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Transport Exclusion and Access so Social and Educational Services —Challenges and Proposed Actions

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The phenomenon of social exclusion is an interdisciplinary issue whose multidimensional perspective extends beyond poverty, unemployment, and access to various goods and services. It encompasses issues such as the breakdown of social bonds, feelings of isolation, and dependence on others. Social exclusion affects numerous social groups; however, some are particularly vulnerable, becoming primary recipients of its adverse effects. These especially vulnerable groups include the elderly, people with disabilities, and children and youth. The aim of this article is to highlight the issue of transport exclusion, exploring potential solutions through the perspectives of both those who experience it in their daily lives and local government officials and social activists striving to address this pressing social challenge.

The findings presented in the article indicate that solving the problem of transport exclusion goes beyond merely restoring regular transportation links; it requires a systemic approach that considers various types of interventions, including educational initiatives. Social inclusion for individuals who have experienced such exclusion for many years should involve actions aimed at creating a predictable and regular transportation system for all transport-excluded localities, developing transport infrastructure, and simultaneously implementing educational measures targeted at residents of areas with low transport accessibility. Over the years, these individuals have developed survival strategies that hinder social development and participation.

Such a transformation, however, requires the social revitalization of residents of transport-excluded areas, grounded in education and social activation within local communities. This process should be facilitated by local leaders and social organizations, which can play a key role in fostering social integration and supporting the active engagement of individuals experiencing exclusion. Education offers the

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opportunity to develop new strategies for the functioning of individuals who have long experienced social exclusion. By promoting education, activation, and social involvement, these strategies can contribute to improving the quality of life for residents of rural and peripheral areas.

KEY WORDS: social exclusion, transport exclusion, access to education, social education.

Introduction

In the context of analyses of transport exclusion, the present work highlights the social dimension of this phenomenon, emphasizing its exclusive nature, which significantly restrains access to many goods and services for residents living in rural areas with no public transport. This type of social exclusion applies to both individuals and social groups, who, due to the lack of access to public transport, are deprived of the opportunity to fully participate in social life. As A. Sen emphasizes—to put his thesis on freedom in a very simplified way—a human being is a free being, who can dispose of their own life, develop, grow in the directions they choose. Sen perceives a human being through the prism of their basic freedoms. If they are not accomplished, the development basically either regresses or, at best, stops. It is through and thanks to agency that a human being participates in socio-political-economic life, and thanks to the freedom that manifests itself in this agency, they realize their basic rights. One of these rights, significantly curbed by transport exclusion, is the right to education. Education is a key element in the development of a person or group in the sense of lifelong, continued education. Meanwhile, residents of towns deprived of transport have serious difficulties in accessing education or have to limit their educational choices due to restricted access to schools or places where this education is organized. Difficult access to education is experienced by young people who, after completing primary school, have no guaranteed transport to schools and places of internship. The lack of public transport also contributes to a significant limitation of youth participation in various forms of education allowing for the development of their interests and passions. Education is a permanent element of development for a person in adulthood and its importance seems to be crucial in the context of solving many social problems and influencing the quality of life of adults.

Guaranteeing permanent public transport also allows for professional activation, which is often based on the need for education and further training in this area and, consequently, on the need to reach places where such education is organized. Social work with persons experiencing various life problems also involves the inclusion of a number of educational activities in work with beneficiaries, which are provided and organized in centers or places that need to be reached.

As indicated in previous surveys cited in this work and in a number of other scientific studies in this area, towns excluded from transport are inhabited by a large group of seniors who, thanks to broadly understood actions in the field of senior policy, are open to participating in various forms of education and training aimed at people in their third age. Like children and youth, they are a group that bears the highest costs of transport exclusion. Strategies for coping with the lack of public transport in this group are significantly curbed due to health conditions or limitations resulting from low income or dependence on third parties. The lack of transport is an often cause of resigning from educational, compensatory or recreational activities organized by Universities of the Third Age, senior clubs or various types of institutions dealing with education, support and care for the elderly.

The aim of this article is, on the one hand, to outline the problem of transport exclusion in the context of the social threats it poses, and on the other hand, to show ways for escaping from this difficult situation seen through the eyes of excluded persons experiencing the consequences of this phenomenon and local government officials trying to find solutions to this complex social issue. Education often becomes a key word that is indicated as a permanent element of finding solutions to this complex social problem both by respondents experiencing the social outcomes of transport exclusion and by local government officials trying to find a solution to this painful social issue.

