

## TWENTY YEARS UNDER THE CHUNNEL, AND BEYOND?

### Rethinking Migrations and Borders

4<sup>th</sup> International Conference, Roundtable, BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON, 12 October 2016

## VINGT ANNÉES SOUS LA MANCHE, ET AU-DELÀ ?

### Repenser les Migrations et les Frontières

4<sup>e</sup> rencontre internationale, Table ronde, UNIVERSITE BRUNEL LONDRES, 12 octobre 2016

**Brunel University London, 12<sup>th</sup> October.** In cooperation with the **Department of Politics, History and the Brunel Law School, Rail et histoire** held a timely event on one of the most pressing cross-Channel issues to date: Migrations and borders.

**David Azéma**, Chairman of **Rails et histoire**, opened the event stressing the growing relevance of cross-Channel migrations and borders for both countries, all the more in the context of the 24th June referendum. **Rails et histoire** decided in 2014 that these issues would be part of the research programme **Twenty Years under the Channel, and beyond?** He pointed out that the French Customs never dismantled their cross-Channel facilities, a fact which should have been understood as a weak signal for the future. **David Azéma** thanked Brunel University and **Dr Alison Carrol** to host the 4<sup>th</sup> event of the programme, as well as **Professors Michel Foucher and Helen Drake**, its co-chairs. He also expressed his gratitude to **Mr Christian Cambier**, who has been supporting the programme for more than 2 years and attended the roundtable, and **Rise Conseil**, both **Etoile du Nord partners**. **Dr Naomi Percival**, Special Collections Librarian, Channel Tunnel Archive, Brunel University, presented the collection, in which the papers of the Channel Tunnel Company and the Channel Tunnel Association are to be found. A rich and pictorial archive, it includes letters, press cuttings, statistics and plans, photographs and objects, mainly about the 1920s and 30s schemes, and is only partially catalogued. **Dr Percival** related vivid anecdotes from the archive and drew parallels with present attitudes towards the fixed links. Specimens were also exhibited and commented.

**Prof. Michel Foucher**, Geographer, former Ambassador, Chair of applied Geopolitics at the College of World Studies (Paris), chaired the session **“A new Border under the sea”**, moderated by **Dr Alison Carrol**, Senior Lecturer in European History, Department of Politics, History and the Brunel Law School, Brunel University, and member of the Steering Committee for the roundtable. **Prof. Foucher**, who published in June 2016 *Le Retour des frontières* (CNRS editions, Paris), emphasized the long-term asymmetric perception of the cross-Channel border in Modern France and the UK, extending along its fortified coast for the first (*La Manche*), over the *English Channel* for the latest, “a sea shared by two kingdoms”. This is one of the reasons why President François Mitterrand believed that a tunnel would affect British insularism less than a bridge could do. The border was defined in the Canterbury Channel Tunnel Treaty in 1986 but remains “a mental map”. In 2003, the Treaty of Le Touquet extended joint control processes implemented for the Channel railway link to the English Channel and North Sea ports, effectively extending the border of an EU, non-Schengen member, to a neighboring country. This has been questioned in France since the *Brexit* referendum, but it is part of a “complex set of agreements”. **Prof. Foucher** listed the multiplicity of factors influencing migrants flows, such as a dynamic economy

and labour market, EU enlargement, UK “open door policy” in 2004, vicinity of two major metropolises. Moreover, ancillary staff of Western troops in crisis regions head to their former employers’ country when troops go home: “Migration is a family strategy”, strongly shaped by connectivity. We may have believed, too hastily, that borders would disappear, but they have not: “The return of borders is the return of politics” after decades of economy-driven policies. Though, in massively mobile societies, border controls have a cost and we need to find the right balance between efficiency and sovereignty. **Dr Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt**, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Brunel University London, compared European borders and related infrastructure and borders such as the cross-Channel railway link, Öresund link and future Brenner tunnel, drawing parallels between the Channel and the German-Polish border: the number of bridges built there has always been a reliable indicator to assess the relations between the two countries, as shown by the fact they were rebuilt after 1990. The Treaty of Le Touquet is now being challenged after the *Brexit* referendum. She also insisted that “every border is unique.” **Dr Laurent Bonnaud**, Programme Manager, member of the Steering Committee for the roundtable, insisted on the specific ‘mass transit’ nature of the cross-Channel railway link: border control processes are determined accordingly. In a way, major infrastructures oblige to make clear where and what borders are and the way they are defined and controlled. This was illustrated as early as 1876, in the wake of contemporary projects, by pioneer reflections about a border for the Channel railway tunnel which would be different from the administrative border.

