

Mobility strategies and social behaviour of inhabitants of non-metropolitan rural areas with poor accessibility of public transport

SUMMARY

Moving is a process accompanying every human being. It results from uneven distribution of goods and services necessary to satisfy basic living needs. Apart from them, a human being needs also surroundings and relations with other people, not always living in the same area. In order to be able to do this, it is also necessary to move.

This dissertation examines the relationship between spatial accessibility, modes of mobility and the social behaviour of inhabitants of non-metropolitan rural areas with poor and very poor public transport services. The topic of mobility is central to understanding human functioning, both individually and in society. Mobility depends on several factors. One of the most important is accessibility. This means that spatial accessibility is a basis for analysing mobility, as it determines what opportunities people have to move around. However, there is still little understanding of whether and how these opportunities are exploited, i.e. what mobility strategies people on the move adopt.

The issues of spatial accessibility and mobility are particularly important from the point of view of non-metropolitan rural areas in Poland, where public transport services have been deteriorating for many years. Poor accessibility of public transport for people who do not have the possibility to travel by their own cars determines their mobility options. As people cannot function in society without travelling, poor accessibility of public transport somehow forces them to develop alternative mobility strategies.

The main aim of this study is to determine how poor accessibility of public transport influences mobility strategies of inhabitants of non-metropolitan rural areas in Poland and their social behaviour and attitudes towards public transport. Specific objectives were defined as:

1. To identify the mobility strategies of the inhabitants of non-metropolitan rural areas with poor public transport accessibility.
2. Identification of factors influencing mobility strategies used by inhabitants of extra-metropolitan rural areas.
3. To indicate the influence of selected mobility strategies on attitudes towards public transport and social behaviour of the inhabitants of extra-metropolitan rural areas.

The individual objectives were realised on the basis of the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from various sources and collected by the author. The study of public transport accessibility included an analysis of the transport network and village physiognomy, public transport timetables, directions of commuting to work and school, and migration. The location of people's places of residence in the individual study areas was also taken into account here. As a result, the author's FAI accessibility index was constructed, which measures the time taken to reach a county town by public transport against the time taken to travel by car. The second part of the study was based on a statistical analysis of the responses of the residents collected in the questionnaire survey, as well as the interpretation of information obtained during interviews conducted with selected people in the study areas.

This study shows that the vast majority of movements of inhabitants in non-metropolitan rural areas takes place on a local scale, most often within the county. Using the author's index of public transport accessibility, from the point of view of personal accessibility, the previously indicated dependencies analysed taking into account spatial accessibility were confirmed: better accessibility to public transport and public transport is enjoyed by inhabitants of large villages located along regionally important roads. At the same time, the railway passenger transport offer is very poor and this also applies to regionally and nationally important lines. The study indicates that 1/3 of inhabitants of non-metropolitan rural areas in Poland are exposed to transport exclusion due to poor accessibility of public transport. There are areas where this figure rises to as much as 2/3.

For their daily commute, usually to work and school, residents tend to use personal cars as drivers. The second most important mode of transport is also the private car, where residents are passengers. Only the third most frequent mode of choice is public transport. In some areas, cycling and walking also play an important role. The choice of mobility strategy depends on a number of factors, the most important of which are a person's employment status and age. Particularly noteworthy is the mobility strategy adopted by around 1% of the residents (especially senior citizens) of the study areas, i.e. not travelling at all.

The most important factor influencing the choice of public transport for daily commuting is the frequency of vehicles. The main obstacle to using this mode of transport is not its quality, but often the complete lack of courses and the high availability of cars.

Research has shown that limited mobility, caused inter alia by poor accessibility of public transport, has a positive effect on social ties at the local level among people with high

social capital. However, it makes it difficult to establish social relationships with people who do not live in the immediate area.

The present paper goes beyond the framework of commonly used analyses of spatial accessibility and mobility and fits into the paradigm of new mobility, filling the research gap concerning accessibility at the micro-scale (of individuals, households), mobility in rural areas and linking this subject to specific social behaviours and attitudes.

Keywords: accessibility, mobility, mobility strategies, non-metropolitan rural areas, social behaviour