



ORIGINAL PAPER

Transport Exclusion as a Heritage of the Post-Communist Period. The Example of Poland

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Abstract

The period of system transformation after 1989 resulted in many transformations in the social structure in post-communist countries. Countries that after 1989 rejected the system of people's democracy affected various kinds of changes that did not necessarily positively affect various aspects of the broadly understood social policy of the state. In many cases, including Polish, social policy is conducted unevenly by the state, being, for example, very advanced in one aspect, where in comparison, even up to 2015, we observe a significant improvement in the situation. On the other hand, we also observe sectors in which there was a significant deterioration in the confrontation with the realities of 1989. Such an example is exactly the issue of communication exclusion, which is one of the disgraceful results of systemic transformation, emerging in the second half of the 1990s. At the present time, the subject of exclusion is popular, its study often fits into the fight against differently understood discrimination. While it is often mentioned about the exclusion due to age, the inability to use modern forms of communication, sex, race, etc. Other forms of exclusion are often overlooked by the attention of decision-makers. A specific example is the communication exclusion, which in a wider form appeared paradoxically along with the process of socio-economic reforms. What is important, apart from the obvious social aspects of this, is also the ecological aspect, where the lack of the possibility of convenient access to work properly enforces the purchase of a car, which intelligibly worsens the ecological situation due to the fact that the vehicle is not new and usually does not meet the latest exhaust emission standards. In connection with the current work on laws to counteract traffic exclusion, the article presents the state of knowledge as of 22 March 2019.

Keywords: *Poland; transport; transport exclusion.*

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The year 1989 is an important turning point in shaping the state's transport policy. Departure as a result of the so-called Balcerowicz's reforms from the principles of a centrally managed economy led to significant changes also in the field of transport. In general, the main culprit was the change of priorities and directions of population movements, especially in local traffic. It was noticeable both on the micro scale, i.e. on the example of individual cities and public transport, as well as on the macro scale, i.e. on the provincial or national level. The image of communication in Poland at the threshold of political and economic changes was as follows. Railway - whose operator was the company: Polskie Koleje Państwowe [PKP], remained in the hands of the state and what was understandable was the only operator operating on the Polish railway network - was then a monopolist in both passenger and freight transport. The situation was similar in the case of road transport, where inter-city and regional transport provided various branches of Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacji Samochodowej [PKS] (State Car Transport), while urban and suburban transport remained under the control of urban (voivodship) enterprises. As far as the aviation communication outside the subject area of the article is concerned, PLL LOT had a monopoly on domestic flights.

Basically, the services provided by the mentioned above state entities were managed by the state, although at least several forms of its provision could be indicated, significantly affecting the limitation of communication exclusion. First and foremost, publicly available transports connecting usually smaller towns with administrative centers: municipalities, and those with the seat of the voivodship should be indicated. The travel prices were not high at that time, however, especially in public transport, there were some restrictions for season ticket holders who actually brought public transport closer to the employee transport, for example, season tickets were not valid on non-working days.. At the same time, no attention was paid to the economic factor. The volume of transport was quite large, with the largest number of passengers recorded in the year of the fall of the previous system, in 1989. At that time, over 2 million passengers benefited from PKS services, for example in 2014 it was below 500,000. In the scale of the entire country in 1989, the volume of transport covered over 2 billion passengers (2.16 billion), while in 2014 only 354.6 million people were transported - there is a huge drop in the number of people using public transport (Książek, 2016: 54). This is a visible sign of transformations in the model of communication in Poland, as well as the general collapse of communication organized for public money, because of the said number of 354 million people only 109 million, which is less than 1/3 benefited from transport organized by local governments (Książek, 2016: 54). It is worth noting, however, that in this case, the presented data are still understated because they do not take into account the market share of enterprises employing less than 9 people - and it is known that they constitute a noticeable element of the Polish transport system.

