

ROADS TO EQUAL ACCESS: THE ROLE OF TRANSPORT IN TRANSFORMING MOBILITY

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ABSTRACT

The article presents SDG's associated with access im/mobility in marginalized areas in the most populous and fastest developing world region, namely, Asia. The role of transport in national development is to provide access for all.

Currently, two-thirds of the Asians live in rural areas, and the majority in marginalized villages. Poverty and immobility are correlated, and for instance women constitute half the world's working population but generate only 37% of GDP. Hence accessibility of rural and marginalized communities becomes a strategic issue. Despite important poverty reductions in Asia, inequalities between urban and rural areas and between women and men are rising.

In adopting the SDGs, Asian states have reinforced the role of sustainable transport policies in national development. The article stresses the role of transportation in achieving the SDG's by 2030, and introduces the 'local mobility turn' to strengthen integration and social mobility. Further, a cost-effective Indian transport-program that increased girl's school enrollment is presented. Finally, the potential of technical and material aspects of transportation in transforming the upward social mobility by means of achieving the SDG's is also introduced.

Keywords: SDG's, 'Local mobility turn', Inequalities, Im/mobility, Rural, Development Research, Connectivity, Bihar, Solo, Education, Gender

INTRODUCTION

"Investment in girls' education may be the highest-return investment available in the developing world"

Lawrence H. Summers (while Chief Economist of the World Bank)

Asia is on the move. Its cities and villages are modernizing and globalizing hand in hand with economic and demographic growth. Asia is the continent with the biggest population and it is currently undergoing massive transformations in terms of connectivity and mobility. The role of transport in providing connectivity and hence also access to opportunities is vital in modern societies. In the rapidly growing middle class, motorized mobility is a prerequisite for the affluent lifestyle aspired to. The possibility to travel is becoming a determinant of opportunities and mobility is also related to wellbeing and satisfaction in life (Ureta, 2008).

However, development progress and motorized mobility is unevenly distributed and for instance urban informal settlements, peri-urban and rural locations lag behind in terms of connectivity, mobility and opportunities. Hence, vulnerable social groups living in isolated or informal villages are further exposed to precarious conditions and uncertainties due to lack of connectivity and modern infrastructure. Transport services are essential for providing access to markets, work, education, services and ultimately, for

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enhancing life quality. Access to a wider transportation network has been recognized as a major enabler of economic and social development (Starkey & Hine, 2014) but 700 million people in Asia are negatively impacted by socio-spatial isolation (United Nations ESCAP, 2015) at a cost of 4-5 percent of the GDP.

Location is found to be the most important explanation for expenditure per capita, followed by household composition and education (Anderson & Pomfret, 2004). In neglected areas, access to schools or hospitals are limited and staff is often unwilling to work in remote areas. Although progress has been made towards increasing access to education worldwide, 57 million children remain out of school and according to the UN; most of them are girls from Asian developing countries (UNCRD, 2017a, p.1).

However, since traffic and transport are highly gendered topics, planners and policy makers require knowledge about 'gender-specific travel behaviour and the local character of barriers to transport accessibility, including women's limited budgets, their preference for safe and uncrowded vehicles' (Starkey, 2016). There are huge and persistent gender inequalities across most of the indicators of individual transport behaviour (frequency, length, mode and cost of journeys). Transport remains a highly gendered sector in modern societies (Thynell, 2016, p.3). 'Inequality and transportation are classic concerns in transportation geography and research and equally prominent in the mobilities literature' (Kwan & Schwanen, 2016, p.248). Hence, planners and decision makers need to understand more about the multiple social obligations that women manage.

