

SPECIFICS, TRENDS MODELS AND EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM OF URBAN TRANSPORT IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE REGIMES OF „REAL SOCIALISM”

The article deals with analyzing the historical trends and political/socio-economic preconditions for the formation and reformation of urban transport and urban transportations in the Visegrad Group countries – Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic – firstly in the communist and post-communist periods and later after the European integration of the region. On this basis, the specifics, trends, models and effects of the development of urban transportations in the Visegrad Group countries for the entire period after the collapse of the regimes of “real socialism” have been clarified. It has demonstrated that currently urban transportations, in particular due to their incomplete reformation or involvement, are not at the appropriate level to overcome the existing modal split between road and rail transport in the Visegrad Group countries, even in spite of the fact that the countries of the region had tested different models of development and reformation of their urban transport.

Keywords: transport, infrastructure, urban transport, urban transportation, Visegrad Group countries.

SPECYFIKA, TRENDY, MODELE, EFEKTY ROZWOJU I REFORMY TRANSPORTU MIEJSKIEGO W KRAJACH GRUPY WYSZEHRADZKIEJ PO UPADKU REŻIMÓW „REALNEGO SOCJALIZMU”

W artykule przeanalizowano trendy historyczne oraz uwarunkowania polityczne i społeczno-gospodarcze kształtowania i reform komunikacji miejskiej w krajach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej: w Polsce, na Węgrzech, w Słowacji i w Czechach – najpierw w okresie komunistycznym i postkomunistycznym oraz później po integracji europejskiej. Na tej podstawie doprecyzowano specyfikę, trendy, modele i skutki rozwoju transportu miejskiego w krajach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej w całym okresie po upadku reżimów „realnego socjalizmu”. Ustalono, że obecnie transport miejski, w szczególności ze względu na jego niepełną reformę nie jest na odpowiednim poziomie, aby przewyżczyć istniejący podział modalny między transportem drogowym i kolejowym w krajach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej, mimo że kraje regionu testowały różne modele rozwoju i reformy transportu miejskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: transport, infrastruktura, transport miejski, kraje Grupy Wyszehradzkiej.

СПЕЦИФІКА, ТРЕНДИ, МОДЕЛІ Й ЕФЕКТИ РОЗВИТКУ ТА РЕФОРМУВАННЯ МІСЬКИХ ПЕРЕВЕЗЕНЬ У КРАЇНАХ ВИШЕГРАДСЬКОЇ ГРУПИ ПІСЛЯ КОЛАПСУ РЕЖИМІВ «РЕАЛЬНОГО СОЦІАЛІЗМУ»

У статті проаналізовано історичні тренди й політичні і соціально-економічні передумови становлення й реформування міського транспорту і міських перевезень в країнах Вишеградської групи – Польщі, Угорщині, Словаччині та Чехії – спочатку в комуністичний і посткомуністичний періоди, а згодом після європейської інтеграції країн регіону. На цій підставі загалом з'ясовано специфіку, тренди, моделі та ефекти розвитку міських перевезень у країнах Вишеградської групи за увесь період після колапсу режимів «реального соціалізму». Встановлено, що поточно міські перевезення, зокрема внаслідок своєї неповної реформованості або задіяності, не є на належному рівні, щоб подолати існуючий модальний розкол між автомобільним і залізничним транспортом у країнах Вишеградської групи, навіть попри те, що країни регіону апробували різні моделі розвитку та реформування свого міського транспорту.

Ключові слова: транспорт, інфраструктура, міський транспорт, міські перевезення, країни Вишеградської групи.

It is common knowledge that the current state of development of the transport system and infrastructure in the Visegrad countries - Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia previously depended and still depends on historical trends and political and socio-economic preconditions of their formation and reforming, first communist and later in post-communist periods. However, each country in the region, due to the specific time and circumstances of the epoch-making changes, has its own history of political, socio-economic and systemic transformations into a democratic and market society, which, nevertheless, in the framework of the transition from the regimes of “real socialism” to post-communism, and later the European integration of the Visegrad countries were summed up and imitated by a number of qualitative and quantitative changes of political-institutional and socio-economic nature. The latter finally determined the specific preconditions and features of the development, **transit** and modernization of the transport system and infrastructure in the region. The issue of specifics, trends and effects of development and reform of urban transport within the transport system in the Visegrad countries is no exception in this context, in particular during the period from the collapse of the regimes of “real socialism” to European integration and up to this day, which actually actualizes the presented scientific research.

