Driving Europe: building Europe on roads in the twentieth century
Schipper, F.

DOI: 10.6100/IR638670
Published: 01/01/2008

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:
• A submitted manuscript is the author's version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
• The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
• The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.
• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal?

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 12. Jan. 2018
This book discusses the intersection of Europe and roads. Today we can hardly imagine life without roads and the automobiles that use them to move around. The vast majority of movements in Europe takes place on the road. Travelers use the car to explore parts of the continent on their holidays and goods travel large distances to reach consumers. Indeed, the twentieth century has deservedly been characterized as the century of the car.

The situation looked very different around 1900. People crossing national borders by car encountered multiple hurdles on their way. Technically they imported their vehicle into a neighboring country and had to pay astronomic import duties. Often they needed to pass a driving test in each country they visited. Early on, automobile and touring clubs sought to make life easier for traveling motorists.

What followed was a century full of international negotiations to tackle the problems arising from differing regulations, with Europe as the main stage. A peregrination along the archives of international organizations has provided the base material for the quest for continental road networks and sets of rules steering their use. The resulting thesis encompasses anything from standardized traffic signs saving human lives on the road to the Europabus taking tourists from Stockholm to Rome in the 1950s. Driving Europe thus offers a highly original portrait of a Europe built on roads in the course of the twentieth century.
The Technology and European History series seeks to present scholarship about the role of technology in European history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The series focuses on how technical communities, nation-states, businesses, social groups, and other actors have contested, projected, performed, and reproduced multiple representations of Europe while constructing and using a range of technologies. The series understands Europe both as an intellectual construct and material practice in relation to spaces inside as well as outside Europe. In particular, the series invites studies focusing on Europe’s (former) colonies and on the two new superpowers of the twentieth century: the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Interdisciplinary work is welcomed. The series will offer a platform for scholarly works associated with the Tensions of Europe Network to find their way to a broader audience. For more information on the network and the series, see: www.tensionsofeurope.eu

Books in series
1. Judith Schueler, Materialising identity. The co-construction of the Gotthard Railway and Swiss national identity (Amsterdam, June 2008)
2. Vincent Lagendijk, Electrifying Europe. The power of Europe in the construction of electricity networks (Amsterdam, August 2008)
3. Frank Schipper, Driving Europe. Building Europe on roads in the twentieth century (Amsterdam, September 2008)

Foundation for the History of Technology
The Foundation for the History of Technology (SHT) aims to develop and communicate knowledge that increases our understanding of the critical role of technology in the history of the Western world. Since 1988 the foundation has been supporting scholarly research in the history of technology. This has included large-scale national and international research programs and numerous individual projects, many in collaboration with Eindhoven University of Technology. The SHT also coordinates the international research network Tensions of Europe: Technology and the Making of Europe. For more information see: www.histech.nl
Driving Europe

Building Europe on roads in the twentieth century

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de
Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, op gezag van de
Rector Magnificus, prof.dr.ir. C.J. van Duijn, voor een
commissie aangewezen door het College voor
Promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen
op dinsdag 30 september 2008 om 14.00 uur

door

Frank Schipper

geboren te Delft
The research has been made possible by:
Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)

This publication is made possible by:
Foundation for the History of Technology
Technical University of Eindhoven
Unger-Van Brero Fonds

Typesetting and design: Ellen Bouma, Alkmaar, the Netherlands

Cover image: “The only road linking France with Italy which can be used at present by traffic throughout the year is the one along the Riviera coast. Here is the usual scene of congestion at the Vintimille frontier post.” Source: Dino Lora Totino, “Bringing Italy “closer”: The effect of the Mont Blanc road tunnel,” Road International 9 (Summer 1953): 43.
Here ends the road. After research in numerous archives scattered around the Atlantic realm, my research notes, innumerable photographs of archive documents and manifold scribbles have found their way into this text. At this point I would like to express my gratitude to those without whom it would have been impossible to finalize this book. I want to thank the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research for financing the VICI-scheme of which my research formed part. I am greatly indebted to the Marshall Foundation for awarding me a Marshall/Baruch fellowship to conduct 2.5 months of research in the United States. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Society for the History of Technology for the two travel grants to attend the annual conferences in Minneapolis and Washington D.C.

