

Mobility in Space and Time - Olof Wärneryd

Biography of Olof Wärneryd

Born in 1931, Swedish citizen and since 1997 professor emeritus in Social and economic geography, Lund university, Sweden.

In my Master of Arts from 1963 I have geography, mathematics, pedagogy and academic courses in basic computer science and oceanography. In 1965 I became Licentiate in Philosophy with a thesis in Social and economic geography and in 1968 I defended my doctor thesis "Interdependence in Urban System" in the same discipline. After some years as associate professor at Göteborg university I was appointed as full professor in Social and economic geography at Lund university in 1974. I held the chair until 1997. During my years at the department in Göteborg I was also acting as head of the department. During 1980 – 1990 I was Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Lund university and belonged to the university board 1985 – 1991.

I have been guest professor at London School of Economics in 1969, visiting professor at the Department of Geography, The University of Toronto, the Spring 1972, acting professor at the Nordic Institute for Planners, Stockholm the Spring 1973. I have visited Japan three times. In 1982 I was invited by the Honda Foundation to give a paper and to take part in a workshop; in 1987 I was a member of a group of experts studying technopolis and in 1989 I was Dean and head of a group from Lund University in order to make agreements on cooperation between Lund and Keio University. During these visits I have also lectured.

Since 1977 I have belonged to the Commission of Monitoring Cities of Tomorrow (even the name of the commission has changed over time) within IGU (International geographical Union). I have taken active part in seventeen of the yearly meetings and every time presented a paper, which have been published in proceedings from the meetings.

My major research interest have been population geography, the dynamic processes of commuting, migration and urbanization and the outcome of these processes in the settlement pattern, sustainable development, particularly sustainable mobility. Among about a hundred works I want to mention Interdependence in Urban Systems (1968), Games for Urban and Regional Planning: A Pedagogical Tool (1975), Central Place Theory from a Perspective of Time Geography (Darmstadt 1979), Interrelationships between High Density and Space-Time Patterns (Tokyo 1982), The Swedish Settlement System (1984), Urban Innovations in the 1980s – the Swedish Experience (Melbourne 1988), Sustainable Development – is it possible in an urbanized society? (Wasa 1993), Urban Destinies – what are the trends? (Berlin 1994), Urban Corridors in an Urbanised Archipelago (Cape Town 1995), Mobility and Consumption. New Challenges for the Sustainable Development Discourse (Stockholm 1999), Transformation in the Swedish Urban System (Mexico City 1997), What about nature? (Stockholm 2001), New Trends in the Swedish Urban System (Calgary 2001), Interdependence in Urban System. The Urban Consequences of the Growth of Higher Education and Research in Sweden (Ljubljana 2003)

Since the middle of the 1960s I have had a lot of mandates and assignments as member of different research councils, chairman of scientific committees, expert in committees of professor´s chairs etc. I have also been called as an expert to governmental investigations, to a group within OECD and as consultant to communes and city councils in Sweden.

Written speech of Olof Wärneryd, Prof. em. on the 19th May 2005 at the SIZE Conference in Lund, Sweden

MOBILITY IN SPACE AND TIME

I suppose that some of you watched the Pope's funeral on TV six weeks ago. As never before in history most people in the world could simultaneously follow the ceremony on TV. In spite of that, around two million people went to Rome to attend the funeral. Of them one million came from Poland by air, train, bus, car and perhaps even by bicycle. Only 300,000 persons could stand inside the area in front of Sankt Peter's Cathedral. The others watched the funeral at 25 big TV-screens in certain places in Rome, which must in many ways have been quite uncomfortable compared with sitting in your favourite chair or sofa at home with all service within reach. But, nevertheless two million people went there. It is interesting to notice that there were so many young people coming from all over the world to Rome. How many watched TV I do not know, but let say at least one billion.

The aim of this short presentation is to elaborate on why mobility taken in a physical sense always has been high and nevertheless is increasing for every year. I will touch upon the driving forces and the motives behind the mobility and argue that mobility is very much depending on how society is organized in space and time.

This is only one example of how a special event, in this case a mega-event, generates tremendous movements. Our history is full of them. Think of the pilgrims, the crusaders, the scientists, the peregrinates (students), the journeymen, the craftsmen of all kind, the artists, the military officers, the diplomats - all these people moved over the whole Europe, most of them on foot. Only a small portion could afford riding or going by horse carriages. The share was perhaps the same as the share enjoying business or first class today.

Let me from the beginning establish that as far as we know the physical mobility of people has always been high. Look upon this map of the Nordic Vikings who travelled by sea to most parts of Europe and scared the life out of the Europeans. They violated and fought people, raped the women or brought them over to the home town or place. They stole treasures, artefacts and ideas. However, some settled abroad and started a new village. The museums, York in England for instance, now attract a lot of tourists. Even if we after more than a thousand years may regret the Vikings' ravaging we are also proud of that period in our history and use The Vikings for marketing our wild character, our strength and vigour, fighting spirit, beautiful women etc., all in order to attract visitors.

But do we know anything about the numbers or figures of all these people moving around? Not much. However, one example is the number of students (peregrinates) leaving Sweden for studying at some European university; in the beginning Paris, Bologna, Praha, later Rostock, Greifswald, Wittenberg, Leiden. For a little more than 300 years ago about 200 Swedish students were registered at Italian, German and Dutch universities, corresponding to around ten percent of the total number of registered students at the Swedish universities (Uppsala and Lund). Compared to the situation of today between 30,000 and 35.000 of our students should study abroad, which I think is more than the actual figures of today. The latest figure for Lund University is around 1100 students and it should have been more than 3000 in comparison with the portion we experienced 300 years ago. Perhaps there are a lot of such relative measures almost like constants within all kind of groups travelling or moving around. In Sweden one of eight moves or migrates once per year; a figure which has been constant since more than a hundred years.