Transport exclusion

When analyzing the phenomenon of transport exclusion, it is impossible not to mention the phenomenon of social exclusion as a conceptual category that imparts a specific shape to social relations and relationships, and due to its interdisciplinary nature, allows for a multi-faceted approach to this phenomenon. Given the importance of the problem, its scope and outcomes, social exclusion becomes a concept that is subject to reflection by representatives of various scientific disciplines, politicians and publicists.

Social exclusion is a phenomenon that has many negative consequences and affects the functioning of a person in the surrounding social reality. The definition by Giddens is an excellent illustration of this concept, in which he emphasizes that social exclusion refers to a situation in which individuals and entire social groups are deprived of full participation in the life of the society (Giddens, 2007, p. 346–347).

Taking into account the purpose and the subject of the discourse addressed in this work, the author would like to draw attention to the ubiquitous phenomenon of transport exclusion in Poland, which generates other types of exclusion concerning

individual persons, social groups or entire communities it affects. This is a phenomenon that has recently been perceived tantamount to a threat to the development and functioning of Polish residents living in towns without any public transport. This exclusion is defined as the deprivation of the ability to use public transport for residents of a given area. Transport exclusion encompasses the access not only to roads but also to railways, pavements and cycle paths.

This type of exclusion is defined as “the loss of the ability of individuals and groups of persons to establish connections with places of work or services, where these are necessary to ensure thorough participation in the society” (Beyazit, 2011). A more illustrative complement to Beyazit’s definition is the definition proposed by Elvy, in which, when defining and describing this phenomenon, the author notes that it can occur in a situation where people cannot partially or fully participate in everyday activities in the community due to their insufficient mobility in the environment, although this environment was built based on the assumption of ensuring high mobility (Elvy, 2014).

When analyzing the key concepts of the discourse on transport exclusion, noteworthy is **the concept of spatial accessibility**, which is often used in analyses and defined as the ease of reaching a specific form of activity in space from the studied place using a specific means of transport (Black & Conroy, 1977). On the other hand, the use of the specification indicating that a place is accessible thanks to the use of a certain form of transport means that we then talk about **transport accessibility**.

It is worth emphasizing that **spatial accessibility—operationalized as transport accessibility**—is one of the key parameters defining the attractiveness of individual places for both residents of these areas and potential investors. In this approach, it is an important element of the standard of living or a component of investment attractiveness (Komornicki et al., 2010; Guzik et al., 2010). Hence, accessibility of transport to education or health care becomes a determinant of life chances (Pacione, 1989), whereas poor accessibility or its lack is a major factor of social exclusion (Cass, Shove, & Urry, 2005; Farrington, 2007).

The analysis of the literature on the subject allows distinguishing several typical social groups that are particularly exposed to the risk of exclusion stemming from the lack of access to public transport, i.e., elderly people, children and adolescents, single parents, disabled persons, persons without access to a car and the poor (Elvy, 2014; Białobrzaska, 2022).

Transport exclusion in the Warmia and Mazury Province

The phenomenon of transport exclusion afflicts many areas of the world located in the zones of both developing and highly developed countries, including many EU Member States. A similar situation is observed in Poland. Analyzing the spatial distribution of accessibility in public transport in Poland, it is easy to notice that the transport needs of regions and even local government units are diverse and elude the common division into western and eastern Poland. Analyses of the public transport distribution even show generally better transport accessibility in eastern Poland than in western Poland, with the differences noted often having a very local dimension (Rosik et al., 2017, p. 258).

According to M. Dulak and B. Jakubowski (2018), communes without the organized public transport of a public utility nature are currently inhabited by approximately 13.8 million people.

The lack of public transport connections or their minimal number, coupled with the inadequate offer lead to serious consequences for both residents of smaller towns and the cities themselves. As indicated by the report of the Polish Academy of Sciences, over 20% of villages in Poland are deprived of any means of public transport, and many of the remaining ones are reached by only two buses a day (Rosner, Stany, & Komorowski, 2018, p. 37). In recent years, a number of activities have been observed, mainly at the level of local governments, aimed at improving the reconstruction of public transport in the municipalities; however, these initiatives are mainly of an insular nature and do not solve the problem of transport exclusion as such. Therefore, there is a need, or even necessity, to develop systemic solutions, which would be the only ones that would permanently and systematically solve the problem of the access to public transport.