The second important communication model also then de facto sponsored by the state were the so-called transport of employees, officially not available to all passengers, but intended for employees of individual plants. Often, the employees' lines reached a quite large distance, bringing people to work sometimes and within a radius of 50 km. At the same time, they fulfilled an important social function, providing the opportunity to reach the workplace, even from the most distant places, but it usually took a lot of time to use them. It was, however, a source of income for PKSs that provided this service for workplaces, because these were rarely able to afford transport on their own. As for the railway, along with the development of road transport (bus) and following asphaltting of roads, which in turn translated into the quality of the service, ie from the

1960s, there was a tendency to liquidate local railway lines that are not able to compete with traveling time with developing bus communication. In addition, the distance from the settlement network was often added here, which intensified the decrease in the attractiveness of the railways as a means of transport - because it made it necessary to reach the railway station, while the bus usually reached the center of the town. This primarily led to cuts on local lines in Greater Poland and Lower Silesia, where the rail network was the densest. Another reason for the loss of attractiveness was the frequent limitation of maintenance works to the necessary minimum, but also such factors as, for example, the profile of the line preventing the speed increase without a thorough reconstruction of the route, which was unprofitable in economic terms.

In this form, collective communication of all kinds survived until the turn of 1989. Shortly thereafter, the state seeking active savings sought to put the rules governing transport into practice. Since marketization of the railways for various reasons, including strategic ones, was not possible in this section, it was decided to maintain the actual state monopoly, unfortunately limiting transport work and modernization of the railway, which led to the liquidation of many railway lines, which in the longer term resulted in transport exclusion many rural areas - the reasons for this phenomenon will be presented later in the article.

Bus transport was much easier to restructure, it was not perceived as a strategic factor, what's more the drivers did not create such a strong lobby as railwaymen, which made it easier for the government to try to market this sector. The first step was to split the PKS into 176 local companies, which had to take up the fight for the passenger, often competing with each other on more profitable and profitable lines. An additional element undoubtedly negatively affecting the costs of running the business was the rather archaic and outdated rolling stock available to the companies. Despite the fact that production was maintained by Polish factories (mainly Autosan and Jelcz), new companies often saved their rolling stock by buying old buses from the West - they were cheaper, more often more economical than the products of local factories. What was crucial for the further development of events, the new enterprises were registered as commercial law companies, which in fact forced them to optimize business operations, especially in the direction of cost balancing. This, in turn, led to the withdrawal of car communication from less profitable courses. However, more serious problems appeared with the wave of reforms that began to be carried out in Poland after the victory of the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) in 1997.

Here, first of all, indicate two of them: administrative and education. They have greatly influenced the development of events in the transport sector, both in terms of wheels and railways. The first of them - administrative - created 16 provinces instead of the previous 49. This led to further fragmentation of transport issues, since the main organizer of transport has since become a county (powiat - intermediate level between the commune and the voivodship). It also led to the change of existing passenger flows because each district primarily wanted to connect smaller towns with the seat of county authorities, often leaving the municipalities an aspect of organizing intra-municipal communication (if it was needed). This led to discontinuation of service on the so-called contact areas between individual municipalities. The delimitation of new, larger voivodships to a large extent in the long term resulted in abandoning the service on routes going beyond the border of the voivodship, which involved the financing of such a merger. Often, new administrative units were not interested in further financing of local lines leading to the neighboring commune, but located in another voivodship. In a