Because road construction in remote areas is costly and the number of beneficiaries per kilometer of road is relatively low, governments are usually reluctant to invest in rural roads. Therefore the potential for economic empowerment remains low in rural (Bird et al., 2010) areas due to lack integrated road network. Such communities also lack agency or voice and are located far from economic and political centres (Engel, O'Neill & Regmi, 2017, p.4). It has also been documented that poorer residential areas in today's megacities often lack access to road infrastructure, modern infrastructure and connectivity with the rest of the city (Hellman, Thynell & van Voorst, 2018). According to the UN some 828 million people live in informal settlements lacking modern infrastructure and hence, they are by and large, without equal possibilities to improve their conditions. This information puts the finger on access to resources as a genuinely complex issue, intertwined with the ability for families to become part of the dynamic processes of development. The complexity consists of manifold parts such as spatial exclusion and the constitution of poverty and inequalities in marginalized spaces. In other words, geographical mobility plays forms the basis for upward social mobility.

The article draws attention to shortage of transport, connectivity and the linkages to equality having an impact on community development. In developing Asian regions, the possibilities for integration and development are associated with physical and spatial aspects of transport and the less visible social aspects such as equality and gender in low-income areas such as rural and informal settlements in emerging markets. The notion of 'the local mobility turn' is introduced below to disentangle the complexity of modern mobility and to amalgamate international, local, technical, spatial and social aspects in line with the SDG's.

The purpose is to: 1) Highlight income and gender disparities in relation to im/mobility in marginalized areas in the most populated and rapidly developing world region, namely, Asia, 2) Present cost-effective transport initiatives that successfully increased school enrolment of girls, and finally, 3) Introduce the SDG's and conceptualize 'the local mobility turn' to overcome current shortcomings in providing informed decisions in policy and planning to spur sustainable development progress in marginalized areas.

METHODS: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Outline

Section 2, presents some barriers impeding of access and mobility. In section 3. SDG's and agendas responding to development need in fragile communities are introduced together with an initiative to overcome the difficulties associated with isolation, deprivation and connectivity.

SOME BARRIERS TO MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

Barriers are often described in terms of long distances; forests; rivers; rocks, or lack of roads; tunnels or bridges separating travelers from reaching their destinations. In addition to spatial and/or physical constraints are the less visible barriers: social aspects, policies or models for planning, as observed by geographers and social scientists. Among other processes of development, modern forms of mobility's have produced new 'geographies of exclusion, disconnectivity, inequality, and immobility' (Merriman 2009, p.135). According to Lucas, transport poverty or lack of connectivity was never 'properly defined and communicated to the transport sector yet it is a problem that adversely affects the daily lives of millions of people across the globe' (Lucas, Mattioli, Verlinghieri & Guzman, 2016, p.353). Perhaps most surprising is the fact that despite decades of studies and projects carried out by development banks and academic research, the side-effects of immobility have not been properly understood and communicated (see Thynell 2016). The shortage of proper analysis of immobility has important consequences for national development and Lucas continues 'it is a far greater problem than the transport profession has previously been prepared to recognize' (ibid.). In other words, the analyses of technical, environmental, spatial or social aspects of systems of transport have not been taken into account properly in the design of transport systems.

Twenty years ago women's contribution to national development was formally recognized as a global goal (Beijing+20, 2017). But so far, poverty reduction programmes have largely failed to reduce inequality within countries and cities as well as between men and women. Inequality is associated with poor integration into society and it is reflected in the way people move and in the meanings they attach to mobility. While globalization and modernization bring opportunities and autonomy to some women, others are finding themselves increasingly marginalized and immobile. Hence, gender inequality is linked to uneven progress of development, reflected in the prevailing strategy of national development and its adherent transport policies. The outcome of the Western rationality and its focus on universality and modernization in the Global South was/is less successful then in the industrialized Global North with different patterns of mobility. Due to local traditions, time and economic restraint in transport' one size does not fit all'. To be successful transport policies and development models will have to emanate from the recognition of environmental, social and economic conditions to achieve sustainable solutions, leaving no behind.

A study of informal neighbourhoods, the kampongs of Jakarta, finds that village's integration into formal planning is crucial to achieve community development and social mobility. As most agricultural production takes place away from villages and cities, improved access to markets will greatly help improve sales having a bearing on education and wellbeing in villages. Increasing connectivity between rural and urban areas (by means of road, rail, and/or inland waterway transport) reduces the adversaries of isolation/immobility and facilitates integration and development. However, geographical proximity does not necessarily translate into connectivity as experienced in cities. For instance, informal settlements or per-urban locations may be located close to markets, but without passable tracks or bridges, people cannot reach sales opportunities.

