

Models of Mobility

Systemic Differences, Path Dependencies, Economic, Social and Environmental Impact (1900 to tomorrow)

A workshop organized jointly by the German Historical Institute (GHI), Washington DC, the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies (CCGES), and the Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto

Conveners: Matthias Kipping (Schulich), Christina Kraenzle (CCGES), and Christina Lubinski (GHI)

To be held at York University on 23 and 24 March 2012

There are continuing debates about the best ways to transport people and goods both over short and long distances in a world marked by population growth, increased urbanization, and –after a brief crisis–induced hiatus– growing trade flows. These concern both the developed economies, which struggle to modernize and integrate their aging infrastructures and reduce the environmental, social and economic cost of mobility, and the emerging economies that often have to build new transportation systems from scratch trying to accommodate rapid growth and changing user preferences.

Building on previous efforts by the CCGES focusing on ‘automobility’, this workshop tries to put these debates into a broader historical and comparative context, by looking at the way different models of mobility emerged and developed in Europe and North America since 1900. The beginning of the 20th century was chosen as the point of departure, because at the time the existing water- and railways started to be complemented and subsequently rivalled by motor vehicles, which were giving a new sense to roads, and by air planes. The same period also saw the first establishment of large-scale urban transport networks.

The workshop intends to look in particular at how various actors, namely industry, users and policy-makers shaped systems that differed along a number of dimensions, including for example public vs. private ownership and operation, individual vs. communal forms of transportation. It also wants to examine the extent to which these initial models might have created path dependencies in terms of technology, physical infrastructure and cultural preferences that limited subsequent choices and, last but not least, to assess the economic, social and environmental impact these different models of mobility had then and continue to have now. The workshop will include a panel discussion among practitioners about possible future scenarios, both in developed and emerging economies.

Those interested in presenting a paper at this workshop should send a 1,000-word abstract and a one-page CV to Baerbel Thomas (b.thomas@ghi-dc.org) by 15 October 2011. Papers with an international and/or comparative dimension are particularly encouraged. Decisions will be announced by 30 November 2011 and full papers need to be completed by 31 January 2012. The organizers will pay the cheapest possible airfare and local costs for all participants.