Urban Machinery

Inside Modern European Cities

edited by
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This collection of essays investigates the making of European cities and modern urban life. In particular, it brings out the technological dimension of modern European cities. Drawing on wide-ranging examples, it illustrates the intriguing relationships between technological, economic, and social developments in cities and towns across Europe. The book investigates the most important changes in the urban environment across the past century and a half. To cover such a long time span and the whole of Europe is a daunting task. None of the contributors could possibly do so on his or her own.

This book is unique in that it includes studies from northern and southern Europe, West and East—and also in that it discusses the ways in which European cities were viewed from and shaped by interaction with the periphery (for example, Turkey) and the United States. Among our contributors are historians from Germany, the United States, Poland, Sweden, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, and the Netherlands. This is not a typical “conference volume.” Since 2000 we have worked together in an international network supported by the European Science Foundation and the U.S. National Science Foundation.

This book is a collective enterprise. It is a joint effort by scholars who study technology, cities, society, culture, and economics from several disciplinary vantage points. Not surprisingly, then, our endeavor has been a lengthy process. The initial task we set ourselves was to examine the state of the art, to get a grasp on the rich body of literature on what we chose to call the history of urban technology. The outcome was two electronic publications, available at ⟨www.histech.nl/tensions⟩ and ⟨www.umn.edu/~tmisa/toe20/urban-machine⟩. We refer readers who are interested in historiographical detail to these publications. Additional city images and teaching resources may be found at ⟨umn.edu/~tmisa/urban⟩.

Having taken stock of the existing literature, we set out to make our own contribution. The present volume depended on the generous financial support of two research councils and several other institutions. The European Science Foundation and the National Science Foundation co-funded a series of workshops the group held in Darmstadt, York, Budapest, and Amsterdam between 2000 and 2004. We would also like to
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