Kampongs, are often located in the centre but inhabitants are continuously marginalized and without access, despite living next to highly developed and modern global hot spots hosting abundant resources (Hellman, Thynell & Voorst, 2018). Further, families are often stigmatized as squatters,

although they have lived in the same house for several generations and prevailing power relations (Ibid) and traditional social practices may constitute invisible barriers, impeding on access for low-income citizens to opportunities in the surrounding society.

Thus the questions about how institutions will establish socially inclusive mobility opportunities for poor groups, girls and women in rural and informal settlements remains to be developed. An Asian intergovernmental meeting noted that 'Due to inadequate basic rural transport infrastructure and services, many developing countries of Asia confront a number of socio-economic challenges. Poverty, mal-nutrition, shortage of markets; basic utilities and public services (e.g. drinking water, energy, education and employment opportunities, health care and recreation sites) remain formidable challenges in the development of most of the rural areas in Asia.

'Additionally, environmental problems arising from vehicular emissions, lack of proper vehicle inspection, maintenance and fuel adulteration significantly affect rural inhabitants and ecosystems' (Vientiane Declaration 2017:1). It also means that travelers may not access enlightened roads, motorized transport or public transport. Besides, fares might be too expensive and travelling is often dangerous and uncomfortable (Starkey & Hine, 2014). Globally about 50% of all crash victims are pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. But in many developing countries this percentage is much higher and even more than 80% like in Thailand (83%) and Cambodia even 86% (Wismans, et al 201X:x). Problems are thus compounded as inequalities, and poverty is exacerbated by the disproportionately negative ways in which the poor are exposed to the transport system itself (Ibid; Barter, 1999; Booth et al., 2000).

Diverse local practices and difficulties experienced in rural or informal settlements need to be properly analysed if transport developments are to support them. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and one-dimensional attempts to solve it are unlikely to succeed, although transport policies have the potential to alleviate poverty when designed in collaboration with other aspects of society as indicated in SDG17. Regarding gender inequalities they often take the form of women's wellbeing being given a secondary place to that of men. The combination of gender discrimination and the fact that women tend to work in low-paid sectors mean that women's wages across Asia are between 70 and 90 percent of men's. Research has it that in a 'full-potential scenario in which women play an identical role in labor markets to men's, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to global annual GDP in 2025' (ADB). However, in real life women bear far heavier workloads but males dominate in the communities (Sevefjord & Olsson, 2002:11). Even in children's nutrition, education, wellbeing and life expectancy there are gender differences and some '103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60% of them are women in Asia. Despite global advances in providing access to health services, only half of the women in developing Asia receive the recommended amount of healthcare and some 350,000 women die annually from complications relating to pregnancy or childbirth' (UNCRD, 2017a). This means that women's lives may be directly at risk and that prevailing inequalities also impact education, income, health and life expectancy, targeted in the SDG's.

Further, some 'knock-on effects' have been recorded in Britain, such as a 'Lack of mobility and low travel horizons can be associated with reduced social learning in early years and social isolation in later life, and people are less likely to seek medical attention if they live in areas of poor transport and low accessibility' (Lucas, Grosvenor & Simpson, 2013, p.39).

In Asia, the UNCRD finds that 'It is well known fact that the vast majority of developing countries, women and children are amongst the most affected by the lack of access to resources and "essentials of life" such as energy, shelter, water and sanitation, food, health and mobility (2017b, p.32). Almost all of these occur in developing countries and it was noted that women and girls often fare worse than men and boys in marginalized social groups (Melamed & Saman, 2013:16). Further, it is known that the poorest families spend more of their time and income on journeys than wealthy ones (Starkey & Hine, 2014, p. 8). Besides, over the last two decades, the richest 10 percent of the population in China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have seen their incomes increase by more than 15 percent while the poorest 10 percent have seen theirs fall by more than 15 percent (ADB) influencing mobility levels.

