CULTURE, GENDER, TRANSPORT: CONTENTIOUS PLANNING ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Transport is known to be one of the most significant investment sectors for many developing countries. Despite the recognized role of transport in development, scant attention has been accorded to the social and gender impacts of transport investments. The recognition of its key role in economic development through classic planning methods remains wanting because of the failure to see the different impacts of transport on the lives of women and men. While there has been an upsurge in research and policy advocacy to incorporate gender perspectives into the health, education and the agricultural sectors, few attempts in Asia have been vigorous in parallel intention and attention in the transport sector. As a starting point, this paper attempts to challenge and inspire researchers and those involved in policy advocacy to address this need.

Keywords: women and transport, developing countries, gender relations, gender-blind, mobility

INTRODUCTION

About 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide are women. According to a report by the Sustainable Transport Action Network for Asia and the Pacific, the transport systems and services, which hardly meet the needs of the poor, disproportionately affect women and their dependents:

“The lower the income of the household, the more probable it is that women will experience greater transport deprivation as compared to men. Transport deprivation may take the form of women’s use of inferior modes of transport as...

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compared to men; it may take the form of women’s journey’s having multiple purposes and thus generating greater anxiety in the travel context; it may take the form of customary or legal constraint on women’s right to travel or to use a particular transport mode.” (Barter and Tanim, 2000)

With the above situation in mind, an examination of how gender issues are reflected in the field of transport is necessary to make women visible in transport planning, policymaking and transport interventions. Treating women as a distinct transportation user group with distinct travel needs and interests is the key to challenging the prevailing male-centred paradigm.

It is in this light that this paper will use a development lens to present contentious issues on women and transport with an emphasis on developing country realities. First, a definition of terms is given to situate the topic. Second, studies tackling women and transport are presented. Woven into salient themes to highlight issues on women and transport are insights and ideas culled from the available literature reviewed and possible avenues for future research to consider.

I. WOMEN, GENDER AND TRANSPORT IN A DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Transport is an essential part of people’s lives. For women, transport provides greater access to various resources, such as employment, childcare, education, health and political processes. Women may constitute the majority of the public transport market (Hanlon, 1996). Women’s needs and issues regarding transport are often assumed to be identical to men’s (Hamilton, 1989), resulting in a low level of awareness of women’s distinct travel needs. Consequently, gender issues in the transport arena are severely neglected.

A. Key concepts

The commonly used definition of transport or transportation is the movement of people and goods from one place to another. For the purpose of this paper, revisiting the definition by Bryceson and Howe (1993) will be useful. Their definition adds weight to daily mobility, as transport is seen as the movement of people and goods for any conceivable purpose, including the collection of water, fuel or firewood by any conceivable means, including walking and head loading. Thus said, three important points surface with regard to the realities for women in developing countries: (a) the mode of travel
is not necessarily conventional or motorized; (b) the choice of mode must be given due attention, regardless of how unimportant it may seem; and (c) travel purposes should not be disregarded.

By adding the term “women” to the term “transport”, the concern becomes uncovering women’s travel needs and women’s travel experiences. Through time, the topic “women and transport” has evolved into the composite term “gender and transport”, which implies capturing the relationships and dynamics of men vis-à-vis women regarding transport.

This inclusive perspective, which acknowledges both women and men, placing men on par with women as equally embodied and gendered persons, is what feminism is all about. As such, the evolution of the use of the term “gender” in place of “women” can be best understood when viewed against the historical context of developments in feminist thinking. Feminist critiques in the 1970s began to look more closely at the roots of women’s subordination, which could be traced to the inequality between men and women, the sexual division of labour and the non-valuation of women’s work within the household. The roots of women’s subordination were linked to the household as an economic unit and to the global economy. It is also crucial to acknowledge further feminist critiques in the 1980s that spotlighted neo-liberal policies, the debt crisis and top-down development projects, as these critiques led to debates on development. In sum, the topic of women, gender and transport is inextricably linked to these structural realities.