Being an historian is inconceivable without archives. I owe many thanks to the professional and helpful staff of the archives and organizations I have visited in the course of my project. I would like to thank Marian Ashworth, Remo Becci, Sylvie Carlon-Riera, Peggy Dillard, Sylvie Gemperlé, Joanne Hartog, Sylvie Picard Renaut, Bernhardine Pejovic, Natacha Pinon, Sibylle Rupprecht, Liz Safly, María Sánchez, Randy Sowell, Esther Trippel-Ngai, and Wim Westerhuis, as well as their countless colleagues for their help in finding long-forgotten documents and making my research trips a very pleasant part of my project.

I feel privileged to have worked in the Transnational Infrastructures of Europe-project at the Technical University of Eindhoven (www.tie-project.nl). Irene Anastasiadou, Alexander Badenoch, Sorinela Ciobica, Vincent Lagendijk, Suzanne Lommers, and Erik van der Vleuten provided an inexhaustible source of inspiration, fertile ground for testing ideas, as well as good company on joint archive trips. Their remarks and input have found a well-deserved place in this manuscript, as have the suggestions of Nicolette Peerenboom with regard to English language usage. Of course, it goes without saying that I and I alone bear complete responsibility for the end result.

I thank TIE-project-leader and supervisor Johan Schot for his unbounded energy and enthusiasm, as well as his support and trust. I have learnt much from the cooperation with an academic of such rare dedication and perseverance. I cherish the many good comments I received from my co-supervisor Gijs Mom. The positive smiles with which he ended each of our conversations were a great comfort.
and helped me build the confidence that I would somehow some day bring my project to a satisfactory end.

I want to thank all my colleagues at the Technical University of Eindhoven for providing a splendid environment to work in. Many thanks to Lidwien Hollanders-Kuipers and Roeslan Leontjevas for providing practical assistance on several occasions. With pleasure I participated in the Ph.D. training program of the N.W. Posthumus Institute and I have also benefited from the contact with scholars in other academic settings. The Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility, the Society for the History of Technology, and Tensions of Europe deserve special mention in this respect, and I would like to thank participants and audience of all the sessions in which I participated.

Special thanks to Mårten Spångberg for having me as a speaker at the International Festival University in the Van Abbe-museum in Eindhoven and to Sébastien Gardon for inviting me to lecture on my research at the Institut d’Études Politiques in Lyon as part of the seminar Circulations de savoirs et pratiques de gouvernement local. They allowed me to share some of my ideas in welcoming new settings.
I want to thank the room-mates of my Eindhoven pied-à-terre Alexander Badenoch, Trosky Callo, Alberto Espinosa Molina, Christian Illies, Arianna Martinelli, Émilie Pouget, and Giacomo Romano for inspiring conversations, tasty meals and turning Eindhoven into a welcoming second home during the last five years.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, sisters, family and friends for their encouragement, interest and standing by my side whenever I needed it. Above all I am eternally grateful to Martijn van Breukelen for his unconditional support. When my research stays in Latin America as a master student came to an end, neither of us supposed that my travels would actually increase during the next phase of my life. Martijn has always big-heartedly accepted my many months of absence and patiently acquiesced in the mass of papers and books littering the dining table, the writing desk, as well as the rest of our house. If it weren’t for him, this book would never have been written. I gladly dedicate it to him.

Pian di Mugnone, 21 July 2008
Table of contents

Acknowledgments 5

1 Introduction 11
   Red carpets all over Europe 11
   Framework and questions 15
      Europe’s system builders 21
      Demarcation in space and time 26
   Roads to European integration: a brief historiography 28
   Sources and methodological issues 33
   Thesis outline 40

2 Setting the stage – The dawn of the spirit of Geneva, 1898-1921 45
   All roads lead to Paris 45
   Early motoring in Europe 48
      The Courses des Capitales, 1898-1903 48
      Touring Europe during the Belle Époque 54
      International organizations and road transport 63
   ‘Careful, driver!’ The Great War and motorized transport 68
   The League of Nations 74
   Conclusion 80