Due to the issues raised in this study, data on the Warmia and Mazury Province occupy a special place in the analyses of transport exclusion. The scale of the problem can be estimated quite precisely thanks to the ample research on the phenomenon of transport exclusion in the Province (Guzik, Kołoś, Fiedień, & Kocajn, 2021). The analysis of studies on transport accessibility and spatial relations in the Warmia and Mazury Province shows that out of the total of 2,736 rural localities in the Province covered by the cited studies, as many as 1,180 are not served by public transport. These localities are inhabited by 151,000 people, i.e., every fourth resident of rural areas. Most of them are small villages, with an average population of 130, located outside the system of national and provincial roads, and some of them still not accessible by a bituminous road. This group also includes towns that are served only by railway connections, where the train station is located outside the village and requires walking. In addition,

the average distance from a town without public transport to the nearest bus stop is just over 4 km, which translates into a 63-minute walk to the stop. This is quite a long time and distance, which significantly curbs mobility, especially for the elderly and children, not to mention the disabled. It should also be emphasized that residents of over 1,200 towns must reach another town or a bus stop located outside the town in order to use public transport. As it results from the presented research results, only 44.0% of village residents live in small towns with at least average accessibility to the nearest city.

Worthy of mention in this case is also the Synthetic Index of Road Accessibility, approached from the perspective of the standard of living, presented in the cited report.

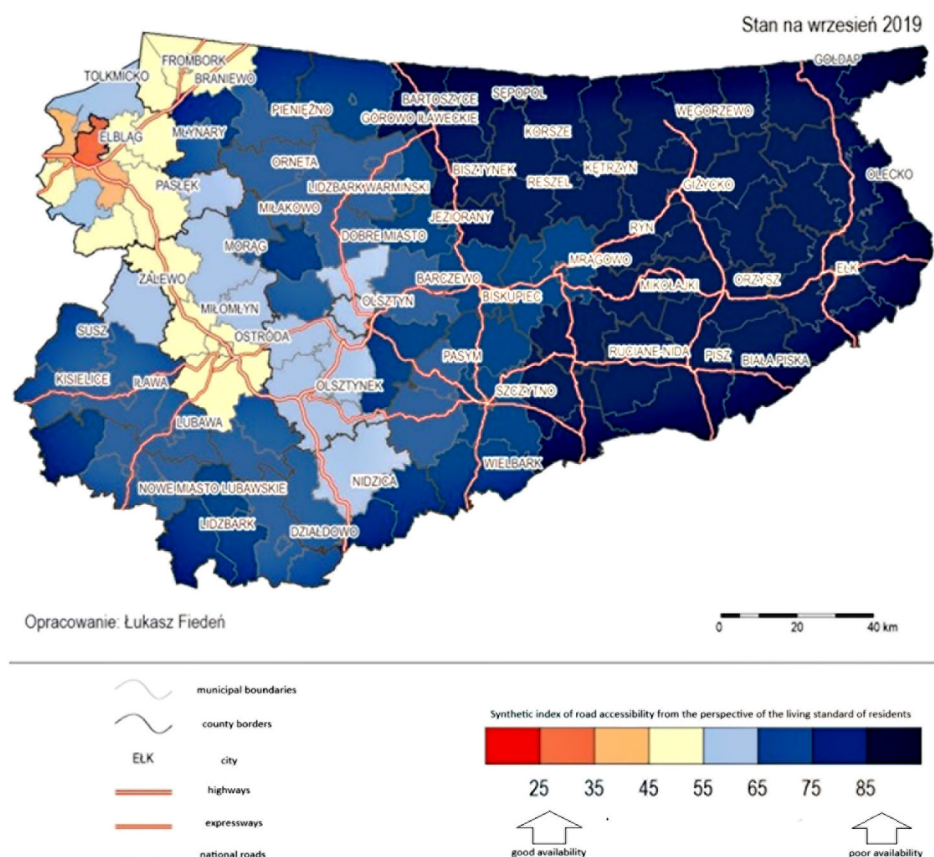


Figure 1. Synthetic index of road accessibility from the perspective of the standard of living

Source: Guzik et al. (2021). Dostępność komunikacyjna i relacje przestrzenne w województwie warmińsko-mazurskim. Kraków: Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej UJ.

