

## **Bullet Train Plan As a Transnational Infrastructure**

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This report aims to capture the dynamic transnational stories in Japanese infrastructures in order to make it clear that material infrastructures have changed 'Japanese society', by focusing on the 'Bullet train plan' before and after World War II in and between Japan and Asian Continent.

Material infrastructures have helped to shape a number of spaces and ways in which people have moved through, talked about and experienced their own 'Home' and its surrounding areas. In this report, I will present a case study that explore the material, institutional and discursive complexities involved in planning, building and using transnational infrastructures in and between the Japanese Archipelago and the Asian Continent before and after World War II; this report deal with Japanese railways by focusing on the 'Bullet train plan'.

By bringing infrastructures - Bullet train - and Japan into the same frame, this report has three interrelated aims. First, this transnational approach allows us to explore empirically the transnational movements of things, people and ideas that lie at the heart of most projects of Japan. In an era when technological projects play an increasing role in the construction and governance of Japanese spaces, simplistic stories about technology and Japan are in greater circulation than ever. Second, this report productively exposes limitations in frameworks of nationalization and globalization, as well as more localized frameworks of urban history, which have dominated historical approaches to infrastructures up to now. Finally, this report attempts to offer some conceptual tools, drawing on a range of disciplines, for understanding the history of material infrastructures in Japan.

Infrastructures are structures that allow things, people and signs to travel across space by means of more or less standardized paths and protocols for conversion or translation. Thinking of infrastructures as mediating interfaces, that is, as points of interaction and translation on material, institutional and discursive levels allows us to get to the heart of the dynamics this report seeks to capture. Points of mediation at the material level can be found in gateway between systems, which allow incompatible systems to be linked and expanded. Such material mediation almost always requires social or institutional mediators, which we can understand as the institutions and individuals who work among those institutions to govern and shape infrastructural use. Not all system mediators are those who build and govern systems; actors such as advertisers, educational bodies and consumer groups have often played important roles in shaping the design, meaning and use of infrastructures. Finally, we may conceive of infrastructures themselves as media in the commonsense understanding of the word, as systems that structure relations and transmit images and signs across distances. Railways surround travellers with signs that frame travel in terms of state authority, class, national

landscapes, and so on. These aspects are not peripheral but central and integral to the meaning and experience of using the railways.

To capture the dynamic transnational stories in Japanese infrastructures, this report has chosen the 'Bullet train plan' before and after World War II with a short biography of things, people, ideas and symbols. This biography illustrates the transnational trajectories of the material, social and cultural forces that work through technologies to shape them.