3 Roads to Europe – Albert Thomas’ European public works, 1929-1937 83
   The Europe of Robert Mangin 83
   The European movement in the Interbellum 89
   European public works 92
      The Plan Delaisi and the Public Works Committee 96
      European motorway networks 102
   Conclusion 116

4 Driving Europe – The League of Nations Road committee, 1921-1938 121
   Making the European tourist 121
   Barcelona and the Committee on Communications and Transit 125
   The Sub-Committee on Road Traffic 132
      Preparing for Paris: Revising the 1909 Convention, 1926 136
      From Paris to Geneva: The European Conference on Road Traffic, 1931 141
   Years of decline? The remainder of the 1930s 150
   Conclusion 154
5 Setting the stage – The parade of organizations, 1942-1953  159
   The reconstruction of a continent  159
   Another war – another aftermath  162
      Planning European post-war transport during the war  164
      The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe  167
      “M-aid for motorways:” the Marshall Plan and motorized mobility  172
      The European Conference of Ministers of Transport  178
   Conclusion  183

6 Roads to Europe – The E-road network, 1950-2007  187
   Get your kicks on the E3  187
   The E-Road network  191
      Main international traffic arteries for Europe, 1947-1957  191
      E-road network development, 1957-1975  201
      Towards a grid: the 1975 revision and thereafter, 1975-2007  205
   Fill in the blanks: building roads in the Balkans  209
   Conclusion  217

7 Driving Europe – The operation of Europe’s roads, 1949-1960  219
   Danish butter for France  219
   The freedom of the road  223
   Towards a regime of regulated freedom  231
      Taking the bus: the quest for trans-European bus lines, 1947-1956  232
      Weights and dimensions: the quest for a European truck, 1949-1960  240
      Interlude: the quest for a European pallet, 1952-1960  251
   Conclusion  254

8 Conclusion  259
   Via Europa  259
      Institutional proliferation and European road transport  262
      Roads to Europe and driving them  267
      The road ahead  274

9 Epilogue – All quiet in Brussels?  279

Bibliography  289
List of abbreviations  315
List of tables and figures  317
Curriculum vitae  319
Chapter 1
Introduction

Red carpets all over Europe

“Je ne vois pas, en effet, quel meilleur moyen il y aurait d’assurer l’unité de l’Europe qu’en reliant tous les États, tous les peuples, par des lignes de transport et des lignes de communication réellement européens.”

Monsieur Margue (1952)

When the French journal Transmondia dedicated a special issue to Europe in 1958, the German transport minister Hans-Christoph Seebohm wrote a short note on the role of transport in European unification. History, Seebohm claimed, had demonstrated that transport was a helpful tool in bringing about national unification. He predicted that Europe could count on the collaboration of transport in similar ways. Seebohm’s words came at a time of optimism regarding European integration. The Treaty of Rome, founding the European Economic Community (EEC), had been signed the year before. The Treaty reserved an entire title to transport issues, giving it a relatively firm basis vis-à-vis other policy areas. The most ambitious aim was to formulate a common transport policy (CTP) in due course. This constituted a logical step in the integration process for most actors at the time. They thought the transport sector was destined to take European integration to the next level.

1 Council of Europe, Consultative Assembly, 4th ordinary session, 2nd part, "Compte rendu officiel, 22e séance, 26 September 1952," AS(4)CR22, nrs. 81-84, registry fonds GIX: Transport and Communications, file 9/2/2/26-10278, United Nations Organisation in Geneva Archives (hereafter: UNOG). Mr. Margue spoke at the session on behalf of Luxembourg. Translation “I do not actually see what better means there would be to ensure European unity than by linking all states, and all people with real European lines of transport and communication.”

Despite this general feeling the CTP became an obdurate irritant continuously reminding all involved of the limits to integration for almost thirty years. Negative qualifications of the CTP abound. In 1972 former European Commission President Walter Hallstein called it the “ironical side” of European integration, claiming that against the odds it had remained in “a state of old-fashioned pastoral seclusion.” In 1980 Kenneth Gwilliam described the difficulties of establishing a CTP as “a mounting source of frustration.” In 1983 Jürgen Erdmenger remarked “Time and again the common transport policy has been the saddest chapter in the history of European integration.”