The poorest accessibility (high index values) is characteristic of the vast areas east of Olsztyn. This poor accessibility of the eastern part of the Province, lowering the selected aspects of the standard of living (accessibility to services or workplaces), may cause the outflow of residents from this area to other regions characterized by better accessibility and a higher level of development.

Ways to solve the problem of transport exclusion —two perspectives

Ideas for solving the phenomenon of transport exclusion depend mainly on the perspective of the people who formulate them or have detailed knowledge on this issue, because—as the Polish proverb says—“what you see depends on where you stand”.

This text presents views on ways to counteract the phenomenon of transport exclusion from two perspectives. The first perspective is related to opinions of the surveyed residents of towns excluded from transport, who experience transport exclusion on a daily basis. The second perspective concerns persons trying to tackle this problem in the local environment, i.e., representatives of local governments, including mayors, councilors, local activists and village heads. The presented research results are an outcome of the survey conducted in the Warmia and Mazury Province in the autumn of 2022, aimed at diagnosing the phenomenon of transport exclusion in the context of the social outcomes it generates and determining the directions of changes to counteract the aggravation of problems or compensate for the negative consequences appearing in this area (Bałobrzaska, Maciejewska, & Kucz, 2023).

In order to achieve the assumed goal, a research project was prepared in a mixed quantitative-qualitative scheme. In the first phase, a survey questionnaire was prepared for the needs of the study and addressed to residents of towns struggling with transport exclusion. Then, based on the initial analysis of the obtained data, a scenario of a focus group interview (FGI) was developed which was addressed to local activists and representatives of local government institutions from the towns covered by the study.

The selection of the research sample for quantitative research was stratified and random. Based on the analysis of data collected from each of the three subregions of the Warmia and Mazury Province (Elbląg, Ełk, Olsztyn), counties and communes were indicated in which accessibility to the nearest city from rural locations was defined as poor. The basic selection layers were subregions and communes. The questionnaire encompassed 318 residents of towns in the Warmia and Mazury Province.

The selection of the research sample for qualitative research was of a stratified purposive nature. The basic selection layer was subregions. Three focus group inter-

views (FGI) were conducted among representatives of local governments: mayors, councilors, local activists and village heads.

As already mentioned, the first group of persons identifying solutions to the problem of transport exclusion were respondents living in towns excluded from transport.

More than 1/3 of them (37.7% of the respondents) lived in towns that are not reached by any means of public transport. Another almost 33% of the respondents had one or two connections a day. This fact indicates that almost 3/4 of the residents taking part in the study lived in towns that can be considered excluded from transport and that the remaining respondents lived in towns with low transport accessibility.

It is important to note that the problem of transport exclusion is experienced by respondents in the long term. Nearly 60% of the respondents indicate that problems with access to public transport have lasted for over 5 years, and another approximately 25% of the respondents have experienced this problem for 2 to 5 years. The analysis of the obtained research material shows that the process of eliminating or limiting access to communication is still pending. About 10% of the respondents lost access to public transport in the past year, and another 6% of them in the period between 1 and 2 years.

Residents of towns excluded from transport adopt various commuting strategies. The key solution is to have a car, and this applies to over 53% of the respondents. This fact confirms the thesis about the phenomenon of forced motorization in towns with low transport accessibility. In 33% of the cases, respondents use the so-called "neighborhood ride", whereas over 16% of them rent a "car for a fee" to be able to get out of the town.

It is worth emphasizing that the use of various means of transport is determined by the age of the respondents. Nearly 40% of the surveyed persons over 65 do not have any means of transport. Age is a variable that also affects the strategy for coping with difficulties in transport. It can be stated that with age, the number of means of transport owned, mainly cars, decreases, while the number of strategies related to renting a means of transport increases. During the research, an attempt was also made to determine what solutions to the problem of transport exclusion, according to persons experiencing it in their everyday lives, are most adequate to the needs of residents of areas deprived of public transport.

More than half of the respondents (approx. 58%) believe that only regular transport can have a positive impact on solving the difficulties resulting from living in these towns. Among the possibilities of solving this problem, over 17% of the respondents propose organizing "on-the-phone-transport". This approach to solving the problem of restoring public transport results from the real needs and observations of residents of towns excluded from communication. It can be assumed that such a rational

approach to organizing adequate transport offered to residents of excluded towns is related to the demographic characteristics of these residents. The study entailed an analysis of the frequency of leaving the town by the respondents and its results indicate that almost 1/3 of the residents leave their town only a few times a month, and almost 8% only a few times a year. Less than 1/4 of the respondents leave the town every day. Considering the demographic structure of the respondents, it should be taken into account that many of them do not need to move in a constant and continuous manner throughout the week. This applies to seniors receiving retirement and disability benefits, as well as persons who are beneficiaries of social assistance or employment offices and use social benefits. The need to commute during the week applies primarily to persons working professionally outside their place of residence, as well as pupils and students.

