Katarzyna Marciniak

Abstract

The most frequent and common form of human mobility is movement connected with employment which is referred to in literature as commute to work. They play different roles, one of them being spatial-functional connections between towns, communes or regions. Thanks to these connections, commute to work constitutes the subject of analysis not only for scientists, but also for spatial planning designers or officers dealing with management on different levels of state administration.

Legal, institutional and social changes connected with shift from administrative command economy to free market economy in Poland have been affecting various aspects of social and economic life, including commute to work. Most studies in the field of research on conditioning of circular migration originate from the period before 1989. Therefore, the issue of conditioning of employee migration of inhabitants of rural areas has become a relevant research topic in the new social and economic circumstances.

The subject of my dissertation is commute to work in rural areas of Kutno Poviat and its characteristics as far as spatial distribution of directions and distances is concerned. The author has made an attempt to analyze the contemporary conditionings of commute to work of inhabitants of rural areas of Kutno Poviat after the political-institutional transformation. The object of the thesis are rural areas of Kutno Poviat, in this case of an area of a number of villages [sołectwo], as well as the inhabitants of this poviat who commute to work. Areas of a number of villages were assumed as the starting point of commute and the destinations were either towns or other areas of a number of villages.

The fundamental research problem in the dissertation focused around the below-listed partial research hypotheses:

1. Within rural areas of Kutno Poviat, commute to work differs spatially depending on direction and distance.
2. As far as conditionings affecting commute to work are concerned, more important are these features which play the role of pull factors, whereas the significance of push factors is smaller.
3. The evaluation of commute to work by the commuting inhabitants of Kutno Poviat depends on the location of their domicile against a city.
Spatial scope of the study covers the area of Kutno Poviat within its administrative limits. As indicated in the title of the dissertation, the key area of the study are rural areas of Kutno Poviat. Because of the adopted definition of a commuter as well as in order to find regularities and conditionings, an adopted reference unit in which analyses were made was an area of a number of villages [sołectwo]. Research on commute to work can be performed using three different methods and approaches to the issue: from the point of view of workplaces, from the point of view of domicile and from the point of view of means of transport (Lijewski, 1961). The author decided that the criterion which shall determine commute to work shall be the domicile of the migrants.

The fundamental research problem in this dissertation is determination of conditionings of commute to work in rural areas as well as analysis of commute to work from the point of view of size, directions and distances. Such approach to the issue was a challenge due to difficulties connected with obtaining statistical materials. Taking into consideration the fact that there is no statistical data about commute to work, the first task was to collect data on commute to work in the area of Kutno Poviat. Apart from queries in different institutions, the author used questionnaires for field studies, which allowed her to determine the scale of the phenomenon of commute to work as well as the structure of the mobility. Extensive questionnaire research allowed to thoroughly analyze commute to work both quantitatively and structurally.

Currently, no statistical analyses are made in the area of commute to work, which was one of the reasons why the author decided to deal with this topic as an interesting research problem. Due to the specifics of the study (for example the choice of spatial units for analyses) as well as lack of available statistical materials referring to the problem in question, the basis for further analyses was the material gathered using the questionnaire. In areas of a number of villages in Kutno Poviat, the total number of 1300 inhabitants were interviewed about their commute to work. After verification, 1240 interviews were used for further research, which gave over 7800 individual items of information. Questionnaire surveys were conducted by the author of this dissertation herself.

The research shows that commute to work of inhabitants of Kutno Poviat is not large in scope. Most employee mobility is limited to the area of administrative limits of the poviat.

Major changes which occurred in the level of mobility in developed countries have had an impact on the improvement of infrastructure as well as on the development of private road transport. These changes have had an influence on expansion of job market for the inhabitants of rural areas and their choice of a means of transport. The prevailing means of transport used by the inhabitants of the poviat is their private car. Over 70% of inhabitants commute to work
by car. The analysis of means of transport used for commuting revealed a new phenomenon of car-pooling. It relies on arranging common transport and commuting to work in one car, which allows to reduce cost of commute.

Taking into consideration spatial diversity of commute to work features, we can distinguish three types of different behaviors and specificity connected with commute to work. We can distinguish suburban, transitory and peripheral area (delimitation of areas is connected with further distance from an urban center). Disproportions of perception of commute to work have been observed indicating differences between areas of a number of villages located between the town and peripheral areas. Generally speaking, all aspects of commute to work (distance, costs, safety, freedom of choice, inconvenience) are evaluated the more negatively, the further the distance from the town.

In the context of carried out research it was a very difficult task to determine one factor which would significantly affect diversity of distance and directions of commute to work in the area of Kutno Poviat. Commute to work of inhabitants of rural areas of Kutno Poviat is performed in the context of different spatial, demographic, agricultural, economic, cultural or psychological conditionings etc. It needs to be mentioned that particular conditionings do not affect commute to work separately, but they are interconnected. The impact of all factors in the area of communication, demographics, sociology, place of work environment and domicile environment as well as the conditions for agriculture development reflects the specificity of conditioning of commute to work.

In the rural areas of Kutno Poviat, the distances and directions of employees’ commute to work are more strongly influenced by the place of work factor. It is a typical phenomenon for rural areas and it seems understandable in the context of greater dispersal of places of domicile and larger concentration of places of work. A very important conditioning for the rural job market in the poviat is the monocentric, strongly centered distribution of places of work in the center located in the industrial district of Kutno.

The carried out research allows to state that the analyzed factors usually operate selectively within the spatial section of the poviat. The impact of certain factors is more visible in the peripheral zone, whereas other factors become more visible in the suburban area. An example might be differences in the spatial influence of the education structure, sex structure, population distribution, transportation conditions or distribution and section structure of economy. Typically, the differences became more visible in the peripheries.
As far as a group of conditions having influence on commute to work is concerned, functions which play the role of pull factors are of greater significance, for example availability of workplaces, whereas push factors were of lesser significance.

It results from the presented conclusions and analyses that the hypotheses presented in the opening of the dissertation have been positively verified. It has been shown that in the area of Kutno Poviat commute to work is subject to spatial diversification depending on direction and distance. Results of the analysis show that the specificity of commute to work is influenced both by housing conditions, workplace conditions, transportation conditions, social-demographic relations, agriculture level and structure, as well as transportation conditions. Although these conditionings operate selectively and complement one another making it impossible to distinguish one dominating element, certain regularity might be noticed. As far as a group of conditions having influence on commute to work is concerned, functions which play the role of pull factors are of greater significance, whereas push factors were of lesser significance. Within analyses of commute to work evaluation, as has been assumed, there is a visible difference in perceiving and evaluating commute to work, depending on the place of domicile of commuters against the town.

**Key words**: commute to work, conditioning of commute to work, rural areas, directions and distances of commute to work