Increasingly dissatisfied with the failure of the CTP the European Parliament decided to involve the European Court of Justice. It originally intended to take both the European Commission and the European Council to court for failing to develop the CTP, but Transport Director-General John Steele convinced Parliament that the European Commission had done all it could to make the CTP a reality. The Parliament’s January 1983 action for failure to act therefore accused only the Council of breaching its treaty obligation to develop the CTP. The Court passed its infamous “inactivity verdict” on 22 May 1985. When the Court made its judgment public the atmosphere in the Council of Ministers had changed. A coalition was emerging between ministers such as Ridley (United Kingdom) and Smit-Kroes (The Netherlands) supported by De Groo (Belgium) and Dollinger (Germany). They all adhered to a more competitive transport sector. A further boost came from the drive of the Commission to complete the internal market by 1992. Finally the “Cinderella among the many Community policies” had been unveiled.

---


6 Only weeks after the inactivity verdict the Commission published an influential white paper on the issue, see European Commission, *Completing the internal market*, COM(85)310 final (Brussels, 1985).

According to this storyline transport integration, as part of a broader process of European integration, only started late in the twentieth century. Yet, in the same years that the CTP failed, international transport in Europe, particularly on the road, grew exponentially. This paradox suggests we might have looked for a common policy in the wrong places. A 1963 advertisement of the Dutch-British oil company Shell in the International Road Federation's glossy magazine Road International points out an alternative direction. Entitled “We roll red carpets out all over Europe” the ad showed a man rolling out a giant red carpet while beckoning a car to follow him. In the accompanying text Shell drew attention to the Touring Information Centers at its service stations along the main motorways of Europe. Shell welcomed both “first-time tyros with language troubles” and “seasoned travelers with savoir-faire.” From Lapland to Lisbon and from John O’Groats to the Peloponnesus Shell offered help to its clients, whether they were looking for “barbers in Seville or Lautrecs in Toulouse.”

The advertisement provides an interesting example of how a large company forming a crucial element in road transport appropriated Europe for its own purposes. By the early 1960s the stream of northern Europeans spending their holidays in the south had become a flood. They increasingly used their car, the “greatest single measure of European prosperity” after the war, to travel to the destination of their annual holiday, a symbol of affluence in itself. The tourist flows caused traffic jams from London to Cornwall and on French routes nationales to the Mediterranean coast and Spain. Through its network of gasoline stations Shell was well placed to profit from this development. By giving information to tourists Shell became one factor in shaping continental patterns of tourism. In a tradition going back to the publication of the first Michelin Guide in 1900 Shell, perhaps unconsciously, provided its version of Europe for consumption by eager tourists traveling the continent by car.

---

10 “We roll red carpets out all over Europe,” Road International 47 (January 1963): 18. ‘Tyro’ is a synonym for ‘beginner.’ John O’Groats is one of Scotland’s northernmost places from where ferries to the Orkney Islands depart. The last phrase refers to Gioachino Rossini’s opera Il Barbiere di Siviglia (1816) and the well-known French painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901). In a later advertisement Shell used a similar rhetoric to point out the use of Shell bitumen for the construction of the “Great E4,” see “The bird flight route from Portugal to Finland,” Road International 50 (September 1963): 18.
Shell is but one example of a private company shaping Europe on the road. Oil companies have formed a crucial part of the road lobby since the advent of the automobile. Shell was one of the founding members of the International Road Federation (IRF), an international road lobby organization founded in 1948 to promote road construction worldwide. In fact Shell financed IRF operations in Europe during the first couple of years. Before the Second World War companies like Shell cooperated with the International Chamber of Commerce, an organization that has represented business interests since 1919. Such international interest groups provide an alternative institutional setting that might provide a key to our understanding of proposals for European road networks and regimes for their use across borders.