The session “**Migration trends across the Channel**” was chaired by **Prof. Helen Drake**, Professor of French and European Studies, Jean Monnet Chair in European Integration, Chair of the University Association for European Studies (UACES), Loughborough University, and Member of The Scientific Board of Advisers for the Programme **Twenty Years under the Channel, and beyond?** **Dr Bonnaud** moderated the roundtable. **Prof. Drake**, who researched with Sue Collard on the British in France, focused on changes brought by the *Brexit* to cross-Channel legal migration and mobility, whereas before 2004, the UK did not really have a policy regulating intra-EU mobility, but “transactional, economic and incremental” action. These topics are central to both the referendum vote and now to the start of the *Brexit* negotiations, affecting UK citizens living in France and the EU, and also in the other way round, and victimizing the “highly-skilled and highly-mobile” – to quote Adrian Favell – Channel Tunnel, Eurostar or Easy Jet generation. Numerous factors, such as the Single Market, pensions systems and airline deregulation, influence settlement decisions, less so the access given to citizens by the cross-Channel railway link. Though, the link is rhetorically more present in terms of irregular migrations than for intra-EU mobility. In a broader perspective, the current “dis-integration” or, to paraphrase Andrew Geddes, “differential engagement” with the EU radically changes migration policies. **Dr Ed Naylor**, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, School of Languages and Area Studies, University of Portsmouth, noted the distinction between voluntary migrants as defined by the UN and refugees displaced by conflicts, with the latter effectively barred from reaching the UK and some other EU countries in order to claim asylum. He also mentioned the Dublin agreements and the “clearly unworkable notion” of first country of entry for asylum claims and underlined differences between asylum systems in the EU, including between the UK and France. “Migrations do not end at the border” since controls continue inside the country (internal borders): Algerians migrants to France in the 1960s benefited from theoretical free movement under the terms of the Evian Agreements in 1962, but encountered discriminatory treatment in practice; by contrast Portuguese migrants who crossed the French border illegally in the same period were able to retrospectively regularize their administrative situation once they found work. **Dr Naylor** believes that the Eurostar and low-cost airlines have been self-reinforcing in expanding the leisure market, but observes that the clearest correlation for migration trends to the UK since 1994 is with economic growth. He sees the railway fixed link with the Continent as a symbol of a world-open society which fitted the optimistic

