The design of the stations of a new subway line seems to be a problem in which architecture has a subsidiary role, since the daily movement of millions of people would be the most important objective. But this project shows that, when there is architecture, it is noticeable: the sizes and the quality of the surfaces not only prevent the mass transport experience to be overwhelming but also, in many cases, it can be even better than the city on the surface.
Santiago’s public transport network – structured mainly by the interdependence between the subway and the Transantiago [bus] – is undoubtedly a regional reference, given the complexity and public explosion that urban transport acquired.

As of February 10, 2007, the Transantiago bus transportation system was opened for the metropolitan region. Along with it, a radical and irreversible change detonated at the subway network. As an example, during rush hours average density in wagons reaches 6.5 users per square meter.

The first images of this newly integrated system were not those of an interconnected city or efficient trips; they were rather the story of large crowds waiting to get on the train or bus with high evasion numbers.

However, we must understand that the system opens a number of opportunities for improvements, which include the creation of a network of public spaces throughout the city linked to both the subway and the Transantiago stations.
The following conversation is based on a series of photos dedicated to subway Line 6 published in an Instagram account. These photographs show the user’s view, while the conversation seeks to reunite such view with that of architecture, exploring questions that have to do with the shape, use and perception of the urban transport space.

AL: I suggest going to go to the most basic concern of an architecture office when building public infrastructure. Do people recognize the architecture behind it or is it seen only as an infrastructure problem? In your experience as user and photographer, in the case there is architecture, do you recognize it? Could you identify and say if the architecture of the Santiago’s subway has certain features, certain highlights? Can you underscore something or is it only understood as a question of trains, stairs and so on?
JPF: Many people feel that Line 6 is quite free of materials, up to the point of looking unfinished or built in a hurry for the opening. There is also the feeling that the line is spacious, but with no certainty it is really finished. It is not very usual to see subway stations with exposed concrete. We are used to having everything covered or painted, even under the counters.

AL: What calls an amateur photographer – and I do not mean this in a pejorative sense – to photograph the urban landscape, to select parts of city, buildings, and – in this particular case – a subway line?

JPF: On the one hand, my family history is partially linked to architecture, but I have always liked the final result of buildings in their context. I think Santiago is a beautiful city; instead of a city of landmarks – of an Eiffel Tower kind – it is a city of corners. I have realized that over the last ten years photographing the city.

AL: Your photographs are rather particular; for us, it has been interesting to notice that it’s not photography under any classical parameter, looking for certain proportions. Instead, it is precisely seen from a singular point of view. Over your detour, do you feel that photography pushes forward what we build as a collective image of the city?

JPF: Sure, from a pedestrian’s point of view. Today, for instance, we appreciate the new angles delivered by drones, but I have some objections regarding that sort of image, as it is far removed from the ordinary reality I’m interested in. Everyone tells me to buy drones for the pictures, but I prefer to focus on the citizen’s view. The average pedestrian that does not realize what he sees throughout his daily routine. Just on the way back from the office, there were already some quite good angles!

AL: You have traveled through all the stations in Line 6; in fact, traveled and photographed them. What were you able to observe as a photographer, as a user, when a station emerges in a certain part of the city? What did you observe with the subway’s arrival to Cerrillos, for instance?

JPF: The example that struck me the most was Pedro Aguirre Cerda Station. How in such a small plot such a powerful entrance was achieved; a daily interruption for a district like that. For the people, it was a good achievement.

AL: And the fact that public infrastructure – especially in the case of the subway – is closely linked to the ground level, an infrastructure designed for the pedestrian. The means of accelerated travel for the pedestrian journey.

JPF: It seems to me that previous extensions were not as unusual as Line 6 is, as it is almost parallel to Line 1.

PPC: Something interesting happens with the pedestrian’s point of view – only occupying a couple of meters above ground level – in these three-dimensional...
stations, featuring a large void, filled only with air. It looks great in your photos and it seems to be the subtlest architectural aspect at Line 6 that people notice. You say that they find the stations spacious, ‘huge,’ 'monumental,' those words begin to appear and it is something that is not said about other spaces of the kind.

AL: There are a number of factors. It must be said that when a station is planned, feasibility studies define the depth levels of tunnels and galleries, and this strongly affects the way in which the line, the train tunnel, the catenaries, and so on, are set. One works with pre-defined conditions. Now, during the design process, one thinks whether that excavation or that void given by the engineers is going to be filled or if, in some way, it is going to be used and transformed into that special feature the station must have. Clearly, we always wanted the volume of air inside the stations to be as much as possible and, hopefully, that the changes in daylight were perceptible from the platform. Sometimes it is achieved, sometimes not so much.

