

Abstracts

Sergio Onger/Ivan Paris

The re-organisation of the Paduan waterway system: the Locarno-Venice waterway

Consideration of the need to re-organize the Paduan waterway system dates back to the 1840s, but it was only a century later that the necessity began to lead to concrete measures. The aim was to provide an economically important area of northern Italy with a modern system of internal waterways, which would be integrated into the European waterway network. Although never completed, the project is still considered today to be of potential strategic value for the renewal of the Italian transport network. Recognising the institutional, political and economic reasons for the mothballing of the ambitious plans for the Locarno-Venice waterway is useful for understanding the suppositions behind the model of infrastructural development characteristic of northern Italy in the second half of the twentieth century.

Alfred Werner Höck

Infrastructure policy and labour migration: The construction of the Tauern railway tunnel in Salzburg from 1901 to 1909

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Austrian government tried to address the long persisting problem of regional economic disparity by initiating the building of new railways, so as to connect the western parts of the Habsburg Monarchy with the main port of Trieste. The centre-piece of this new infrastructural policy was the construction of the Tauern railway tunnel between Salzburg and Carinthia. From 1901 to 1909, several thousand workers populated the then still remote Gastein valley. For the most part, both the local population and the regional authorities regarded these migrant workers, the vast majority of whom came from the southern and south-eastern parts of the Austro-Hungarian state, with a combination of apprehension and repudiation. Sheltered near the construction site and far away from the villages, working and living conditions for the migrant workers and their family members were very trying. The ethnic and social tensions initiated by the government's infrastructure programme can be seen as a mirror of the condition of the Habsburg Monarchy in its late phase. One conclusion that can be drawn for the present is that infrastructure planning should not be viewed solely as a technical process, because it always involves social repercussions, both intended and unintended.

Magdalena Pernold

The Brenner motorway as transport and transit infrastructure: the erosion of geographical spaces for transport in the period of their realization

Employing the methods of the ‘new transport history’, the article analyses the discourse about the Brenner motorway in Tyrol and South Tyrol during the period of its realization (1959–1974/75). Generally speaking, the construction of the motorway and its impact on processes of communication, exchange and transfer, and on the transnational erosion of transport spaces, was viewed positively and its construction was seen as an urgent economic and transportation necessity. Three thematic strands characterized the mainly homogeneous discourse, albeit with slight differences between Tyrol and South Tyrol: firstly, the association with a connecting ‘European’ infrastructure, which would drive forward the unification of Europe and guarantee a secure economic future; secondly, regional political efforts towards make the Brenner border more permeable, together with concerns about the potentially greater Italianization of South Tyrol resulting from motorway construction; thirdly, discussion about the route of the motorway and the best possible links from economic, traffic, landscaping and aesthetic points of view.

Paolo Tedeschi

Crossing the Alps in order to shape Europe: the European Investment Bank and the financing of projects for Alpine communication routes in the 1960s and 1970s

The paper shows why, during the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, European institutions financed the renovation or building of new infrastructures in the Alpine regions that connected Italy to other EEC members. The European Investment Bank (EIB) financed, firstly, the renovation of the railways between Genoa and Modane and between Bolzano/Bozen and Brennero/Brenner, and secondly, the building of the Bolzano/Bozen-Brennero/Brenner and Aosta-Quincinetto motorways. The European institutions wanted to improve the social and economic cohesion between the EEC countries; the new infrastructure was intended to enable better links to southern Italy (at the time, the most economically ‘backward’ area in the EEC) and to further the development of new factories that had just been established there. At the same time, the new projects improved connections between the Alpine regions and the most developed parts of the EEC, such as Lombardy and Bavaria, as well as to the port of Genoa and southern France. Hence, they enabled both the development of local factories in Alpine regions and the growth of Alpine tourism. In the final analysis, however, the Alpine valleys benefitted more from this investment than southern Italy.

Carlo Bartalucci

Bartolomeo Talenti at the Bolzano/Bozen fairs. A merchant family from Lucca between tradition and demands for reform

Parallel to the weakening attraction exerted by the Polish market over the course of the seventeenth century, merchant traders from Lucca identified Bolzano/Bozen as the ideal spring-board towards the more stable German market. From the second half of the seventeenth to the first half of the eighteenth century, the Bolzano fairs constituted for the traditional silk-trading townsmen of Lucca their main conduit towards the territories beyond the Alps. Moreover, many Luccan merchants rented warehouses in the Tyrolean market-place and these proved worthwhile during the four annual fairs. Among this group was Bartolomeo Talenti, a small-scale businessman who became the protagonist of an extraordinary social and economic rise during the seventeenth century, creating a network of trading interests across much of Europe. The article provides information about the working methods, the merchandise subject to contract, and the provenance of the businessmen involved, as well as the juridical and institutional regulation of merchant activity, with the aim of adding to recent historiography by providing a new perspective for research on the Bolzano fairs.