The conceptual shift from “women” to “gender” seeks to distinguish between biological differences and socially constructed inequality. The use of the concept of gender as socially constructed inequality set the stage for the elucidation of gender relations. Tackling gender relations implies moving beyond concentration on women and men as unrelated categories. Instead, both men and women must be considered together to understand the complex and unequal social dynamics through which resources are allocated, tasks and responsibilities assigned, values held and power mobilized (Kabeer, 1996).

B. Strands of approaches

In the parlance of feminists and development professionals involved in gender work, the use of terminologies in one’s work reveals one’s assumptions. Most important, these assumptions reveal the strand of development approach one embraces. Feminists of various shades in the political spectrum insist on demystifying jargon to uncover the hidden oppressive assumptions of perspectives.
In the first major exploration of the topic women and transport, which was published in 1989, Hamilton and Jenkins pointed out the ways transport policy had been gender-blind and had failed to integrate the issues affecting women in particular. Gender blindness means neither recognizing nor responding to the needs or priorities of women. The question whether women’s potentials are restricted by the state of transport cannot be answered by what little information is available as most planning and development decisions are undertaken by men with little or no regard for women’s needs (Turner and Fouracre, 1995).

Gender blindness in discussions on transport implies that there is no consideration of the fact that women also have to perform reproductive tasks. There is implicit ignorance about the fact that women are involved in multiple tasks beyond income earning. Women are also doing valuable work caring for members of the family and managing the household and community tasks.

Research on transport from the 1950s until the early 1980s was outright gender-blind. Such gender blindness was attributed in large part to researchers on transport coming from the predominantly male-dominated technical disciplines of transport planning and engineering and transport geography. However, the gender blindness manifested in the literature on transport conditions in the developing world did not pass unnoticed for long.

More attentive interest in the gender aspects of transportation slowly emerged in the mid-1980s. Research proceeded to address structural constraints on women’s daily mobility (Law, 1999), such as that done by Pickup (1984), who utilized the concept of gender to explain transport patterns. This research cited gender roles as the primary reason for the low level of mobility of women. Gender roles had three components: family roles, gender-related tasks and the conditions under which women travel. Although Pickup focused attention on unequal access to household resources (such as a vehicle), the use of the concept of gender role becomes not only problematic but also static in the mould of the often cited “women in development” approach in gender analysis literature. Fulfilling gender roles implied equivalence, consensus and choice, which were the crux of criticism by feminists. Nowhere in this study were the concepts of power or coercion.

It was during the 1990s that theoretical concerns, such as the construction of gender identities, began to overshadow the beginning of interest in structural constraints on women’s travel situation. According to Law (1999), with the increasing prominence of post-structuralist perspectives in the last
decade of the twentieth century, the attention of research on gender and transport was redirected from structural constraints to discursive constraints.

After all is said and done, it is evident that research on transport has begun to put a spotlight on gender. In general, most approaches include a discussion on gender-differentiated roles, which is a descriptive account of what men and women do. Even if gender analysis in current research on women and transport is fundamentally a matter of the analysis of disaggregated data, this step is a positive starting point. The less prominent focus on the relations of subordination and domination that underpin gender as a power relationship is, of course, waiting for thorough follow through.¹ As gender hierarchies are reproduced through the workings of other institutions, such as markets, firms and State institutions, it is imperative that gender analysis in research on transport extend beyond the confines of the household.

C. Women, transport and mobility

Today, it is more crucial to view the historical development of transport research against the realities of developed countries vis-à-vis developing countries. The often linear tendency to import the developed country perspective to developing countries continues to prevail. Most of the models originated in developed countries and have been followed universally by developing countries. The fact that many authors have criticized this tendency is promising at least.

A perfect illustration of the mismatch of developed country perspectives being imported into the developing country context is how authors have tackled mobility through the years. Extensively taken up in transport and development literature, many authors define mobility as the ability to move. In transport literature, the standard measurement of mobility is the number of trips made per person. While mobility can be easily broken down into various operational indicators, this concept is more applicable in a developed world context, where society is functionally organized (Centre for Transport Studies, 2006; Vasconcellos, 2003). Space is more often than not a distinctive, straightforward feature in developed countries. However, space is more structured around distinct cultural, ethnic and religious characteristics in most developing countries.