The twentieth century has been characterized as the century of the car. The automobile represents the “quintessential manufactured object” and a major item of individual consumption. In 1900 cars were rare elite gadgets, but around 2000 an estimated total of 500 million vehicles roamed the planet’s roads. To travel around automobiles used existent road networks. The United States qualifies as having the world’s foremost automobile culture. Yet it is in Europe that the century of the car has witnessed the most intense negotiations for the use of the automobile across national borders, both with regard to material road networks and the operation of trans-border flows. It is therefore unsurprising that mobility issues have formed an important part of discussions concerning European integration from the start.

Yet scholars of European integration have more often than not neglected the crucial role transport has played in the phenomena they study. In a similar vein mobility historians have in large majority remained within national boundaries, despite the fact that mobility is a prime example of a transnational phenomenon. This situation is regrettable. While in the course of the twentieth century the automobile has become the most common means for crossing national borders in Europe, we have barely begun to understand if and how road transport has

contributed to European integration. Thomas Misa and Johan Schot have spotlighted how technology has generally been excluded from the study of European integration, despite the fact that infrastructure networks have fulfilled a crucial function as material underpinnings for the process. They claim technology has been a crucial agent of change and has enabled a process of hidden integration (and fragmentation) of Europe. Integrating network technologies in the study of European integration implies we need to look beyond the work of the European Union (EU) and its direct predecessors and to push back the roots of European integration into the nineteenth century.

This thesis investigates the intersection of ‘Europe’ and ‘roads’ in the century of the car. The next part elaborates the two main constituting elements, namely ‘roads’ and ‘Europe(s).’ After identifying intergovernmental organizations as a key research site for studying their intersection, it deals with a particular set of so-called “Europe’s system builders” and also discusses the spatial and temporal demarcation of the subject matter. The third part of the introduction presents a historiographical overview of the literature that has inspired this research. The fourth part reflects on some of the methodological issues arising from conducting a research into the work of international organizations and provides insight into the source basis of this thesis. The fifth and final part presents a brief outline of the thesis.

Framework and questions

In this thesis roads are viewed as purposefully human-built (infra)structures. The first roads in this sense are the stone-paved streets of the city of Ur around 4000 BC. The roads of the Roman Empire are often cited as the zenith of pre-modern road-building and contemporary road lobbyists praise them in support

18 Georges Livet defines them as “une construction humaine, choisie, élaborée et entretenue par le groupe social pour que les voitures y circulent en toute saison,” Georges Livet, Histoire des routes et des transports en Europe: Des chemins de Saint-Jacques à l’âge d’or des diligences (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2003), 16. Translation “a human construction, chosen, worked and maintained by social groups to allow vehicles to circulate in all seasons.”
19 Maxwell G. Lay, Ways of the world: A history of the world’s roads and of the vehicles that used them (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 43. On the prehistoric roots of roads, see ibid. xvii, 5.
of their own clamor for more and better roads. Apart from the roads themselves there are certain artifacts accompanying road networks that are of interest, like traffic signs, traffic lights, viaducts, tunnels and bridges. And there are of course the vehicles that use roads to move around. All together these roads, artifacts and vehicles form what Tim Edensor calls ‘motorscapes’ or ‘roadscapes.’ Besides these material elements, there are institutions that have an impact on the design, construction, and use of roads. They include traffic rules, the schools teaching them, civil engineering schools, departments for road-building or maintenance, and ministries of public works.

Roads have undergone a profound transformation since the advent of the automobile in the late nineteenth century. At that time a multiplicity of vehicles and users, including pedestrians made use of public roads. Especially in rural areas roads formed a place for social interaction. Today they are thoroughfares for motorized traffic where other road users are only admitted under narrowly defined conditions. The process of redefining the road has been remarkably fast. For example, the authoritative Permanent International Association of Road Congresses (1908) excluded horse-drawn and bicycle traffic from its work in 1908 and 1910 respectively.

