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The role of socio-spatial aspects for easing the burdens of mobility – Bangkok example

Known for its notorious traffic chaos, Bangkok will most likely experience a worsening of its traffic situation in the decade to come: A continuing growth of the middle-class fuels motorization which Bangkok's urban fabric is not fit for; policy strategies that promote mass rapid transit and road capacity expansion do not meet the mobility needs of the majority of the population; “burdens of mobility“, such as pollution, congestion, and safety hazards, accumulate. Rather than regarding Bangkok's urban characteristics dimension, density, and diversity as the cause of its prominent traffic chaos the paper will show options how the city can utilize its urban fabric for solving traffic problems in the future. As has been argued widely by many researchers, (mega)cities are not only the cause of many local and global problems but due to their urban characteristics – dimension, density, and diversity – they are the ideal form of settlement to achieve sustainable development as they can contribute to the solution of pressing sustainability challenges without cutting down on living standard and comfort.

After investigating the main burdens of mobility in Bangkok, congestion and pollution, my paper will test this hypothesis on Bangkok's transport sector and provide 3 strategic policy and planning options that have the potential to significantly reduce Bangkok's traffic burdens:

1. Density: Fitting transport systems to densely built-up inner-city areas and imposing stricter emission controls
2. Dimension: optimizing suburban-city centre traffic flows and increasing densities on the fringe
3. Diversity: increasing diversity and attractiveness of suburban areas

It will show how the consideration of the named urban traits which have been neglected in the past by modernistic planning strategies and infrastructure projects can contribute to a more sustainable transport system which is economically, ecologically, and socially fit for the future of Bangkok's development.