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Relations between Wellbeing and Transport Infrastructure of the Country

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Abstract

The concept of wellbeing is rather difficult for perception since it cannot be expressed by just one definition. It usually gives quite broad illustration of the standard of living of the population and comprises both concepts measuring the subjective satisfaction of people and objective indicators. Wellbeing reflects the quality of life of the country population. The indicator is not the static one, vice versa it is highly dynamic and changes together with the ideas and perception the people have about their possibility to fulfill the goals of their life, both personal and social (Statham and Chase, 2010; Rees *et al*., 2010). The efficiency of national economy and economic growth as well as sustainable development of industries and entire regions are determined to a great extent by the transport sustainable functioning. The goal of this research is to find out the relations between the factors of population wellbeing and the level of transport infrastructure development within the country.

1. Introduction

The paper under consideration reveals the relations between such important concepts as wellbeing and transport infrastructure. These systems have many intersection points, and their mutual impact is assumed to be significant.

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The notion of infrastructure takes into account two huge categories: social infrastructure and economic or production infrastructure. The social infrastructure comprises such subsystems as healthcare and education, culture, tourism, etc., while the economic infrastructure consists of transport and transportation system, telecommunication, electrical grid, water supply system, bridges, roads etc. This division is relatively symbolic. The social infrastructure has significant impact on the economic one, and the economic infrastructure presupposes the level of development of the social infrastructure.

In its turn, the concept of wellbeing gives quite broad illustration of the standard of living of the population and comprises both concepts measuring the subjective satisfaction of people (it concerns happiness, relations within families and with friends, with colleagues etc.) and objective indicators. Wellbeing reflects the quality of life of the country population. The indicator is not the static one, vice versa it is highly dynamic and changes together with the ideas and perception the people have about their possibility to fulfill the goals of their life, both personal and social (Statham and Chase, 2010; Rees *et al.*, 2010). Many researchers consider the indicators of health as the main factors of wellbeing; there exist special Boards, dividing duties and responsibilities on following the issues of health and wellbeing. Some measures such as the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index place particular emphasis on environmental impact and sustainability (Happy Planet Index).

Anyway, the close connection of these concepts is evident, which allowed this research.

The goal of this research is to find out the relations between the factors of population wellbeing and the level of transport infrastructure development within the country.

The research questions are as follows:

- to reveal the importance of transport infrastructure for the economic development of the country,
- to consider wellbeing as a complex concept,
- to determine the interrelations of transport infrastructure and indicators of wellbeing of the population,
- to provide the scope of transport infrastructure in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania).

Conventional generally accepted scientific methodology was used in the process of research. The methodology assumes the system approach to the problems solving, providing unity of qualitative and quantitative analysis; the principles ensuring the objectivity of the approach; the application of the method of analysis and synthesis; the use of qualitative content analysis; the employment of economic and statistical methods, such as: factor analysis, time series data analysis, regression analysis, correlation analysis.

The research is applied to the Baltic countries, mainly Latvia. It considers such transport infrastructure factors as length of state and local roads, investments in their construction and maintenance, freight turnover, number of passenger and cargo vehicles, state financing of 1 km of the roads.

The indicators of wellbeing investigated in this research are level of poverty of population and level disposable income of households per capita.

Part of analysis is presented at the level of national economy of Latvia, some studies refer to the statistical regions of Latvia, and comparison is presented for three Baltic countries.

1.1. Importance of transport infrastructure for the economic development of the country

General economic and social development of any region or country cannot be considered without such influential factor as transport and transport infrastructure (National Reform for Latvia for the Implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy).The areas of the country where the transport services are available have higher level of economic development. Even the non-occupied areas have the potential to become interesting for the investors as well for the population in case the transport infrastructure, including motor roads and railway lines, are developing (Latvia 2030. Strategy of Sustainable Development).

It is quite natural to presuppose that infrastructure facilitates all the production processes. The level of infrastructure development is interconnected with the level of foreign and local investments, with the level of economic development of the country, with the level of the human capital development and the standard of living within the country.