The stated topic is not very developed in the social sciences, because the vast majority of research literature focuses on the parameters of the development of road and rail transport, as

well as passenger and freight traffic in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in general, and in particular the Visegrad Group countries after the collapse of the regimes of “real socialism”. However, some scientific and analytical developments in the stated direction still exist and they are represented by studies of such scientists as U. Altrock, S. Guntner, S. Hunmg and D. Peters¹, J. Campbell and O. Pedersen², P. Güller³, E. Judge⁴, T. Komornicki⁵, T. Lijewski⁶, J. Pucher and R. Buehler⁷, D. Stead, M. De Jong and I. Reinholde⁸, W. Suchorzewski⁹ and some others.

The appeal to the results of the listed scientists research gives grounds to assert that against the background of constant competition of railway and automobile, passenger and freight types of transport in the countries of the Visegrad group the outfit of so-called city transportations occupies a special place. This outfit is of considerable interest due to several factors, because: first, urban transport is a cluster of passenger transport, which has been very important in the Visegrad countries since the time of the “real socialist” regimes, and therefore operates today and intensifies the division of transport into rail and road ones; secondly, some (though few of them) types of urban transport are a cluster of transport of passengers, goods and cargo, which was not actually known during the period of “real socialism”, but it is increasingly being used today and often serves as a mechanism for bridging the gap between rail and road transport. Thus, the type of urban routing and transportation at first glance is separate from other modes of transportation, but significantly indicates the peculiarities of the development of the entire transport infrastructure and system in the Visegrad countries and therefore requires both separate consideration and comparison.

The phenomenon of urban transport and urban routing is certainly inherent in all countries of the Visegrad Group historically, but today attention is paid to it, because it is a kind of “mirror” of the transport infrastructure and system development in the region. This was especially true shortly before, but mainly after the accession of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic to the European Union, as the region began to operate pan-European norms and recommendations, including on the specified problems. In addition, this is obvious given the fact that urban routine: a) is characterized by the relative stability of routes, which allows you to record accurately the changes that occur in it; b) due to the large and traffic capacities, it is focused on the most important highways and directions, connecting the most important centers of formation of passenger flows and even freight

¹ Altrock U., Guntner S., Hunmg S., Peters D., *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, Wyd. Ashgate 2006.

² Campbell J., Pedersen O., *Legacies of Change: Transformations of Post-Communist European Economies*, Wyd. Aldine de Gruyter 1996.

³ Güller P., *Urban Travel in East and West: Key Problems and a Framework for Action*, [w:] *Sustainable Transport in Central and Eastern European Cities*, Wyd. ECMT 1996, s. 16-43.

⁴ Judge E., *The Development of Sustainable Transport Policies in Warsaw: 1990-2000*, [w:] Rydin Y., Thornley A. (eds.), *Planning in a Globalised Era*, Wyd. Ashgate 2002, s. 359-386.

⁵ Komornicki T., *Factors of development of car ownership in Poland*, „Transport Reviews” 2003, vol 23, nr. 4, s. 413-431.

⁶ Lijewski T., *The impact of political changes on transport in Central and Eastern Europe*, „Transport Reviews” 1996, vol 16, nr. 1, s. 37-53.

⁷ Pucher J., Buehler R., *Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe*, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), *Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions*, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.

⁸ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., *Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe*, „disP - The Planning Review” 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

⁹ Suchorzewski W., *Transport Policy Forum. Transport*

flows; c) due to changes in its geometry reflects changes in urban spaces; d) it is municipalized, and therefore its condition reflects changes in the level of organization of the entire passenger transport system; e) operates in most or even all major cities in the region, which allows you to compare the situation both between cities and in general between countries¹⁰.

