

TRANSPORT AND EQUITY IN MEGA CITIES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD**E.A. Vasconcellos***National Association of Public Transport, Brazil*

In mega cities of developing countries, transport conditions remain highly inadequate for most of the population, who are disproportionately subject to factors such as poor public transport supply, accidents, pollution and congestion. Although conditions vary among mega-cities, some common factors may be cited. Unbalanced regional economic growth and persistent poverty generates chaotic urban expansion. Structural political and economic determinants maintain social exclusion, poverty and unemployment and confine the decision making process to selected groups. Traditional transport planning techniques developed in industrialized countries have been irresponsibly used, generating transport systems that reinforce inequities in accessibility, safety and environmental quality. Private transportation has been favoured and non-motorised means have been neglected. Public transport provision has been subject to a market approach, generating negative externalities and denying essential services for the most needy. Problems have also been aggravated by increased motorization (automobiles and motorcycles), also supported by public policies. Explanations of current conditions as 'natural' consequences of economic development and of people's free choices are inadequate and based on widely propagated myths. Such conditions derive instead from a complex political and economic process where powerful public and private actors influence transport policy and drive urban and transport development according to specific interests, generating inequities and an unfair division of road space. Although long term solutions rely on complex structural changes - such as control of urban expansion and a better income distribution - improvement of current conditions may be achieved by the democratisation of the decision-making process, the reorganization of urban space and road use, the protection of pedestrians and cyclists, the improvement of public transport and the control of the undesired or inadequate use of private transport.