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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Introduction

- 1 In 1861, with regard to Brussels North Station, Gustave Janssens¹ wrote that
“In all of the places where railway stations have been established, there was an immediate commercial movement around the location with a marked development, increasing the wealth of the inhabitants and serving as the cradle of a new elegant neighbourhood” [Janssens, 1861: 11].
- 2 Fifty years later, Louis Bertrand² still shared the same opinion:
“It is recognised that the creation of a station results almost immediately in the construction of houses and the formation of a built-up area around the station” [Bertrand, 1912: 60].
- 3 The influence of rail infrastructures on urban development has therefore long been known. It is accepted that the evolution of forms of transportation favours the growth³ of

a city as well as the changes in its physical structure, i.e. its “urban morphology” [Allain, 2004: 5 and 55; Paquot, 2006: 192; Gauthiez, 2003: 83; De Meulder, 1998: 4]. There is no shortage of studies in the literature on the links between railways and urban development. In Britain (which seems to have been a pioneer in the field) studies on the impact of large stations appeared as early as the 1960s [Simmons, 1968; Betjeman and Gay, 1973; Richards and MacKenzie, 1986], and the links between railways and urban development have been the subject of numerous recent studies [see for example Bertolini and Spit, 1998; Nilsen, 2008]. In France, interest in these questions grew strongly in the 1990s, with the publication of several issues of urban planning or history journals devoted to the influence of railways on cities,⁴ as well as the work of Karen Bowie, an authority in the field (Bowie, 1997, 2003).

- 4 However, most of these studies focus on stations and stress the role they have played as an adjunct to urban development. Presented as “growth centres”, they are considered, like historical centres, as reference points to and from which growth movements take place. By contributing to movements of the population, they become new places of centrality, encourage the development of public spaces and new activities – in particular commercial activities – which reinforces the attractiveness of these neighbourhoods [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 61-62; Malverti, 1996: 95; Paquot, 2006: 126-127].
- 5 However, stations are not the only way in which railways influence urban growth: while they promote the development of the city centre and the urbanisation of its suburbs, the impact of building the railways which connect them to the outside world should not be overlooked. A sprawling city served by the railway will eventually see its urbanisation edge⁵ reach the railway lines, and unless they are buried deep underground, these lines constitute obstacles which are difficult to cross, resulting in various configurations.
- 6 When the line serves a terminus station within the city centre, it forms an urban border which hinders connections between neighbourhoods, as only the main roads have facilities to cross it (viaducts, tunnels, level crossings) [Santos y Ganges, 2011: 1-2]. In Brussels, one of the most obvious examples concerns the rails located south of the South Station (initially a terminus station, until the construction of the North-South Junction): the convergence of railway lines towards the station compromises connections between the neighbourhoods on either side of the station and leads to the fragmentation of this territory, forming inaccessible blocks which are gradually taken over by industrial activities. This is explained by the often low price of these plots, which is directly linked to their isolation and their proximity to the railway and the noise and nuisance it causes. (Figures 1 and 2) [Allain, 2004: 81].

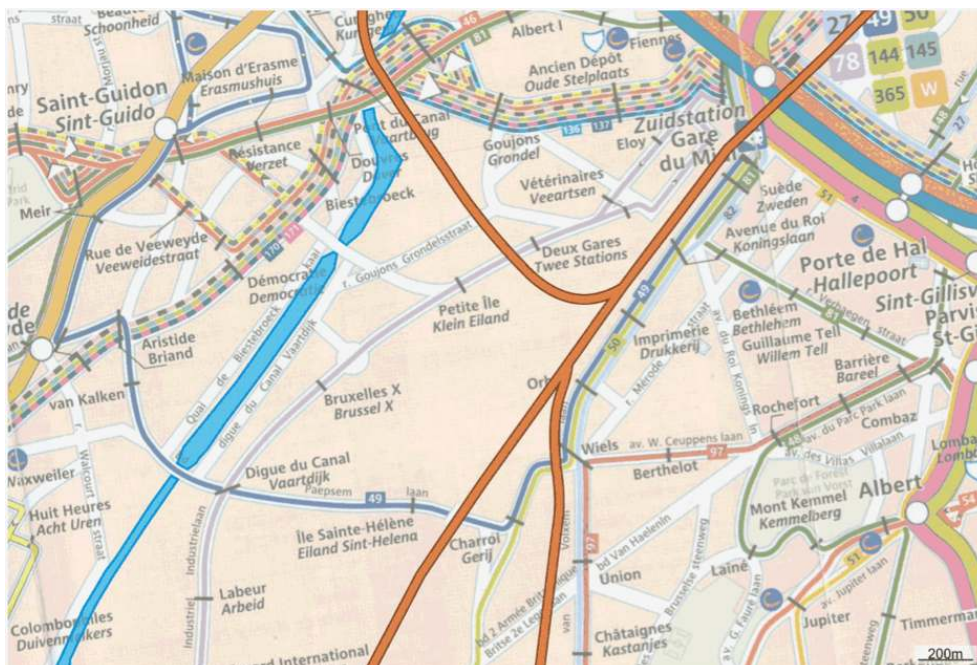
Figure 1. Merging of railway lines south of the South Station.



RAILWAYS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION OF DISTINCT BLOCKS, WHICH ARE OFTEN INACCESSIBLE AND ARE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES. THE PRESENCE OF THE CANAL ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO THE FORMATION OF THESE BLOCKS.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON A GOOGLE.MAPS BACKGROUND

Figure 2. The STIB network south of the South Station.



THE STIB NETWORK MAP SHOWS HOW FEW LINES CROSS THE RAILWAYS, WHICH HINDERS CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURHOODS.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON A STIB.BE BACKGROUND

- 7 When it is a railway ring, i.e. one which bypasses the urban area, the railway lines act as growth *barriers*: they constitute obstacles to the expansion of the urban habitat [Verniers, 1935: 94-104]. These growth barriers can be geographical (natural obstacles) or anthropogenic (canals, railways, walls, etc.) [Allain, 2004: 78]. Like surrounding walls, railways can therefore constitute true “ramparts” and have similar effects on the urban fabric: most new constructions are built in the area delimited by the obstacle [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 66].
- 8 While stations promote urban growth, railway lines can hinder it [Vandenbosch and Vereerstraeten, 1980: 6; Roth and Polino, 2003: xxvi]. In this article, we discuss an example of this type through the analysis of the Brussels-North - Brussels-Luxembourg railway section, i.e. the portion of line 161 (Brussels-Namur) which crosses the municipalities of Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, and the eastern extension of the City of Brussels⁶. Initially, this section was referred to as a “connecting railway” or “railway ring” in the municipal bulletins of Brussels, Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode (figure 3).⁷

Figure 3. The route of the Brussels-Namur railway line crossing north-east Brussels.



