

Written Response

This project investigates the role of Route 73 in shaping and affirming social connections in the urban network.

Infrastructural Tourism (Mattern, 2013) provides a key insight into the theme for this investigation. According to Mattern, infrastructures are man-made systems operating collaboratively to distribute resources across a given site where numerous systems intersect and connect. Mattern argues that only by observing our surrounding infrastructures can we develop infrastructural literacy, or, the ability to understand our dependencies on these systems and reflect on their social implications.

Route 73 runs between the residential area of Stoke Newington and the commercial hub of Oxford Circus. Beyond functioning as a transit system, it operates as a mobile infrastructure that grants residents with a more affordable means of reaching resources concentrated in the city centre. Residents along its route rely on the service to perform daily routines. This dependency reflects a form of surrender, in which comfort and privacy are relinquished in exchange for economic opportunities. Building on this concept, the project positions Route 73 as a physical infrastructure through which commuters compromises personal space in favour of access to urban resources, resulting in the formation of a community based on involuntary cohabitation.

Species of Spaces and Other Places (Perec, 1997) expands this investigation further by offering a method of experiential engagement through observational writing. The work encourages reassessment of spaces via the compilation of visually observable details, phrased in the simplest way possible. Instead of describing the space itself directly, the observer is invited to focus on their lived experiences within it—what occurs there, what the space is used for, and who uses it.

This inventory defamiliarises our conventional understanding of the space, thus constructs a new version of it in our subconscious mind. This project hence employed this method and documents Route 73 focusing on its commuters, specifically their interaction with the space and one another.

It was then observed that the compacted seating arrangement has long blurred the boundaries of personal space between unfamiliar commuters. This spatial constraint has compelled commuters to adopt verbal communication as an adaptive strategy to navigate the tension between privacy and publicity. From this perspective, verbal communication becomes a form of negotiation between commuters and the bus. This negotiation results in a new dimension of the bus space, one based on shared stories and emotional resonance. In other words, through reclaiming privacy, commuters are unconsciously drawn to strengthen their social connections with their companions during the journey, coincidentally implying new significance to Route 73 through collective memories.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Route 73 is a multi-dimensional space sustained through serial acts of surrender, designed to maintain the pre-established urban social network by forcing its commuters to endlessly yield to its operation in order to carry out daily activities. It is a reflection of how public infrastructures function in actual practice, revealing the reality of how social networks in the urban landscape are continuously built and reinforced through compulsory decision-making by its residents.

Bibliography

- Mattern, S. (2013) Infrastructural Tourism. *Places Journal*, July. Available at: <https://placesjournal.org/article/infrastructural-tourism/> (Accessed: 5 October 2025).
- Perec, G. (1997) *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. Translated by J. Sturrock. London: Penguin Books.