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The Legible City

Intermodal urban signage in Latin America

A NEW ON-BOARD BUS DISPLAY SYSTEM GIVING INFORMATION ON ROUTES, INTERMODAL CONNECTIONS AND THE CITY'S SIGNIFICANT FOCAL POINTS. INITIATED AND IMPLEMENTED IN BUENOS AIRES, THE PROJECT IS UNDER DEVELOPMENT IN OTHER CITIES – RIO DE JANEIRO, PORTO ALEGRE...

Information is a key component in getting around any city. However, it has received little attention in Latin America. In some cities, the transportation system is an integrated public network. In others, like Buenos Aires and many other Latin American cities, there is a system of private operating licences, in which everyone tends to concentrate on their own service. This means that providing an integrated information system for users of the city is a major challenge. It is all the greater in a context where public transit faces increased competition, further exacerbated by new imperatives such as travel passes, tourist provision, new medium-capacity lines, route redefinition, ever-increasing urban expansion, etc.

In response to this challenge, IVM-Latin America is developing multimodal urban information systems initially on three of the city's bus lines. The project is run in coordination with bus companies, the City of Buenos Aires and the federal government. It uses elements of web design, architecture and culture to develop and display public transport information systems in different cities, drawing on ideas put forward by users. It has already been implemented in vehicles on three bus routes in Buenos Aires (132, 12, 34 and soon 50 more), an experiment that has helped to refine the information selection and design protocol for application to other routes on the network. Work on adapting the project to the Métrobus lines is in its final phase, together with its application to the city's largest intermodal hubs. It provides an information and reference protocol that includes the interconnectivity of public transport and the mobility system in general.

It makes the city more legible in the sense that it gives users the information they need to make the best decisions for their travel plans, in full possession of the facts, at any time and anywhere. To do this, the system identifies shared codes and offers a common set of references in Latin America's large cities. In Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre or Lima, the aim each time is to develop and reinforce a single and specific interface. This takes into account the specificities of each city, whether these relate to the way the city is planned, the way mobility is organised or the society's particular culture.