THE DOTTED LINE REPRESENTS THE ROUTE OF THIS SAME LINE BEFORE IT WAS RELOCATED AND COVERED AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON A TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND FROM THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL INSTITUTE, 2018

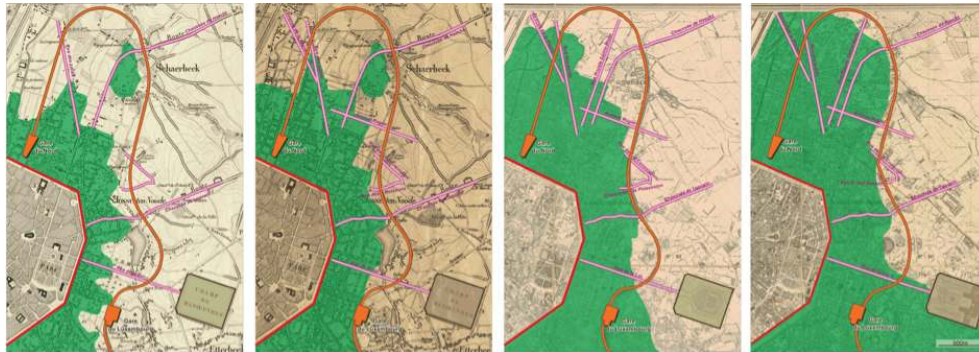
- 9 To fully understand the urban impact of this line, we shall first discuss its history and that of the municipalities it crosses. We shall then describe its effects on the landscape of these municipalities using the concept of a “growth barrier” as described in urban morphology studies [Allain, 2004; Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999]. Finally, we shall

show how this barrier was finally overcome by highlighting the repercussions of this operation on the municipalities concerned.

1. The history of the railway ring

- 10 The railway ring and its construction are part of a concession which the *Grande Compagnie du Luxembourg* obtained from the Belgian state in 1846. The objective was to create a railway line between Brussels and the Grand Duchy (currently line 161), from a station located in Quartier Léopold. Even before the construction of this line, the designers planned to connect it to the country's network, by means of a section crossing the municipalities of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and Schaerbeek. It was completed in 1855 and opened to freight train traffic the following year; it was used for passengers ten years later, in 1865 [Jacquemyns, 1936: 138; Demey, De Ville et Pastiels, 1994: 31-35].⁸
- 11 The initial location of this railway section crossed Rue Montoyer and Rue Belliard, went over Chaussée d'Etterbeek on a viaduct and passed under Rue de la Loi. It then followed the current Boulevard Charlemagne and Rue John Waterloo Wilson, before crossing Chaussée de Louvain on a viaduct, and then followed Avenue Pêtre, Avenue Jottrand, Avenue Deschanel and Avenue Voltaire. At the elbow, it curved towards Place Verboeckhoven and joined the rails leading to the North Station (Figure 3).
- 12 When the line was being built, most of these streets had not yet been laid out and the rails therefore crossed empty construction areas. In the 1850s, Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and the eastern extension of the City of Brussels (Quartier Léopold and north-east Brussels) presented two different aspects: most of these territories were still essentially rural, while the areas bordering the city were already urbanised. These municipalities therefore included two types of residential area: villages and suburbs,⁹ along with some hamlets [Grenez, 1990: 15]. In Schaerbeek, for example, there were buildings in the centre of the village and in the suburbs of Cologne and Schaerbeek (located around the North Station and the extended Rue Royale respectively), but between the two, there were only a few farms scattered in the fields, and beyond the village, the hamlet of Helmet (Figure 4a) [Hanosset and Marchi, 1994: 2-7; Berckmans and de Pange, 2013-2014: 4].

Figure 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d. Urban growth of the municipalities of Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and Brussels (Quartier Léopold and north-east Brussels) between 1858 and 1894.



THE RAILWAY LINE WAS STILL A BORDER BEYOND WHICH THERE WAS LITTLE CONSTRUCTION. ONLY MAJOR ROADS AND THOSE WHICH EXISTED PRIOR TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LINE CROSSED THIS BORDER.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON OLD TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUNDS: ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM (KBR), CABINET CARTES ET PLANS (CP), FONDS VANDERMAELEN (VDM), TOPOGRAPHIC AND HYPSONETRIC MAP OF BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1858; KBR, CP, VDM, TOPOGRAPHIC AND HYPSONETRIC MAP OF BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1866; KBR, CP, INSTITUT CARTOGRAPHIQUE MILITAIRE (ICM), BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1881; KBR, CP, ICM, BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1895)

- 13 It was the middle of the 19th century and, for a few decades, Brussels had experienced unprecedented growth, which can be explained by several factors. On the one hand, there were demographic factors. Since the beginning of the century, this city in Brabant had experienced a significant increase in its population, due in particular to a general improvement in living conditions and a massive exodus of rural people who had come to work in the city's industries. Around 1830, its new status as a capital was another pull factor. This demographic increase concerned both the Pentagon and the suburbs. In this respect, two scenarios emerged: in the west, the proximity of industries, factories and other workshops, as well as low land prices, attracted workers (Molenbeek, Cureghem); in the east, in addition to the price factor, there were healthier living conditions, which explains the establishment of middle-class populations (Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Ixelles).
- 14 On the other hand, there was an urban planning factor. Since the Austrian period, the decision had been taken to destroy the city's ramparts and replace them with ring roads. This destruction was only begun under the French regime, around 1804. Movement between the Pentagon and the suburbs was therefore easier, allowing them to develop freely as true extensions of the historic city [Leblicq, 1979: 15; Lelarge, 2001: 169-170; Verniers, 1935: 105-107; Demey, 2013: 469-470; Dessouroux, 2008: 38].
- 15 Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse gradually lost their rural aspect as urbanisation progressed (figures 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d). However, the development of these municipalities stopped when urbanisation reached the railway ring. Built at street level, it blocked the growth of the suburbs and the urbanisation of the land located to the east of it for several decades.¹⁰ Following numerous protests (particularly from municipal authorities), the rails were finally moved a hundred metres eastward, and were buried in the slopes of the Maelbeek valley between 1881 and 1915 [Vandenbosch, 1955: 20; Heymans, 1994: 23; Hanosset and Marchi, 1994: 9 and 13; Berckmans and Genon: 12].¹¹ The current route of line 161 in Brussels is the result of this move.

