

The City in Passing: How the Metro Bus on Overhead Bridges connects Time and Space

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Abstract

Bridges are engineering feats that arise out of transportation necessities, but can also be framed as intervention to the routine course of life. Bridges do not only cross over water bodies but also concrete roads. Urban planners sometimes use overhead bridges to expand the space available for motorists and vehicle traffic. However, what route is taken and where the necessary infrastructure intervention takes place is usually dictated by a mix of political, economic and social ambitions. The article argues how the overhead bridges alter and affect life for the city's inhabitants, by re-routing traffic, romanticizing the cityscape and also influencing the socio-economic landscape. Rapoport (1990) writes that places often embody messages and meanings that people associate with in their experiences and interactions. I analyze the case of the Islamabad/Rawalpindi Metro Bus project in Pakistan, which runs on an overhead bridge all along the Rawalpindi side of the route, by using ethnographic observations and interviews from commuters, city planners and businesses around the area. On a broader level, the article reflects on how such larger infrastructural adjustments can also become platforms of discussion to make the city more economically and socially sustainable.