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Allocation of tasks, arrangement of working hours and commuting in different Norwegian households

Introduction

The traditional family with two parents and a male breadwinner is no longer universal, neither empirically nor normatively (Crompton et al. 2007). A large majority of women with children are employed, and dual-income families now prevail in many Western countries. In Norway, for example, 77 percent of women in the age group 20–66 years are in the labour force compared to 83 percent of men in the same age group (SSB 2013 a). Even though a great majority of Norwegian women are in paid work, as many as 36 percent work part-time compared to 14 percent among men (SSB 2013 b). And research shows that spouses make compromises between individual and common careers (Faganini 1993, Karsten 2003).

In organizing everyday life in families, the partners have to negotiate weekly working hours, distance to their job, access to the family's transport resources (car), responsibility for the children getting to day care or school as well as other household tasks. In the process of establishing a work–life balance, conciliations very often have to be made, and in this regard women more readily adjust their career to meet the family obligations than men do (e.g. Crompton 2006, Crompton et al. 2007, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995).

In the discussion on developing a work–life balance, adjusting working hours tends to take precedence over mobility and commuting (Rantanen et al. 2011, DeSimone et al. 2013, Greenhaus et al. 2003).

Previous research on commuting has demonstrated gender differences in distance travelled and mode of transport used. Women work closer to the home than men do and drive less, indicating restricted choice on the labour market (geographically) and less access to transportation (especially a car). Research shows that geographical mobility getting to work can exclude potential workers from entering the labour force or of working reduced weekly hours. The gender implications of this demand have been addressed by Friberg (2008).

As women’s participation in the labour force increases – although still a high share of part-time work – and gender equality comes higher up the agenda, an obvious assumption is that commuting differences will probably disappear or at least be reduced. Are there indications of a change to a more equal distribution of household tasks and to commuting related aspects such as distance and access to transport resources?

Results from national travel surveys in Sweden and Norway, however, indicate an opposite development in regard to the distances commuted by men and women. In Sweden, the average travel distance to work for both men and women increased in the period 1980–2010, as did the difference between the genders (Frändberg and Vilhelmson 2011). This same phenomenon has been registered in Norway. In 1985, the average commute for men was 12.4 km and for women 7.8 km (Hjorthol 2012). In 2009 these were 18.1 km and 10.7 km, i.e. travel distance increases of 46 percent

for men and 37 percent for women. This has occurred in a period of greater similarities between the genders in regard to education and working life, and to more sharing of household responsibilities, even if women, and especially the age group 25-39 years (with small children), do more household work (both housework and care work) than men (Egge-Hoveid and Sandnes 2013).

The opportunity to combine paid work and family duties for both men and women is central to Norwegian work–family policy. Indicators of equality between genders show for example that the share of women with higher education is larger than for men; 65 percent of fathers are taking their quota of parental leave in connection with childbirth, and 90 percent (2011) of children 1-5 years are in day care/kindergarten (SSB 2013b). On the other hand, women’s income is lower than that of men, mostly due to the greater share of part-time working among women.

The increased difference in travel distance contrasts with assumptions of more similarities between the genders concerning commuting, the consequences perhaps implying an even greater difference between men and women regarding options on the labour market.

This development is taking place at the same time as regional enlargement is currently being discussed in both Norway and Sweden (Amcoff 2007, St. Meld nr. 25 (2004-2005). Regional enlargement means growth and strengthening of local (geographical) labour markets, and is usually measured as increased (long) commuting. Neighbouring regions coalesce into one unit. The idea is that by integrating several smaller regions a larger region can be created with a more varied and effective labour market. An obvious question is whether this regional labour

market policy is gender neutral or a policy favouring those who have the desire and ability to cope with a long trip to work, namely men? A recent study of commuting within the greater Oslo intercity region reveals a large male majority (73 percent) of these long distance commuters (Engebretsen et al. 2012). The same study shows that while 27 percent of women are single, only 16 percent of men have this civil status among these long-distance commuters. It seems that long-distance commuting implies different challenges for men than for women.

Working hours and commuting time/distance are often examined separately, and at an individual level, but in dual career households, especially households with children, the arrangements of working hours and work location (commuting distance and use of transport mode) are made in the context of the family situation. In many cases, negotiations preceding these arrangements will typically involve questions relating to everyday mobility, household tasks, caretaking of children and participation in leisure activities.