At the same time, in a certain period of time after the collapse of “real socialism” regimes, the development of urban transport in the Visegrad Group countries found itself in a situation where it needed to be updated and modernized, but certainly taking into account the peculiarities of the region. That is why the current state of the urban transport and urban routing development in the analyzed region is not a simple copy of its homologue state in Western Europe countries. As a result, the conclusion is that large-scale institutional transformations are often neither appropriate nor desirable for results that benefit the cities of the Visegrad Group. On the other hand, it is small initiatives that have direct and short-term results and a relatively small budget that often work better and more progressively in constructing more stable urban transport policies and programs in the region. Even though in recent decades, especially after the European integration of the region, there has been a marked increase in the desire to transfer models, concepts, ideas, goals and tools of urban transport policy from one European city to another¹¹. And despite the fact that the transplantation of experience can take place in very different ways, in particular in the form of copying policy and legislation, synthesis and hybridization, inspiration and ideas, voluntarily or forcibly¹², etc.

However, the transplant policy of the Western experience does not always work effectively when the technological, economic, political and / or social positions that cities have achieved over the last decades of their development are very different¹³. In this context, the situation in the Visegrad Group countries is quite specific, as they largely adopt the so-called “donor” practice of Western Europe¹⁴; however, they still remain “natives” of the Warsaw Pact system, in which a completely different logic and construction of urban transport operated.

¹⁰ Zyuzin P., *Transformaciya setej gorodskogo passazhirskogo transporta Centralno-Vostochnoj Evropy (1990-2010 gg.)*: Avtoreferat dissertacii na soiskanie uchyonoj stepeni kandidata geograficheskikh nauk, Wyd. Moskovskij gosudarstvennyj universitet imeni M. Lomonosova 2012.

¹¹ Bueren E., Bougrain F., Knorr-Siedow T., *Sustainable Neighbourhood Rehabilitation in Europe: From simple toolbox to multilateral learning*, [w:] de Jong W., Lalenis K., Mamadouh V. (eds.), *The Theory and Practice of Institutional Trans-plantation. Experiences with the Transfer of Policy Institutions*, Wyd. Kluwer, 2002, s. 263-279; De Jong M., Edelenbos J., *An Insider's Look into Policy Transfer in Transnational Expert Networks*, „European Planning Studies“ 2007, vol 15, nr. 5, s. 687-706.; Héritier A., Kerwer D., Knill C., Lehmkuhl D., *Differential Europe: The European Union Impact on National Policy-Making*, Wyd. Rowman Littlefield 2001.; Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., *Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe*, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.; Stone D., *Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the „Transnationalization“ of Policy*, „Journal of European Public Policy“ 2004, vol 11, nr. 3, s. 545-566.

¹² Dolowitz D., Marsh D., *Learning from abroad: the role of policy transfer in contemporary policy making*, „Governance“ 2000, vol 13, nr. 1, s. 5-24.; Dolowitz D., Marsh D., *Who learns from whom: A review of the policy transfer literature*, „Political Studies“ 1996, vol 44, nr. 2, s. 343-357.

¹³ Campbell J., Pedersen O., *Legacies of Change: Transformations of Post-Communist European Economies*, Wyd. Aldine de Gruyter 1996.; Elster J., Offe C., Preuss U., *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1998.; Offe C., *Designing Institutions in East European Transitions*, [w:] Goodin R. (ed.), *The Theory of Institutional Design*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1998.

¹⁴ Randma-Liiv T., *Demand- and Supply-based Policy Transfer in Estonian Public Administration*, „Journal of Baltic Studies“ 2005, vol 36, nr. 4, s. 467-487.

This means that the technological, economic, political, institutional and social situation in the creditor countries (in Western Europe and in the EU in general) and in the borrowing countries (in this case, in the Visegrad Group countries) is very different¹⁵. A clear reflection of this is the facts that since most countries in the analyzed region have many years of experience with widespread, but low and medium quality public and urban transport, the level and quality of its modernization are unsuccessful or at least not always successful. Accordingly, in such conditions, the process of transfer and involvement of lessons of urban transport development in the EU for the Visegrad countries can have different forms and consequences.