¹ A companion article in the Bulletin discusses this topic in greater detail.
In many studies on transport, mobility is indeed used as a pivotal concept. (De Boer, 1986; Tillberg, 1998; Urry, 2000; Peters, 2001; Vasconcellos, 2001; Matin, 2002; Hall, 2004; Mumtaz and Salway, 2005; Hamilton and Jenkins, 2005). The concept of mobility is unable, however, to capture the diverse realities in the developing country context, specifically in reproduction processes in society, that is, the caring economy, which is crucial in understanding the gender variable in research on transport.

Interest in the caring economy marks a high point of interest in the gender aspects of transportation. This is rather recent in transport and development studies. Much of this kind of research is concentrated in rural Africa vis-à-vis agriculture, food production, distribution and economic growth (Bryceson and Howe, 1993; Masika and Baden, 1997; Fernando and Porter, 2002). Many studies on women and transport in the developing world have focused on African women, specifically those in sub-Saharan Africa. The empirical literature on the conditions of women in Asia is scarce; few studies have been done in Asia (Fernando and Porter, 2002; Selim and McCleery, 2005), with the exception of a few reports on World Bank projects in Bangladesh, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam (Shefali, 2000; Fernando and Porter, 2002; Du and Kurz, 2003; Vu, 2003).

Research tackling the intersection of gender, transport and mobility in the developing world points to the need to take into account women's modal preferences in transport infrastructure planning. For example, one study done by the World Bank in Dhaka showed that 35 per cent of female commuters relied on cycle rickshaws as their sole mode of transport. One fourth of all women relied on rickshaws for accessing educational facilities. When authorities proposed to ban rickshaws from the major streets of Dhaka, they were in fact singling out not only the most environmentally friendly mode available but also the one transport choice most essential and accessible to women, thereby gravely affecting their mobility (Sustainable Transport Action Network for Asia and the Pacific, 1998).

II. ISSUES REGARDING WOMEN AND TRANSPORT

The spectrum of approaches outlined in the preceding section is captured in the following discussion about research on women and transport in various contexts, with a special emphasis on countries in the developing world. Several related concerns permeate the existing work, which makes it difficult to pinpoint the core of the problem or classify such issues and concerns into
stringent categories. Nevertheless, utilizing such themes can foster a better appreciation of the issues regarding women and transport.

A. Defining gender and situating women's interests

Gender relations, like all social relations, are multi-faceted: they reflect ideas, values and identities. They influence the allocation of labour between different tasks, activities and domains; they determine the distribution of resources, and they assign authority, the ability to make choices and decision-making power. This means that gender inequalities are multidimensional and cannot be reduced simply to questions of material or ideological constraints (Kabeer, 2003).

Therefore, supporting women's interests in the context of gender relations means optimizing labour time and effort from the perspective of women themselves. The concept of women’s interests can be seen more clearly in findings on how transport interventions were destined to enhance solely men’s mobility at the expense of women’s welfare (Malmberg-Calvo, 1992). To illustrate, research on intermediate transport has shown how projects have glossed over the question of how men’s and women’s transport activities can be redistributed more equally. Improvements in intermediate transport in particular were found to be enjoyed by men, yet there were no attendant changes in the allocation of functional tasks and associated transport responsibilities along gender lines within the household.

Attention to the gender division of labour and activities is very useful in helping understand travel demand and the reasons why men and women make trips to particular places at certain times. Research on gender and transport in the developed world already includes a substantial discussion on the components of spatial and temporal differences in the organization of women’s work and men’s work, both paid and unpaid (Grieco and others, 1989; Hanson and Pratt, 1995). However, no such parallel work emanates from research in developing countries.