Within the field of work–family studies, opinions differ on issues of mothers' (very rarely fathers) adaptation to paid work, on the one hand, and care and other household tasks, on the other. Over recent decades, two main but contrasting perspectives have developed. Hakim (1995, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2007), with her Preference Theory, claims that decisions taken in families are the outcome of a set of individual choices based on gender-specific lifestyle preferences, which she classifies within three categories: the work-centred, the home-centred and the adaptive (a combination of work and family). The other perspective emphasises the significance of constraint on women's employment opportunities (e.g. Crompton and Lyonette

2005, McDowell et al. 2005), constraints relating to both structural and institutional factors; for example, the supply of childcare arrangements, local services and facilities, financial resources and transport supply. A third perspective “questions the assumption of free choice within objective constraints, and rather examines how individual preferences are both socially and culturally shaped, reproduced and constrained” (Halrynjo and Lyng 2009:323).

In this paper, we relate our work to the second perspective, namely that decisions are taken within the framework of structural and institutional constraints. We find the perspective of preferences limiting and our data do not include attitudinal information.

The aim of our paper is to examine how different groups of employed Norwegian spouses adjust household tasks, working hours and work location. Here, the distribution of household tasks is measured by number of trips related to shopping for groceries and taking children to different activities. The affiliation to work life is measured by weekly working hours. Commuting distance can also be seen as an indicator of affiliation to work life. Our research questions can be formulated as follows: What characterizes couples who have an equal distribution of household tasks and where work and travel distance are similar/different from those with another forms of adjustments and allocation of household tasks? What are the most important factors contributing to the different types of adjustment?

The paper is organized in six sections. After this introduction, findings in previous research on commuting are presented and discussed. Data and empirical analysis are given in section three and the results in the following two sections (adjustment of

working hours and commuting distance). The last section is a discussion of our study along with some concluding remarks.

Differences in commuting are related to multiple factors

Research carried out some decades ago showed that women in employment travelled shorter distances to work than men, and by public transport rather than by car (Hanson and Pratt 1988; Hanson and Johnston 1985). The traditional gender roles and women's dual role were often given as reasons. More responsibility for household maintenance was therefore assigned to women than to men (Hanson and Pratt 1988; Hanson and Johnston 1985). Women with small children, or many children, had shorter journeys to work than other women. Some of these former studies suggested that length of the journey to work varied with occupational status, i.e. high-status workers travelled longer distances than low-status workers (Hanson and Pratt 1988; Villeneuve and Rose 1988). Even though there were differences between occupational groups of women, significant differences were found between men and women in one and the same occupational group (Hanson and Johnston 1985). However, there seemed to be ethnic variations. Examining commuting time for service workers in the New York metropolitan area, McLafferty and Preston (1991, 1992) found that black and Hispanic women commuted just as far as their male counterparts, and the times involved far exceeding those of white men and women. Income, occupation and job accessibility were important in explaining these findings. Mauch and Taylor (1997) found that the differences in commuting times

varied across ethnic groups and were highest among whites and lowest among Hispanics.

Traditionally, men have had better access to a car than women and have used it more for work-related travel (Hanson and Johnston 1985; Rutherford and Wekerle 1988). A lack of suitable means of transport might have restricted women's choice in the labour market, and thus their greater dependency on public transportation may explain their shorter journey to work or their situation as “captive riders”.

Commuting has been found to be more complicated for women than for men (Hjorthol 2000, Rosenbloom 1989). Women more often integrate non-work activities, such as taking their children to the daycare centre or shopping on the way home (Mauch and Taylor 1997).

Current research on commuting shows many of the same tendencies. In Sweden, there are differences in distance and transport mode, with women travelling shorter distances to work than men and with less use of a car (SIKA 2002; Sandow 2008, Sandow and Westin 2010). It is the same in Norway (Hjorthol 1998, 2000, 2008), in Italy (Cristaldi 2005), the Netherlands (Schwanen 2007, 2011), Israel (Prashker et al. 2008), Germany (Best and Lanzendorf 2005, Scheiner et al. 2011, Scheiner and Holz-Rau 2012) and in the USA (Crane 2007).

A study from Quebec suggests a change in mode of transport; women now commute by car rather than by public transport (Vandermissen et al. 2003). Some researchers claim that access to private transport (car) is the key factor determining women's mobility and economic inclusion (Dobbs 2005). The differences between men and

women in terms of length of journey to work have also been said to reflect the spatial distribution of their respective employment opportunities (Jensen 2004), but studies show that women still experience more spatial and time budget constraints than men (e.g. Kwan, 1999, 2000). Access to a car might also be reduced for women in times of economic recession.

