

Transportation, Inequality and Wellbeing

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Abstract

In the context of social welfare, the meaning of transportation has been pointed out frequently, particularly with respect to elderly people and people with disabilities. The necessity of being able to get to a hospital when needed goes without saying, and the relevance of commuting and of socializing with family and friends can be said to be generally accepted as well. To a certain extent, the same is true for cultural and relaxation activities.

Things become more complicated, however, when it comes to tourism. On the one hand, there is no doubting the positive impacts of visiting foreign places and communicating with people from other cultural and social backgrounds. On the other hand, in recent years the negative influences of tourism have become more and more conspicuous, from the garbage left by visitors, the unbalance in the number of tourists and locals, and the lack of economic advantage up to environmental problems tourism causes through transportation or tourists intruding into and devastating natural sites.

These considerations suggest that transportation networks are not equally desirable in all contexts. At the same time, social economic factors must be taken into account: most of the people needing support from others have to depend on public facilities, while people without any kind of impairment are free to choose between motorbikes, private cars, bicycle etc. The devices available also differ regionally, between urban and rural areas, depending on the economic conditions of the users, and on the distance of destination. From the perspective of equality of well-being, besides the scope of the transportation network, its *kind* seems to matter as well.

The paper will discuss the positive and negative effects of transportation, its necessities and superfluous elements from the perspective of well-being, attaching primary significance to locals and people in need. Examples and data from different regions will be used to throw light on the transportation planning and policy and its neglected effects. It will be emphasized that while from the perspective of ecological, economic and social sustainability transportation should not be expanded without limit (as the case of tourism shows), the focus should be on public facilities.