Valuable work on the gender division of labour in some developing countries may be found. In a similar vein, Bryceson and Howe (1993) stressed that the almost exclusive focus on household demand rather than in-depth research from the perspective of women who were primary transport suppliers has yielded the dangerous result of a restricted informational base for many donor agency interventions. Much of their research has illustrated the need for a more comprehensive research approach to push for women’s interests. They emphasized the need to:
(a) Discard assumptions about the unity of household demand and household welfare;
(b) Widen the analysis to a consideration of the decision-making and logistics of women as primary transport suppliers;
(c) Abandon the narrow agricultural production maximization goal;
(d) Recognize the multitasking and childcare dimensions of women's transport strategies.

**B. Culture and the gender logic in transport planning**

The intertwining of gender relations and cultural constraints emerge as a second area of interest in research on women and transport. Bryceson and Howe (1993) noted how cultural norms in rural sub-Saharan Africa continued to dictate women's responsibilities. These included (a) travel and load carrying connected to providing basic household needs and (b) head loading and back loading goods in the absence of travel modes, such as wheelbarrows, trolleys or bicycles. These two underlying precepts of the gender division of labour stood in the way of not only a more rational distribution of work in the household, but also the equitable distribution of benefits between male and female household members through transport agency interventions aimed at replacing load carrying by people.

These findings give us a glimpse of how imperative it is to see the cultural dimension in understanding women and transport. Every society socializes young boys and girls in practices, beliefs and values that privilege one gender over another, thus perpetuating gender inequities. Both males and females are affected by these practices and pass them on to the next generation. Advocates of gender equity are analysing the nature of relationships between men and women in social structures, such as the family. They are challenging traditional practices that subordinate women and girls and transforming into public issues what is hidden in the private sphere of life.

Development agencies cannot justifiably avoid the issue of cultural norms regarding the allocation of transport work in the household along gender lines. The principle of sensitivity is expected to be put forward, pushing for a practice that all development efforts must be culturally acceptable to the community. In reality, the gender division of labour in transport accords women the bulk of responsibility, and this is what is culturally acceptable. Therefore, the conventional belief is that this unequal sharing of household tasks should not be subjected to external agency interference. Bryceson and Howe (1993)
are very emphatic about the reluctance of international agencies to challenge the dangerous cultural preferences of the community even though such age-old preferences give rise to gross inequities between the sexes. The impact on women is especially harsh as the transport burdens have been found to jeopardize women's physical health (Doran, 1996).

Cultural conventions affecting the transport situation of women also consist of prohibitive religious practices. Specific religious practices tackled by Matin and others (in Fernando and Porter, 2002) are those that influence gender roles and affect women's ability to benefit from transport improvements, as well as opportunities to purchase and benefit from transport. A study in a village in Faridpur, a district 145 km from Dhaka, showed that the majority of poor women there travel on foot to the union centre to participate in income-generation activities. Social restrictions prevent women from using public transport with men. There are only a few seats reserved for women on buses. When the buses are full, drivers do not take women. They have to wait a long time for the next bus and often use rickshaws or rickshaw vans, which charge high fares.

Such conventions as the exclusion of women in transport described above do not remain unchallenged, however, especially when people are mired in extreme poverty. In Bangladesh, cases of women from destitute families (Matin and others, in Fernando and Porter, 2002) are presented side by side with examples of the families of well-to-do women who are more concerned with maintaining the family's izzat (respectability and honour).

Sangita and others (in Fernando and Porter, 2002) documented how women in Ahmedabad, an urban centre in the western region of India, were often willing to contribute to the purchase of means of transport not for themselves but for their husbands or adult sons. The respondents whom they interviewed stated that they would not use a bicycle, scooter or rickshaw because it was not culturally permissible. Most of the women respondents were willing to take out a loan from a bank for the purchase of a vehicle, not for themselves, but for male members of their household.

Nelson-Fyle and Sandhuif (1990) discussed the sensitivity of introducing into communities transport technologies and how women were not culturally associated with their use. Most of the time, women themselves prefer not to be involved in transport improvement initiatives. For example, Nelson-Fyle and Sandhuif's research documents the feeding and caring system of a community-owned animal in an animal-powered mill. Mutual self-help through a well-knit group working together is therefore necessary since care for the animal is the group's responsibility. However, if the animals are not
community owned, each user has to provide an animal to mill their grain. As men are usually the owners of animals, they are reluctant to allow their animals to be used in the milling process, traditionally considered the responsibility of women. In some societies, men see no advantage in reducing the labour burden on women since the belief is that women will only become idle.

