

Pedestrian Footbridges and the Production of Socio-economic Spaces in Urban Ghana: Reflections from Kumasi.

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Abstract

This paper poses, and attempts to answer the question: do footbridges ensure pedestrian safety in urban Ghana? The study argues, that beyond easing pedestrian movements, footbridges in urban Ghana produce social and economic spaces, less understood by engineers, planners and city authorities. In the presentation, I explore the dynamic production, co-production and re-production of social and economic spaces around pedestrian footbridges. Using two case studies in Kumasi, the study adopted multiple qualitative data collection methods, including pedestrian counts and interviews, institutional consultations, interview of traders around the footbridges and focus group discussions of local stakeholders. The study reveals multiple unintended uses of the footbridges and reactions of pedestrians. Instead of providing safety for pedestrians, footbridges rather produced a huge market space, passenger “pick-up” and “drop-off” points, street vending activities, which reshape their uses and relevance. Situated within the “production of space” theoretical framework, the study unpacks how the social contexts and uses of footbridges can be understood by relevant professionals in urban Ghana. If inclusive and participatory urban planning is anything to go by, then maybe pedestrian footbridges in urban Ghana must be re-designed to respond to the socio-economic needs of residents.