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# Introduction

The 340 Technical and Scientific Cooperation Action (Action Cost 340) entitled 'Towards a European Intermodal Transport Network: Lessons from History' has gathered a large number of researchers since 2000. These historians, geographers, economists and engineers are all natives of the countries (as many as eighteen in 2004) that agreed to participate in this research programme financed partly by the European Union and partly benefiting from funding by the participating states. Action Cost 340 aims to observe and present – independent of ideology and without theoretical preconceptions – the successive realities of the development of trans-European connections and of inter-modal transportation, two major factors in the integration of transportation networks within Europe. To achieve this, it is necessary to provide an analytical framework in order to define transport policies and a series of recommendations that will help in determining priorities for the various projects designed by the European authorities.

Within the framework of this program, several scientific conferences have already taken place. The first was organised by Hans-Luidger Dienel, Professor at *Berlin Technische Universität* and Vice-president of Action Cost 340. It was held on 28 September 2001 in Berlin, on the theme: 'Why so Late?'. The contributions analysed the reasons behind the delayed construction of infrastructures that aim to consolidate connections between different transport modes. The second event was held in Lisbon from 23/25 May 2002, thanks to Maria Eugenia Mata, Professor at *Universidade Nova de Lisboa* and a member of the Action management committee. This conference concerned the development of the European transport system, which was explored both through general investigations and case studies. It led participants to analyse the development of some concepts such as complementarity and coordination, inter- and multi-modality. It also aimed at applying an inter-modal approach to the networks boom and to the implementation of some trans-European corridors. A CD-ROM of the conference's proceedings will soon be available.

(1) The Eindhoven conference also aimed at rounding up a large number of researchers to form, at G Mom's initiative, the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility.

(2) Even though this session was not organized with the financial support of the COST programme, it brought the works-in-progress and program of Action 340 to the attention of the academic world.

Action COST acted in partnership with other research groups, thus promoting the progress of the three other international conferences. The first conference was organized by two members of the Action COST Management Committee: Claudio Pavese, Professor at Milano University Political Sciences Department and Andrea Giuntini, Professor at Modena University. It took place in the premises owned by the Milano University at Gargnano (Lake Garda) from 2 to 3 May 2002. Under my presidency were gathered Italian scholars and researchers, all transportation experts coming from various fields. We were thus able to assess the state of researches all over Italy. A volume will be issued in 2004, with the title: *Verso una rete intermodale europea di trasporti. Tendenze, filoni e problemi della ricerca in Italia*.

The second conference was held in Neuchâtel from 13 to 15 February 2003, thanks to Laurent Tissot, Professor at the Arts and Human Sciences Department of Neuchâtel University, and Gjis Mom, researcher at the *Foundation for the History of Technology* (Eindhoven Technology University) and President of the *Tensions of Europe, Mobility History* research group. They also belong to the Action COST 340 Management Committee and they mobilized the researchers on the topic of *L'histoire de la mobilité et le réseau routier européen* (History of Mobility and the European Road Network). Financed by several Swiss institutions (The Scientific Foundation, the State, Neuchâtel University and the Touring Club) and by the COST program, this conference was an opportunity to analyse the road policies and programmes implemented in various European countries, as well as to present more specific studies relative to local and regional transportation. A publication of this conference proceedings is also planned for 2004.

The third encounter continued the cooperation started in Neuchâtel and took place from 6 to 9 November 2003 at Eindhoven Technology University, under the aegis of G. Mom, and with the participation of the *Transport History Group of the German Association for Business History* chaired by Hans-Luidger Diemel. Organized around the general theme of History of Transportation, Traffic and Mobility, this encounter made possible for Action COST 340 and more specifically, for two of its work groups (one chaired by Laurent Bonnaud and the other, on this specific occasion, by Peter Lyth) to focus their efforts on three major issues : cross-border connections; trans-European corridors and their traffic; trains, planes and very high speed. Some of the studies presented then will be published in specialized reviews<sup>(1)</sup>. Also including the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the XIII international Congress of Economic History held in Buenos Aires from 22-26 July 2002<sup>(2)</sup>, these first initiatives will be completed by a future conference to be held in Milano in May 2004, seminar Prague in September 2004 and the Action's final conference in Paris in the spring of 2005.