As stressed by Fernando and Porter (2002) in their introduction to a collection of case studies on women and transport in the developing world, a focus on women’s transport burden is not enough. The cultural conditions that constrict women’s mobility limit how far they can travel and their command over the political and social processes that determine their lives. It is just as important to address gendered power relations and to enable women to have greater mobility and more control over transport decision-making in the household, as well as in the wider political context.

C. Geography, location and urban-rural linkages

Interacting with culture affecting the transport situation of women are factors related to geography and the interplay of urban-rural linkages. Patterns of mobility are complex and depend on the interplay of both cultural and access factors, plus geographical factors (such as mountains or lakes) and locational factors. The latter two are well noted in available literature as crucial factors related to mobility patterns and transport burdens. A review of available work also reveals that research on women and transport in urban areas is scarce compared with existing work done on the transport situation of women in rural areas. Urban studies of the travel time and time budgets of women constitute a promising area for future research (Cervero and Jonathan, 1998).

One study debunks the belief that proximity to urban centres and a high density of transport in urban and peri-urban areas automatically mean better accessibility. Mukherjee (in Fernando and Porter, 2002) examined the journeys of rural women who commuted to and from the centre of Calcutta to emphasize this point. Domestic helpers, vendors, industrial workers and government institution labourers who travel from the outskirts of Calcutta into the city spend approximately 12 hours per day outside their homes. Their daily travel experiences include overcrowded, irregular public transport, a lot of time waiting for transport, a lack of facilities and harassment by pickpockets.

Related literature also mentions how transport has not included discussions on where people live. For example, transport is not a part of discussions on the location of credit institutions, housing, water (such as community taps) and basic services in communities. According to a study done
in Nairobi, 27 per cent of female-headed households depended on walking as their primary form of mobility, compared with only 15 per cent of the male-headed households (Barwell, 1996). Contrary to common perceptions, even women in urban areas are more likely than men to be dependent on walking as their only option. Other modes are often not available to them, because they are either too expensive or located too inconveniently or far away (Hook and Deike, 1998).

Research on households located close to paved roads vis-à-vis those far from paved roads highlight location as a key concern. This is best illustrated by a number of studies done on public transport. In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the location of public transport routes meant poor women living in peripheral settlements had longer trips and changed transport more often than men (Schmink, 1982). Added to locational factors were the unreliable transport services, which translated into women’s untimely arrival at urban markets to sell their produce. Porter (2002) explained that the produce of women living in villages without road access deteriorated by the time they reached the market.

Looking at the differences in transport in rural and urban areas proves to be one useful way to emphasize the important differences in local contexts. It is then important to examine transport and development in changing urban and rural contexts, as well as in wider national and regional contexts. How mobility, accessibility and equity is affected by the locational context, especially with regard to disadvantages along dimensions of gender, language, ethnicity, class and minority status, still needs to be further explored. Thus, more focused research on women, gender and transport in rural-urban interactions, in different local contexts, and in current transformations in rural-urban linkages are critical, requiring careful understanding and consideration.

D. Transport safety and safe travel for women

The fourth issue is safe travel for women. Personal security concerns, including accidents and attacks, are an important theme of research on women and transport. Women’s fear of attack while travelling is also ultimately related to the issue of safety.

Personal security has been taken up in conventional transport sector research, focusing on the vulnerability of pedestrians, cyclists and people using slow-moving, non-motorized transport modes. The vulnerability of women is covered as women are usually pedestrians and users of slow-moving transport modes.
A gender-aware transport perspective shows another dimension of safety in women and transport research. For example, women walking on village paths and tracks are not likely to be at risk of being hit by motor vehicles, but they are often injured from falling, from sharp objects and thorns, or from animal bites and attacks. Women with head loads are particularly vulnerable, especially when paths are slippery or overgrown, distances are far or the women are tired. Bryceson and Howe (1993) explained that it was not simply a matter of balancing child carrying capacity with mobility as most rural women carry children in addition to other loads. The nature of women's multitasking at any time during their workday means that they have to carry an assortment of tools, raw materials or other goods while transporting young children.