THE IMMOBILITY TRAP

Modern societies are increasingly based upon the rapid movement of people, goods and money, through spatial movements or by means of ITS. Perceptions, attitudes and understandings of mobility vary considerable between cultures, religions and geographical locations and there is no such predefined or universal model to rely on that enables modern development for all, or that works in diverse conditions. Genuine development is never linear and it turns out that immobility in rural or informal areas is more frequent than anticipated. Further, immobility has become 'proscribed as a counterproductive behaviour in a mobile context' (Mincke, 2016, p.12). Similarly, Adey notes, 'in a sense, fluidity and mobility were everything fixity and immobility were not', and they are romanticized as 'Acts of freedom and democratic choice, whereas fixity and immobility are seen as the product of domination and subjugation' (2009, p.194). The cost of immobility has been mapped out in some European areas and it was found too costly to be ignored by governments.

Mobility enhances opportunities for social mobility and wealth generation, whereas immobility is a driver of exclusion for low-income families, women and girls. It is therefore valuable to explore travel experiences (since meaning, movement and practice are interrelated) as well as power relations in the search for knowledge about how to reduce poverty and inequality. In the Western or modern regions, being immobile today means being an outsider who is excluded from 'normal' activities. Immobility is associated with marginalization, disempowerment and a poor capacity to generate income. The 'question of social exclusion and integration revolves around access' (Mandanipour, 2003, p.185; Thynell, 2009). It has also been shown that spatial exclusion and lack of mobility translate into poverty and various forms of vulnerability associated with shortage of education, paid work and health care. Because of their global or national nature, Western economic and political institutions have failed to respond to women's mobility needs at the local level in developing markets. Economic modernization and its detailed models have largely neglected cultural and social diversity and problems with access to resources are partly due to prevailing transport planning models and the fact that more attention is 'being paid to the needs of an elite minority'. When policy maker's focus on economic efficiency e.g. walking as a means of mobility is largely ignored (Engel, O'Neill & Regmi, 2017, p.3) despite being the most common form of mobility in real life.

GLOBAL GOALS AS NATIONAL POLICIES

The SDG's target various challenges associated with motorized modernization, fragmentation and uneven development. Because of the large numbers of low-income families impacted by limited integration and access to societal resources, connectivity becomes a prerequisite for achieving the SDG1, to reduce poverty, vulnerabilities and inequalities between men and women, and rural and urban areas. The role of SDG's in confronting uneven modernization and lack of connectivity in marginalized communities is fundamental to achieve social cohesion and development. Rural connectivity will contribute to realizing SDG2, to achieve zero hunger and ensure food security; SDG3, to ensure health and well-being; SDG4, to provide access to education; SDG6, to facilitate access to clean water and sanitation; SDG8 to promote inclusive growth and economic opportunities; SDG9 and SDG11 to contribute to sustainable infrastructure and communities for all citizens and SDG13 to increase climate resilience and adaptation in rural areas.

The improvement of rural roads has immediate effects on the generation of income opportunities by expanding commercial opportunities for disconnected farmers. Insofar as these investments allow the poorest communities to thrive and diversify their incomes, it has a positive bearing on reducing exclusion, marginalization and inequality (Kanbur, 2016, p.131). In China it was found that low volume rural roads have in fact produced the greatest return on investment (Starkey & Hine, 2014). However, road construction is no panacea for achieving the SDG's because households are embedded in local social contexts and governing structures influencing traditional mobility practices.

A transport strategy may be an enabler of pro-poor development but it needs to be formulated as part of a wider poverty strategy (Blank, 2005) focusing on both material and social aspects of development in marginalized communities. Thus, the materiality's or the physical parts of transport systems (roads, rail, vehicles, motors) are development prerequisites but they will not bring about well-being or solve the challenges of poverty, food shortages, gender imbalances and increasing inequality associated with social mobility and national integration.

