

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Historical research has been exploring the evolution of infrastructures for a long time, but historical infrastructure research itself can be considered as a fairly recent subdiscipline. This applies in particular to studies focusing on cross-border international network connections. We have analysed this topic from the perspective of political and economic history using primarily methods and theories from the political and economic sciences. In this volume we have neither covered important infrastructures such as road traffic, electricity, oil or gas pipelines or aviation nor applied other important approaches derived from technical or cultural history and, consequently, from cultural or social theory. We have also chosen not to explore the economic, political, cultural and social consequences of international infrastructure integration. Infrastructures themselves are only technological systems, but they have a vital importance for different dimensions of society. It would be possible to design a whole research programme which would have to ask a multitude of questions about history and would certainly inspire current systematic infrastructure research. The present volume is therefore just a beginning. The topic of international infrastructure integration will never lose its relevance. There are plans to transfer solar energy from Africa to Europe in the near future. The railway networks between Asia and Europe will be connected more closely and even connections between Asia and North America are within the realms of possibility. A growing network of gas pipelines is envisaged between Russia and Europe, but also between the Asian countries. In comparison the expansion of trans-European networks seems rather conventional, but is high on the European Commission's agenda. Overall the expansion of international infrastructure connections will only gain importance in the future, both on a European and a global level.