More than 12% of the respondents envisage the possibility of organizing access to some services on site, including those related to mobile trade, or medical services, e.g., a general practitioner, nurse, etc. who would appear on specific days of the month, as well as mobile libraries or animation and cultural services that could be implemented in towns excluded from communication through village community centers, rural housewives' associations, etc.

Another approximately 9% of the respondents see an opportunity in the possibility of solving some of the difficulties related to the limited access to transport in the dissemination of e-services. However, in this situation, they see the need to educate residents of areas affected by transport exclusion in the field of operating/handling both devices and applications related to services and also in improving access to the Internet.

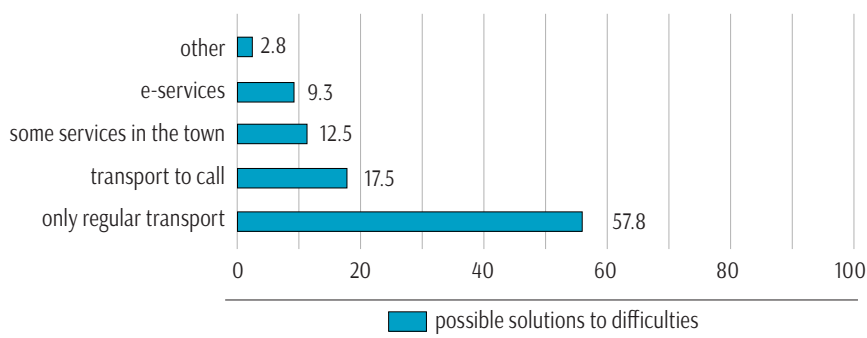


Figure 2. Possibilities of solving difficulties related to limited access to public transport, data in % (N=318)

Source: own research

Solving the problem of transport exclusion from the perspective of local government officials

The second perspective on solving the problem of transport exclusion in the cited studies includes proposals of engaged local government officials, i.e., persons currently struggling with solving this phenomenon in the local environment. Thus, representatives of local governments: mayors, councilors, local activists and village heads, were invited to participate in the qualitative study conducted in the form of 3 focus group interviews (FGIs).

The panelists confirmed that public transport is a prerequisite for eliminating transport divide, A1 stated that "(...) regular transport (...) allows Mrs. Helenka or Mrs. Grażynka to take care of more matters at one time. It is a kind of respite, a change of environment, an opportunity to meet people". A3 added that "(...) of course public transport is very important. If it reaches every town, then it is superb and that is how it should be".

According to the respondents, the development of public transport is somehow inscribed in the social development of the province and, as C10 said, "(...) is the result of social changes". Regular transport affords the opportunity not only to maintain continuous communication with the workplace, school or places providing various goods and services, but is an element of development for residents of towns excluded from transport. The possibility of getting to schools as well as to places where one can develop own interests and passions means equal opportunities for children and young people as well as adults and seniors who want to learn and develop their potential. In addition, ensuring continuous public transport enables professional activation, which is often based on the need for education and further training in this area and, consequently, on the need to reach places where such education is organized.

Participants emphasized, however, that we should not close ourselves to other, novel forms of tackling the problem. Participant C2 emphasized that "sometimes it is not a matter of launching new connections (...) and sometimes it may be a matter of introducing some new social service. (...)". He added that it is important to think about completely new, individualized solutions. In turn, participant B12 confirmed that although introducing public transport provides a solution to certain problems, there are still places "that are difficult to reach even by car".

According to many FGI participants, a real change leading to the social re-inclusion of transport-deprived residents of towns is necessary through their education and re-education of. FGI participants responded positively to the thesis that the introduction of public transport may not improve the situation per se. In their opinion, two types of actions are necessary in this respect, i.e. the ones aimed at convincing the community to use novel solutions and those focused on education leading to a change in

attitudes. As A3 said, “(...) after the introduction of public transport in the commune, which was requested by residents, not everyone switched to buses. When a resident travelled with a taxi driver, he continued to travel in this way, and when he travelled with a neighbor, he continued to do so.” Participants confirmed that residents have their own habits related to their previous functioning and use what they consider safe strategies for dealing with problems, including using a paid car or help from neighbors; hence, education is necessary. As the participant C1 from Braniewo claimed “(...) they do not use these connections because it is more convenient for them (...) to use social taxis.” A separate problem is the mentality of the elderly, who, as C4 said, “do not want such help. And here we need education, to reach to them, to explain that there is such a need and it is for their good.”