The motorway epitomizes the redefinition of the road. Motorways are roads exclusively reserved for motorized traffic with limited access points and devoid of level crossings. Roads come in different categories. On a European level the 1950 Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries created what we today call ‘E-roads.’ The E-road network supposedly followed the trunk

20 Stevens calls Roman military roads "the first transport policy," Stevens, Transport, 15. For International Road Federation president Gallienne "The road was the very foundation of Greek and Roman civilization," Georges Gallienne, "The influence of roads and road transport on the future of Europe," Road International 1 (Autumn 1950): 20. On the roads of the Roman Empire and the comparable high-quality road system in ancient China, see Lay, Ways, 52-57.
22 In American urban settings the conception of streets as an exclusive transport place surged with the introduction of urban railways, Clay McShane, Down the asphalt path: The automobile and the American city (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 29. See also Peter D. Norton, "Street rivals: Jaywalking and the invention of the motor age street," Technology and Culture 48, no. 2 (2007): 331-359. Cathérine Bertho claims a predominantly urban elite was able to push its support for the redefinition of the road to the detriment of lower social classes and rural areas, Cathérine Bertho-Lavenir, La roue et le stylo: Comment nous sommes devenus touristes (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1999), chapter eight. In the urbanism of Le Corbusier streets were "a factory for producing traffic." Earlier, Haussman's Parisian boulevards had already convinced the public that they were "ideal speedways for heavy traffic," Marshall Berman, All that is solid melts into air: The experience of modernity (New York: Penguin, 1988), 158, 167.
routes of continental transport, but contrary to what has recently been suggested E-roads are not motorways per se. More importantly, E-roads did not operate in a vacuum, but formed part, first, of existing road networks, second, of transport systems including all modes of transport, and, third, of an even more encompassing set of infrastructures.

To start with the first aspect, roads form complex layered systems connecting multi-lane motorways, dirt roads and all road types in between. Napoleonic road planning was among the first to differentiate between different road types serving different purposes. Primary roads form the backbone of the system connecting major cities and industrial areas and are thus of (inter)national importance. In (Western) Europe most primary roads today are motorways, which typically do not make up more than 2% of the road system in its totality, but carry a disproportionate amount of traffic. An intricate system of lesser roads connects to this primary road net. Secondary provincial roads connect minor towns and tertiary rural roads extend the road network into more peripheral areas. A fourth category of unpaved roads completes the road taxonomy. In short, E-roads form only the tiny top-layer of the continental road network.

Second, roads operate in a broader, similarly multilayered system involving other transport modes. A firm grip on multimodality and the change in relative shares among transport modes provides insight in the complex cooperative-competitive relations among them. The relation between rail and road illustrates this. In the early phases of motorized transport, the rail sector viewed the automobile as an opportunity to extend its services door-to-door and to substitute unprofitable branch lines. Railroad companies started to offer bus services in mountainous

24 Blomkvist refers to the E-roads as motorways and Mom identifies the E-roads as 'highways,' which in his article equals the term 'motorway' as it is used here, Pär Blomkvist, "Roads for flow - roads for peace: Lobbying for a European highway system," in Networking Europe: Transnational infrastructures and the shaping of Europe, 1850-2000, ed. Erik van der Vleuten and Arne Kaijser (Sagamore Beach: Science History Publications, 2006), 161; Gijs Mom, "Roads without rails: European highway-network building and the desire for long-range motorized mobility," Technology and Culture 46, no. 4 (2005): 763. The establishment and development of the E-road network forms the subject of chapter six.


26 Gijs Mom has shown the importance of taking these roads seriously by demonstrating that secondary and tertiary roads steadily expanded in the nineteenth century in the Netherlands (and Belgium). He thus debunks the accepted view of the railway age as a period of scant attention for or even decline of road construction and maintenance. Gijs Mom, "Constructing multifunctional networks: Road building in the Netherlands, 1810-1980," in Road history: Planning, building and use, ed. Gijs Mom and Laurent Tissot (Neuchâtel: Éditions Alphil, 2007), 33-62, particularly 35-37.

areas not reached by train, and in the United States railroad companies actively supported the so-called good roads movement until around 1916. In the course of the Interbellum complementarity gave way to fierce competition. On the more extreme side Marcel de Coninck in his 1931 brochure La Mort du Rail proposed to transform all railroads into motorways, a project taking as little as six months. The resulting network would connect the hearts of all major cities right from the start at an estimated cost of just 33,333 francs per kilometer. Although such a view did not enjoy broad support, there was a heated debate on the proper coordination of transport. Business interests supported freedom of choice, while state agents worried about the revenues of state-owned railways. Irrespective of competitive animosities, rail and road representatives and governmental officials still needed to negotiate issues like how best to protect human life at level crossings of road and rail.