Physical safety also means women being free from attack during travel. Research on the geography of women's fear has revealed women's pervasive awareness of the reality of sexual assault. A recent study on public transport in Colombo, Sri Lanka; Faisalabad, Pakistan; and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Sohail and others, 2006), demonstrates views of respondents on the lack of transport infrastructure, the harassment of young girls, rape attempts on women and the danger for women to walk. Other research in Lima, Peru, showed how safeguards against physical attack and sexual harassment on public vehicles restricted women's use of all types of transport (Anderson and Panzio, 1986). In a similar vein, a recent study in the Philippines describes the sexual harassment experiences of women members of workers and communities in metropolitan Manila (Herrera, 2007). Attempts to transform private cases of public transportation incidents into a public safety issue are indeed a promising beginning.

The Lima and metro Manila studies mentioned above describe how women using public transport have employed an array of self-protection strategies and behavioural constraints, such as travelling with a companion and deliberately avoiding certain places at certain times. These self-imposed precautionary measures have not only limited women's mobility but also contributed to the continued underrepresentation of women in specific locations. For those who have found themselves in such settings, the women's sense of fear and risk has been reinforced. This has prompted government agencies involved in transportation to become involved in what is known as "safety audits." Such studies mention how these have led to the creation of "safe cities" programmes in some countries, which involve fulfilling set criteria as well as environmental design to enhance and improve safety. (Trench and others, 1992; Law, 1999)
E. Integrating various sectoral initiatives

The fifth issue regarding women and transport concerns the intersection of transport with other sectors. Better stated, there is a danger in separating transportation from other sectors (Cervero, 1998). Experience has shown how integrated approaches that combine transport with other sectors are found to have more promising impacts on women, particularly if they take into account men’s and women’s transport-related roles, resources, constraints and priorities. Studies have found the links between access to social and health services and transport, access to education and transport, as well as access to trade and markets and transport. Therefore, these studies have tackled the various parts of the lives of women in communities.

Research has shown that the total stock of tasks of household transport has not actually changed as new tasks have replaced old tasks and how various tasks have also become easier to do, thanks to improvements in transport (Dawson and Barwell, 1993; Edmonds, 1998). As there are no changes in gender relations or the division of household labour along gender lines, workloads have become increasingly heavier on women. Other authors are even more straightforward by declaring that, by promoting traditional road-based solutions, effectively 90 per cent of resources are being directed to serve just 10 per cent of the population, with the majority of women, being excluded. Simply building more roads is not going to alleviate poverty and may make the poverty situation worse (Hook, 2006).

In a similar vein, understanding women and transport has meant taking into account the merging of what gender specialists have termed practical versus strategic needs (Moser, 1993). The former means tackling short term, survival-level needs, while the latter means addressing the structural and long term transformation of women’s lives. For example, the impact of transport interventions has always been measured in terms of rural women’s time savings. This has been criticized only to stress the potential benefits to the overall household rather than to women themselves. Moser (1993) identified this thinking amongst development agency initiatives, describing it as a failure to give priority to women’s strategic needs by instead prioritizing practical needs. This essentially sidesteps the deep-rooted political and economic dimensions of women’s subordination in society in favour of non-controversial attempts to address basic needs.
F. Participation: women practicing power

Last but not least is the issue of women themselves charting the course for changes in their lives, or what is well known in studies on the subject as a sense of “agency”. To address transport needs or to acquire and use transport technologies and services, men and women in poor communities usually have to negotiate with powerful stakeholders, such as policymakers, politicians, local officials, transport providers, local government officials or even financial institutions. Women are not recognized by policymakers as transport stakeholders. In assessing the level of transport demands and resources, women’s and community needs are nonexistent. As was given weight in the preceding sections, the harsh reality is that data on the travel and transport burden are highly generalized and aggregated in many developing countries (Peters, 2001). Looking through available policy documents, it is safe to conclude that women’s transport needs for both productive and reproductive purposes are generally ignored in transport policies in both developing and developed countries (Cervero and Jonathan, 1998).

