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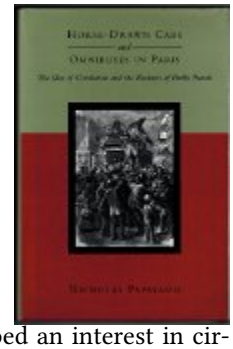
Nicholas Papayanis. *Horse-Drawn Cabs and Omnibuses in Paris. The Idea of Circulation and the Business of Public Transit.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996. 217 pp. $68.75 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-2043-9.



Reviewed by Paolo Capuzzo (United Kingdom)
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The urban growth of the nineteenth century brought about an expansion in scale and a functional differentiation of the urban space required for an intra-urban transport system. Although some important and seminal works of urban history developed a close but problematic relationship between transport history and history of cities,[1] I fear that the usual image of transportation systems in modern cities uses a sort of functional and technical determinism. Instead, I suggest that transport and urban mobility are not simply an answer to the expansion of urban areas, but a result of the confrontation between actors, planning perspectives, urban interests, on different technological patterns and strategies of urban development. Papayanis' book overcomes this technical determinism through an accurate analysis of the autonomous role played by different factors (planning debate in a broader sense, public administration, companies' strategies, etc.) in the creation of the nineteenth-century Parisian transport system.

Papayanis outlines the idea of "circulation" as intellectual background for administrative traffic policies between eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The image of the street as multi-functional public space became increasingly incompatible with the need for circulation in a time of administrative engagement for efficient communication in France as well as in its capital city. The modern engineers and the *philosophes* created the background for administrative intervention which aimed to realise the ideal of the city as a rationally arranged space. In the first half of the nineteenth century the Parisian transport infrastructures were not keeping up with the dramatic urban growth, and traffic became a main interest of police administration, in accord with a general trend of state intervention. Thus, already before Haussmann, the prefect Chabrol developed an interest in circulation witnessed by the *Recherche Statistiques* carried out in the 1820s, which proved the need for the widening of Paris streets in order to make Paris fit and to accommodate the infrastructures needed for its national role. Public intervention by this time was limited to the regulation of traffic in the street and to the statistical analysis.

The increasing need for mobility of a lower middle class, which could not afford to rent a cab, created the basis for a profitable omnibus service. In 1828 the first omnibus line got authorisation and after that new companies rapidly started to operate omnibus services, and to gain good profits. Fares excluded the working class from using omnibuses, and apprehensions about traffic densities in Paris streets pushed the *Prfecture de Polie* to limit the number of omnibuses to a distribution which privileged the socially, economically, and politically most important areas (p. 64). Although there was already a theory of the revitalisation of peripheral areas by means of the potential in mobility provided by the omnibus (Perreymond, p. 82), it became clear that the transport system reinforced the hierarchy in the urban space rather than loosening it.

The beginning of the Second Empire ripened the conditions for the managerial concentration of the omnibus service. The steady city growth and the establishment of a national railway system which was centred in Paris and surrounded by several terminals in the peripheral area, increased the need for improved intra-urban transport facilities. The railway system gave an impulse to the development of tourism in Paris, which also increased the demand for transport. The concentration of the omnibus system under a sole company originated with the govern-

ment and was a part of a national strategy for capitalistic development and modernisation, supported and encouraged by the state. This decision came through several different factors: the long-term trend toward a regulation of traffic and improving circulation; a large capitalistic agenda, which aimed to increase the value of the central area, and to promote new touristic business; and the fiscal interest of the municipality in increasing the fee on omnibuses. This last point confirms an attitude toward the urban services already pointed out by Berlanstein for the gas service. Management of services and infrastructures aimed at increasing the urban property value rather than providing a service to consumers.[2]

The case of the cabs is partly different. The decision to create the *Compagnie Imperiale des Voitures de Paris (Civ)* also originated with the government, but in this case neither a legal monopoly nor the status of corporation were granted. This different basis created some difficulties to the company–which in the 1850s was also suffering for management errors. The changes, introduced by a new management, reorganised the company according to a pattern of centralised supervision of separate functions, meant to foster efficiency and rationalisation, and to create the basis for a recovery.

The creation of urban transport monopolies by the middle of the nineteenth century increased the standard of the mobility in Paris–a city which indeed was admired by all other European capital cities. But the alliance between state and big business became later a hindrance to the development of new transport technologies because the CGO wanted to keep the advantages resulting from its monopolistic position. Moreover, the development of public transit in Paris reinforced the hierarchy of urban space (and later in its first phase of development the underground did the same) because of the profit orientation of the company and the fiscal aims pursued by the municipality which fostered the service in the affluent areas rather than improving the urban standard of the peripheral areas.

Thus, besides the built environment, the mobility system of Paris in the nineteenth century confirmed the creation of an urban landscape expressing the interests, values and image of the bourgeois ruling class. In completing the picture and the analysis of the Paris urban landscape carried out by David Harvey[3] the book of Papayanis is successful. As Papayanis stresses at the end of the volume the morphological transformations by the middle of the nineteenth century conditioned permanently the following developments imposing a hierarchy to the urban growth which can explain some of the current concerns of the Parisian banlieu.

At one point this book leaves a sense of disappointment. In the first chapter, Papayanis writes of the first omnibus system created in the seventeenth century. This service was run for awhile, and omnibuses developed only in the nineteenth century. As far as I know, this was the only example of an omnibus system in Europe (I guess in the world, too) created before the nineteenth century. Since the scale of Paris in the seventeenth century was much bigger of many cities which had a transport system in the nineteenth century, a broader discussion of the failure of the first attempt to build up an omnibus service would have helped to answer an intriguing question: Why did urban transport networks developed only in the nineteenth century and not before? I suppose that the level of incomes and urban morphology and geography are major factors in this story, but I am sure it would be more interesting to hear what Papayanis thinks about it.

Notes:

[1]. See, for instance, H.J. Dyos, "Railways and Housing in Victorian London", *Journal of Transport History.* (1955), pp.11-21 and 90-100; H.J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb. A Study of the Growth of Camberwell*, Leicester, 1961; J.R. Kellett, *The Impact of the Railways on Victorian Cities.* London-Toronto, 1979 (originally published 1969).

[2]. Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Big Business and Industrial Conflict in Nineteenth-Century France: A Social History of the Parisian Gas Company.* Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991.

[3]. David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization.* Baltimore, 1985.

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