

Reconsidering Regional Railway Management in Hokkaido from a Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

The aim of this co-authored paper is to expand on our webinar discussion, which took place on 15th July 2021. France has realised the development of a passenger-friendly regional railway service by giving increased discretion to regional authorities. This favourable outcome can also be explained by the organisational reform of quasi-public railway companies and the recent decisions made by the independent regulatory agency in France. The ministerial management of franchised train services and privatised railways after the failure of neoliberal reforms in the United Kingdom, along with changes in regional policies, has resulted in an increase in passengers and an improvement in service. Germany has a balanced system for overseeing its regional railways, as its federal parliament ensures that regional interests are considered thoroughly; consequently, sufficient federal subsidies are devoted to the Bundesland region's railways, which are subject to a highly effective, competitive bidding process. The recent events in Hokkaido are reviewed in the paper, and it is concluded that (1) Hokkaido's rail lines should be divided into three categories, including mainline, wide-area, and intra-municipal transport systems, to clarify which level of government (i.e. central, regional, or municipal) should be in charge of them; (2) the Hokkaido government should take more responsibility in obtaining funds from the central government, forming a strong relationship with JR Hokkaido through financial assistance, and coordinating with stakeholders to form a regional 'transport network'; and (3) transport modes, including regional railways, should be integrated into a wider network with a comprehensive plan including policy objectives for regional development and environmental protection, which should be primarily established by the Hokkaido government so that passengers can utilise the railways efficiently.

Keywords

Regional railway management, France, The United Kingdom, Germany, Hokkaido