In recent years, there have been few initiatives to reduce discrimination and to ensure a greater voice for women’s needs and priorities in transport and more generally in places where women live and work. Much attention can be seen in the area of income generation for women. It is now common to find discussions on women’s livelihood and transport needs together (Brown and Lloyd-Jones, in Rakodi, 2002).

Women need to be more involved in the planning and implementation of transport interventions so that their perspective and needs are more central to the interventions. Political representation by transport users, specifically women, is important. However, ordinary men and women in communities, without the confidence to register their travel needs, are relegated to the lower rung of captive transport users, who are burdened with barriers to representation. The first reality is their lack of representation in most upper bureaucracies and technocracies, because, more often than not, they are unorganized, making their demands invisible. The second reality is that transport is only one of the overwhelming concerns faced by poor communities.

The planning process is political in that interest groups negotiate solutions in a conflicting arena. Among the major forces in the arena of transport are the historically entrenched traditional politicians, the construction sector, the real estate sector, automobile users and the public transport industries. Case studies provide instances of women leaders in communities raising their concerns to authorities to improve infrastructure or services, with
no result. Unlike in some developed countries, transport stakeholders in developing countries, such as those in Asia and the Pacific, especially the poor and the marginalized, are not as influential as bureaucrats and private operators.

The needed changes being pushed for in the transport agenda, however, still do not specifically reflect the practical transport concerns of marginalized groups such as women. There is no evidence in studies on the subject of how local communities could put the interests of ordinary commuter citizens on the agenda. In addition, how organizations can strongly influence the agenda of politicians and public servants with a perspective of public interest is not on researchers’ agenda. Also not mapped in any research is the need to express and register the transport needs of marginalized, vulnerable groups, such as women, their young children, the disabled and the elderly.

Still, a few initiatives in transport activism are evident. Pressure to transform the transportation system affecting the larger public is a rather recent phenomenon in the developing world. Transport activism is said to be categorized under specific sector struggles, such as the worker's movement (transport workers, public utility vehicle drivers), one corner of the consumer movement (as very few leaders have emerged to represent the large mass of unorganized public commuters) or the broad environmental movement, in which there has been much discussion and action on strategic issues (for example, global warming, clean energy). However, pushing for the changes needed is still not tactically linked to the practical transport concerns of such marginalized groups as women. A promising start is that the global women's movement is now visible in the transport arena, raising public safety issues and violence against women in public transportation. Such thinking across the labour, environmental, consumer and women's sectors can bring to life the development of gender, women and transport research.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion shows in many ways that there needs to be a rethinking of the outdated notions of work, the economy and development. The economy is not solely the productive or commercially oriented economy (formal and informal) that is measured solely in quantitative terms. A purely technology or infrastructure orientation continues to dominate the transport sector; therefore, there must be pressure to push for the social and cultural aspects of transport to be clearly articulated in the policy planning process. Integrating gender into transport policies must take the centre stage in this rethinking process.
The work of women, excluded in policy and planning because it is not traditionally produced for exchange in the market, must be made visible and be given value. Excluding the economy of social reproduction from the transport sector framework translates into ignoring equity the aspect in the design and delivery of transport sector activities. The crucial task of re-examining conventional notions means treating the transport sector as a gendered structure, recognizing the implications of transport policies for men and women and the implications of gender relations for sector level analysis and policy options.

This way, the crucial element of equity, or fairness, could be tackled head on. This approach is not meant to complement existing approaches, but to replace outdated approaches. The present approach calls for efficiency, even at the expense of equity, but the proposed approach calls for equity as the primary objective, with efficiency socially accorded and guaranteed.

Research on women and transport in the developing world, specifically in Asia and the Pacific, is in its infancy. Researchers working in the developing world must take the lead in discovering women, gender and transport with serious intention and attention. The call is now for serious researchers enlightened by progressive perspectives to guide policy and search for new ways to reconsider thinking about transport in women’s lives.

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