zeitgeist of the early New Labour era beginning in 1997. There was little debate on economic migration up to 2004: the focus of public anxiety in the UK was then about asylum. Returning to 2016, he analysed the *Brexit* results along the Eurostar route: there was a 75% *Remain* vote in Camden (“a good proxy for St Pancras”) but Ashford and Dover overwhelmingly voted in favour of leaving the EU. **Dr Daniel Gordon**, Senior Lecturer in European History, Edge Hill University, observed that discussions around Channel migrations are not new. He drew parallels between fear of invasion – both military and moral – through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century tunnel projects and today’s narratives on migrations: “the language of invasion lives on.” Both reflect anxiety about national identity. The largest group of Channel railway link users are the British – most of them tourists of course. Settlement by British nationals in France has also been on the increase, thus representing 5% of the new arrivals in 2012, but this has been rather unproblematic. Recorded British residents in France grew from 102.000 to 173.000 between 1990 and 2013. A tunnel effect exists but is limited. Growth of British residents in Spain is much higher in the same period whereas the British population in Germany went down. Though, Eurostar is more useful for connections to North-Western Germany than to Southern Spain. Budget airlines and the widest socio-cultural context are alternative explanations. The period of greatest increase for British emigration to France is not 1990 - 2000 but 2000 - 2013. Settlement favors Southwestern and not Northern France, another argument against an all-to-strong determinism of transport mode and in favor of the broader social and cultural factors. Thanks to cultural factors, the British community is much larger in Ireland than in Belgium – in spite of an extremely easy connection between London and Brussels, and “basically, the French come to Britain to work but the British come to France to live.” The first wave of British settlers in the South-West of France in the early 1980s as well as the younger and larger one in the 1990s rather use ferries, including the more westerly routes, or travel by air from the North of England. The effect of the cross-Channel railway seems greater for French migrants to the UK – the second largest group of users. They are indeed concentrated in London, where railway has the edge over car and plane. Also, a higher proportion of young urban single people in this group have less need for cars. **Dr Gordon** assumed, as an hypothesis, that Eurostar clients would have been more likely to vote in favor of remaining in the UE. “Neo-liberal globalization has brought central London and central Paris mentally closer together, even if it has widened the economic and cultural gulf between central London and, for example, West Lancashire”, which had just 38 residents born in France in 2011, compared to 6 659 in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The French may come to the UK because they perceive the country as culturally less rigid than France, but need to keep a foot or even come back home later when the need for public and health services grow. The tunnel makes it easier in both directions. Finally, for the much smaller group of people who dominate the discussion, the refugees and *jungle* slum in Calais, the period from 1994 onwards is one of decreasing mobility. We can argue about terminologies, but we should never forget that refugees are people, like migrants in the previously referred groups. Since migrants camps appeared around Calais in the late 1990s, this might be perceived as related to the opening of the railway fixed link. Though, we need to understand this “Catch 22 situation” whereby people seeking asylum in the UK must do so from within the country, and yet are denied to get there (Carriers liability Act 1987 and subsequent legislation). There, the until now British open policy for EU migrants contrasts with a very selected policy for asylum seekers. This is an alternative explanation for the origin of the present crisis. Last, the Le Touquet Treaty fits a logic similar to the more recent deal between the EU and Turkey. Meanwhile, the camps drift further East of Calais, in the port area, and there are camps in Dunkirk, too, although there is no fixed link there. In a scenario where there would be similar blockade on legal routes to the UK, with or without a Tunnel, “there would still be a *jungle* in Calais”, as well as the associated human sufferings and victims: “Calais is our Berlin wall”, **Dr Gordon** concluded.

A lively debate with the audience addressed the current situation in the Calais area, the representations of internal and external borders in the UK, the question of a border crossed by an international tunnel and an international bridge. Discussion also covered the different motivations of migrants for coming to Europe depending on their origins and the disappearance of a common law between Britain and the UE, once the country has left the Union, and offered background on the Treaty of Canterbury in 1986, the Sangatte agreements in 1991 and the Treaty of Le Touquet in 2003.

**Prof. Drake** concluded on the difficulty to correlate the cross-Channel railway link; when considered as an isolated factor, with migrations trends, and the unclear prospects for cross-Channel *post-Brexit* flows. On a normative level, she observed that “there is a very little to guide us in terms of objective definitions of people who move.” International law constantly needs to be adapted to keep up with reality. Meanwhile, “the language of migration has been taken prisoner by the press, and particularly the tabloids.”

The event proved once again the benefit, for all participants, of an open exchange between experts with varied backgrounds from both sides of the Channel.

*The conference was held with the support of the Brunel University London.*

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It was in 2014, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Channel Tunnel, that **Rails et histoire** embarked on its **Twenty years under the Channel, and beyond?** 3-year programme of research and events. Supervised by a Franco-British Board of Scientific Advisers, the programme targets the Paris-London-Brussels Cross-Channel rail system in the broadest sense of the term.

In 2017, a communication campaign will address the academic and business community, as well as the general public to disseminate the results and proceedings of the 3-year programme.

*Conference proceedings will be published on the [www.ahicf.com](http://www.ahicf.com) website.*

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