

ABSTRAC:

Megaprojects have been recognized by States, multilateral organizations and investors as instruments of urban development, large-scale constructions that promote economic growth. All this is based on the principle of seeking competitiveness within globalization or at least being able to enter it, as is the case of developing countries.

One of the major megaprojects that have been carried out in recent years in Latin America have been highways, this after the liberalization of markets and the signing of several Free Trade Agreements, which forced to connect the city and the metropolitan municipalities with ports and land borders due to the lack of rail infrastructure in many countries. However, the need to connect the most remote municipalities of the city with the different regions of the country has not been important for the Latin American states.

Based on the previous problem, the following research question was formulated: What are the economic and socio-environmental impacts after the construction of highways in developing countries? This question was posed with the main objective of finding the reasons for the unequal geographic development between urban municipalities and rural municipalities farther away from the city.

In order to approach the theoretical framework correctly, the first step was to investigate the evolution of the theoretical concept of spatial production, where territories began to be observed not only as static places but also as reproductions of symbols, images and experiences. Subsequently, the way in which space is usually molded and created was investigated, finding consensus in several sociologists and geographers of Marxist current, pointing out that spaces are usually conceived by technocrats who do not tend to satisfy social objectives.

The methodology was developed in three chapters. In the first chapter, two mega road projects already built in Latin America were selected, one in Colombia, with the Ruta Caribe highway, and the other in Mexico, with the Mexico-Tuxpan highway. These two roads were selected because they have similar characteristics: they connect a city with a seaport, they are projects financed with public and private resources and they cross socially and economically heterogeneous regions.

In the second and third chapter, an analysis of the impacts of each municipality affected by the highways was carried out using the ex-ante and ex-pos method. This methodology was used to make a comparison before and after the construction of the highway megaprojects, using qualitative and quantitative impact indicators. In the last chapter, a balance was made between the two road projects, finding similarities and differences in each of their impacts, analyzing through the bibliography the reason for the existence of some inequitable aspects between the rural municipalities of smaller population respect to the large cities.

Most of the social, economic and environmental results indicated that the greatest benefits from roads were concentrated in large cities and their metropolitan areas. On the other hand, those who benefited least from road construction were the rural regions farthest from urban

centers. It was also found that many rural communities have been excluded from using the services of the mega road project for this reason, the highways have become a focus of protests and social resistance, demanding transparency from the Concession and the State.

Inequality and spatial injustice in Latin America can only be reduced by focusing on the free development of rural and semi-urban municipalities. For this reason, communities must be given the right to conceive their spaces autonomously, encouraging real and not biased participation, establishing forms of financing in accordance with the socioeconomic capacities of each territory. Only in this way will infrastructure be a fundamental incentive to reduce the inequalities that Latin American countries have historically suffered.