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natural way, this leads to the exclusion of transport of people living in those places that would remain active on the labor market, but also socially need to purchase an individual mode of transport. Another reform, the negative effects of which are probably the most indirectly felt in matters related to exclusion, is education reform. At this point, its essence will not be analyzed (especially that after 20 years it has been withdrawn and the education model existing in Poland since the 1950s has been restored). From the point of view of this article, its impact on public transport is important. Until its introduction, free transport of children to primary school, especially in rural areas, was provided by the commune, usually in cooperation with the parents of pupils. The legislator envisaged such a solution in case when the road to school was over 3 kilometers for students of grades I - IV and over 4 kilometers for students of older classes (Cyrankiewicz, 2012). The service of the connections usually resided at the local PKS branch, which usually included these courses into the network of public connections, which positively affected the mobility in the villages, providing a minimum of communication of most villages - 2 courses per day. The reform changed this state of affairs by creating the next level of school - junior high school (former classes VII-IX), and handed over the task of running them to the commune. The problem was that quite often their network did not coincide with the network of primary schools (due to the need to comply with statutory conditions - the need to locate a gymnasium in a separate building), often accompanied by their consolidation, which also translated into problems of transporting students to schools. To remedy this, the legislator decided to introduce and even subsidize special school buses (so-called *gimbus*). Finally, it turned out that due to statutory requirements, this led to further deepening of the transport exclusion, especially of adults. *Gimbus* could not be used for regular transport. Due to the need to mark it as transporting children, it was impossible to travel in it adults. On the other hand, this requirement certainly extended the operation of Polish bus factories (Autosan and Jelcz, which were produced by the appropriate bus models). The exclusion of school transport from the network of public connections has undermined the revenues of PKSs, which the municipality has so far paid for services rendered, or has paid up adequate amounts as part of compensations for statutory concessions. In addition, *gimbuses* were passed to specific municipalities, which excluded their use by PKS. Statistical data confirms that a significant slump in the transport market occurred after 2000, when many communication companies started the process of liquidation of connections. It was related, as already mentioned, to the transfer of student transport by local self-governments, and thus with the subsequent outflow of funds from communication enterprises. It caused a snowball effect, because limiting the transport offer caused a further outflow of passengers, etc.

The year 2019 is the election year in Poland - elections to the European Parliament will take place, and much more important the next election to the Sejm and the Senate, it is also a prelude to the presidential elections planned for 2020. Therefore, the issue of transport exclusion was noticed by the government, actively seeking the possibility of extending the mandate to exercise power.

The Polish government, sponsored by Law and Justice (PiS), and currently headed by Mateusz Morawiecki, in his electoral program, announced at the beginning of March 2019, announced the fight against transport exclusion, making this task one of the main points of his election strategy referred to as "the Kaczyński's Five". The fight against transport exclusion holds in it an important place alongside: the 500+ program for each child in Poland (this is a flagship program of the PiS government in Poland,

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consisting in paying the parents of the child support in the amount of PLN 500 (about 550 lei) for each child, currently the right to support are mainly families with 2 or more children), the so-called. "Thirteen" in the amount of PLN 1,100 (1210 lei) for pensioners; tax breaks for people up to 26 years of age and reduction of the first income tax rate from 18% to 17%.

Understandably, most of these demands were enthusiastically received by the electorate in Poland, somewhat less by the Ministry of Finance. The essence of the idea in the area of combating transport exclusion is to restore the network of liquidated connections at the county level, by increasing the number of so-called "vehicle-kilometers" from 500,000 to a million a year. According to the leader of the PiS - Jaroslaw Kaczynski, this should happen gradually, so as not to incur excessive expenditure of the state budget. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki in his promises was much more enthusiastic and clearly announced the start of the program from April 2019. Regardless of the clearly electoral basis of these promises, it should be noted that it is only now to the awareness of the political caste that the problem of transport exclusion has disappeared. As it was mentioned, it has been growing in Poland since at least 2000.

An important element in this case is ensuring the financing of the program. Here, of course, the issue is its cost. The first estimates presented by "Puls Biznesu" estimated the costs of the program at approximately PLN 1.5 billion. Subsequent declarations of government members are gradually decreasing (the amount to be allocated for the implementation of the program, which implies the need to supplement the difference from the own funds of the local governments, which is one of the conditions for the future awarding of co-financing). Government spokesman Joanna Kopcińska declared PLN 800 million for this purpose, while the last announcements even further reduced the declared expenditure to 500 million. The trouble in presenting the right amount is due to a lack of knowledge (March 7, 2019) about the government's vision for the final resolution of the problem. Although it was announced that the relevant law will be issued by May this year, its details are not yet known. It should be mentioned that the original announcement of Jaroslaw Kaczyński about transferring PLN 1.5 billion to the missing 500 million. km indicated a real approach to the problem, because it gave a surcharge of 3 zlotys per kilometer, the later announcements that add to the size of the zloty for a vehicle kilometer do not allow real thinking about restoring all connections (Dybalski, 2019b). The methodology of calculating this amount is also unknown, whether it is an additional amount to be spent on improving the quality of transport in *poviat* Poland, or whether it already includes the refund of any tax relief already applied in the country.