A recent study in Sweden demonstrates variations between groups of women depending on their education and family situation (Gil Solà 2009). The results of an analysis of commuting based on census data from 2000 for Hamilton County in Ohio, however, indicate a greater variation between occupations than between genders in distance travelled (Kim et al. 2012).

A study of dual-career spouses who commuted by car (based on the 2001 American Housing Survey) found that men in general commuted further than women, but that journeys to work for these couples were 'complements' rather than 'substitutes' (Plaut 2006). This indicates that commute distance was chosen to be longer or shorter for both spouses as part of preferred housing.

A study from the Netherlands found that living in urban areas (densely populated) offered enhanced opportunities, especially for women, to work in combination with other mandatory and leisure activities (Ettema et al. 2007)

Another study from the Netherlands concluded that it was likely households in highly urbanized areas had working arrangements where both partners worked full time (Meester and Ham 2009). An interpretation was that there were more egalitarian attitudes towards task division between partners in large urban areas. Karsten (2003) found that urban neighbourhoods provide a tight social and informal structure for dual-earner household living in the inner city of Amsterdam. The central location

suits an urban lifestyle and enables paid work and household work to be combined. Meester et al. (2007) found that in urbanized areas women work more hours than women living elsewhere, whereas men in urbanized areas work fewer hours. The impact of the residential context is strongest for women and men who have a partner and children.

Some studies claim that women commute shorter distances due to their shorter weekly working hours. Schwanen and Dijst (2002) find a positive relationship between commuting time and working hours.

Few of these studies examined internal adjustment in the household in regard to working hours and travel distance to work. An exception is a study by Meester and Ham (2009), who examined the residential context on working and commuting arrangement of partners in family households and found a gendered effect of residential location in degree of urbanization and job access on both working and commuting arrangements. The results indicated that good access to jobs makes it more likely that couples have a symmetric full-time working arrangement and work far from home – the higher the level of education of the female partner, the more hours that are worked in the household as a whole. Having children increases the likelihood of a female in a small part-time arrangement. Those in symmetric full-time working arrangements are those most likely to be in close symmetric commuting arrangements. With increasing level of education of the female partner, dual earners are more likely to have a symmetric far-commuting arrangement compared with the symmetric close arrangement. Highly educated women are likely either to have a long commute themselves or have partners with long commutes. The presence of young

children decreases the probability of all commuting arrangements compared with the symmetric close arrangement.

Review of the literature indicates that there are still gender differences concerning both working hours and commuting, but there are also variations between occupational and educational groups of both men and women. At the same time, in only a few studies have working hours and household tasks been included when commuting differences have been examined. As stated in the introduction, we see commuting as part of the arrangements spouses have to negotiate toward finding some sort of work–life balance.

The Norwegian National Travel Survey includes information about the working hours of both spouses, but travel distance to and from work for the respondent only.

Here, we apply this data set and research the following questions:

- What are the results of the adjustments of working hours of spouses in different types of household? Do they vary between households with and without children? What is the impact of education and place of living on adjustments? Does the woman's education (higher versus lower) have a bearing on equality?
- How do men and women in different types of household allocate tasks such as shopping (for the household) and accompanying children to their different activities?
- How does commuting distance vary for women and men in households with different types of working time adjustments, education, family situation and place of living?

Since our empirical analyses are based on cross-sectional data, they do not contain information on the process of negotiation and adjusting, or on the ordering of decisions on working hours, commuting and residential location. What the data show is the result of this process at a given time.

Data and methods

In this study, data from the Norwegian National Travel Survey of 2009 (NTS 2009) (in total 30 000 respondents) are used to examine working hours, adjustments between spouses, allocation of shopping and accompanying trips, and the commuting patterns of men and women in different types of family household. We concentrate our analysis on respondents living with a partner, and both are in employment (this subsample includes 9486 respondents, Table 1). The NTS 2009 also gives socio-demographic information about the respondent and his/her household, e.g. education, income, occupation, number of children and their age, travel activity on a particular day (registration day), long trips, work trips and other work-related questions, access to a car(s) and quality of public transport. This database also gives information about the family situation, age of the children and the parents' travel patterns (for more details about NTS, see Vågane et al. 2011).