Some of the FGI participants confirmed that the problem is systemic, permanent and related to far-reaching social changes. However, many of the respondents emphasized that exclusion is not the cause, but the effect of the situation.

As the participant B12 from the Górowo Iławeckie commune said, “our commune has a high rate of former state farm (PRL) residents, the reason is precisely this PRL system, (...) the old system is passed on to subsequent generations, although there is a percentage of our residents who are getting out of it. (...) Some of these residents are taught to be comfortable, they get something for free, so they do not have to do anything.” Participant B1 from the Srokowo commune confirmed that this is an old problem, maybe now more publicized and more aware. In turn, participant B5 from the Piecki commune added that “this is an old problem, but in a new edition. (...) Motivation is important to establish why and where we want to get, but this motivation must also be translated into possibilities. (...) The solution must certainly be different than before, more adapted to individual needs, because society has also evolved.” The respondents clearly emphasized that in order to introduce lasting social change and improve the situation of persons excluded from transport, it is necessary not only to guarantee permanent public transport, but also to implement a number of educational activities for the population that will allow them to re-evaluate and change their previous attitudes and strategies. Thanks to social education and changing attitudes, it would be possible to gradually move away from established survival strategies that impede development and move towards strategies based on education, allowing for both individual and social development.

According to the respondents, the local leaders (e.g., village heads) and non-governmental organizations have a strong influence on changing the attitude of the local community. According to A1, “there is a need to work on two levels.” For example, rural women’s associations can use their role to apply for funds. Thanks to the development of the local community, “people have restored faith that they can do something, improve their life quality, and enjoy things they have never enjoyed before.”

The respondents emphasize the importance of the social education carried out by educators and social activists working in local environments because without their work it is difficult to make changes and encourage residents to participate in social life and engage in development.

Participant B11 from the Srokowo commune confirmed that, in addition to the changes introduced, the need for change must also be developed among the residents themselves. She said "(...) in terms of the project we want to trigger these changes (...), but if we have some goals to achieve, some social change, we have to support it. To make these participants want this change, we have to work out this social change for them." According to the participants, it is also important to adapt the solutions to the needs of each commune. As B12 claimed, the solutions to the transport problem "should be tailored to each commune. Each commune is different."

The conducted study presents a different picture of transport exclusion compared to the prevailing common perception of this social problem. The analysis of group interviews shows that the problem of transport divide is not only a matter of the lack of means of transport, but a far more complex problem.

According to local government officials, the main problem of persons affected by transport exclusion is the development of specific forms of awareness and mental attitudes towards the reality surrounding them. Numerous socio-economic transformations that have taken place in Poland over the last 30 years mean that we are dealing with a number of attitudes that could be called strategies for coping with exclusion. In the respondents' opinion, restoring public transport will not solve the problem of social exclusion of individuals or entire social groups living in areas deprived of transport. There is a need to implement extensive educational activities in these areas that will facilitate social inclusion and restore faith in the possibility of creating their own social reality and building a positive vision of life in their current place of living.

When analyzing the statements of local government officials regarding solutions that would improve the situation of persons living in transport-deprived areas, it can be concluded that the catalogue of their proposals is relatively extensive. Noteworthy ideas of the participants that could improve the situation of the excluded residents include:

- Using external EU funds to implement innovative projects. As emphasized by participant C3 from the Braniewo commune, local government officials hope to use funds from a new financial perspective, including for electromobility and implementation of ecological investments, like e.g., purchase of electric buses with charging stations. Participants emphasize that EU funds afford an opportunity to change a difficult situation. They also notice a greater interest of excluded persons in project activities; however, as B1 says, "there is no direct willingness on

their part, they have to be persuaded.” Thus, a number of educational and motivational activities have to be undertaken in order to encourage the respondents to participate in projects.