The interface between the physical, spatial, environmental and the social aspects such as attitudes and behavior require gathering of knowledge beyond the transport sector by means of learning in collaboration and the amalgamation of findings from several development contexts. Comprehensive and detailed studies should be undertaken to inform planning and policies able to achieve the SDG's. Whenever taken seriously, SDG17 is useful to bridge knowledge gaps and create social innovation or political arenas that foster upward social mobility for all.

THE 'LOCAL MOBILITY TURN' AND LOCAL POLICY TOOLS

The 'local mobility turn' is an amalgamation of two separate research strands to facilitate understandings and integration of the social aspects, for instance gender, in development and to achieve the SDG's by 2030. Focusing on mobility means to consider travelling practices as shaping and being shaped through factors relating to 'symbolic and cultural meanings'. The 'mobility turn' is apt also for inquiries of traffic and transportation in rapidly motorizing and changing contexts such as developing Asian regions because it serves 'to uncover the more invisible and complex processes linked to people on the move in modern societies. It is a tool to consider the mobility practices as shaping and being shaped through factors relating to identity, psychological and cultural aspects beyond functional purposes of movement and transportation (Cass & Falconbridge, 2015, Jensen, 2011). Firstly, the 'mobility turn' was coined by Urry, et al (2006) and stresses mobility as an important aspect of societal development in modern societies. Cresswell states that mobility is 'the fragile entanglement of physical movement, socially shared meanings ascribed to such movements and the experienced and embodied practice of movement' (Kwan & Schwanen, 2016, p.244). British researchers have widely recognized the importance of spatial mobility in facilitating social mobility and well-being (Adey, 2006; Cass et al, 2005; Kaufmann, 2002; Sager, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2003, 2006, Urry, 2000). Secondly, 'the local turn' in development research refers to a range of locally based perceptions of stakeholders, understandings or experiences grounded in the local conditions. For instance, the mobility practices of poor families offer insights into the effects of uneven motorization on everyday life. The decisions people make about whether or not to undertake a journey give useful information about people's perceptions and the impact of social structures on differently positioned actors. Hence, it means re-thinking the foundations of national development and the global imperative of motorized modernization during the 20th century (Thynell 2003). The adoption of sustainable transport policies and implementation of SDG's may push for other approaches to handle the negative side-effects of fragmentation and uneven motorized modernization, responding to the transport and development needs in fragile, rural or informal communities. Hence the 'local mobility turn' is a heterogeneous and critical turn that stresses cultural and social diversity. Further, locally grounded strategies may converge with the global goals, and be successful. The local turn links sustainable development to local stakeholders and experiences in order to achieve efficient and legitimacy solutions.

THE SDG'S HAVE IT ALL

There are no SDG that targets both material and social aspects of transport, rural access for low-income or mobility for socially marginalized families. Rural networks are seen as prerequisites for achieving SDG1, to alleviate poverty; SDG2, to ensure food security; SDG 3, to ensure health and

well-being and SDG4, to access education. The way in which the SDG's and their 169 targets are defined, form the basis for local initiatives to confront the side-effects of economic modernization and uneven development. Because whenever taken seriously and further elaborated with regards to local conditions the SDG's grasp prerequisites for development at all levels of society. When broken down and combined with each other's (SDG5, gender equality and SD1, poverty eradication) it becomes clearer what can be achieved in rural or informal settlements by 2030. The lack of equality and uneven motorized mobility has been a problem for decades and several initiatives have been launched to enhance women's influence and involvement, though they have failed and masculine norms persist, guiding planning and implementation (Thynell, 2016). The notion of empowerment (SDG5) is helpful in understanding how urban mobility is gendered: "to be disempowered means to be denied choice, while empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability" (Kabeer, 2005).

The launch of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs, 2000) prompted further studies of the travelling conditions of women and girls. But further studies of the interface (SDG17) between low-income families and transport in rural areas require detailed studies to improve understandings about how to increase productivity and close the gender gap in order to eliminate poverty and hunger. Further, studies that clarify the relationship between women's access and inclusion in the development, mobility patterns and the gender norms that affect females in dynamic Asian regions will bridge a current knowledge gaps. More in-depth knowledge about the conditions for women who commute or make other kinds of journeys is likely to help bring about desirable long-term changes. Universal policies for increasing equality should be favoured over exclusionary practices such as gender separation in public vehicles, or the 'pink solutions', which may lead to future gender imbalances (Kabeer, 1999, 2002). Because of their global nature, big economic and political institutions have failed to respond to the mobility needs of women or rural citizens.

