Abstract

**Title:** The territories of electrical business: the model of Pearson and its application to San Paulo, Mexico D.F., Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona.

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The era of the introduction of electricity to cities, between the end of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th, is directly related to the rising of a new technology and its first progresses, as well as to a group of engineers and capitalists that recognised the development opportunities this was bringing, as well as the great business opportunities lying behind.

Frederick Stark Pearson (1861-1915) was one of the key figures in this era, an American engineer that mastered the technical knowledge related to the latest electric technology and “high finance” and combined them in the most optimal way. This knowledge, together with the absolute faith in the progress that electricity would bring about, made him found large electricity monopolies from hydroelectricity in the entire american continent and finally in Barcelona, supported by the principal capitalists of Canada.

The literature with respect to the companies that Pearson gave rise to is rather extensive (only of those companies that still exist), but it basically deals with the economical or social aspects that derived from them. However, a spatial or network-approach has not been taken yet, nor has there been a study of his working course in order to understand how he acted in each particular case.

Pearson developed a model to plant electrical networks in the form of a monopoly over the territory. His most advanced application was to Barcelona in 1911, when he founded the Barcelona Traction, Light and Power Company, also known as La Canadiense. After a first period of learning the main aspects of the different actors in the electrical business, he started to build large hydroelectrical installations to electrify the cities of San Paulo (1899), Mexico City (1902) and Rio de Janeiro (1904), where he faced the difficulties of having the city only as a client. Later he proceeded covering large territories with railway and irrigation infrastructures. Finally in Barcelona he linked the knowledge on hydroelectric high generation to that on territorial networks, understanding that the field of electrical business is territorial, and not urban.

In all his electrical companies, Pearson make a link with the business of electric trams in order to introduce and control a large consumer and user of his own network. In the same way he tried to link the real estate business to the electrical in Barcelona, with the urbanisation project of Collserola using the railway of Vallès that he had built himself. But his unexpected death by the sinking of the Lusitania kept the project from realisation.