A third observation is that road networks also form part of a broader set of infrastructures. The concept ‘infrastructure,’ coined around 1875, has known an extraordinarily successful terminological career. Arne Kaijser, who prefers the term ‘infrasystems,’ describes them as enabling technologies facilitating flows of commodities, information, and people, providing basic societal functions that are publicly accessible. Paul Edwards has described them as “the connective tissues and the circulatory systems of modernity,” but also warns that we should not think of infrastructures only as devices that enable flows. They also restrict in the sense that they define the routes flows can follow and thus where it is possible to go.

29 This was a bargain in comparison to the cost of constructing ordinary autoroutes, estimated at 15 million francs per kilometer, cited in Philippe Reine, Trafic automobile et réseau routier: Les autoroutes en Italie, en Allemagne et en France (Paris: Éditions A. Pédone, 1944), 139.
30 The railways had triggered a similar debate in the nineteenth century, Livet, Histoire, particularly 488-507. The competition became the object of a steady flow of studies, including ICC, Road and rail transport: Introductory report submitted to the Committee of Independent Experts to the International Chamber of Commerce, brochure 85 (Paris: ICC, 1933); Paul Wohl and A. Albitreccia, Road and rail in forty countries: Report prepared for the International Chamber of Commerce (London: Milford, 1935).
32 Arne Kaijser, “Redirecting infrasystems towards sustainability,” in Individual and structural determinants of environmental practice, ed. Anders Biel et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003): 152-156. An ‘infrasystem’ includes the flows that it enables. The use of this concept allows Kaijser to discuss systems that depend on infrastructures, such as the postal system. This is reminiscent of the concept of ‘second-order system’ from LTS literature.
For Dirk van Laak infrastructures represent first-class means of societal integration that often antedate political integration. Eugen Weber’s well-known Peasants into Frenchmen forcefully illustrates the process for the build-up of the nation-state in France. The second part of his book entitled “The agencies of change” starts with the chapter “Roads, roads and still more roads.” Weber underlines the crucial importance roads have had for French nation- and state-building. Among the most extreme examples of infrastructure dynamics in this respect are the Netherlands, where high levels of population density, industrial activity and agricultural intensity were achieved through constructing extensive, large-scale infrastructures. By the 1970s the Netherlands had become a ‘networked nation’ par excellence. Among transport networks its road network was by far the densest.

These works illustrate the role of infrastructures as the material underpinning of processes of national integration. Others have put them forward as part of an effort to construct a European entity, or predicted such an entity would emerge from efforts to build transnational infrastructures, along the lines suggested by Seebohm at the beginning of this chapter. Road builders or the politicians that sponsored them wanted roads to tie Europeans together and harmonize international relations as a by-product. The twentieth century has seen many proposals for European road networks that aimed at the integration of the continent, yet existing literature fails to investigate the precise content of the ‘Europe’ they projected.

This thesis poses the central question to find out what the relationship is between road networks on the one hand and European integration on the other. This central concern for the intersection of roads and Europe is subdivided into three more empirical questions. First we need to understand where European road networks were designed. This brings us to a particular set of international institutional actors treated in detail in the next section as ‘Europe’s system builders.’ It should be noted that not these international organizations, but the individual European states ultimately remained responsible for financing and constructing the roads in question. They usually conceived their road networks in national terms. There are only a few occasions where single states drew up continental networks, Nazi

35 Weber focused especially on the importance of vicinal instead of primary roads, because the high-quality radial network of main roads remained “only a skeleton” until lesser roads were improved as well, Eugen Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of rural France, 1870-1914 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), particularly 196.
Germany being the main exception. International organizations facilitated negotiations on how to connect the various national networks and which road standards should apply. In addition they engaged in continental road network proposals imbued with explicit European ambitions.