Compared to the total NTS sample, the respondents in our sample (see Table 1) are more concentrated in age, have higher education, but place of living is more or less the same as in the total sample. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents in this sample live in family relations with children (up to 18 years), and as many as 28 percent have

children under the age of seven. In Norway, children start primary school at six years of age.

Table 1 in about here

Adjustment of working hours between partners

The average weekly working hours of men and women in this group are 40.4 and 34.4, respectively. Statistics Norway defines part-time working as less than 37 hours per week (SSB 2013a). In Norway, a 37-hour week is considered the “normal” working week. Table 2 gives the distribution of weekly working hours for men and women (the respondents) in this group using the definitions of Statistics Norway.

Table 2 in about here

Among men, only 20 percent work less than 37 hours per week, while nearly half of working women have fewer weekly hours, which is a significant difference. This is the picture presenting working men and women separately.

Crompton and Lyonette (2005: 605) classified couple households into four groups depending on working hours: (i) high commitment couples – both partners working more than 40 hours per week; (ii) dual moderate couples – both partners working between 35 and 40 hours a week; (iii) neo-traditionalist couples – the man working

over 40 hours a week and the woman less than 40 hours, characteristically part-time;
(iv) alternate commitment couples – both working under 40 hours a week.

Inspired by this grouping, we also classified our partners into four groups (but using the Norwegian “normal” week as a division marker).

Table 3 shows how the working hours are combined within couple households.

There are four different adjustments: (1) Similarity, high commitment, i.e. long working hours (both 37+ hours); (2) similarity, low commitment, i.e. short working hours (both <37 hours); (3) traditionalist, i.e. the husband working 37+ hours, the wife <37 hours; (4) non-traditionalist, i.e. the wife working 37+ hours, the husband <37 hours. The largest groups are ‘similarity, high commitment’ (1) and ‘traditionalists’ (3).

Table 3 in about here

What are the characteristics of these two groups and the differences between them?

Table 4 gives education level, family type and place of residence of men and women in the ‘similarity, high commitment’ group and the ‘traditionalist’ group.

Table 4 in about here

Men and women in the ‘similarity, high commitment’ group have a higher educational level than those in the ‘traditionalist’ group. While women in the ‘high

commitment group' have a higher educational level, there is no significant difference between husband and wife in the 'traditionalist' group, but there is a tendency for more women in the 'traditionalist' group to have higher education than men in this group.

The 'traditionalist' group more often has small children than the group where both partners work full time, but the differences are not great. A larger part of the 'high commitment' group than of the 'traditionalist' group live in the four largest cities. There is a greater tendency for the female part of the equality group to live in the large cities and less in the suburban areas of these cities compared with the female part in the 'traditional' group. Men in the 'traditional' group more often live outside the urban area than men in the equality group.

To examine the strength of the different variables on the probability of working long hours (normal week or more), we carried out a logistic regression with working hours 37+ compared to shorter weekly working hours as the dependent variable. The multivariate analysis of the probability of women having long weekly working hours, 37 hours per week or longer, indicates that university education, having children below 13 years (especially under 7 years), and being between 35 and 44 years of age are significant factors (Table 5). Living in the surrounding areas of the bigger cities has a negative effect on working long hours for women. We also see that living in middle-sized cities has a slightly negative impact. If the husband is working full time, there is a higher probability of the female working less than 37 hours a week.

Table 5 in about here

A similar analysis of men gives another picture. As for women, men educated at university level go for long working hours. Men under 45 years have longer weekly working hours than men over this age, but, unlike their female counterparts, the family context, children/no children in the family and children's ages have no significant impact on weekly working hours. Place of living has no significant impact on weekly working hour for men.

Allocation of tasks

How do different types of household allocate everyday tasks such as shopping for groceries and accompanying children to kindergarten/school and children's leisure activities? To measure this, we use the number of trips related to these two activities. Table 6 indicates gender differences in both the 'similarity, high commitment' group and the 'traditionalist' group, while in the other two groups there are no significant differences, although there is a tendency for women to have more trips related to these activities than men have. In the high commitment group, women do more of the shopping, while there is no difference between men and women concerning accompanying children. In the 'traditionalist' groups women have more of both trips.

Table 6 in about here

Commuting distance

Average commuting distances for men and women are 18.1 km and 10.7 km, respectively (Vågane et al. 2011). The difference is even greater in the case of men and women living with a working partner. Looking into different groups of commuters, we find that the gender difference is prevalent in most cases (see Table 7 for a descriptive analysis).