In parallel to these, Action Cost 340 also aims to analyse and discuss the bibliography on transport and inter-modality in all the social sciences, particularly history, geography and transport economics. This enterprise is an ambitious one as can be seen in the bibliographies gathered in this volume. The reader will, in fact, realise that the

## INTRODUCTION

authors had to make a very selective choice from the very numerous publications on European transport, and therefore the list of studies relating to each country is far from exhaustive. Concerned with respecting the criteria chosen by the Action management committee, the authors generally present works published within the last twenty years. Only rarely do they refer to books published before this. The management Committee proposed a common structure for each chapter, combining a wide-range chronological approach – overviews, before the steamage, up to 1914, the inter-war period, the post-war up to the 1980's, recent developments since 1990 – and modal headings under each sub-section. References appear mainly in order of publication. Each contributor chose to adapt this outline to national cases as explained in the chapters introduction.

After looking at the books and articles included in the bibliographies one can make three observations. The first concerns the researchers' approach: generally, their mono-modal approach reflects the logic of supply. Their studies aim at describing: the policy that favoured each transportation mode, the development of technologies, and the organisation of services that were provided along the lines of competition. Even general books are no exception: a chapter by chapter analysis of the development of each transportation mode proves it irrefutably. Another characteristic also emerges clearly: railways still attract the attention of experts more than do other transport modes. It seems that the traditional 'heroic' vision of railways, established by nineteenth-century authors as the very symbol of industrial power and progress, is still prevalent and due to the very high rail speeds that appeared in the early 1980s. The increase in the number of different types of high-speed European trains (TGV, ICE, Pendolino, ETR 500, to name only the most famous) contributed to the publication of numerous studies. However, the imbalance with the two other traditional transport networks (roads and waterways) tended to decrease because the boom in automobile use, from the 1950s on, has also raised a lot of interest. A thorough examination of the bibliographies shows that the development of the highway network and the boom in goods road traffic, are among the most studied themes. The boom in air transportation in the years from 1960 to 1980 has also grabbed researchers' attention. Historians as well as geographers studied airport layouts, and the development of road or rail infrastructures that had to be adapted to guarantee the indispensable connection between cities and airports. In such a context, all the bibliographies show the marginalisation of studies about inland navigation, whose decline in some countries – France in particular – seemed inexorable soon after the Second World War.

The second observation is about the way researchers considered innovations in the transport sector. They first took into account the innovations that led to improvements in infrastructures and rolling stock, and tended to neglect those that characterised commercial operations, organisation and the management of traffic flows. However, a broad historiographical movement was born, thanks to the innovative works of B. Gille and T. P. Hughes, two historians who, respectively, were behind the concepts of

technical system and large-scale technical system. By putting users at the heart of the development of transport modes, and especially at the centre of rail, air and automobile development, European researchers envisaged the history of transportation in relation to the development of society as a whole. Finally, during the 1980s another approach emerged, for the studies pursued by historians and economists increasingly tended to consider decision-making processes and actors. Research areas such as relations between networks, interconnections, and the effects of networks on their spatial environment continued to hold the attention of geographers.

Thirdly, it must be pointed out that the bibliographies presented here indirectly show the gaps that are inherent in approaches to the transport sector as one in which competition rules. This is in keeping with the attitude of network managers, and it explains why inter-modality – that is to say, the complementarity of networks with the movements of goods and travellers – was neglected as a theme. Few are the historians who tackled this issue, and the works available to us are most often limited to very specific cases; for example nodal points, and true interfaces between two or various transportation modes. A close reading of the book lists drawn up by the contributors reveals that airports are the most studied subjects, while ports and harbour stations, and inland ports (waterways' ports, connection harbours on canals) raised less interest. Only recently have geographers tackled the issue of inter-modality, and attempted to determine its characteristics. This, however, requires a comparative analysis of the definitions given on either side of borders, for the semantic field related to the notion of inter-modality varies from one country to another. Another difficulty inherent to the nature of the available sources is raised when considering the following: the behaviour and strategies of operators (carriers and logistics operators); and the role of the various players (users, local and regional authorities, states), and now the European authorities. The reports and directives from Brussels – which, in the field of transport, have become more and more numerous over the last thirty years – form a valuable document source. But only archive sources that include the record of enquiries made at all levels and the documentation of discussions that lead up to decision-making can provide us with satisfying explanations.

Two last remarks are necessary to conclude this brief introduction. As Action president I regret that this volume remains incomplete, but the agenda requirements could not bear a further publication delay and it has therefore not been possible to integrate other bibliographies. I must offer my very sincere thanks to the colleagues who participated in the making of this book, which in spite of the limitations discussed above, is a valuable tool for anyone interested in European transportation. These acknowledgements also include Marie-Noëlle Polino, secretary of the French Railway Historical Society (AHICF), in charge of the Cost 340 Action secretariat; Maïca Sanconie, who translated the present text and some chapters into English; Susan J. Vincent, who was in charge of the editing; and Emmanuelle Noël who acted as the desktop publisher.