Beyond the private car

Managing sustainable mobility in everyday life

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ABSTRACT
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It is increasingly recognized that private car use needs to be reduced, alongside spatial planning solutions and vehicle development, to realize a sustainable mobility transition. But the fact that the organization of everyday life is profoundly shaped by car use remains a persistent challenge. By studying how carless individuals manage mobility to organize their everyday lives, this thesis investigates how mobility can be remade to reduce private car use.

The thesis draws on a dual theoretical perspective to analyze the role of mobility in everyday life. Time-geography is used to understand the situated conditions of carless individuals to manage constraints and partake in everyday activities, whilst social practice theory enables an understanding of the social practices that activities are part of, and how they bundle with mobility and car use. The aim of the thesis is to identify conditions, challenges, and opportunities for a sustainable mobility transition. This is pursued through three consecutive studies, applying qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate different aspects of carless everyday mobility: the situated organization of relatively well-functioning carless lives; extensive patterns of mobility and car use among the carless in Sweden; and the prospects of ridesharing to reduce car use in organized leisure practices.

The findings demonstrate that carlessness is not a binary state, but a matter of degrees of access and degrees of need, shifting with time and context. Accessibility strategies based on proximity and coordination are central and work particularly well for routinized activities and with support from the social network. However, challenges arise in the face of social norms and mobility expectations, particularly in relation to non-routinized leisure activities requiring the coordination of people and things. The thesis identifies potential in recrafting the social practices of leisure to reduce car dependence, and to promote ridesharing when car use remains necessary.

Key words: sustainable mobility, carlessness, car dependence, Sweden, leisure, everyday life, social practices, time geography

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