Starting with the combination of working hours, there are significant differences in the travel distance of all groups. Males in the traditional group travel furthest, i.e. 22.3 km and females 11.9 km, and in the group where both work full time, the men travel 32 percent more than the women.

In all the different family types, men have significantly longer commuting distances than women, and there is no indication of adaptation by either gender by working closer to home if there are small children in the household. For both educational groups the differences between the genders are significant, but between university educated men and women the difference is less than for those with no university education. One explanation could be that university educated women and men operate in the same labour market, while those with no higher education are in a more gender-segregated labour market, with many women working in the health and service sector in jobs that are often located within the community.

Place of living has a significant impact on commuting distance for both men and women. Those living in the four largest cities have the shortest distance to work, but also here men's journey to work is significantly longer than that of women. Women who live in municipalities surrounding cities travel about 50 percent the distance of

women who live within the cities. As indicated in Table 5, women living in these areas have shorter working hours than women in other areas.

Table 7 in about here

High income commuters have longer work trips than those with lower income, especially among men. Variations between income groups of women are small. In the low income groups (< 300 000), there is no difference between men and women. In the other income groups the gender differences are significant, and increase with income.

A driving licence and access to a car are important transport resources. Table 7 shows that even if women always have access to a car (both driving licence and a car whenever needed), they commute a shorter distance than men do. Occupation has an impact on men's commuting distance, but not women's. Table 7 indicates that men in occupations with short university education have longer travel distances than those with other occupations.

Analogous to the question of adjustment of weekly working hours and the influencing factors, we also ask which variables have greatest impact on the commuting distance of men and women, and whether these vary between the genders. A multivariate analysis (linear regression) of the impact of the different variables on commuting distance for women and men is given in Tables 8 and 9.

The variables that influence the commuting distance of women are given in Table 8. Place of residence is the most important variable in this model. Women living in the four largest cities and in small cities have shorter distances to work than women living in other areas, such as surrounding the larger cities. Young people have longer commuting distance than older. Women without children and women with children in the age group 7-12 years travel further to work than women with older or younger children. With increasing income there is an increased tendency for commuting distance longer than average. Women in sale, service and health occupations have shorter commuting distances than women in other occupations.

Table 8 in about here

The corresponding analysis of men with a working spouse shows some of the same results (Table 9). Men living in the four largest cities travel shorter distances than men living in other areas. Like women, young men travel further than older men do. Commuting distance increases with income to a larger degree than for women. But, unlike women, children and children's age have no impact on the commuting distance of men. Also unlike women, men in occupations with short university education have longer commuting distances than other men. Among men who work part time while their spouse works full time, travel distance is long (see Table 7). This is a very small group.

Table 9 in about here

The multivariate analyses presented in Tables 8 and 9 do not indicate a relation between the arrangement of spouses' weekly working hours and commuting distances for men and women. None of these analyses showed a significant effect of different combinations of working hours on commuting distance for either men or women. Instead, we found that structural variables (place of living), resource variables (income) and demography (age) have impacts on commuting distance for both men and women.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The aim of this study was to examine how employed spouses in different contexts arrange their weekly working hours and location of work, measured by commuting distance. Our questions related to what degree the arrangements of working hours and commuting distances for spouses are seen as a “total package”, where time-use is the crucial factor. We used data from the Norwegian Travel Survey of 2009 to study the results of adjustments of weekly working hours and of commuting distance in families in which both husband and wife were in paid work. Our specific interest was to examine what is happening in families with working spouses in terms of both temporal (working hours) and spatial (distance to work) adaptations and adjustments, and the differences between family types and between the characteristics of spouses.