It is likely that the co-financing will be transferred under the next special act, the currently applicable and binding law on Public Collective Transport (PTZ) provides for support for local governments by a total amount of PLN 1130 million (Dybalski, 2019b).

Another problem is proper diagnosis of the problem and selection of counteraction. Here, it is appropriate to return again to the definition of social exclusion and to indicate the groups of people who are affected by it. As a rule, this will apply to older people, for specific reasons (often health) that can not use a car - for them the priority will certainly be reaching out to public institutions, such as: health centers or offices. Students who are too young to guide a car are already a similar group. Their needs can not be reduced, especially in the case of high school youth only to reach the

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school. Another group indicated in the study of the problem, and often overlooked in the current discussion are women who statistically less often have a driving license, moreover they rarely decide on objective reasons for a bus trip, especially in conditions of moving away from the bus stop. Therefore, perhaps the right solution at the local level should be to bring urban / communal communication closer to the potential passenger (Nagalski, 2019). Another important element, essential for every passenger, especially those layers threatened with communication exclusion (but also in connection with digital exclusion) is the necessity to access the timetable in the form understandable for the average passenger. Unfortunately, Polish examples pointing to many different restrictions, or containing many departure options for the same connection can certainly give rise to uncertainty about whether a given vehicle will appear at the stop at the scheduled time and may discourage you from making a decision about choosing this mode of transport. In addition to the clear and clear timetables for all, the side problem will be the use of a consistent and relatively simple numbering system of public transport lines. For example, in Łódź, we deal with variants of line 53, serving areas threatened with exclusion (ie peripheral to the city, 5 in number (marked 53A-53E), plus 3 variants of 54 and 58 operating in similar areas of the city. This causes a certain chaos, especially for visitors, not to mention the uncluttered timetable. Finally, an important element of the fight against exclusion is, especially in the cities mentioned above, the fight for the shortest possible way to the bus stop. On the one hand, most passengers are quite positive about this issue, but very often their enthusiasm ends at the moment when it turns out that the bus will be going directly under their windows. In addition, the problem was also a fairly small amount of rolling stock designed to operate such lines, which sometimes threatened the need to issue full-size rolling stock on the line; he could block individual streets, which further deepened the problem. Currently, Łódź deals with the problem by purchasing a 8-meter rolling stock - Isuzu Novocity Life, which joined Jelcz M081, which was much earlier.

Of course, the program of combating transport exclusion is not a question of recent months, the relevant laws have already been prepared for a long time, as experts say - for example Adrian Furgalski from the TOR Economic Advisers Team, even for 4 years, in fact from the beginning of the current parliamentary term (2015) (Dziennik Łódzki, 2019). Currently, it is estimated that the scale of transport exclusion is close to 14 million people (Żakowska, 2019) and the solutions proposed at Kaczyński's five are currently only able to stop the current liquidation of the line, and not their reconstruction in regions where it has long ceased to drive something. The said expert also points to a fairly vague system of awarding subsidies to local governments, which does not promote those areas that have already been excluded; the reason for foreclosure was usually the lack of money - which usually involved smaller local government units, not larger ones. In the meantime, the proposed solutions clearly promote larger entities, which will be easier to obtain state funding. An important postulate, already mentioned earlier, is the so-called release of *gimbus* or allowing these buses to carry also normal passengers, which is currently not allowed in regular traffic. Experts estimate that this would allow reducing the cost of transport organization by nearly half and additionally earning on tickets (Dziennik Łódzki, 2019). What is important, this would avoid a significant cost category, namely the purchase of new buses - you can use your existing resources to do this. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that it would not completely eliminate the problem of exclusion, because these vehicles are usually high-floor, technically rather inaccessible to the disabled and the elderly. There is also a question about the possibility

of convincing people to return to public transport. Here, it is estimated that about 60% of the population can be convinced to do so, while several factors must be ensured in this case: first of all, the certainty of transport, and the regular timing of calls. It is known that the reconstruction of transport on the basis of the so-called “alibi-zug” (or rather in this case, “alibi-bus”), or connections that run in strange hours, practically driving the proverbial air, will not pass the exam and will only generate additional costs and will still plunge the entire reform. Of course, regular connections, carried out preferably in an hourly hour, will generate adequate costs, but they will nevertheless constitute a possible success of the reform.