The article argues that a 'local turn' focusing on the local conditions and demands for mobility is adopted and implemented. Such turn is possible through a shift in focus from mainstreaming economic models and towards solving the local needs by means of local stakeholders and local surveys that bring knowledge about experiences and needs. The often impressive social and cultural diversity at hand cannot be usually made justice in a mainstreamed or Western economic model. Hence, achieving the SDG's by 2030 also imply re-thinking the prevailing developmentalist model or the economic modernization designed by Euro/American institutions during the Golden Age or later on. The SDG's and the 21st century have the potential to open up a new and sustainable development path in Asia. Whenever taken serious, the SDG's have it all!

WOMEN ON WHEELS INITIATIVES IN INDONESIA AND INDIA

"I think the bicycle has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world."

Susan B. Anthony (19th century leader of US Suffrage movement)

In adopting the SDGs, the role of sustainable transport, including non-motorized mobility was stressed. Several trials in Nepal, Lao PDR, Bangladesh, Indonesia and India targeting SDG's, 1, 5, 8 and 11, are worthy of note. Among other things, investment in rural roads helps to improve school enrolment and better staffing at village primary schools and health clinics amongst other direct social and economic benefits (Starkey & Hine, 2014, p.8). In this section two transport initiatives in Solo, Indonesia and Bihar, India, aiming at a formal role of females in societies at large. Strengthening school enrollment is one such initiative aiming at reducing gender gaps and spurring social mobility. In fact it has been seen as one of

the most effective initiatives (Muralidharan & Prakash, 2015, p.1). See also Chant & McIlwaine, 2016, Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South.

In Indonesia, due to traditional values, some communities discourage women from cycling and fewer women than men use bicycles (<http://www.kotakita.org/project-women-wheels-pilot.html>). To confront this a long bicycle lane with few users was used by the Dept. of Transport in collaboration with international expertise began a 'Women on Wheels' initiative to promote cycling as a mode of transport for school girls, women factory workers and others. Therefore, in Solo, authorities aimed at increasing quality of life by promoting cycling as beneficial for family economy, for health and for the environment, all in line with the SDG's.

Findings have it that bicycle programmes are popular and cost-effective initiatives for increasing girls' secondary school enrolment. In India, a 'Cycle programme' for schoolgirls improved the comfort of girls on their way to school and increased the likelihood that the participants would finish secondary level. A bicycle trial in rural Bihar showed a transformative impact on girls' school participation with the greatest success among girls who lived 3 km or further from a school. There is strong evidence to suggest that a reduction of 'distance cost' brought by bicycles, was an important part of the success. In Bihar, the gender gap was successfully closed by 46% since girls' school enrolment increased by 41% (Muralidharan & Prakash, 2015, p.26). This 'Cycle programme' became popular also in other Indian states (Mr. Rajiv Gauba, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, India).

CONCLUSION

South-East Asian economies are growing but not everyone is benefitting equally and apparently, the science policy interaction in the sector of transport has failed to bridge the gap between the materiality's (the physical and visible components) and the less visible expressions of transport systems (attitudes & behavior) and the linkages to the transport demands of different social groups.

The integration of marginalized (rural and urban) communities into national development by means of transportation is a multifaceted and complex task.

In adopting the SDGs, some Asian states have reinforced the role of sustainable transport policies in achieving them and that ensure that "no one is left behind". Therefore, to gather required knowledge to improve connectivity, accessibility and social mobility in low-income communities a 'local mobility turn' in policy and planning was presented.

Evidences show that improved rural transport infrastructure and services are crucial in achieving resiliency, empowerment, social integration, increased food security, poverty reduction and improved supply chain logistics in rural and marginalized areas. Hence the local turn imply re-thinking the development trajectory towards meeting the transport needs of total population.

