

Guest Editorial

Connections between gender, transport and employment

Andree Woodcock

Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities, Institute of Creative Cultures, Coventry University, Coventry, UK
E-mail: A.Woodcock@coventry.ac.uk.

This special section of WORK includes papers which discuss issues around gender, transport and employment. It was inspired by funding received from the European Union, under the H2020 research programme. The three year Transport Innovation Gender Observatory¹ project funded under the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020 between 2018 and 2021 aimed to create a sustainable change in women and transport – focussing on employment, education, and mobility and the new smart mobility sector.

The relationship between women, transport, and employment is complicated.

Firstly, the transport workforce is still dominated by men, for example, in Europe women form only 22% of the transport workers in Europe [1]. Similar figures are found in most countries. Additionally, women do not occupy key, influential roles in the organisation, and they are subjected to gender discrimination, harassment and other forms of inequalities [2, 3]. Increasing women's representation in the workforce is believed to be key to 1) developing more sustainable (e.g. public transport, walking and cycling) and fairer transport systems, as women use, and support sustainable transport more than men and 2) improving transport services for women. With such a gender imbalance in the industry, transport services and vehicles are designed by men, for the male

commuter. Understanding employment conditions in the transport sector is key to increasing the number of women employed in it and supporting those already employed in it.

Secondly, transport services and vehicles are not designed to support women's mobility needs. Research has consistently pointed to the need to provide safer and more secure public transport services (e.g. well maintained pavements, stations, security systems) and to provide transport which supports all the work women do – both paid and unpaid employment. The poor design of public transport influences the way in which women travel to work and their overall health and wellbeing when they undertake work related journeys. They may be so anxious about their safety (especially after dark and when travelling alone) that they take more expensive forms of transport, or work closer to home (restricting their job choices).

Thirdly, in most countries women undertake the majority of household and care related journeys (mobilities of care). Significantly, for the design of equitable transport, many of these journeys are not recorded, meaning that transport services are not designed to meet these requirements. The dual burden of women, as employees and carers, restricts their job opportunities as they need to work at times, and in places where they can still undertake their duties of care. They may take low paid, part time and seasonal work to fit in with child care, or look after sick and elderly relatives. The lack of affordable transport to

¹<https://www.tinngo.eu/>

facilitate such journeys puts them in transport poverty [4].

The papers included in this special section address all of these points.

Looking firstly at employment, Adorean et al. consider employment and gender inequalities in this sector in Portugal. Using both qualitative and quantitative measures and case studies, they assessed gender inequalities in the transport sector labour market, identified the causes, and proposed guidelines and possible solutions. They discussed the problems women faced within the industry in terms of García-Jiménez et al.'s [5] classification of factors which negatively influence women's empowerment, namely (i) socioeconomic conditions, (ii) job characteristics, (iii) personal circumstances, and (iv) individual characteristics. Recommendations were made at a number of levels highlighting not only that gender inequality pervades all of the transport sector, but requires cross sectorial action.

As has previously been mentioned, increasing the number of women in transport, and placing them in influential positions is viewed by the European Union and other agencies, as key to bringing about fairer and more sustainable transport. Nienaber et al. conducted a survey of women who were nominated as change agents in small to medium local transport authorities in Europe, which were starting to implement sustainable transport measures. Women in such positions were given the responsibility of designing and implementing organisational change processes in male dominated organisations, which may not be supportive of them or the transformational changes they were seeking to make. The introduction of new technology and the need to redesign transport services to make them more integrated and sustainable requires organisations to work in new ways, with a larger group of stakeholders. Nienaber and colleagues looked at the female change agents' perceived self-efficacy and job satisfaction as job-related dimensions of wellbeing. They found that female change agents needed extra support in managing change processes within these male-dominated contexts to avoid a decrease in their perceived job satisfaction, their well-being and physical and mental health. Specific recommendations were that senior managers gave full and public support to them with regular check-up meetings to discuss upcoming challenges; secondly that women in this position support each other through forming networks and mentoring each other; and thirdly that organisations create a culture of equality and diversity within their workforce

by break down deeply anchored assumptions, gender stereotypes and unconscious prejudices.

The remaining two papers in this special section deal with mobility to and from employment.

Ponsin et al. studied 390 commuting accidents among non-physician staff in a large French university hospital centre from 2012 to 2016, breaking down the incidents by gender and profession. They observed an increased risk for auxiliary nurses and childcare assistants and service agents which was attributed to fatigue caused by work schedules, long commuting distances, physical work, and psychological burden.

Iqbal's doctoral work focussed on gender transport poverty as experienced by young working women in Karachi, Pakistan. Here social and cultural norms restrict women's movements outside the home (how, when, where they can travel) and their employment prospects. Women are expected to remain at home performing household, caring and child rearing tasks. As such they are unwelcome in the public realm. Public transport – vehicles and infrastructure – is poor, infrequent, and overcrowded, with small spaces allocated to women. Women are not safe in the public realm or on public transport. Where possible, women who are able to work, use more expensive but safer forms of transport. The results from focus group discussions were mapped on to Woodcock's [6] hexagon spindle model to produce a set of far-reaching recommendations on how transport provision could be improved for women.

In conclusion, the papers demonstrate the ways in which gender inequalities in transport affect women's livelihoods, their health and wellbeing, and point to a number of ways in which inequalities could be reduced.

References

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