It is important to note that from the late 80's - early 90's of the 20th century, the countries of the Visegrad Group moved or gradually began to move from centralization to decentralization of power and decision-making processes, , albeit with too large deviations in the scale and depth of the transfer of power and resources from the state to the regional and local levels¹⁶. Moreover, in the countries of rapid reform (primarily in Poland and the Czech Republic, to a lesser extent in Slovakia and Hungary), local or subnational administrations have gained jurisdiction to provide most processes and services in local infrastructure, ownership of utilities and housing, as well as partly in streamlining the transport system and infrastructure¹⁷. In turn, in terms of municipal financing, taxes on the turnover of local enterprises were replaced by combined and block subsidies from the state and revenues from local taxes and fees, but with a gradual transition from the first to the second. Therefore, regional or local issues were delivered to local leaders and structures, a significant drawback of which was the mismatch between the new responsibilities of local governments and the funds and resources available to them. In practice, all of this looked like the city had the impossible task of increasing previously very low utility and infrastructure fees (when real incomes fell sharply) and / or increasing local taxation within the framework of extremely weak (at that time) local economy. Instead, the alternative was to reduce services, which did not quite fit into the structure of the declared electoral democracy, which made even local politicians dependent on the satisfaction and sympathy of the electorate.

Accordingly, most cities in the Visegrad Group countries could not resolve this dilemma, which led to a gap between the costs and revenues of companies that provided or provide various utilities and infrastructure, including transportation services. Over time, this underestimation of the situation has also led to deterioration in services, reduction of production efficiency and volume of equipment and infrastructure. After all, the sudden (after the collapse of the regimes of "real socialism") gap between income and expenditure on the ground it was difficult to fill even in the richest cities in the region, including Bratislava, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw, which significantly deteriorated the quality of transport services on the ground. This was complemented by the fact

¹⁵ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

¹⁶ Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.

¹⁷ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

that by the end of the 1980s, public transport in the countries of the current “Visegrad Four” was generally quite large, but cheap¹⁸. Along with low incomes, this meant a high level of the public transport use and a low level of car ownership¹⁹. Moreover, regulated prices and supply of cars and fuel in most countries in the region ensured that owning and using private transport was extremely expensive and complicated. As a result, most people at the time simply could not afford cars and, of course, could not use them on a regular basis. Even if the number of cars increased during the 1970s and 1980s, most of them were used only on weekends and holidays, but not for daily travel. Another feature was that the providers of public transport services until the late 80’s of the 20th century were mostly state or municipal enterprises organized by type of transport (buses, trams, trolleybuses) or combined into a single company with a monopoly on traffic in cities. As a result, the region’s population suffered from a number of structural problems – cumbersome management and organizational structures, overstaffing (in administrative departments), incompetence, lack of a motivated workforce, excessive bureaucracy, and extreme inefficiency²⁰.

The result was that in the early 1990s, the public and urban transport systems found themselves in a state of deep decline, in part due to a wave of macroeconomic reforms and economic downturns. In particular, a significant part of urban transport rolling stock was worn out and obsolete, and the level of fuel consumption and emissions of most vehicles was very high²¹.

In addition, the revenue base of public transport enterprises declined due to inadequate local government budgets and falling incomes, what affected plans to expand and replace transport companies. Maintenance and repairs at this level also declined significantly, causing obsolete infrastructure and rolling stock to begin to crumble²². The answer was that with the reduction of subsidies, the public transport system in the region was forced to increase tariffs sharply – both in absolute terms and in terms of inflation, wages and the cost of owning and using the cars²³.

In addition, not only the cost of public transport has increased, but services have also been significantly reduced, especially in small towns. The fact is that urban transport services became

¹⁸ Pucher J., Buehler R., *Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe*, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), *Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions*, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.

¹⁹ *Panorama of Transport 1990-2006: sixth edition*, Wyd. Eurostat Statistical books 2009.

²⁰ Pucher J., Buehler R., *Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe*, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), *Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions*, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743; Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.

²¹ Güller P., *Urban Travel in East and West: Key Problems and a Framework for Action*, [w:] *Sustainable Transport in Central and Eastern European Cities*, Wyd. ECMT 1996, s. 16-43.; Judge E., *The Development of Sustainable Transport Policies in Warsaw: 1990-2000*, [w:] Rydin Y., Thornley A. (eds.), *Planning in a Globalised Era*, Wyd. Ashgate 2002, s. 359-386.; Suchorzewski W., *Transport Policy Forum. Transport Policies in The Countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A Decade of Integration: Results and new Challenges*, ECMT 2001.; Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.; Zachariadis T., Kouvaritakis N., *Long-Term Outlook of Energy Use and CO2 Emissions from Transport in Central and Eastern Europe*, „Energy Policy“ 2003, vol 31, nr. 8, s. 759-773.

