

Accessibility: A Challenge for Regional and Rural Balanced Development

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Policy Making: Implications for Innovation and Communities

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Irish Centre for Rural Transformation and Sustainability

Accessibility and Balanced Development

- Balanced Development (BD) is the aim of many regional and rural policies.
- Accessibility is a relevant concept in BD
- Irish government's objective for regional policy is to achieve BD
- Peripherality
- Improvement in transport infrastructure
- The extent to which transport investments generate additional benefits that translate into economic growth is an open debate in the literature



Outline

- Concept of Accessibility
- Measurement
- Key issues – relationship between transport infrastructure investment and economic development
- Research in NUI Galway



What is Accessibility?

“Accessibility is ... a slippery notion ... one of those common terms that everyone uses until faced with the problem of defining and measuring it” (Gould, 1969)



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“Accessibility is ... a slippery notion ... one of those common terms that everyone uses until faced with the problem of defining and measuring it” (Gould, 1969, p.64)

- Two sides: legal/social and physical

- Definitions:

“The potential of opportunities for interaction” (Hansen, 1959).

“The inherent characteristic, or advantage, of a place with respect to overcoming some form of spatially operating source of friction, for example time and/or distance” (Ingram, 1971).



What is Accessibility?

- Accessibility versus Mobility
 - “Divorce” between accessibility and the nature of the desired destination
- What experiences accessibility?
 - Access and Accessibility. Perspective depends on the objective of the study
 - Circumstances of each resident



Components of Accessibility, Geurs and van Wee (2004)

- **Land-use component**
 - Supply of opportunities at each destination
 - Demand for these opportunities at origins
 - Competition
- **Transportation component**
 - Disutility of individuals to cover the distance between origins and destinations
 - Supply vs. demand for infrastructure
- **Temporal component**
 - Availability of opportunities at different times of the day, time availability
- **Individual component**
 - Needs, abilities, opportunities



Accessibility and Economic Growth – Key Issues

- Elements related to the concepts of accessibility and peripherality (Copus, 2001):
 - Causal elements
 - Increased travel costs
 - Absence of agglomeration economies
 - Contingent elements
 - High costs of service provision
 - Weak rates of entrepreneurship and innovation
 - Associated elements
 - Sparse, low density population
 - Dependence on primary industries
 - Poor local and inter-regional infrastructure
 - Weak influence on the wider governance arena



Accessibility and Economic Growth – Key Issues

- Role of accessibility as a mechanism to re-distribute economic activity
- **Economic growth?** – positive economic and political externalities must be present (“Open dynamic systems”)
 - Labour market economies
 - Availability of highly skilled labour force
 - Dynamism on the local economy
 - Investment factors and facilitating political environment



Accessibility and Economic Growth – Key Issues

- **Causality** – Statistical relationship between transport investment and economic growth
- Decoupling argument
“Policy should be seeking to reduce the transport intensity of activities whilst at the same time maintaining economic growth” (Banister and Berechman, 2001)
- Effect of non-spatial factors – “Aspatial peripherality” (Copus, 2001)
- Elements: ICT infrastructure, social capital, local business networks, embeddedness/civic society, institutional networks, local/global links



Research in NUI Galway

- Objective:
 - Study the relationship between road network job accessibility and the spatial distribution of labour participation in urban, periurban and rural areas.
 - Improvements in rural accessibility resulting from investments in the transport infrastructure will have a positive effect on local labour participation, but this effect will be significantly higher in cities than in periurban and rural areas.
 - Implications for policy-making



Research in NUI Galway

- Objective:
 - Investigate patterns of employment clustering by industrial group in rural Ireland with the objective of assessing whether less accessible rural areas systematically lie outside clusters of industrial activities.
 - Spatial cluster analysis and GIS are used to identify and map a number of clusters of employment across rural areas in Ireland.



Research in NUI Galway

- At a later stage,
 - Empirical test of the relationship between the existence of local business networks and innovation activity and accessibility in a particular region.
 - Previous empirical studies have found that higher levels of innovative activity are related to higher levels of regional accessibility, suggesting that innovation resides in large cities (Audretsch, 2002; Copus and Skuras, 2006). However, high innovative activity was also found among businesses in remote areas (Copus and Skuras, 2006).
 - The objective is to explore this relationship in an Irish context by looking at Co. Galway as an example of an innovative region. Is lower accessibility offset by the operation of innovative business networks?

