The role of gender contracts within the household

Main results and conclusions

Overall, the study shows that the role and implications of the work trip for individuals (and their households) on everyday life and welfare are shaped by surrounding structures such as conditions on the labor market, the housing market and the design of transport systems. This shaping appears in largely different ways for women and men, to a great deal depending on the (explicit or implicit) gender contract that defines their room to maneuver. The analysis highlights two distinctive and contrasting types of gender contracts: the traditional gender-contract and the equal gender-contract. The traditional gender-contract describes women and men as different, expressing unequal (male dominant) power relations between female and male attributes and roles, and leads to the man limiting the woman’s activity space and range on the labor market. The equal gender contract, on the other hand, assigns women and men different roles within the household, but as the roles are not taken for granted to the same extent, further power relations between the roles are not distinct, and the man does not limit the woman’s action space.

In the interviews these gender contracts are clearly expressed as regards: (i) The use of the car(s) and how families and households, as a unit, are driving, who is driving and to what place? (ii) How much do the family members count on each other? (iii) What is the woman’s need of the car is not perceived important motivating the economic cost that a second car constitutes. (iv) Men dominating, or no car despite need.

Furthermore, power relations between the roles are not taken for granted to the same extent. Households with equal gender contracts show more easily get stuck in traditional solutions. Furthermore, in some cases the woman even when she is overqualified for her current job. In some, result show that gender contracts within the household influence the consequences of regional enlargement for the individual. The consequences depend on how the household succeeds in handling existing restrictions, as well as making use of possible solutions. Households with equal gender contracts show a greater variety of possible solutions in their negotiations, whereas households with traditional gender contracts more easily find no solution at all. Continued progress toward gender equal work trips thus depends on the (implicit or explicit) gender contracts within households are negotiated and further re-negotiated as how future societal structures support households’ decision making in a more equal direction.

References

disparities in actual mobility between the sexes are seen as an expression of the relationship between women and men found in the homes, places of work and in the transport system. Focusing on the role of the household, the concept of gender contract is used in order to understand existing mobility choices and decisions. In the case of Sweden, this concern is raised when the argument is on the habits and what men and women containing mutual agreements about the individual is expected to be and act, in this case as regards travel-related issues. The argument is under- stood as having advantages for both parties. In this study, we focus on the agreements concerning transport, as how the individual is expected to "be and should leave the children at the day-care center in the morning.

The rights and responsibilities of the home

The traditional gender contract

Gender roles limit the woman’s activity space

No car despite need

More household-work trips due to work commitments

Equal access to the car(s)

Gender contract

Gender roles do not limit the woman’s activity space

Equal gender contract

We can afford the car a car

Equal access to the car(s)

One car is enough

Equal access to the car(s)

And questions of who should leave the children at the daycare center.