²² Suchorzewski W., *Transport Policy Forum. Transport Policies in The Countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A Decade of Integration: Results and new Challenges*, ECMT 2001.; Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.

²³ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., *Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe*, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.; Pucher J., Buehler R., *Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe*, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), *Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions*, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.

less frequent, less comfortable and less reliable since not enough funds were available to upgrade and even maintain existing infrastructure and vehicles. Therefore, in the Visegrad countries, both the quality and quantity of public or urban transport services have decreased. However, many central and local governments have still spent heavily on improving and expanding road networks, focusing on high-speed ring roads around cities, bottlenecks in connecting roads, etc. As a result, the supply of road infrastructure has increased, although much slower than the faster growth of the private cars use. This was particularly noticeable given that it was in the early 1990s that almost all restrictions on car ownership were removed, in particular due to the opening of a free market to foreign car manufacturers, what increased the quantity and quality of transport, which could now be purchased by the residents of former socialist countries²⁴. In addition, as a strategy of economic development, some central governments of the Visegrad Group countries (but especially Poland and the Czech Republic) began to promote their own automotive industry²⁵.

In terms of urban transport, this was reflected in the fact that the increase in motorization and private transport occurred mostly in places of decline of public transport, ie in small towns and rural areas²⁶.

This was complemented by the fact that many people bought cars not only because they were more affordable, but also as a symbol of success and independence. That is why people often went beyond their socio-economic means of capabilities and real transport needs²⁷. As a result, in the early 1990s, the Visegrad Group's government policies became less favorable to public transport and more adapted to owning and using private cars, leading to a "vicious cycle" of future urban transport reductions²⁸. This was reflected in the fact that public transport services, which included most bus and trolleybus lines, suffered foremost from congestion caused by the rapid increase in car ownership and use. This further reduced the attractiveness of public transport services, increased its operating costs and gave additional demand for private transport²⁹.

In addition, as a result, by the end of the 1990s, the economic, social and environmental problems associated with the growth of private transport and the equally sharp decline in the use of public transport began to be more widely recognized³⁰.

²⁴ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

²⁵ Pucher J., Buehler R., Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.; Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.

²⁶ Lijewski T., The impact of political changes on transport in Central and Eastern Europe, „Transport Reviews“ 1996, vol 16, nr. 1, s. 37-53.

²⁷ Komornicki T., Factors of development of car ownership in Poland, „Transport Reviews“ 2003, vol 23, nr. 4, s. 413-431.; Lijewski T., The impact of political changes on transport in Central and Eastern Europe, „Transport Reviews“ 1996, vol 16, nr. 1, s. 37-53.; Pucher J., Buehler R., Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.

²⁸ Judge E., The Development of Sustainable Transport Policies in Warsaw: 1990-2000, [w:] Rydin Y., Thornley A. (eds.), Planning in a Globalised Era, Wyd. Ashgate 2002, s. 359-386.; Pucher J., Buehler R., Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.

²⁹ Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.

³⁰ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

Local authorities in the Visegrad Group countries have begun to realize that their local transport policies need to be adjusted. The partial solution was made by overcoming the “parking chaos” and creating zonal parking systems, as well as the introduction of new environmental standards. However, in the long run, national policy has continued to be focused on the wider ownership and use of private cars. Therefore, the problem at that time was that buses, trolleybuses and trams often did not have priority on the congested city streets. Although, local authorities have begun at least pay more attention to public transport as an important part of the urban transport system. Over time, this is inherited from the fact that after the initial “shock” from the sudden transition to capitalism in the late 1980s, urban transport systems in the Visegrad Group countries gradually began to recover in the late 1990s. In particular, in partnership with Western European experts, many urban public transport systems in the region have sought to improve the quality of their services, modernize their vehicles and infrastructure, and increase their efficiency, albeit primarily in large cities.