Since most agricultural production takes place in rural areas, improved access to both local markets and cities make a significant difference in securing the livelihoods of farming communities. In Asia with 80% of rural populations living close to cities, there is huge potential to connect rural and urban areas by means of sustainable transport policies (integrated eco-mobility, NMT and public transport) (UNCRD, 2017b).

The article also stresses the importance of the SDG's in achieving nation social and development by addressing spatial and social aspects. The road network is part of the built environment and the material aspects constitute the basis for social and behavioural changes (upward social mobility) also addressed in the SDG's by 2030. Given the continuing trends for mass migration, urbanization and wealth

concentration within, and between the global north and the global south, transport and mobility issues require attention.

The notion of mobility is suitable since the 'mobility lens' serves to uncover invisible and complex processes linked to people on the move in modern societies. The mobility lens is a tool to consider how traffic and transport investments shape, and are being shaped through local stakeholders, local cultural and social aspects. Mobility practices are hence designed at the 'global' interface. Spatial isolation translates into poverty and rural transport to increase girl's school attendance was also presented in two case studies. Still, large demographic groups in rural Asia remain immobile and scarcity and isolation shape people's everyday lives.

However, the social dimension of traffic and transport is not fully understood and communicated to the transport sector. There are thus significant knowledge and development gaps to be explored and bridged: between cities and rural areas and between men and women.

Isolated rural populations are more likely to be trapped in poverty and marginalization - both political and social - and this affects women, the elderly and the disabled, disproportionately. Rural-urban connectivity is essential to improve the access to healthcare, education, markets and social and political activities, which are predominantly located in urban or peri-urban areas. Families are embedded in communities that uphold norms and these may limit activities as well, discourage bicycling or school enrolment.

The phenomenon of modern mobility is a truly societal and complex matter beyond the geographical aspects of a journey since it also includes the socio-political embeddedness of transport, villages and families.

'The local mobility turn' has implications for the nature and location of road investments and it builds on re-thinking strategies for transport integration and sustainable development.

In modern societies, spatial mobility becomes a prerequisite for social mobility and immobility exacts a high cost at all levels of society. To reduce the exposure of vulnerable groups to a number of risks associated with precarious living conditions the topics associated with gendered mobility, social exclusion, access to health and education needs to be enhanced in policy.

Poor families are important in national development and social cohesion, yet, instead of participating equally, their capacity to contribute to progress is lost. Such failures are costly in terms of failed economic development and social fragmentation, increasing inequality and reduced wellbeing including ill-health.

Poor connectivity or lack of mobility is found to co-produce exclusion and vulnerability. In particular, education, is widely recognized to improve wellbeing and spur social mobility and hence, the importance of bringing girls to attend schools.

The development gaps in terms of gender and socio-economic inequality require long-term, national initiatives based on high quality Poor connectivity or lack of mobility is found to co-produce exclusion and vulnerability. In particular, education, is widely recognized to improve wellbeing and spur social mobility and hence the importance of bringing girls to attend schools.

Whenever taken seriously, SDG17 may create new social spaces; political arenas; social innovation and contribute to upward social mobility.

The importance of spatial and social mobility in confronting uneven modernization was stressed in the Vientiane Declaration on Sustainable Rural Transport (2017).

To achieve this, good quality analyses and state-led management of SDGs is needed. SDG's are useful in making the diagnosis and to develop goals in collaboration with stakeholders. The SDG17,

learning in collaboration is a core topic in defining successful answers to several of the challenges. Therefore, authorities should make sure that citizens are at the core of transport systems and services, and that the poorest, most marginalized and vulnerable groups have access to sustainable transport. But how is this seen and handled in Asian countries?

Achieving development goals will not eliminate social hierarchies, persistent discrimination, poverty or hunger but may alleviate physical constraints, reduce costs and make resources available to larger groups.

As observed by the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is of paramount importance that countries improve their rural transport infrastructure and services to ensure accessibility for low-income communities, farmers, women, youth and other vulnerable groups to make sure 'no one is left behind,' regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, age or social belonging.

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