2. The effects of a “growth barrier”

- 16 As soon as the construction of the railway was completed, people used the term “barrier” when referring to its impact. Thus, in 1861, Missale, a municipal councillor in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, declared that the line “form[ed] a real barrier to the development of the municipality”.¹²
- 17 An evolutionary study of the maps, combined with an analysis of the municipal archives, shows that the municipal councillor was right: the application of what various authors nowadays call the concept of a “growth barrier” to the case of the railway ring is entirely relevant. Moreover, despite the fact that the railway was moved, the “barrier effect” was still noticeable more than a century later.

2.1. Limit and densification

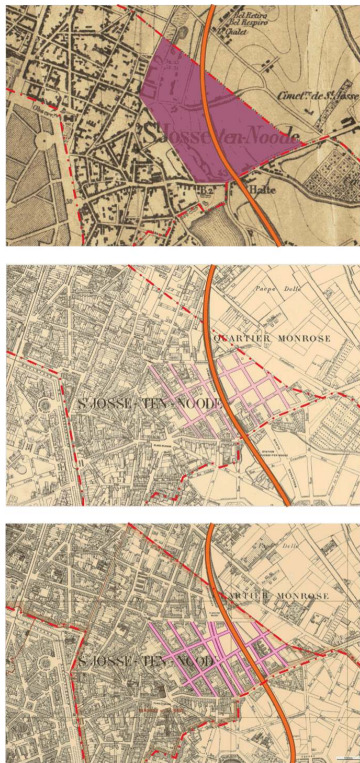
- 18 At first, a growth barrier blocked the extension of the urbanised area, and promoted the densification of the network which it surrounded to the detriment of the network in the external area [Allain, 2004: 78-79; Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 66]. This blocked urbanised area is no longer noticeable today, yet it is very clearly visible on a map from the end of the 19th century (Figure 4d): with a few exceptions (Chaussée de Haecht and Chaussée de Helmet, which existed before the railway), streets (and therefore the built-up area) were built only in the area circumscribed by the barrier (Figure 4d). As regards the densification, we can still see on a current map a tighter network to the west of the railway.
- 19 This phenomenon was already apparent at the time: as early as 1861, Victor Besme, inspector for the suburbs of Brussels,¹³ presented his opinion on the location of the line in the memorandum attached to his *General Plan for the extension and embellishment of the Brussels urban area*:
- “We believe that with the gradual development of the Brussels urban area, it would have been appropriate to have it [the railway] located even further away, in order to leave empty spaces between it and the urban area it would have bypassed instead of crossing, which soon would have been covered with buildings, according to the principle established in all cities with a railway line passing next to them, whereby buildings are erected without hesitation in the space between the urban area and the railway line, whereas the construction of buildings beyond this line only takes place in exceptional circumstances”.¹⁴
- 20 The consequences of the initial location of the railway ring are summarised perfectly in these words. Besme expresses, in the terms of the time, one of the effects of growth barriers: in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and in Schaerbeek, buildings were rarely built beyond the railway [Heymans, 1995: 23]. People did not wish to settle in this area, as it had poor connections with the rest of the municipality. Due to this low demand, the local authorities thought twice before committing funds in order to provide these areas with urban facilities (paved roads, street lighting, sewage system, etc.). Their absence also contributed to the population's lack of interest in this area, and was the reason for the densification of the area located west of the line [Vandenbosch, 1955: 30].¹⁵
- 21 The municipal authorities also expressed their opinion on the location of the railway ring. Between 1861 and 1880, the subject was discussed regularly by the municipal

councils, but the various requests and alternative plans were ignored by the minister and the *Grande Compagnie du Luxembourg*. However, the fact that it was a recurring debate proves that it was a delicate issue for both municipalities. It is not surprising, moreover, that the protests of the town councillors of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode were the most virulent: while urbanisation had not yet reached the railway line in Schaerbeek (there was still a large amount of land available for the creation of new streets), the situation was clearly different in the neighbouring municipality: only the eastern part of the municipality located on either side of the railway still had no buildings [Hanosset, 1995: 10].¹⁶

2.2. Impact on neighbouring streets

- 22 The railway route also had an effect on the surrounding streets: it was an element which had to be taken into account during the development of the areas it crossed [Allain, 2004: 79]. Major roads were sometimes built parallel to the line, especially when it was not possible to cross the rails. This was the case with Rue Stephenson in Schaerbeek, which followed the railway route. In the 1880s, when it was impossible to extend Rue Van Schoor and Rue Vanderlinden beyond the railway, a major road was built parallel to it in order to avoid the creation of dead ends and to maximise the use of the land along the railway. This operation was part of the plans for “Quartier Saint-Félix”, created at the initiative of the property company which it was named after, and whose purpose was to develop the vacant land between Rue du Pavillon, Rue Navez and the railway ring. This location was the reason why many factories and workshops were built in the neighbourhood, mainly on the west side of Rue Stephenson, where large lots were still available at low prices. The area became one of the most industrial areas in the municipality (Figure 5) [Berckmans and de Pange, 2013-2014: 23-24; Parisse, 2004: 35; Allain, 2004: 81]¹⁷.

Figure 6a, 6b and 6c. Quartier de l'Est in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode between 1858 and 1894.