However, despite the fact that many municipalities have taken active steps to improve public transport, their efforts have been largely limited by central governments, which have provided very little funding, technical support, coordination and planning in the urban transport sector. Perhaps the most difficult thing against the background of automotive motorization was to restore a reliable and stable customer base of public transport³¹. Although changes have been made, many cities have turned their systems into public corporations with considerable managerial independence. Thus, even though local government still own public transport systems and set travel and service policies on the ground, corporate governance teams have been given many opportunities to increase efficiency in the sector. This increased customer orientation and led to an increase in attention to the quality of service. This was compounded by the fact that some cities selectively privatized some of their public transport operations. As a result, some of them have constructed new light railways (high-speed trams) or expanded subway systems. Many cities have reconstructed tram tracks, modernized metro stations, and gradually replaced aging buses, trams, trolleybuses, and subway parks with more modern ones. Most cities have also streamlined fares, improved fares and started providing real-time information to passengers at stops. Although the lag behind private road transport on the ground is still quite critical³².

In general, it has been demonstrated that the development and reform of urban and public transport in the Visegrad countries took place in constant changes in the functional and morphological structure and transformation of various urban subsystems. It is the transport infrastructure, being one of these subsystems and a link between the territorial and functional

³¹ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, „disP - The Planning Review“ 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

³² Altrock U., Guntner S., Hunmg S., Peters D., Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention, Wyd. Ashgate 2006.; Pucher J., Buehler R., Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe, [w:] Button K., Hensher D. (eds.), Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions, Wyd. Elsevier 2005, s. 725-743.; Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy, „World Bank Report“ 2002, nr. 25188.

zones of cities, reflected and reflects the content and spatial forms of these processes³³. Accordingly, the nature of the urban transport systems transformation in the Visegrad Group countries has been and remains an indicator of socio-economic and territorial processes that have taken place and are taking place in the region³⁴.

This was especially evident at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, when the transition to a market economy led to a large-scale transformation of urban transport networks both in the process of its development and complexity, and as a result of its limitations. For example, the transport schemes, directions and volumes of passenger flows, which were designed decades before, have drastically changed. As a result of the reorientation of large passenger flows to new “centers of gravity”, in some cases the existing lines of passenger urban transport, which were equipped with relatively expensive (due to the number) infrastructure, were unclaimed. These processes had the most significant impact on land electric transport networks (trams and trolleybuses) and the metro, as the dynamics deteriorated in Poland, improved in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and remained relatively stable in Hungary³⁵.

At the same time, it was comparatively found that the Visegrad Group countries tested two different models of development and reform of their urban and public transport. The first model, in the form of “network volume growth”, has been and is characterized by the spatial development of transport networks (even with a decrease in the number of networks themselves), including increasing their length, complicating their topology, connecting autonomous parts into a single network, emerging new autonomous areas³⁶. It is recorded in most capitals of the Visegrad countries. For example, in Warsaw, the general geometry of the integrated urban electric transport network has become more complicated due to the commissioning of a completely new type of transport – the metro. As a result, the main load on the transportation of passengers from north to south fell on the subway, while the right bank of the city continued to be served by tram transport. In turn, in Prague, the integrated type of the urban transport network transformation has developed significantly, although the development is mainly due to the subway and to a lesser extent tram transport, but this does not affect the current state of development of trolleybus transport. To a lesser extent, similar processes have taken place and are taking place in Bratislava, where new tram and trolleybus lines are also being constructed. Instead, the second model of development, in the form of “network stagnation”, has been characterized and is characterized either by a weak spatial transformation of urban transport networks, or by the lack of transformation of its integrated network. At the same time, the length

³³ Vaksman S., *Socialno-ekonomicheskie problemy prognozirovaniya razvitiya sistem massovogo passazhirskogo transporta v gorodah*, Ekaterinburg 1996.

³⁴ Zyuzin P., *Transformaciya setej gorodskogo passazhirskogo transporta Centralno-Vostochnoj Evropy (1990-2010 gg.)*: Avtoreferat dissertacii na soiskanie uchyonoj stepeni kandidata geograficheskikh nauk, Wyd. Moskovskij gosudarstvennyj universitet imeni M. Lomonosova 2012.

