

Place, Identity, and Imagined Geography: The Cultural Politics of the Mass Rapid Transit System in Kaohsiung, Taiwan

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The Mass Rapid Transit system in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, reveals a paradox that challenges the effect of homogenization and the negative judgment of this effect embedded in the theoretical discussions of global city formation. It points to the danger of equating and privileging the local as a space of authenticity and community while associating the global with the abstract and universal. A “non-place” like a subway system attains great meanings, to the extent that it becomes a reflection of the nation, in the Taiwanese context precisely because it is considered as devoid of any specific historiography. This “jumping of scales” is facilitated by the recent development in both the global capitalist expansion and Taiwan’s accommodation to this expansion, under which the city emerges as the linkage between a national (or regional) economy and the global economy. This economic turn provides new possibilities for the Taiwanese to envision their collective identity.

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