The 800 million zloty promised in the current election campaign, unfortunately, will not ensure the implementation of the program. As already mentioned, the program presented in the recent draft laws promotes actually larger local governments that will be able to guarantee coverage of at least 30% of the bus connection deficit. In addition, the government subsidy is also not expected to be of an alarmingly high level - by 2021 it is to amount to PLN 1 for the so-called the vehicle is then to be lowered to 80 gr. per kilometer (Bereszczyński, 2019). Some of the counties, eg in the Łódź voivodship, are quite skeptical about the aforementioned possibilities, indicating that local governments are already burdened with, for example, educational matters and it will be difficult to find funds for the so-called own contribution to the transport subsidy (Bereszczyński, 2019). Further skepticism of interested parties comes from the fact that the granting and subsequent continuation of transport subsidies will depend on proper reporting, which in turn generates further bureaucracy. The whole subsidy program is to be managed by the Bus Transport Development Fund, subsidies will be granted in the form of subsidies to the deficit of a line with public utility features (Urbanowicz, 2019). In fact, the Law and Justice Party offer is directed to richer local governments because the planned subsidy in the case of urban transport would cover only 1/6 of the costs of running the bus on the line (the real cost of the so-called one kilometer in urban traffic is 6-7 zlotys), in the case of regional traffic it may be slightly lower (less frequent arrangement of stops), but also insufficient.

The costs of the program will certainly exceed the already mentioned 800 million. Because to start the connections, which unfortunately the government clearly forgets, are also needed buses, which municipalities or counties as potential transport organizers do not have, moreover, to fully counteract the exclusion, eg due to the unavailability of means of transport for the elderly or disabled), should they are low-floor, the cost of such a vehicle on the secondary market is: from 20,000 PLN for a 20-year-old vehicle, of course, together with the younger year-old the price increases accordingly. The situation is so uninteresting that the *poviat* Poland is dominated by vehicles whose vintage and state leaves much to be desired. A notable problem noticeable especially in eastern Poland is the relative discretion of the timetable, which is very often not observed by private carriers, the courses are canceled, shortened etc., which does not create an atmosphere favorable for the use of organized transport (Rydzyński 2019: 45). An additional problem for communes will also be fuel costs, but most importantly the biggest problem will be the recruitment of drivers who will have to propose favorable working conditions and pay. It is known for a long time that this is a serious problem in Poland, especially in larger cities, where large communication enterprises are struggling with the lack of people willing to work, despite offering fairly competitive employment conditions (eg at MPK Łódź or ZTM Warsaw).

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The average salary in MPK Łódź is approximately PLN 3,400 per hand (Losik, 2018); in ZTM Warszawa, earnings are at a similar level (Zajac-Malarowska, 2017). It is hard to expect that municipal enterprises would be able to offer more, especially that local self-governments will not be able to offer the opportunity to earn a salary, eg overtime. In the context of combating transport exclusion, an important issue should also be not limiting only to support for bus transport, and its reorganization, which takes place in the Czech Republic, so that the bus only serves as a rail transport function, which of course should be realized on one ticket regional. Providing convenient changes to the railway which is faster and usually more convenient, especially in the context of providing connections with larger urban centers may also be treated as a solution to communication problems. Unfortunately, in Polish conditions a significant obstacle can be encountered in this respect, namely a significant increase in electricity prices for an industrial customer that has occurred since the beginning of 2019 (even by 50-60%). This puts a huge question mark on the communication integration around the railway, especially in the situation of a permanent lack of an alternative in the form of combustion vehicles on the Polish rail network, which are simply too few and not enough to even ensure current traffic. The reasons for this state of affairs are systematic, due to the negligence of the case, in the mid-1980s, when the Hungarian SN61 series railbuses of Hungarian provenience were withdrawn from the service, and no sensible alternative was designed. This forced providing traffic on lines not electrified by means of classic sets, i.e. a locomotive + wagons, which in turn negatively influenced the profitability of such a solution. This led to the liquidation of many regional connections and further deepening of transport exclusion. Currently, some connections are reactivated, they are usually successful, but the problem here is the Public Procurement Law and strange ambitions of individual public transport organizers (Marshal Offices), they order short series of vehicles from different manufacturers (PESA, NEWAG), which increases costs repairs and causes problems with obtaining spare parts, which in turn negatively affects the quality of transport offered. It is also important to build an appropriate political climate, so that the fight against transport exclusion can lead in the fashionable spirit of the so-called sustainable transport. In Poland, there is a lot of pathologies in this area, eg in Tuchola Forest, it was postulated to suspend railway traffic on peripheral sections, which would bring significant savings and thus enable the financing of a larger number of bus services. However, a simple matter was not taken into account - such a shape of the road network in the region, which would cause two-fold lengthening of the passage time of the same section, which, of course, would further discourage people from public transport, however under the influence of public opinion, this idea was abandoned, (Rydyński 2018: 42). Similarly, it looked like Hel, where at least during the off-season the trains were tried to replace trains, but the idea is questioned even if buses are not transported and Hel is a popular place for cycling outside the holiday season (Rydyński 2018: 42). A model for solving the situation may be the example of large urban agglomerations in Poland (Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Wrocław), which after launching their own agglomeration railways "redirected" the bus traffic from the direction of the village-metropolis towards the village-railway station, which allowed for enrichment transport offer in smaller urban centers.

