

# Exploring transport inequalities in Palermo and Naples: the role of spatial accessibility to the rail system

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## Extended abstract

Inequalities are widening across the world and recent studies indicate that there is a clear relationship between urban growth and spatial inequalities. The shape of urban inequalities is influenced by the interplay of factors that range from socio-economic, land-use, environment and housing to transport and mobility aspects. Notwithstanding the relevance of the challenges relating to the field of transport inequalities for both academics and (on few occasions) political bodies, in many cities from Southern Europe, there are still pressing levels of deprivation and marginality that are aggravated by the lack of appropriate knowledge and instruments to identify and tackle such unbalances. Simultaneously, in the last three decades different urban planning paradigms studies and approaches (like the Transit Oriented Development or 15 Minute-city concepts) have emerged and stressed the role of spatial accessibility as a relevant condition for reducing urban inequalities. On such a basis, the convergence between city and transport appears as a significant strand of urban planning studies that can support policy makers to address the urban development of cities that witness an unequal access to the transit networks.

Against this backdrop, the paper presents a comparative analysis of Palermo and Naples, two of the largest urban conurbations in Southern Italy, that are also places of widespread territorial challenges translated into spatial inequalities and complex mobility and transport settings. The work is part of an ongoing study that seeks to promote a better understanding of the accessibility to urban mobility nodes as a key aspect to support design strategies that answer spatial inequalities by integrating land-use and transport.

After setting the theoretical framework, with the initial goal of illustrating the patterns of transport inequalities within each city, the study delves into a socio-economic, functional, and spatial contextualization of the two cities. On such basis, we proceed to illustrate the particularities of the cities' transportation system, followed by a more detailed qualitative and quantitative analyses that focuses on highlighting the potentialities and/or needs of specific transit node areas. In its concluding part, the paper offers a preliminary discussion on the observations and potential of this type of analyses, followed by the limitations of the study and the following steps of the research.

As part of a multidisciplinary research project, the outcomes of this study will be hopefully integrated to support decision makers and technicians with advanced planning tools and effective land-use guidelines to achieve a more sustainable and inclusive transportation system and consequently to reduced spatial inequalities.

**Keywords:** *accessibility; transportation; inequalities; Palermo; Naples*