

Managing Flows: Techno-Utopianism in the Age of Empire

Synopsis

Scientific and technological endeavors played pivotal roles in the construction of and in maintaining the Japanese Empire during the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Behind these endeavors were drives to direct and manage different types of flows, such as the flow of capital, energy, people and nature, for “efficient” and “rational” development to expand the empire’s political economy. This presentation scrutinizes the role of the Suwŏn Agricultural Station in Colonial Korea—one of the largest stations in the empire—in building networks for managing flows on the Korean peninsula and the Japanese empire. It looks to the station to explore how the intersection between flows and networks across imperial space became the vehicle for the spread of techno-utopianism. In so doing, the historical investigation on the link between flows, networks and techno-utopianism serves as a way to uncover and critique structures of authority in empires of the past and today’s empires of technology.



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