S-33 – Visions of Urban Mobility in the Global Age from the 1890s to the 1970s

International Committee for the History of Technology

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Abstract:
It was not so much the objective needs of a growing traffic that motivated the remodelling of urban transport in the twentieth century in Europe. Highways were built before mass motorisation was a reality and cities were redesigned to the needs of the automobile before it had arrived in large number. In contrast, it were technological visions of urban mobility and about the city’s connection to the globe which shaped the ways in which European towns and metropolises were re-planned and re-designed in the twentieth century. These concepts were formulated in works of arts, such as literature and film, as well as in professional architecture and city-planning. What united these different models of the future’s urban mobility was that they present their visions in a figuratively compressed form. The tangible character of visions of urban mobility and the cities connection to the globe – the production of compelling visual and literary representations – was central for their power and effectiveness. The papers presented in the session study these visions of urban mobility as well as the city’s connection to the globe from the 1890s until the ecological turn of the 1970s.

Keywords: History of Technology – Transport – Utopias – Traffic Culture – Automobiles.

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