It is more usual to study either adaptations of working hours or location of work (commuting distance). In this paper, we studied aspects of adjustments and examined the effect of working hours of the spouse on travel length of the respondent. The results show that adjustments are clearly gendered. Women have fewer working hours and a shorter commute than men, as also found in the majority of studies referred in section two. In about half the cases of families with spouses in paid work, both husband and wife work full time, the so-called 'similarity, high commitment' group. In a little more than one-third of cases we found the more traditional adjustment, i.e. the husband working full time and the wife part time. The descriptive statistics in Table 4 indicate that in the 'similarity, high commitment' group many of the women have been educated at university level and more of this group than of the traditional group live in the larger cities. This indicates that there are good opportunities for women in central urban areas who want full-time work, especially the higher educated. This is in line with findings from several studies in the Netherlands (Karsten 2003, Meester et al 2007, Ettema et al 2007). In families where both partners are university educated, their chances of finding jobs for which they are qualified are better in central urban areas than in other areas, which means that central urban areas attract couples with university education/high competence. The logistic regression of the propensity of women working full-time (or longer) indicates that living in the periphery of the larger cities is disadvantageous for those who want a full-time job. This is the situation also when the effect of age, education and young children in the family is controlled for. Men who work long hours have other characteristics to women in the same situation. Like women, high education and young age increase the propensity of having long working hours, while children

in the family and children's age have no impact on working hours for men. Unlike women, place of living does not have a significant effect on the weekly working hours of men.

It seems that the urban structure creates conditions that are different for men and women in relation to working hours. The compact city, which offers the potential of shorter distances between services and workplaces than in the outer parts, seems to give women better opportunities for longer working hours. For men in the same situation this does not seem to be significant, probably because most men have a working week of 37 hours or more. Costa and Kahn (2000) found that highly educated dual earners increasingly choose to live in large metropolitan areas, because these areas enabled them to pursue two careers within reasonable commuting distance.

The results from the analysis of commuting distance show that those who live in the outskirts of the large cities have among the longest trips to work; this is the situation for both men and women. While women in these areas have a combination of short working hours and relatively long travel distance, men have both long working hours and long travel distance. The typical long-distance female commuter lives in the surrounding areas of the four largest cities, has high income, lives without children, or has (the youngest) children between 7 and 12 years. Women with short commuting distances live in cities, especially the larger cities, work within sales, service and health and have low income (tendency). The typical long-distance male commuter lives in the same areas as his female counterpart and has high income, but there the resemblance ends. Type of family has no impact on travel distance to work. The regression analysis of commuting distance for men and women with a working

spouse shows that the working arrangement has no significant impact on commuting distance either for men or women. This is an indication of a gendered division of commuting across all different working family arrangements. As Table 7 indicates, women have shorter commuting distances than men in most contexts – a finding that supports earlier research on gender differences. Kwan (1999) found that women have more fixity constraints than men do during the daytime, regardless of their employment status. Women who encounter high levels of such constraints are more likely to work part time. Fränberg and Vilhelmson (2011) have examined trends in the Swedish population over 30 years (1978-2006) and shown a general tendency of mobility convergence between men and women, but not for commuting. Men generally travel longer distances to work and thus have access to wider labour markets than do women. Gustavson (2011) finds that young children in the family reduces the travel activity of women, but not of men. He argues that the relationship between work-related travel and family obligations involves both individual adaptation and structural factors.

This study concerns different policy areas. Family policies and the politics of equality, on the one hand, and policies of labour market and transport, on the other, are areas important in how families can organize their everyday lives, how parents can distribute work and care responsibilities, and the possible contact between children and parents – both when parents are living together and living apart. Labour market decisions are mainly seen as choices made by individuals. Yet, when living with a partner, such decisions are ‘collective’ with consequences for all members of the household. The needs of other family members are usually of importance in decisions involving work-related mobility, e.g. migration, weekly or daily commuting,

etc. This study in Norway has shown that adjustments are still clearly gendered. A large proportion of part-time workers are women, and equality in working hours is present in only about half of the couples. In addition, women are restricted in finding jobs within a more limited geographical area than men. An international trend is that women work closer to the home than men, as we have seen in this study (e.g. Kwan 2000, Kim et al. 2012). It seems that women contribute more than men to getting work and family life 'balanced' in terms of temporal and spatial adjustments. Differences in travel activities may have consequences both at work and at home. Traditional gender roles may be reinforced. When both work and travel involve absence from home, the absent partner is likely to take less responsibility for household tasks than the partner at home. The tendency of increased commuting and differences between men and women may contribute to a re-traditionalization" of gender role patterns.

Our results indicate that the policy of regional enlargement of labour markets is far from gender neutral. So long as it is women who adjust their labour market participation – both temporally and spatially – an enlargement of the regional labour market, resulting potentially in longer commuting distances, will primarily favour those who have the possibility to travel irrespectively of family situation, i.e. men, not women. The possibility to travel might also be important for career opportunities analogous to working long hours (Gustavson 2011).

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