

**Living without a car in the periphery: a study of the changing potential for non-car based accessibility to grocery stores in rural areas 1990-2014 in region Västra Götaland, Sweden.**

Anders Larsson, [anders.larsson@geography.gu.se](mailto:anders.larsson@geography.gu.se)

Unit for Human Geography, Department of Economy and Society, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Over decades we have witnessed a continuous increase in individual mobility in most western countries. The lion's share of this growth can be attributed to car travel in combination with urban sprawl, producing a landscape where long commuting distances and complex tempo-spatial organisation of everyday activities has become the norm. In the current debate and planning practice, sustainable solutions to this problem often include limiting car transport through the promotion of active modes of transport (walking and cycling) and densification in land-use planning (housing, services and jobs). However, this multifaceted process is almost without exception studied in urban contexts. The research question of this paper addresses the rural context in terms of the changing potential accessibility by proximity to important everyday activities, here exemplified by grocery stores. Changes in accessibility potential are studied for the period 1990-2014. Focus is set on shifting patterns and conditions for carless groups of the population, such as the young and the elderly. Results show that more than one third of the population live more than one kilometre from a grocery store. This share is increasing, especially for the elderly. At the same time is the number of grocery stores rapidly decreasing in the non-urban areas. These results will be discussed in the framework of the potential for sustainable living in rural areas based on principles of proximity and active modes of transport. The result of this research is also expected to provide a basis for a critical appraisal of the urban-rural dichotomy in the area of accessibility analysis.