INITIALLY, IT WAS THE ONLY AREA IN THE MUNICIPALITY WHERE THERE WERE STILL NO BUILDINGS. THE PLANS FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT WERE REVISED SEVERAL TIMES, MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF THE RAILWAY RING AND ITS SUBSEQUENT RELOCATION.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON BACKGROUNDS FROM KBR, CP, VDM, TOPOGRAPHIC AND HYPSONETRIC MAP OF BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1858; KBR, CP, ICM, BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1881; KBR, CP, ICM, BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1895

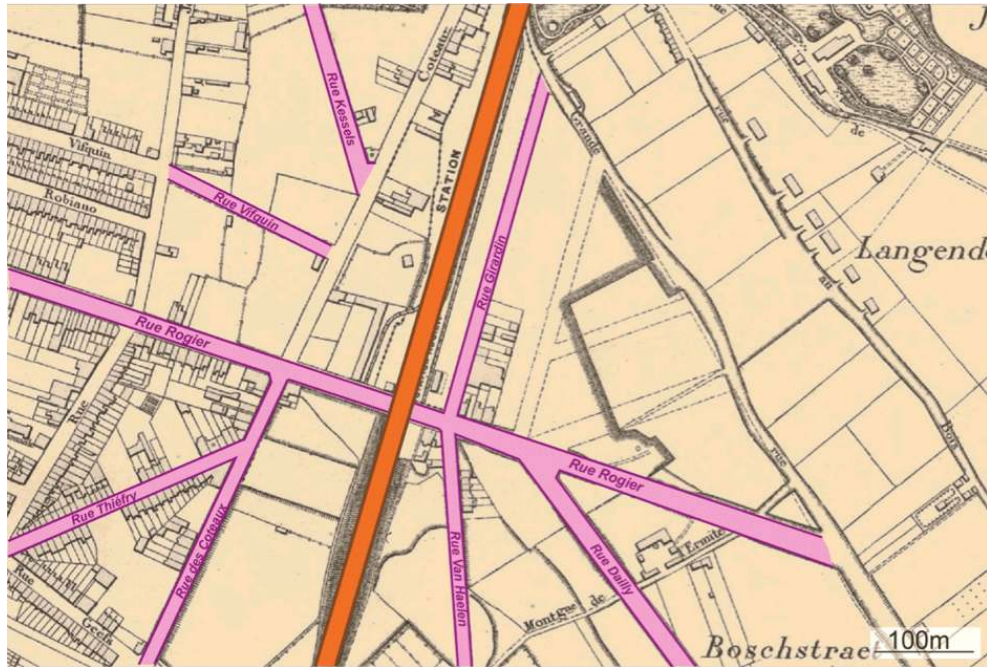
- 24 However, both the *Grande Compagnie du Luxembourg* and the Public Works Minister were opposed to these requests. Other plans were then proposed by the municipality, but all ended in failure.¹⁹ The councillors finally decided to abandon the 1864 project and its subsequent amendments and proposed a new, much less ambitious one. This was due to the fact that the hope of relocating the railway had finally faded and that it was becoming urgent to subdivide this land, as the population of the municipality was still experiencing strong growth.²⁰ This new plan was approved by the Minister in 1869 and consisted of streets forming a check pattern, some of which were parallel to the railway. There was no public square, monumental avenue or streets in a star pattern (Figure 6b) [Nevelsteen and Kerremans, 1997: 12].²¹
- 25 By acting as a barrier to urban growth, the railway therefore compromised the implementation of municipal projects and, in this sense, imposed its morphological and lasting mark on the layout of the surrounding streets.

2.3. Points of convergence

- 26 As there were few crossing points (bridges and level crossings), a structure of converging streets was created, leading to them [Allain, 2004: 79]. The example of the Rue Rogier level crossing is revealing in this regard: it is the starting point for Rue Van Haelen, Rue

Dailly and Rue Girardin.²² Rue Thiéfry, Rue Kessels and Rue Van Hoorde, although indirectly connected to Rue Rogier, were also built in the direction of this crossing (Figure 7). Another example is the roundabout at Place Verboeckhoven, where Rue Van Oost, Rue Portaels and Rue Metsys converge, as well as Avenue Maréchal Foch, Avenue Princesse Elisabeth and Avenue Eugène Demolder (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Merging of streets around the Rue Rogier level crossing.



THE RUE ROGIER LEVEL CROSSING WAS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE SURROUNDING ROADS WHICH LED TO IT. A STATION WAS BUILT AT THIS LOCATION IN 1865.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON BACKGROUNDS FROM KBR, CP, ICM, BRUSSELS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, 1881

categories. The boundary between them was none other than the railway ring, which caused a major depreciation of the land located east of the railway.²⁵