- Financing the purchase of monthly tickets or unprofitable lines in the summer by municipalities.
- Transport tailored to the needs of the elderly, e.g., on-call transport with a carer (door-to-door). As C4 explains “(...) an 80-, 90-year-old person will not go to the doctor by themselves, unless they are local and the clinic is very close.”
- By-passing public transport 1–2 times a week—more profitable, generating fewer costs and strictly tailored to the needs of residents of small towns. Participant B2 argues “(...) if there was a bus once or twice a week, not every day, because then it would run empty, (...) I think it would prove convenient as a means to take care of some matters at the pharmacy, at the office (...)” As another resident (B3) of the same commune adds, a good solution would be “not a large bus, but a 7–8-person van,” touring around the surrounding towns.
- Transport provided by employers—it would afford a chance to commute to work comfortably to persons from outside the main communication routes and from towns not covered by public transport.
- The activity of Social Service Centers, which allows reaching out to excluded people. However, there was a voice that the fact that such services are free of charge causes a lack of responsibility of residents and that it would be appropriate to implement a symbolic fee. B9 argues that “the necessity of paying this proverbial ‘one zloty’ will teach people responsibility for using services. It has happened many times that there were people who were registered for certain services and then did not use them without a word.”
- Government programs for municipal social welfare centers (MOPS)—government-subsidized programs such as “Personal Assistant for Disabled Persons”.
- Activities of rural women’s associations and the establishment of rural community centers. As C4 says, the ideal situation would be at least one community center per village, and “to be some subsidies in this matter.”
- Activities of self-help homes, occupational therapy workshops, and senior clubs.
- Mobile services, including a doctor, shop, library, free time animation in cooperation with village community centers. The interview participants emphasized the value of social services delivered directly to residents. As B11 says, “this is one of the solutions that provides an opportunity.” These can include initiatives implemented in cooperation with village heads through village community center, making public spaces available, e.g., in the form of “street pedagogues or free time animators, as well as initiatives in the field of medical services.”

- Development and education of residents in the use of e-services. Participants emphasize the importance of digital competences, which allow for the implementation of various types of services. As B6 says, “people I know do not use them, but they could use e-prescriptions via the Internet, or they could handle many things—tests, registrations, or banks—in this way.” Training in this area should be addressed, in particular, to the elderly. As C4 says, “these people need to be reached, adapted to such conditions. And here is the role of associations, foundations, communes. The role of village heads/mayors is also huge.”
- Internet access. Participants confirm the lack of Internet access in many places, and as C10 emphasizes, it is necessary “for us to function differently.”
- Education and information campaigns addressed to residents regarding the launch of public transport and the benefits of returning to this form of transport.
- Development of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The expansion of pedestrian and bicycle paths will allow residents of towns located near larger cities—centers of culture, services and industry, to meet their needs. As C4 argues, “Communication is important, not only the transport one, but also pedestrian one (...) people make use of it.”

Summary

When analyzing transport exclusion, it should be borne in mind that it is one of the key problems generating other types of social exclusion, especially in rural and peripheral areas. No access to transport has various consequences, like restricted access to a number of goods and services, causing educational, professional and social exclusion and enlarging development differences between regions. The case of the Warmia and Mazury Province described in this article is an excellent example of the phenomenon of transport exclusion, which concerns also other Provinces facing similar social consequences. The results of published studies indicate that solving the problem of transport exclusion is not limited solely to restoring permanent connections, but requires a systemic approach, taking into account various types of impacts, including those of an educational nature.

Social inclusion of persons who have been experiencing this type of exclusion for many years should include actions aimed at developing a planned, regular system of connections for all locations excluded from transport, developing transport infrastructure and simultaneously undertaking educational activities addressed to residents of locations with low transport accessibility. Restoring transport will equalize educational opportunities and provide access to various forms of education for both secondary school and vocational school youth, university students and adults

who want to improve their qualifications or acquire new skills. The possibility of using predictable transport may motivate seniors to participate in various forms of activities and education organized within the commune.

The respondents underline the advisability of coupling corrective actions with the implementation of innovative complementary solutions, such as transport on call, door-to-door transport, mobile or in-home services or the development of e-services. However, such a change requires social revitalization of residents of transport-excluded towns based on education and social activation in local environments through leaders and social organizations that can play a key role in social integration and in supporting activities of persons experiencing exclusion. Education fosters hope for developing new strategies for the functioning of residents who have been experiencing social exclusion for years, based on education, activation and social involvement, which will contribute to improving the quality of life of residents of rural and peripheral areas.

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