

På väg mot jämställda arbetsresor?

Vardagens mobilitet
i förändring och förhandling

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ABSTRACT

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In Swedish regional policy, regional enlargement, i.e. geographically extended labour markets and associated longer commuting distances, is an explicit goal. This is in order to stimulate economic growth and better match labour supply to the qualifications of the population. However, this policy seldom takes gender into account, overlooking the implications of long commuting for individuals and households in their daily living and practice.

The overriding aim of the thesis is to update and deepen existing knowledge about commuting among women and men. A related ambition is also to derive knowledge that could serve an urban and regional policy and planning that advances transport systems and infrastructures better suited for women and their access to the labour market, as well as more equal living conditions for women and men.

The thesis is based on two empirical studies, one quantitative and one qualitative. The statistical study uses Swedish national travel survey data covering the periods 1994-95 and 2005-06 and focuses on changes over time in women's and men's commuting. The qualitative study is based on twenty in depth interviews with parents with small children living in the Gothenburg urban region, being highly skilled with specialized labour markets, and recently having moved to a new residential location. This study investigates the crucial role of work trips in households' daily life and asks what women and men perceive as important when decisions affecting travel distance, travel time and mode of transport (travel speed) are taken. The theoretical approach of the thesis is based on time geography and theories of mobility, accessibility and gender.

Results from the statistical study show that gender gaps in work trips, as regards distance and speed of travel, have converged slightly over the period. However, women still commute much shorter distances than men do, thus having less spatial reach and access to the labour market. Women and men have equivalent commuting times, implying that men in general use faster means of transport than women. The overall (national) pattern of convergence hides regional variation. A distinct pattern of convergence between the sexes occurs in the Malmö region, while divergence occurs in the Gothenburg region. Regression analyses show that several aspects related to the individual, and to her environment, affect the work trip distance and time in different ways for women and men. For example, having small children associates with reduced trip time for women, and increased trip distance and time among men, other important factors held constant.

Results from the qualitative study show how important aspects shaping the work trip are clearly gendered. For example, the wish to have a work place near to the children is more pronounced among women. However, decisions related to the use of a car often give men priority. Also, fairly non-gendered factors shape the work trip, for example housing (location) preferences and the perception of trip time as being useful or not. Work trips made by public transport are experienced as a relief by those who can use the time on board for purposeful activities (e.g., work or rest), but as a burden by those who have no such opportunity. The consequences of long work trips for the household members, as regards household work and caring as well as individual's free-time activities, depend on type of gender contract of the household as well as possibilities to use certain space-time strategies in everyday life.

In conclusion, the study shows that Swedes are moving towards more gender equal commuting, but at a very slow pace. At the household level, development depends on the how gender contracts are negotiated, and how societal structures (regarding work locations and supply of public transportation, for example) constrain any decision shaping work related mobility.

Keywords: commuting, distance, gender, gender contract, means of transport, men, negotiations, regional enlargement, speed, time, women, work-trip.

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