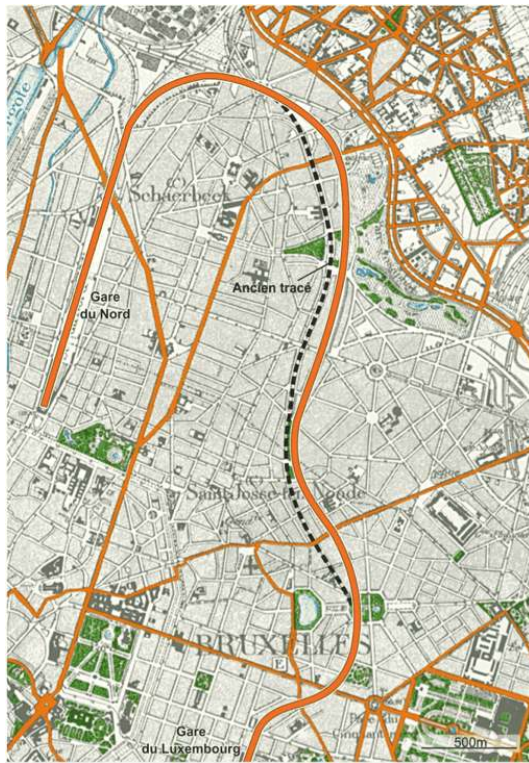
3. Crossing a growth barrier

- 30 Due to municipal protests, the relocation of the line was finally considered. This event may probably be linked to the fact that in 1873, with an aim to standardise the rail network and put an end to the many financial difficulties experienced by the *Grande Compagnie du Luxembourg*, the latter (and therefore all of its railway lines) was bought by the Belgian state [Kurgan Van Hentenrijk, 1972]. Negotiations with this new partner, which was undoubtedly more willing to respond to municipal protests, may explain why the line's relocation works were finally on the agenda.
- 31 While decisions were made in favour of Brussels and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode as early as 1884 (a royal decree ordered a diversion of the route in the territory of these two municipalities), Schaerbeek had to wait until 1902. We shall not dwell here on the negotiations which preceded the publication of the royal decrees declaring the beginning of the works. It should simply be noted that for more than twenty years, many plans were proposed, rejected, amended and abandoned, before the works were finally begun in the municipality.²⁶ This difference in treatment between municipalities is probably due to “political antipathies”²⁷: from 1884 onwards, there was one Catholic government after another at the head of the country. However, in Schaerbeek, the mayor at the time, Achille Colignon (1879-1891), and his successor, Ernest Laude (1891-1895), were liberal [Van Hengel, 2010]. Guillaume Kennis (1873-1878 and 1896-1903), who became head of the municipality in 1896, was a Catholic. It can therefore be assumed that his political leanings made it easier for him to obtain a favourable ruling as regards the railway ring.²⁸
- 32 The line was then relocated about a hundred metres eastward, and this time it was built either as an excavation or in a tunnel in the slopes of the Maelbeek valley. It was therefore no longer at street level, which made it easier to cross. The works were completed around 1915, under German occupation. Few of the stations along the line were relocated. Only the stations in Rue de la Loi and Chaussée de Louvain managed to stay open until the 1920s.²⁹

3.1. Develop new neighbourhoods

- 33 While the first route of the railway ring was an obstacle to the growth of the municipalities of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and Schaerbeek, its relocation and excavation gave them a breath of fresh air, as seen in the comparison of two maps, dated 1895 and 1930 (during and after the relocation of the railway). The first (Figure 4d) shows a concentration of buildings between the city limits and the railway. The areas to the east and north of the railway were still very poorly developed. Thirty-five years later, the situation was totally different: in the east, new neighbourhoods emerged, either still in the planning phase or already built partially (Figure 9) [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 69].

Figure 9. The railway route and the neighbourhoods it crossed, circa 1930.



CONSTRUCTION WAS UNDER WAY BOTH EAST AND WEST OF THE RAILWAY. A CLEAR DIFFERENCE MAY BE SEEN IN TERMS OF URBAN FABRIC: TO THE EAST OF THE TRACK, THE NETWORK IS MORE OPEN AND RATIONAL, UNLIKE THE WESTERN PART, WHERE IT IS TIGHTER AND MORE CHAOTIC. WHILE THESE CHARACTERISTICS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO THE PERIOD DURING WHICH THESE NEIGHBOURHOODS WERE BUILT (REGARDLESS OF THE PRESENCE OF THE RAILWAY), THESE CLEAR DIFFERENCES IN CONFIGURATION ARE LINKED DIRECTLY TO THE FACT THAT FOR A LONG TIME, THE RAILWAY HAD BLOCKED THE EXTENSION OF THE BUILT-UP AREA.

SOURCE: LINES DRAWN BY AUTHOR ON A BACKGROUND FROM THE INSTITUT GÉOGRAPHIQUE MILITAIRE [IGM], 1930

- 34 In Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, the part of Quartier de l'Est beyond the railway had finally developed as expected. In particular, the works led to the creation of a square, the future Square Armand Steurs, on the vaulted railway line. The entire municipality was urbanised (Figure 6c) [Nevelsteen and Kerremans, 1997: 13].
- 35 In Schaerbeek, the line's relocation works made it possible to modernise the Teniers-Josaphat neighbourhood, i.e. the old village centre: according to the plans drawn up by Octave Houssa who was appointed municipal engineer in 1898, the former Saint-Servais church was destroyed to make way for the majestic Avenue Louis Bertrand (Figure 10) [Berckmans and de Pange, 2013-2014: 30].³⁰

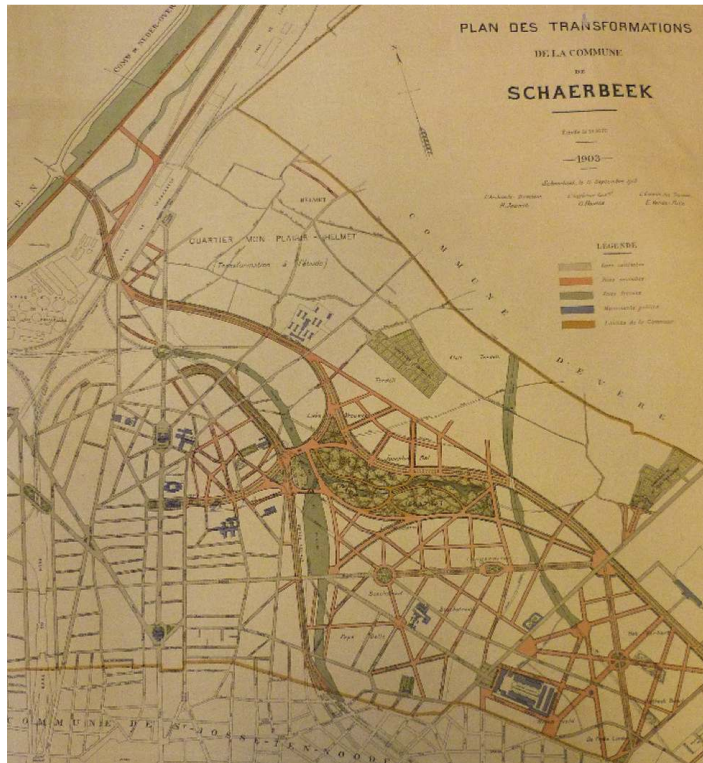
Figure 10. One of Octave Houssa's plans for the modernisation of the Teniers-Josaphat neighbourhood, i.e. the village centre of Schaerbeek.



SOURCE: ACS, FONDS DES TRAVAUX PUBLICS (TP) - RAILWAY RING, "SNCB 1899-1909", MAP OF THE JERUSALEM NEIGHBOURHOOD - FIRST PROJECT, BY OCTAVE HOUSSA, 1898.

