

Growing transport dependency resulting from an increasing level of mobility characterise society nowadays all around the world. Various urban and rural areas thus face many transport-related problems arising from the necessity to move in order to participate in daily activities fully. Not only academic scholars but also policy authorities or various civic organisations agree that such a development is hardly sustainable for upcoming decades and actions have to be taken to break current transport patterns. Unfortunately, which steps should be taken to solve transport-related problems such as car-use externalities, social exclusion or landscape fragmentation to support sustainability and increase (not only) urban resilience, is a still subject of broader debate due to complexity of the problems. Policy planners and scholars consider the fare-free public transport policy (FFPT) as a possible measure of how to challenge above mentioned issues by following the narrative of sustainable mobility development. What is unfortunate for the FFPT policy, is the fact that current studies have been focusing too much on the various economic, socio-spatial and behavioural aspect of the policy. Nonetheless, some fundamental issues remain unanswered, in particular the processes and mechanisms which precede the implementation of the FFPT. If we want to be sure the transport development is following the paradigm of sustainable mobility, the issues of policy planning cannot be at the periphery of transport and FFPT research. The current research should focus not only on how to design or embody more sustainable means of transport within our transport and urban systems but also examine the actors who have the power to (re)create transport policies as well as to uncover the mechanisms and processes which enables it. This project aims to go further and fill this practical knowledge gap by uncovering the political discourse, power relations underpinning the formulation and adoption of FFPT policy. **The main aim of the study is to understand not only why, but also by who and how is fare-free public transport policy formulated and adopted.**

The processes and mechanism will be studied in-depth on the example of Poland. Even though, Poland stands at the forefront of FFPT practices there is a lack of the research which would comprehensively cover the problematics mentioned above at more than 60 cases with implemented principles of the fare-free policy present in Poland. The project has been divided into five different stages which will enable to fulfil the main aim of the proposed study. Firstly, an up-to-date inventory of FFPT practises in Poland will be created. Secondly, a qualitative comparative spatial analysis will be performed, resulting in the typology of the FFPT practises. As a third, the sample selection of FFPT cases for the in-depth study will proceed. The fourth stage focuses on analysing the urban, transport and the FFPT development in selected cases. It will help to know for which urban and transport setting is the FFPT suitable option, explain the role of the FFPT within the urban and transport development, which will be performed by use of the multidimensional analysis. To understand the policy implementation process, the in-depth interviews will be carried out. Last, the fifth stage will focus on analyses of end-users' attitudes, travel-behaviour and mobility patterns in the system with the FFPT. Questionnaires and interviews will do this in the selected cases.

The research subject, policy planning, in particular, is essential in order to understand ongoing transport and urban planning practises. The proposed study will thus contribute to the newly emerging tradition of critical urban transport studies which has not yet been fully recognised by the mainstream transport research. It is expected, that the results of the research will help to develop theoretical framework enabling for further examination of not only the FFPT policy itself but mainly of the mechanisms and processes which underpin transport and urban development. It is especially crucial in nowadays world where the question on how to accommodate the mobility needs of society and support sustainable development is still more actual.