Press release: September 2018

STEPS TO SUCCESS: DEVELOPING BETTER WALKING INFRASTRUCTURES WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE LIFE CHANCES OF VULNERABLE URBAN POPULATIONS IN GLOBAL SOUTH CITIES

An international researcher collaboration between several UK, African and Asian universities has exposed the important links between inadequate transport systems and the inability of the poorest urban residents to participate in important life chance opportunities in burgeoning Global South cities.

The International Network for Transport and Accessibility in Developing Countries (INTALInC), led by Professor Karen Lucas at the University of Leeds, has published a series of reports looking at the mobility and accessibility constraints of residents in developing cities, and the ways in which addressing them can improve access to education, employment, healthcare, welfare services and leisure. INTALInC's key findings include:

- Plans to scrap out-dated transport systems are welcome from environmental and safety perspectives, but there are exclusionary consequences for informal communities. Regulations, cost and limited local access mean that most slum residents will never use, or reap the benefits of new, large scale, urban transport infrastructures;
- While policy makers and planners in cities in the Global North are frantically seeking to promote more walking and cycling, these are already the main modes for the urban poorest in developing cities. Although interventions to improve walking environments are highly cost effective, cities in the Global South are building infrastructures that undermine walking and prioritise the demands of a rapidly motorising elite and middle class minority;
- The mobility of low income populations is restricted by contested public space which does not accommodate their diverse needs and preferences. Where they exist, pavements in poor urban areas are taken up by informal street traders and parked vehicles, forcing pedestrians to share the road with motorised traffic;

- These issues are not confined to national capitals, and it is important to consider the needs of people in second order cities in terms of the economic opportunities they offer incoming populations as major cities reach their population capacity.

Professor Karen Lucas said: 'In every city we visited [as part of the INTALInC programme of international workshop events], walking has been identified as the most important mode of transport for low income populations, and yet it is the most overlooked by transport policymakers and governments. The social consequences of inadequate transport systems in developing countries are largely ignored. We want to ensure that everyone can travel affordably and without fear for their lives.'

The INTALInC reports suggest several ways to address these issues. A trend for sectorial planning means that strategy across regional and national authorities in developing countries is fragmented and planners struggle to keep abreast of the needs of growing, peripheral communities. Further, innovative research into the travel behaviours and requirements of low income populations in developing cities is needed urgently.

ABOUT INTALInC: INTALInC is a research network comprising 20 partners and over 200 individual members. It was established in 2017 through funding from the UK Economic and Social Research Council Global Challenges Research Fund. Continuation funding has since been received from the Volvo Research and Education Foundations. INTALInC brings together academics, planners and policy makers with a specific focus on finding innovative ways to address the mobility needs of the most vulnerable populations in its partner countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa and Uganda. By using local case studies and facilitating discussion through a series of international events, INTALInC aims to transform transport systems planning in these locations.

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