- 36 In addition, the village modernisation project led to a broader reflection on the further development of the municipality: the municipal councils were considering the creation of several new neighbourhoods to the east and north of the railway.³¹ Octave Houssa was again in charge of drawing the necessary maps, which were included in his *Plan for the transformations in the municipality of Schaerbeek*, drawn up in 1903. These four new neighbourhoods were called Vallée Josaphat, Monrose, Linthout and Monplaisir-Helmet and were developed after World War I (Figure 11) [Hanosset and Marchi, 1994: 10-11; Berckmans and de Pange, 2013-2014: 28-29].

Figure 11. Plan for the transformations in the municipality of Schaerbeek, by Octave Houssa.



IN ADDITION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD VILLAGE, THE MUNICIPAL ENGINEER PLANNED TO CREATE FOUR NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS: MONROSE, VALLÉE JOSAPHAT, LINTHOUT AND MONPLAISIR-HELMET. OCTAVE HOUSSE CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO THE CURRENT APPEARANCE OF SCHAEERBEEK.

SOURCE: ACS, MAPS, PLAN FOR THE TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SCHAEERBEEK, BY OCTAVE HOUSSE, 1903

- 37 Although we can assume that, regardless of the relocation of the railway, these new neighbourhoods would have emerged anyway due to demographic pressure, the presence of the railway nevertheless would have delayed this urban expansion. If not the trigger, the relocation of the railway was at least the catalyst in the urbanisation of the areas beyond the railway, and an important stage in the history of these municipalities.

3.2. "Avenue du Chemin de fer"

- 38 The relocation of the railway also led to the creation of a boulevard. Saint-Josse-ten-Noode in the 1880s, and then Schaerbeek after 1900, acquired the land of the old railway line free of charge from the state and created Avenue Georges Pêtre, Avenue Jottrand, Avenue Paul Deschanel and Avenue Voltaire. This was in the urbanistic and financial interest of the municipalities: the majestic avenues which they owned and the profits from the sale of the land located on either side of them were two major advantages. In Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Avenue Jottrand and Avenue Pêtre were built in the 1890s. In Schaerbeek, Avenue Voltaire and Avenue Deschanel were built between 1900 and 1930 (Figure 9) [Hanosset, 1994: 12]³².
- 39 These avenues, created at the site of a growth barrier, become new structural elements for the urban area. Like the boulevards of the inner ring established at the site of the former fortifications of Brussels, the role of these avenues was very different from that of

the railway: although they recall its existence, their purpose was to connect the two sides of the line, which were once clearly separated and had few connections between them [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 67-69].

3.3. Effects still perceptible

- 40 Although the new line was built in excavation or was covered, it remained a barrier whose effects were less significant than before. Today, while the buildings are spread out on either side of the line, it has left its mark on the appearance of the neighbourhoods it crosses.
- 41 First of all, viaducts were created to facilitate connections, but only the major roads crossed the rails to connect the new neighbourhoods with the oldest centres. With the exception of these major roads, there were few roads linking the historic centres and these neighbourhoods, which were therefore organised relatively autonomously in terms of street layout. This was the case in particular for the four new neighbourhoods in Schaerbeek (Figures 9 and 11) [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 67].
- 42 Moreover, when we see the layout of the main roads on either side of the railway on a map, the difference between the east and west sides of the line is very noticeable: in the west, the network is denser, more chaotic and tighter. In the east, the street pattern is more spread out. We can even detect star or check patterns, which is proof of the existence of plans for these areas [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 67-69; Allain, 2004: 79-81].
- 43 Finally, there is a clear difference in the architectural style of the buildings, which is proof that the areas located to the east of the railway were built later. In this respect, the example of Avenue Rogier in Schaerbeek, which crosses the railway, is very revealing: between the North Station and Avenue Paul Deschanel (with the exception of a few modern buildings which replaced the original buildings), the buildings are neoclassical in style, and sometimes eclectic. Beyond this avenue, the buildings belong to the art nouveau, art deco, modernist and Beaux-Arts styles as well as various neo styles (in particular the Flemish neo-Renaissance style, which was very popular in Schaerbeek at the turn of the century).³³
- 44 These various elements show that for about fifty years, the railway was a border between the east and west of the municipalities of Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and the extension of the City of Brussels.

Conclusion

- 45 In the 1860s, while the inhabitants of Brussels were already aware of the role that a station could play in the development of a neighbourhood, some stakeholders (owners, town councillors and civil servants) also took into account the fact that a railway could represent an obstacle in a rapidly expanding city. There is a real paradox here: behind the ideal of progress which accompanied the beginnings of rail transport in Europe, there was a less attractive aspect, i.e. that of the obstacle which these infrastructures represented. It was our aim to take a closer look at this aspect, which is too often omitted in urban or historical studies.

- 46 Until its relocation at the beginning of the 20th century, the railway ring was an obstacle to the urbanisation of Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode. There were many protests by the inhabitants, owners and local councillors to modify its route. In both municipalities, the construction of entire neighbourhoods was hampered by the presence of the railway. The case of the Quartier de l'Est in Saint-Josse is telling in this respect: its completion was compromised and was only possible thanks to the relocation of the railway. In Schaerbeek as well, this event accelerated the expansion of the urban fabric towards the east and north of the municipality. It should be noted in this regard that the relocation of the railway occurred at the same time that the works on the boulevards of the outer ring were begun (in Schaerbeek, Boulevard Lambertmont), which were among the major urban projects planned and implemented by Victor Besme. It would undoubtedly be fitting to determine more precisely the links between the two phenomena, but it is in any case clear that both reflect a turning point in urban planning practices in Brussels.
- 47 While it can be argued that these neighbourhoods would have been built eventually regardless of the presence of the railway, it would have caused a significant delay in the development of certain parts of Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode or, at the very least, a gap with respect to other municipalities in the Brussels urban area. This delay should be linked to the slow decision-making processes and the works themselves, which are a symptomatic element of urban planning in Brussels.
- 48 What do we owe today to the presence of the railway ring? Which urban structures, street patterns and neighbourhood layouts has it affected? In other words, how can the existence of this railway explain what we have before us when we look at a current map of Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode? The use of urban morphology concepts, combined with the analysis of maps and archival documents, has enabled us to answer these questions and has shown us that, although the railway was relocated, the influence which it may have had on the morphology of the territories it crosses is still perceptible. The concentric streets around Place Verboeckhoven or the crossroads of Avenue Rogier and Avenue Deschanel, the curved route of Rue Stephenson, the layout of the streets in Quartier de l'Est in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, the existence of avenues at the location of the former railway, and the difference in building density and architectural style between the east and west of the railway are all elements which can be explained by the presence of the railway ring.
- 49 The “barrier effect” which the railway may have had is therefore still perceptible to those who look more closely at maps and see the layout of certain main roads. The railway is therefore an important factor in understanding the evolution of urban morphology. In many respects, Brussels is a very relevant example. The case of the North-South Junction alone is telling, but the case of the railway ring is just as revealing, although less well known. This observation can extend beyond the railway domain: urban motorways such as some boulevards or express roads, as well as the canal, have produced (and still produce) the same effects on the urban fabric.
- 50 Currently, the railway ring, and more particularly the small stations which were located along it, could return to the spotlight: the RER project provides for the creation of several stations of local interest in Brussels. In this context, it was proposed to reopen some of the stations along the railway ring, particularly that of Rue Royale Sainte-Marie (“Cage aux Ours”). Although studies show that they will have a high level of passenger traffic, the density of the surrounding buildings and the four-lane construction of the line

