

Framed within the context of a global ecological crisis, persistent poverty and social polarization, global cities have the challenging task of leading a reversal of these trends. Global cities will have to be redesigned in such a way that social, economic and environmental capital reinforce and regenerate one another. Public transportation, we argue, is one of the tools global cities can employ to achieve this regenerative economy. Research has established the economic benefits of labor mobility and environmental benefits of energy efficiency. Public transportation's potential to create social capital has been less appreciated, however. Streets, stations, buses and trains can act as public spaces for social interaction, stages for civic action, venues for public education and entertainment, and emblems of urban identity, in addition to their economic and environmental functions. Public transportation can penetrate a city's isolated enclaves and unite its tapestry of cultures around common causes and interests. Our research of global cities has revealed insights about the critical features that make transportation systems socially regenerative or destructive.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Social workers speak with a homeless man on a platform at subway station to convince him to take a bus provided by RATP (Parisian Transport Authority) to a shelter. The public transportation system acts as a safety net for the disadvantaged without hiding their existence from affluent classes.



Images, G. (2008, December 3). Paris, France.



Toryview. (2009, April 4). Lisbon, Portugal.

Planning projects intended to improve global image in order to attract foreign direct investment often neglect the needs and interests of the city's residents. Creating iconic transportation infrastructure can establish unity and facilitate social mobility, while also turning heads of entrepreneurs. The steam locomotive became a cultural icon for utilitarian progress; perhaps green architecture of train stations and symbols such as the Boston T or London Tube can spur an environmental revolution.

GLOBAL IMAGE+

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS PUBLIC SPACE

The minibuses in Lima, Peru, like those depicted, are often colorful with unique designs reflecting the vibrant community that it serves. Because transportation is so consequential, effective transportation systems must be coordinated comprehensively. Nevertheless, aspiring or professional artists and architects from local neighborhoods can design their stations, stops, trains and buses. This "Capital Web" approach to design grants a feeling of ownership and belonging for residents, while creating unique character.



Schüßler, H. (2008, November 15). Lima, Peru. multicin, p. (2008, November 18). Taitos, Peru.

CITY AS CANVAS

CIVIC

On December 1, 1956, Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat for a white man, a gesture mandated by law at the time. Her protest marked the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which lasted over a year and led to the Civil Rights Movement. The boycott remains a venerated example of non-violent social movements.



Parks, R. (1956, December). AP. Montgomery, Alabama, USA.



Post, T. C. (2008, June 2). London, England

On the eve of June 1st 2008, before the city of London banned consumption of alcohol in the 'tubes', many of the locals organized themselves for a final "Tube Party" on the Circle Line. While alcohol may only be banned once, on-train celebrations of football victories, civic accomplishments or great concerts can bond city dwellers and help society function harmoniously.

BONDING CAPITAL+

Metrocable public transportation systems are becoming popular solutions squatter exclusion in global cities, as they connect chaotic squatter cities on steep hillsides to formal settlements. Unlike highways, these gondolas preserve the neighborhoods and public spaces below them, while serving people of all ages, incomes, and physical abilities.



Manuela, F. (2007, August 16). Medellín, Colombia.

EQUITY+



PASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT



Keane, M. (2008, October 17). New York, New York, USA.

Almost every surface of the New York subway system is covered with advertisements, but now the transportation plans to project video ads onto tunnel walls as well. In addition to encouraging excessive consumption, advertisement is passive entertainment that distracts passengers from interacting with the diverse people of their city.

STATUS SYMBOL



Guardian, T. (2007, August 20). Cars are blatant status symbols that illustrate inequality, create class divisions and foster racial stigma in global cities. On public transportation and sidewalks, a CEO and factory worker are brought to the same level and can interact to produce bridging capital.

Highways consume vast amounts of space with pavement and unappreciated enclosed green-spaces. They provide little opportunity for social interaction or productivity, as drivers are occupied by driving, and only provide mobility for those who can drive. In addition, highways create physical barriers segregating neighborhoods and creating social stigma.



HIGHWAYS

In Jakarta, squatters sift the rubble of their incinerated settlement underneath a highway where they are neglected by formal settlements. Highways often create "anti-space" below them and in areas bound by them, which is either inaccessible, unattractive or dominated by illegal activity.



AP. (2007, May 22). Jakarta, Indonesia.

ANTI-SPACE



Many global cities have followed the American, highway-oriented development model and struggle with congestion and inefficiency, as well as limited social capital and ubiquitous anti-space. Bus Rapid Transit, like the Transmilenio system in Bogotá, Colombia, is a cost-effective method of creating public transportation on existing highways and diffusing their negative externalities.



cachaco_de_modelia, F. (2007, January 4). Bogota, Colombia.

FUTURE

ADAPTATIONS



Can we challenge the utilitarian notion of public transportation as simply mobilizing consumers and workers? Can we vindicate the lost spaces created by highway oriented cities and create systems that eliminate them? We see the fusion of public transportations and public spaces as a fundamental principle of future cities.

MOBILE PUBLIC SPACE

