



Special Session Proposal

Transport and rural development: Keeping rural areas accessible

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Abstract

Rural areas face the loss of local facilities to larger venues in more central locations at greater distances, as increased personal mobility enables the upscaling of economic activity across developed countries (Christiaanse, 2020; Fujita et al., 1999; Glaeser and Gottlieb, 2009; Neumeier, 2016). Thanks to upscaling and car mobility, most rural residents have access to high-quality amenities and experience similar levels of satisfaction with accessibility as their urban counterparts (Pot et al., 2023a, 2023b). However, the more car-oriented a society becomes, the higher the probability that people with limited access to mobility encounter difficulties participating fully in society (Kenyon et al., 2002). This is commonly referred to as ‘transport poverty’, which can induce processes of social exclusion with significant impacts for well-being (De Vos et al., 2013; Ettema et al., 2010; Lucas, 2012). Moreover, car use as a means of reducing spatial accessibility inequalities could increasingly prove incompatible with environmental objectives. As a result, rural areas are confronted with the challenge of maintaining access to high-quality amenities in a more inclusive and sustainable manner.

This session welcomes theoretical and/or empirical papers that contribute to understanding and solving current rural accessibility challenges. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The role of transport and daily mobility in rural social and economic development.
- The tensions between economic efficiency, environmental sustainability and social equity in car-dependent rural areas.

- Access to economic and social activities for different groups of rural residents and visitors and/or how they perceive accessibility.
- Travel behaviour in rural areas by different modes of transport and how this differs across personal characteristics, preferences, attitudes and capabilities.
- Daily activity spaces of rural residents and the role of urban areas in these spaces.
- The role of digitization in substituting and/or complementing mobility in rural areas.
- Smart and green public/shared mobility solutions that aim to improve accessibility and liveability of rural regions.
- Governance and institutional barriers/opportunities to improve accessibility in rural areas.

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