(essential in order not to hinder traffic on a busy line) compromise the project for a station and explain the opposition to it by SNCB [Lebrun and Dobruszkes, 2012: 9-13; Schwengler, 2018].

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NOTES

1. Not much is known about him, except that he was neither an alderman nor a municipal councillor. Nor does he seem to have published any other work than this small booklet [Janssens, 1861]. It can be assumed that he was the owner of a house in the municipality of Schaerbeek.
2. Louis Bertrand (1856-1943) was a Belgian socialist politician and founder of the Belgian Workers' Party in 1885. From 1895 to 1921, he was a municipal councillor and alderman of the municipality of Schaerbeek, deputy from 1894 to 1926 and Minister of State in 1918. He was also one of the instigators of urban development in Schaerbeek at the beginning of the 20th century. In particular, he is the founder of the Foyer Schaerbeekois (a social housing company) [Van Den Dungen, 2000: 73-79].
3. This refers to "all of the phenomena of extension and densification of urban areas understood from a morphological point of view, i.e. from their material appearance in the territory" [Panerai, Demorgon and Depaule, 1999: 51].

4. In France, *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine*, Gares en mouvement. 1997. no 71: *La gare et la ville. Revue d'histoire des chemins de fer*. 2008. n°38. In Belgium, *Les Cahiers de la Fonderie*, Bruxelles entre en gare. 1998. no 24.
5. The urbanisation edge refers to “the outer limit of the urban area, which has spread in morphological continuity with the city” [Allain, 2004: 49].
6. This railway line and its links with urban morphology were already studied by Jean-Pierre Vandenbosch in 1955 [Vandenbosch, 1955]. However, both in terms of the purpose of our study and the methodology (the analysis of maps, in our case, follows the examination of the written municipal archives) or the sources used (Jean-Pierre Vandenbosch's paper contains only four pages of bibliographical references), we believe that we have provided some new material on the subject.
7. Archives of the City of Brussels (AVB), *Bulletin communal de la Ville de Bruxelles* (BCB). Brussels: Imprimerie J. Briard; Schaerbeek Municipal Archives (ACS), *Bulletin communal de Schaerbeek* (BCS). Brussels: J.-A. Greuse Editeur; Saint-Josse-ten-Noode Municipal Archives (ACSJ), *Bulletin communal de Saint-Josse-ten-Noode* (BCSJ). Brussels: Imprimerie C. Denis. The choice of these sources implies that the point of view adopted to study this railway line is essentially that of the municipalities.
8. *Moniteur belge*, 1/10/1865, p. 4638.
9. All buildings grouped outside the city, partly because of the lack of space in the old centres and the existence of tax barriers at their gates [Allain, 2004: 76; Merlin, 2009: 383].
10. The effects of this “growth barrier” will be discussed in more detail below.
11. ACS, BCS, 1873, June 9, pp. 316-317.
12. ACSJ, BCSJ, 1861, December 27, p. 237.
13. For more information on Victor Besme and the function of inspector, see the work by Benedikte Zitouni [2010].
14. BESME V., 1866. *Plan d'ensemble pour l'extension et l'embellissement de l'agglomération bruxelloise, Travaux de voirie en général, Habitations de la classe moyenne, Logements de la classe ouvrière, Rapport fait à M. le Ministre de l'Intérieur, Suite du travail portant le même titre publié en 1862*, Brussels: Imprimerie Guyot, quoted in the book by Benedikte Zitouni [ZITOUNI, B, 2010: 130].
15. ACS, *Rapport au Conseil sur l'administration et sur la situation des affaires de la commune*, 1860, p. 5.
16. ACSJ, BCSJ, 1864, February 26, pp. 25-26; 1880, January 21, pp. 52-53; ACSJ, BCSJ, 1869, November 26, p. 649; 1880, January 21, pp. 52-53
17. ACS, BCS, 1869, 9 November, p. 61; 1879, 25 November, pp. 407-411; 1881, 18 January, pp. 24-28; 1882, 31 January, pp. 61-62; 21 March, pp. 203-206; Rue Vanderlinden; Rue Van Schoor; Rue Stephenson. *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*.
18. ACSJ, BCSJ, 1864, 13 May, p. 92; Rue de Liedekerke; Rue Braemt; Rue des Deux tours. *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*.
19. ACSJ, BCSJ, 1865, 26 May, p. 135; 30 June, pp. 205-206; 1867, 8 March, pp. 70-73; *Rapport sur la Situation et l'Administration des affaires de la commune pendant l'année 1864-1865*, pp. 14-15.
20. ACSJ, BCSJ, 1868, 3 January, pp. 19-22; 13 March, pp. 84-91; *Rapport sur la situation et l'administration des affaires de la commune pendant l'année 1867-1868*, p. 40.
21. ACSJ, BCSJ, 1869, 22 October, pp. 578-580; 1875, 3 March, p. 71; *Moniteur belge*, 19 October 1869, p. 5917.
22. Rue Van Haelen and Rue Girardin were removed when the railway ring was moved in 1902. ACS, BCS, 1879, 13 May, pp. 112-113; Square Emile Duployé. *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*.
23. ACS, *Rapport sur la situation et l'administration des affaires de la commune pendant l'année 1864-1865*, p. 2; BCS, 1865, 2 February 1865, p. 36; 28 March 1865, p. 75; Avenue Rogier; Rue des Palais. *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*; *Moniteur belge*, 1 October 1865, p. 4638.

