

Urban Machinery

Inside Modern European Cities

**edited by
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Preface

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

thank the Darmstadt University of Technology and the National Railway Museum in York, England, for their support.

We also need to thank those involved in preparing the book's manuscript. At TU Darmstadt, Iris Ohlrogge efficiently managed a steady flow of papers for the workshops and the book project, and Simon Bihl helped us set up the index. For assistance with editing we are indebted to Stephany Filimon and Ed Todd. Translations were done professionally by Peter McKenna (chapter 9) and Bernard Vowles (chapter 12). At the University of Minnesota, Katie Baumhover Charlet capably took charge of editing and printing the final manuscript, advising with a French translation, and compiling the integrated bibliography. Our long-suffering authors endured untold rounds of questions and revisions.

Last but not least, our thanks to Johan Schot and his colleagues at the Dutch Foundation for the History of Technology at the Eindhoven University of Technology. At the end of the 1990s Johan initiated a Europe-wide network, Tensions of Europe, to which our group belonged from the very beginning. Mikael Hård directed one of nine research themes, "Narratives on the European City." With the present book, we hope that our publications will stimulate further research on the borderlines between the histories of technology, cities, and Europe.