There is something in that volume of air, which does not happen with the building. Something that becomes clear in the photographs. The relationship between the station and the street is meant to be continuous, to be fluid. We were thinking about the first stations in Line 1. Pajaritos Station, for example, has a series of pavilions in an area that is being transformed and consolidated. Or cases like Inés de Suárez Station which is a gate to a much larger volume. Then, finally, what is perceived from the station? Is it its position? Is it the Metro S. A.'s logo? The signs? Either way, these are not related to the massive world inwards, thinking also in a significant volume of people moving. There is an extra fact: when the stations are empty these large spaces appear, but at rush hours the spaces are completely full.
JPF: There are also examples like Bío Bío Station, where rush hours are on weekends on account of the Persa Bío Bío flea market. On the other hand, Pedro Aguirre Cerda or Cerrillos stations are empty on the weekends. And these are two very different photo outcomes, between a full station and an empty one.

AL: It is difficult to photograph these underground stations, that underground world. It is quite homogeneous; the ten stations look like different facades of the same building.

JPF: But there are also peculiarities at transfer stations. In Nuble, for instance, there are several open areas, pillars, an interplay of spaces; when arriving at the transfer area there is something different from what you see in the entrance or from what you see in the station on Line 5. There is an interplay of angles. The same thing happens at Los Leones station. Transfer stations are good examples to be photographed. Exteriors are also challenging, having certain angles obstructed.

AL: It is important to note that the magazine’s commission is not exclusively what triggers this conversation. It started before, when we discovered your Instagram feed (@fegophotography). We found, eventually, the rigor behind photographing the stations, discovering the new line through your photos. We made a first contact and later requested you to go back to the stations and take more pictures. And then, obviously, something uncommon happened: meeting the architects behind the subway line’s design, though they could have also

9 Congestión en metro de Santiago. Congestion at Santiago’s subway. Fuente / Source: La Tercera, Agencia Uno
been the architects of an x building. Thus, what was originally done on your own, for your own archive, now becomes a commission. In other words, the commission derives from a dialogue between the user, the photographer, and the architects. There is a particular point of view. The other day, while going through the photos, the issue of privacy or security came up. As these spaces are public, civic facilities, the buildings belong to all their users and are ruled by certain strict security measures. It is not allowed to stay; it is not allowed to take pictures.

PPC: The story you told us then was also interesting: as you were standing on a sidewalk, a public space, the guards arrived; to be removed from the subway by guards also shows that, despite being a public space and a state-owned company, it works as a private company.

AL: Nowadays, to build a record on the city you rely on images. Just like those stories of Perec, who sits in a public square and describes it, after spending days just sitting and writing his poems. Today, that routine of observation is very much in the hands of photography, of video, of how those images are built and how they are disseminated, which ends up being the way through which we got to know your photos.

JPF: There is also a special atmosphere when a building is inaugurated, something like a probation week during which everyone takes pictures, selfies, and records. It happens in towers, in malls, and on the subway. The day of the opening I went with my tripod, my camera, and friends also with their cameras, and no one forbade us to do anything.

AL: I heard that people walked in singing the national anthem the day Line 6 was inaugurated. There is
something nice about the opening of a public facility; a sort of ‘adoption’ takes place. I feel that, with all its peculiarities, people adopted the line.

As a subway user, what things do you think are missing? Because obviously we are in favor of public space, public transport, the subway, the Transantiago, and we seek to integrate these systems. In short, we believe that a better-connected city will generate a better city. But that may be just too theoretical in the eyes of the regular user.

**JPF:** I believe that Line 7 is going to be the most beneficial one for the city. It will be interesting to see how flows are reordered, since it will run parallel to Line 1.

**AL:** And there is a ‘hot point’ in the convergence, now being built, between lines 1, 4, 6 and eventually Line 7.

**JPF:** And if it arrives at the airport!

**AL:** And if there was a train system that reached Valparaíso, you could go through a large portion of the territory on rails. Without getting off.

Now, back to the stations, these will eventually begin to be filled with spaces that managers consider profitable and become an advertising space. Wagons are covered with beer signs, and so on.

**JPF:** A couple of months ago at Los Leones Station, there was already a university’s ad on the pillars as well as a number of other surfaces. I would say it is part of its financing, of the subway’s own private functioning, as if it were something necessary for it to work. I think it’s something that should be regulated.

