

## Domestic services and (the lack of) equality

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### **Abstract**

The growing demand for domestic services in Sweden during the 1980s is a central issue in this study. Some political actors have argued that tax reduced domestic services is a strategy to solve problems dual career families experience when they try to combine career work with domestic work and family life. This idea was met by strong ideological resistance and a formal law was not possible to introduce until July 2007. The questions of balance between work and private life are commonly considered to be "private troubles" since it concerns people's most personal life. Some private troubles though can, according to C W Mills (1959) in his book *The Sociological Imagination*, during certain periods of time turn into "public problems" and create a demand for formal decisions. These decisions can cause new private troubles.

Three phases in time are discussed: the 1930s, 1960–1970 and 1990–2000. The author concludes that the right for married women in the middle classes to work outside their homes, better conditions for children, professionalisation of women's traditional work and collective solutions during the first phase were changes originally caused by personal troubles becoming public problems. These questions were eventually institutionalised and have had great influence on future negotiations and decision making – for example during the two following phases.