Are the driving forces behind peoples' behaviour the same either you attended a Pope's

funeral in April 2005, took part in a Viking trip to the European centres, listened to a famous professor in Göttingen, ? In many ways they are! As a summarising concept we can use the term **attendance** and by that I mean physical attendance. The concept attendance contains quite many motives, most of them connected with a certain place, a certain event and at last it has to do with a decision of a certain person, the traveller. People wanted to attend the funeral of the Pope by participating or fulfilling obligations towards in this case the church or a religion and its Superior. They also wanted to show respect and to be able to afterwards tell people who could not attend. Other motives are to gain knowledge and experience, and not at least to satisfy our curiosity. These motives or driving forces have not changed so much over time. They can explain our ancestors' behaviour and they do influence the mobility in our time. Just think of all meetings, conferences and congresses we as academic people attend every year!

But, long before these more modern kinds of mobility we can go back to the eras when the human being took possession of the whole globe. The huge international migration over a period of almost a million years shows us another kind of driving forces, still anchored in our own present mobility behaviour. The human kind looked for new land and areas to discover and to conquer. In some way you can say that they wanted to fill up empty land. A summarizing concept could be **existence**, by which I mean motives for mobility connected with the needs and wishes of you as an individual, of your family or of the clan. Challenges and curiosity but above all survival were and are the driving forces. The increasing international migration is in many ways of this kind; to find an existence or an outcome outside the homeland. Today around 200 million people can be classified to be on move or waiting in camps.

A third category of driving forces could be named **imitation**. Ernest Hillary climbed Mount Everest in 1953. There are quite many after him. A Swede, Göran Kropp, took his bicycle outside his apartment in the city of Jönköping and bicycled to Himalaya, climbed to the top, climbed down and then went back home by his bicycle! There are always some people to be the first to do something. Afterhand it will be more and more common amongst ordinary people. Tourism or what we today call the visitor's industry is such a sector. Why not look upon elderly people in this way following or imitating younger generations in their travel habits? Still, I go downhill skiing, swimming, playing golf etc many times together with my grandchildren. And think now of the "Forties", wealthy, vital, trying to maintain their youth as long as possible. They will be the most demanding generation ever of high mobility.

When we today think of mobility we have the daily rhythm of commuting before our eyes. Billions of people on move to go to their works, to look for service, to get education in cities, towns and villages are not only of gigantic figures but they also create the most severe environmental problems. The flows of people moving over longer distances are compared to these flows like rills even if the figures are high. To some extent these gigantic moves are a kind of imitation. We are as the Noble Prize winner, Hannes Alfvén said in order to explain our yearning to build as large cities as possible in his book *The Story of the Big Computer* (1966): .." we are like ants following the scent of the cars". Even if the urbanization is said to be the best organization of human life in space and time which minimize distances the increase of travelling is always growing. In Sweden the increase of our mobility during the latest century has grown with around a hundred times from 0,5 km to 50 km per person and year.

Jaques Attila born 1943 in Algeria and earlier adviser to president Mitterand and during the 1990s president of the European Bank of Restructuring and Development in London, wrote a small book named "The Millenium" (1991) in which he presents the idea of a nomadic man. That is a person all the time on move facilitated by the so called nomadic objects, Walkman,

mobile telephone, portable computer etc, sitting in his car. He or she has developed a tremendous simultaneous capacity. Even if this person is spending more and more time in his car because of congestion, he still prefer that before choosing public transport or stay at home. In 1991 these people belonged to a elite but today a growing portion of the population must be categorized as nomads. In this behaviour of a nomad there are no signs of decreasing mobility. On the contrary the forthcoming technologies will support your possibility to be on move. Attila concludes by arguing that the nomadic objects will more radically transform life in the second millennium than the automobile and television changed the way of life in the twentieth century. Not at least these circumstances have already changed and will change even more the daily life for us in older ages.

To conclude I want to show you some figures which I as geographer and social scientist have developed in order to analyse what has happened but also for thoughts of future situations. Time, space and space/time are the dimensions we use to mirror the biographies of people, firms, nature or what ever living organizations we identify in our environment.

To conclude I want to add that the driving forces behind our mobility are almost the same since the rise of men. To be on move expressed by all kinds of motives or driving forces are more or less anchored in our genes. The growing number of elderly people in almost all countries in the world seems just to strengthen these trends of increasing mobility. Even if events like the September 11th 2001, the tsunami catastrophe, frightening terrorism etc. momentarily curb the growth the trend of increasing mobility seems inexorable. For people who want to reduce our mobility, mostly the car use, and thereby also improve our milieu, these thoughts may be too pessimistic. A more permanent decline in our physical mobility can only be a reality if we as individuals will be more open to a change of our way of living and thereby chose another lifestyle. This can only happen together with changes of how we organize our society in space and time.

In one of his latest articles from 1999 the well known human geographer, Torsten Hägerstrand, Lund University, formulates an alternative to the most common model of studying society by using categorisation, roles, classes, political parties, organizations and by more or less abstract economical entities. He writes: "My society consists of acting physical persons, who alone or in cooperation try to do things which they see a meaning with. But these actions can not be found in a free space. They are subjected to restrictions which are determined by collective goals and rules or are conditioned by limits for knowledge or are a result of our biological nature and our requirement of attendants, an entourage, of artificial things"... "I think it is difficult to understand attitudes and reactions and endeavours without a biographic perspective".