It is worth mentioning that there are also parishes and counties that, without waiting for money from the state on their own, began to fight exclusion. One of such counties is Lipno, which organized its own communication in the area. It was successful, generating success in turnout, especially through its reliability, which prompted some

people to leave the car as a means of movement. Lipno's starost also points to another socially important element of the distribution of costs of functioning efficient county communication. It attracts students to schools in the country, preventing their outflow to other places, which means that, for example, the educational subsidy remains in the commune / county, which is a serious financial injection for the local government (Dybalski, 2019a).

The government's response to the publication of the PiS program's assumptions is also important. There was unconfirmed information about the possible dismissal of Finance Minister Teresa Czerwińska, who alarmed Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki that the assumptions of the previous century are virtually unrealistic due to the excessive burden on the state budget. The finance minister believes that the implementation of all program assumptions could disturb the so-called an expenditure rule, in principle to counteract the emergence of too large a financial deficit. A certain dangerous for public finances may be statements of some members of the government, indicating that the budget is to be a tool for the implementation of the policy of the Council of Ministers and not the goal itself. Finally, the law on bus transport is to come into force in mid-May and then we will finally find out how many local governments will be really interested in participating in the program; (we can *a priori* assume that it will be all those in which the PiS has the majority, while further continuation of the program will undoubtedly depend on the result of the parliamentary elections that will take place in autumn 2019.

Generalizing, the problem of transport exclusion is an important problem in Poland, especially since it is highly complicated and its problems can not be limited only to strictly communication issues. It is one of the bricks that build the entire wall of exclusion, and also has a fairly large impact on ecology and, for example, which is noticeable especially in larger agglomerations for the demand for parking spaces. Lack of access to good and effective public transport leads to serious limitations, for example in the case of job seeking (although often larger employers often offer their own substitute for employee transport), but also access to broadly understood culture (cinemas, theaters), which further deepens the gap between city and village. The inclusion of the issue of transport exclusion in the governmental program is an action in my opinion rather serving to draw attention to the problem rather than an attempt to solve it in a comprehensive way, especially as, as already indicated, the proposed measures are not enough to fully heal the situation. There is at least one additional program supporting the purchase of buses for local communities, which in turn may further support the Polish economy (production of Solaris, Ursus Bus and Autosan buses), although this aspect is highly controversial, especially when we follow the latest developments in this market segment, especially the withdrawal of some companies from already won tenders. Finally, it should also provide municipalities with the opportunity to employ drivers on competitive terms - this is an important gap on the Polish labor market, which the legislator clearly did not think about. What is understandable about the scale of success will be something to say only in the next few years, of course the first step to the fight against exclusion will be to extend the parliamentary mandate for the Law and Justice Party in the upcoming elections scheduled for autumn 2019.

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