24. ACS, *Rapport sur la situation et l'administration des affaires de la commune pendant l'exercice 1867*, pp. 56-57; 1870, p. 26; 1868, pp. 60-61. The law of 1 February 1844 defines the criteria necessary for a road to be considered as an urban road. For more information on this concept and this law, see the work by Benedikte Zitouni [ZITOUNI, B., 2010: 155-164].
25. AVB, BCB, 1870, t. 2, 22 August, p. 80.
26. AVB, BCB, 1884, 1 October, p. 482; ACS, BCS, 1883, 8 February, pp. 55-83; *Moniteur belge*, 14 February 1902, pp. 598-601.
27. ACS, BCS, 1895, 12 November, p. 547.
28. ACS, BCS, 1891, 7 July, p. 471.
29. ACS, *Rapport annuel sur la situation et l'administration des affaires de la commune pendant l'exercice 1914-1915*, p. 131; AVB, 1920. *Almanach du commerce et de l'industrie*. Brussels: H. Tarlier Editeur, p. 354; 1921, p. 270; 1923, p. 269.
30. The Royal Decree of 1902 ordered both the relocation of the railway and the work to be carried out in the Teniers-Josaphat neighbourhood. *Moniteur belge*, 14 February 1902, pp. 598-601; ACS, BCS, 1898, 22 November, pp. 1332-1333; 6 December, pp. 1505-1506 and p. 1512; Avenue Louis Bertrand. *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*.
31. ACS, BCS, 1898, 6 December, pp. 1513-1515.
32. ACS, BCS, 1888, 25 September, p. 443; TP – Chemin de fer de ceinture, « SNCB ceinture 1880-1943 », *Lettre du Receveur des Domaines au collège des bourgmestre et échevins de Schaerbeek, Bruxelles*, 3 avril 1889; *Collège*, 5 avril 1889; *Lettre du collège des bourgmestre et échevins de Schaerbeek au Receveur des Domaines, Schaerbeek*, 13 avril 1889; *Lettre du collège des bourgmestre et échevins de Saint-Josse-ten-Noode à celui de Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode*, 1 mai 1889; Avenue Georges Pêtre; Avenue Jottrand; Avenue Paul Deschanel; Avenue Voltaire. *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*.
33. Place des Bienfaiteurs is, in this respect, very rich architecturally: most of these styles are represented there [Avenue Rogier; Place des Bienfaiteurs]. In: *Inventaire du patrimoine architectural de la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*.

ABSTRACTS

How did the development of the railways affect the urban morphology of the Brussels suburbs? In an attempt to provide a first answer to this broad question, this article examines the role of railway infrastructures of the east railway ring in Brussels (currently line 161). Above all, it proposes to demonstrate that, contrary to a preconceived and still widespread idea, the tremendous development of the rail network in the second half of the 19th century was sometimes a huge obstacle to the urbanisation of certain neighbourhoods, with what could be referred to as “growth barriers” being built in the middle of them. By comparing archives of different types - in particular cartographic (mainly from municipal archives) - and various works on the evolution of urban morphology, through the example of this ring line, this study shows that while stations have often promoted urban development as economic growth areas, the railways crossing the city have had the opposite impact, sometimes acting as obstacles to the growth of certain neighbourhoods.

Quel a été l'impact du développement du chemin de fer sur la morphologie urbaine des faubourgs de Bruxelles ? Pour tenter d'apporter une première réponse à cette vaste question, ce texte

examine le rôle des infrastructures ferroviaires de la ligne de ceinture est de Bruxelles (l'actuelle ligne 161). Il propose surtout de démontrer que, contrairement à une idée reçue et encore largement diffusée, la formidable croissance du réseau ferroviaire dans la deuxième moitié du 19^e siècle a parfois pu constituer un redoutable obstacle à l'urbanisation de certains quartiers en érigeant au beau milieu de ce ceux-ci ce que l'on pourrait appeler des « barrières de croissance ». Croisant des archives de différentes natures et notamment cartographiques (issues principalement des fonds d'archives communales) et divers travaux sur l'évolution de la morphologie urbaine, cette étude montre, à travers l'exemple de cette ligne de ceinture que, si les gares ont souvent favorisé le développement urbain comme pôles économiques de croissance, les voies ferrées traversant la ville ont par contre joué le rôle inverse, en constituant parfois des entraves à la croissance de certains quartiers.

Hoe heeft de ontwikkeling van het spoor de stedelijke morfologie in de Brusselse buitenwijken beïnvloed? Om een eerste antwoord op deze brede vraag te proberen geven, onderzoekt dit artikel de rol van de spoorweginfrastructuur van de oostelijke ringlijn van Brussel (huidige spoorlijn 161). Het wil vooral aantonen dat, in tegenstelling tot een nog wijdverbreide opvatting, de enorme groei van het spoornet in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw soms een geducht obstakel vormde voor de verstedelijking van bepaalde wijken doordat midden in die wijken wat we zouden kunnen noemen “groeibarrières” werden opgetrokken. Door de vergelijking van allerlei soorten archieven, en in het bijzonder cartografische archieven (vooral uit de gemeentelijke archieffondsen), met diverse werken over de ontwikkeling van de stedelijke morfologie toont deze studie aan de hand van het voorbeeld van deze ringlijn aan dat, terwijl de treinstations de stadsontwikkeling vaak hebben bevorderd als economische groeipolen, de spoorwegen in de stad die ontwikkeling net hebben tegengewerkt doordat ze de uitbreiding van bepaalde wijken soms in de weg hebben gestaan.

INDEX

Subjects: 1. histoire – culture – patrimoine

Keywords: history, land use planning, urban infrastructures, public transport, town planning

Trefwoorden: geschiedenis, ruimtelijke ordening, stedelijke infrastructuur, openbaar vervoer, stedenbouw

Mots-clés: histoire, aménagement du territoire, infrastructures urbaines, transports publics, urbanisme

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