**AL:** As a user, I find the size of advertising within the stations somehow aggressive; I find the volume of television sets aggressive; I find aggressive that one does not have the option of avoiding this type of provocation. We somehow think of this line’s interiors as we see them today. We are fooling ourselves believing that someone is going to keep this unfinished, incomplete. That someone will think that because there is no stucco on a wall it cannot be covered with advertising. There is an incongruity in that.

**PPC:** It is also interesting to think to what extent one can place advertising. For instance, only a few would think that you cannot place advertising on a private building, but nobody would advertise on the façade of a public building like La Moneda, because it is a civic building. However, the subway falls within a very arguable grey area. Why couldn’t the subway be considered a civic building?

**JPF:** It should be restricted.
In addition, an important portion of the design efforts was meant to clear the stations from information in favor of neat spaces. What will happen when its advertising capacity is filled? Will that initial effort be lost?

Yes, stations are on that verge; there is a risk. And a large volume also leads to the possibility of filling that available space with a giant banner.

However, it also seems that not all stations are meant for advertising.

That seems critical, because the line traverses a part of the city. It goes from the high-land-prices and high-density center to Pedro Aguirre Cerda, where plots are cheaper, yet the line maintains a certain standard throughout them. Regardless of where they are. If differentiation begins with those in charge of management, by deciding to locate advertising where there is more flow, the differentiation of that homogeneous standard that speaks of a system begins. Moving sixty, seventy million passengers a year speaks of the city’s circulatory system. It also speaks of empowering public means of transport over the use of cars. All of it, under a canon of homogeneity, of continuity that turns partial, that turns into a segregating element if we modify the stations.

There is another interesting thing: going back to references. I mentioned earlier Pajaritos, but we also discussed the space at Los Héroes Station.

And it also recalls Universidad Católica Station, when you notice how the public square becomes part of the station.
PPC: Another good example could be Plaza de Maipú Station.

AL: One last question. Why photographing architecture? Could it produce value?

JPF: I started my Instagram account only a few months ago and many people value the photographs, how I capture architecture, but many also tell me that these photographs are not of everybody’s taste, of ordinary people’s taste. They find them very right-angled, very straight. However, my intention is to bring to social networks that experience I have with a particular place in the city. To show that it is possible to better appreciate the city, gazing up from time to time. Valuing that moment in the city a little bit more.

AL: And, at the same time, it is a new version of architectural photography, with its free format and lack of curatorial control from the authors of that particular space. We come across that photograph without overdirecting, without stressing an overproduction on what interests us. There is a tacit agreement because the platform points towards freedom. ARQ
LINEA 6 METRO DE SANTIAGO

Arquitectos / Architects: mobi Arquitectos, ACXT Arquitectos (IDOM)
Ubicación / Location: Santiago de Chile
Cliente / Client: Metro S.A.

Ingeniería estructural / Structural engineering: ALV ingenieros
Construcción / Building contractor: E1-055A, Ferrovial Agroman S.A., Besalco-Dragados

Instalación sanitaria / Mechanical engineering: IDOM y PSI Consultores
Instalación eléctrica / Electrical system: IDOM y PSI Consultores

Materiales / Materials: Hormigón armado / Reinforced concrete
Materialidad de terminaciones / Finishing materials: Vitrispan, mosaico de vidrio, tela tensada / Vitrispan, glass mosaic, stretched fabric

Presupuesto / Budget: US$ 1.356/m²
Superficie construida / Built surface: 123.525 m²
Año de proyecto / Project year: 2013-2014
Año de construcción / Construction year: 2015-2017

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Diseñador gráfico, estudios técnicos de la DuocUC, 2017. Se autodidacta fotógrafo de arquitectura y ciudad por más de 10 años, en 2017 abrió una cuenta de Instagram (@fegophotography) donde comparte sus fotografías de espacios urbanos cotidianos.

Pedro Pablo Contrucci C.

Arquitecto, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2015. Durante sus estudios, fue presidente del Architecture Student Center 2013 y asistente de profesor para Sebastián Gray, Óscar Rodríguez y Luis Eduardo Bresciani L. Ha colaborado con la planificación urbana y el espacio público. Fue premiado con el Premio Hernán Riesco Grez en 2015 y finalista en el MoMA Young Architects Program 2016 (MoMa Young Architects Program) concurso. Desde 2016, ha sido parte de mobi Arquitectos equipo de investigación y estudio.