³⁵ Zyuzin P., *Transformaciya setej gorodskogo passazhirskogo transporta Centralno-Vostochnoj Evropy (1990-2010 gg.)*: Avtoreferat dissertacii na soiskanie uchyonoj stepeni kandidata geograficheskikh nauk, Wyd. Moskovskij gosudarstvennyj universitet imeni M. Lomonosova 2012.

³⁶ Tarhov S., *Evoljucionnaya morfologiya transportnyh setej*, Wyd. Universum 2005.

of lines of different types of urban transport may change slightly in one direction or another or may remain stable, as in Hungary. For example, the peculiarity of Budapest is that it has an integrated and wide network of public transport (but especially the subway) has a high level of complexity, but extremely “sluggish” dynamics of its development.

As a result, during the reforms of urban transport, the modernization model of its development has been and remains typical for Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and the stagnation or stabilization ones – for Hungary. In the first case, modernization and progress are the result of the growth and complexity of transport networks, the development of transport strategies, sufficient funding for the industry and sound management, improving the quality of transport networks, modernization of rolling stock, etc. As a result, modern standards of traffic organization and passenger service were introduced; introduced tariff zones, night routes and electronic fare payment system, etc.; transport was adapted to serve people with disabilities; tourist-oriented information services has been significantly improved. In the second case, on the other hand, stagnation or stagnancy was due only to the partialness of the measures taken in the first group of countries. Therefore, the situation in this group of countries was characterized and still makes it a relative network, technological and socio-economic backwardness, lack of funds to support fixed assets and network development.

That is why, in light of the dramatic and rapid economic, social and political changes in the Visegrad countries, which were largely inspired by Western Europe, it was logical to assume that the countries of the region should seek lessons (both good and bad) from the European Union, because it could help decision makers to prevent problems before they arise. However, it is clear that the situation has been more complex, in particular in the financial context and in the context of the reform objectives, including urban transport (and transport in general). Therefore, in the Visegrad countries, the simple transfer of the experience of Western European countries did not work, but instead the situation depended and depends on the context (combination of individual actors, ideas, incentives, interests and time)³⁷. In addition, the situation in the countries of the region had a psychological dimension, because, on the one hand, most local and national administrations had to experience the problems first hand and bring them to a critical-negative level before taking appropriate measures. On the other hand, road transport and “car” in the Visegrad countries were immediately perceived as a symbol of status, wealth and self-confidence, and not just as a vehicle. Thus, the policies and actions that have influenced and continue to influence the ownership and use of cars are perhaps more unpopular in the countries of the region than in Western Europe, which has modified and is modifying the technique of transplanting the latter’s experience.

This means that large-scale institutional reform and the policy of borrowing from the experience of Western countries is not always a promising way to improve the efficiency of the

³⁷ Stead D., De Jong M., Reinholde I., Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, „*disP - The Planning Review*” 2008, vol 44, nr. 172, s. 62-73.

system of reform and development of transport, especially when the subjects of such reform and policy have extremely limited resources. Instead, it is sometimes appropriate to be focused on achieving practical goals and visible accomplishments that can stimulate enthusiasm among stakeholders and the general public, and so to be focused on the diversity of actors in the process and the options for the professional, institutional and cultural environment, etc.

Nevertheless, in general, it can be stated that currently urban transport, in particular due to its incomplete reform or involvement, is not at the appropriate level to overcome the existing modal gap between road and rail transport in the Visegrad Group. Even though the countries of the region have operationalized at least two models of development and reform of their urban transport – in the format of “network growth” (the so-called “modernization” model – Poland, Slovakia and “stabilization” model - Hungary). Accordingly, it is generally proven that the Visegrad Group, as an intergovernmental association of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, on the one hand, corresponds to European trends and processes in the urban transport sector, but on the other hand often positions itself quite separately in particular due to the variability of involvement in modern urban / public infrastructure complexes. And this is actually the dependence of the Visegrad countries on the historical heritage of the so-called regimes of “real socialism”. Therefore, the countries of the Visegrad Group in this context cannot be interpreted as a single and unified whole, as they differ significantly in the specifics of the current state and development and in the regulation of infrastructure in the transport system on the ground.

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