term goals. By using the autonomous space that you already have (be it large or small), you expand the possibilities for self-determination.

To the extent that you can control your own time, also adapt your time management to your individual goals and values, to your personal behavioural style, and to your personal circumstances (see Chapter II). Of course, the specific academic culture in your discipline and at your institute must also be considered.

- How much of chance do I have to implement my own planning and decision-making? Am I perhaps already trapped in a victim mentality and letting myself be driven by the 'academic business'?
- Can I answer the question of what I would do if the next career step should fail? And what am I already doing today for this eventuality?
- Am I also implementing my big goals within the smaller planning horizons?

3. The planning of research requires knowing and applying the basic rules of project management. Particularly in the case of teamwork, but also when working alone on a research project, phases must be objectively identified and planned in their logical sequence according to the subject matter under consideration. Even where no research exposé and timetable had to be submitted to receive funding, you should nevertheless work this out in

a professional manner (see Subchapter VI.1). If you plan target dates for the individual phases and subgoals of your project, when integrating this into the chronological planning in calendar form, you should also take into account the requirements of your subjective life situation and 'private' life goals such as non-academic training, partnership and family, and other interests and activities that increase motivation, provide recreation, and create meaning. You will learn how to do that in this book, especially as of Subchapter II.3.

Personal Challenges and My Commitments

The most important ideas to improve my self-organisation:

My commitments and SMART goals:

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1 The determination of (core) working hours naturally varies from institute to institute.

2 The current structure in universities is partially characterised as 'presidential feudalism' (*präsidialer Feudalismus*), partially as a transition to an 'individual-centred negotiation jungle' (*individuumszentrierten Verhandlungsdschungel*): Christian Scholz und Volker Stein: Überlebenskritische Fragen zur Struktur von Universitäten; in: *Forschung und Lehre* (January 2011), 26–28.

3 In Germany, 98% of full-time academic and artistic employees under the age of 35 (excluding professors) have fixed-term contracts; between the ages of 35 and 45, the figure is still 77% (92% overall, little changed since 2010). An employment contract of doctoral students lasts on average 22 months, of post-docs 28 months. About one-third of young academics are employed part-time; see *Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2021* (www.buwin.de/dateien/buwin-2021.pdf, 14.4.2021), 108. The mid-level faculty, the many teaching assistants and outside lecturers, i.e. post-doctoral lecturers with teaching duties, however, provide a large part of the total teaching, see

https://www.gew.de/aktuelles/detailseite/neuigkeiten/professorinnen-und-professoren-in-der-minderheit/ (14.4.2021).

4 The terms ‘mastery’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘meaning’ are fully described in Daniel H. Pink: *Drive, the surprising truth about what motivates us.* Penguin, 2011. Behind this are older concepts for example by Alfred Adler and Viktor Frankl.

II. Specific Challenges—Individual Factors

What it's about:

The specific challenges in academia arise not only from institutional frameworks, but above all from individual factors. These must also be considered so that individual methods of self-organisation can bring about sustainable improvements. This includes self-knowledge of individual behavioural preferences, an awareness of one's own values, and clarity about how these values determine role models, as well as consideration of the whole continuum of life while integrating all major life goals.

1. Knowing myself: Individual behaviour style

What it's about:

Just as the specific challenges faced by academics due to their field of study, job, and position are varied so are their life situations, goals, and values; their personal traits, behavioural styles, and ways of working also differ along with their individual strengths and weaknesses. This must be considered so that you, as a unique person, can select and implement those methods that sustainably improve your self-organisation. Personal behavioural preferences significantly influence time management.

Individuality and structuring time

Every human being is unique, is an individual in the emphatic sense. This concerns all levels: the biological (cf. fingerprint or genetic make-up), the cognitive (intelligence profile[1]), the ethical in the sense of the ethos expressed in values and goals, the historical, cultural, and social life situation with its influences, but also the behavioural style. Of course, all of this is interrelated and more or less mutually dependent. These factors influence the personal structuring of time, for example the daily performance curve, the energy budget, the way of thinking, the priorities placed on values, traditions, and social status, and, above all, the character.

Some jump out of bed early in the morning full of energy, others are not fully ready for action until late in the morning but are still awake late in the evening. Some can easily concentrate on one thing for two hours, while others switch between different activities more often. For some, large charts and detailed plans help with time management, while others are terrified by them and prefer to stick reminder notes with small pictures or symbols on their computers and desktops or on their doors. Some always have an open ear for their fellow human beings because they want to be there for them, while others introduce limited office hours and otherwise close the office door and turn off the phone. One analyses and decides quickly, the other regards that as slapdash and insists on a thorough discussion of all relevant points of view.

Many time-management training courses and advice books take little account of individuality and find it difficult to do so, since it is objectively difficult to do justice to all possible styles and offer individually accurate help in a short seminar or a book with unknown readers. By necessity, they limit themselves to general rules and standard tips and leave their selection and adaptation entirely up to the reader or the training participant. However, the more a profession is shaped by the personality of the person

practicing it, the more open it is to design, the more important it is to take individuality into account.

How can we get a little closer to this goal? One possibility is to use typification, i.e. a level between individuality in the strict sense and the general that should apply to everyone. On this basis, a person can be offered help for individual assessment and then work more precisely on adapting time management tools and strategies to individual behaviour.

Not only the profession itself but, as far as possible, the self-organisation must fit the individual personality, i.e. not only the ‘what’ but also the ‘how’. Where this does not match in the long run, achieving high performance becomes very exhausting. Conversely, success beckons those who organise their personal environment and routines to use their personal strengths and not be slowed down too much by their weaknesses. It is even better to move from individual self-knowledge to self-development and thus use one’s full potential to respond better to the diverse demands of specific situations. It is therefore about a two-way adjustment of environment and behaviour, which we perform intuitively all the time, but which can be consciously improved in order to avoid the losses due to friction, which can go as far as blockages. Those who have achieved a high capacity for such adjustments become aware of it through faster and more effective work, higher satisfaction and well-being and, in normal cases, more success. Such people are often said to be ‘completely themselves’ in what they do—whether it is the quiet and solitary work at the desk or the inspiring lecture, effective leadership, or valuable collegial collaboration in the research team.

Why does one lecturer like to give oral exams and enjoy the opportunity to get to know the students personally to some extent, and does not mind running over time in the process, while another prefers to develop and use multiple-

choice tests because they enable standardised and rapid assessment?[2]

Why does an institute director immediately seize an opportunity to apply for a large third-party funded research project and take the necessary steps even in the face of resistance, while a colleague thinks about it for a long time and ends up with more concerns and counter-arguments than concepts? Why does one professor seem to be grateful for personal conversations and then quickly and with inspiration returns to work, while another
feels jolted out of concentration and disturbed by every visitor?

These examples show how a person's behavioural style influences the many daily decisions related to time. They do not suggest that there is only one 'right' behaviour in diverse situations, but that it is important to know one's natural behavioural preferences, to identify causes of ineffectiveness, and to secure the conditions under which you can work well with respect to others. Also, appropriate planning depends on it.

- How important is it for me to reserve large blocks of time for drafting a lecture or writing a paper, in which I eliminate interruptions as much as possible?
- How important is it for me to receive inspiration through discussions, such as at conferences?
- How much quiet seclusion do I need? How often should I discuss my projects with others?

All these questions allow for an interesting psychological debate. This is not the place and time for such a debate—our aim is to provide you with a heuristic instrument to help you systematically better understand and control your personal behaviour, the effectiveness and dysfunctionalities of which you know to some extent from experience. In doing so, we rely on a scientifically validated personality model