

International Mobility Biographies: a Means to Capture Institutionalisation of Long-Distance Travel?

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An important aspect of current changes in international travel and tourism is the degree to which such practices are becoming embedded as regularised and prescribed parts of the lives of individuals, families and various organisations. At the individual and family level, patterns of regularised international mobility often work on a time-scale that by far exceeds the reference periods normally applied in long-distance travel surveys. Other methods are therefore needed to address these issues. The main purpose of the present paper is to discuss a method used as part of an ongoing research project on the international mobility of young Swedes. Students in the last year of the upper secondary school are here asked to account for their international mobility biography; that is, all international trips conducted during their childhood and adolescence. The discussion will focus on the potential of this approach for providing qualitative information on various forms of regularisation or institutionalisation of international mobility. It will mainly be based on experiences from a pilot-study carried out with a small group of students in the autumn of 2003. The notion of mobility biography will furthermore be related to the concept of the 'travel career ladder' introduced by Pearce in 1988.