The second and third questions are related to the propositions emanating from these institutional settings. On the one hand we need to scrutinize the Europe embedded in the proposed road plans. In particular we should lay bare the connections, but also the exclusions they entailed. On the other hand the European ideal was reflected in ideas concerning the operation of road networks as well. We therefore also need to examine continental visions of the regimes that should regulate the operation of Europe's roads across borders, both of future and existing networks.

Within this context Europe itself is an all but unproblematic category. According to Eric Hobsbawm no single Europe has ever existed, not in ethnic terms, not as an ideology, and certainly not as a geographical entity. He views Europe as a construct, a shifting, divisible and flexible concept giving 'Europe' the characteristics of a process rather than a solid-state entity. The conception of European integration as a process of infrastructural connection and division employed here spotlights the work of hitherto forgotten organizations. While Brussels' transport (infrastructure) policy did not get off the ground, negotiations on infrastructure and network use formed the core business of alternative organizations.

Erik van der Vleuten et al. have recently identified such organizations, which they call Europe's system builders, as a fruitful research site for studying transnational infrastructure development in Europe. The idea of the makeability of Europe permeated attempts at European unification in the course of the twentieth century and in that context transport infrastructures became a means to this end. When actors developed plans for a 'European' road network, such plans formed a spatially bounded manifestation of Europe reflecting their interpretation of the continent. The system builder label is an overt reference to Thomas Hughes' work

---

on Large Technical Systems (LTS). To Hughes’ original concept they add the negotiated and contested character of continental infrastructure building, and the clear ideological dimension involved in European infrastructure plans. This latter element explains why projections and plans play such a major part in this thesis. Plans do not have a one-to-one relationship with reality. Many plans do not materialize at all and if they do, the outcome often differs to a certain degree from the original design. But plans are certainly not inconsequential either. They invent needs, create expectations and give rise to fantasies, which in turn have the potential to guide actors’ behavior and form a key factor in molding infrastructure projects.

Moreover, European plans reveal contemporary conceptions of Europe even before they are realized. Choosing Europe’s system builders as research sites makes it possible to overcome the problem of a priori defining Europe, as referred to above. Instead Europe is viewed as an actor category, a notion used by individuals or organizations engaged in European integration. When ‘European’ proposals pop up in these institutional settings, they form a reflection of what Europe actually is in the conception of these actors. The next section discusses the peculiarities of Europe’s system builders more in-depth.

Europe’s system builders
Organizations come in many kinds and varieties. In an overview of big technological projects in twentieth century Europe, Helmut Trischler and Hans Weinberger make a distinction between single- and multi-issue organizations. The former include the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN) and EURATOM, the latter refers to for example the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation or the European Economic Community. This dissertation resorts to the classic distinction between intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). The former have states as members

41 Vleuten et al., “Europe’s,” 324-328.
and thus assemble supreme decision-makers. The latter usually have non-state actors as their members, although ministerial departments or state agencies are not per se excluded. Non-governmental organizations like automobile clubs and touring associations have been singularly important in (north-western) Europe in the redefinition process of the road referred to earlier.  

The Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 is generally considered the first modern IGO. The number and variety of IGOs has risen steeply in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly towards its end. As an explanatory factor to understand the large increase in the number of organizations Iriye points out the technological developments that have resulted in an increasing proximity and closer contact and the development of worldwide networks of goods, capital and labor.

This is not the right place to discuss the precise distinctions between IGOs and INGOs or possible hybrid forms. Accepting the general distinction, it can be argued that IGOs form the more adequate research site for three reasons. First, IGOs were forums where the voices of many countries could be heard simultaneously. This is a pragmatic advantage in research terms. Second, IGOs have been a magnet for the activities of INGOs trying to influence them. Handley Stevens interprets the proliferation of lobbies and interest groups in Brussels as an indicator for the primacy of the EU in transport policy today. Indeed, INGO decisions on where to establish themselves and devote their limited resources provide important clues on the relative perceived importance of IGOs. On the more practical side, many INGOs have not consistently had the means nor felt the need to preserve their historical record. IGO archives sometimes form the only resource to reconstruct their past and assess their impact.

Third, IGOs have piled up information on the subjects they deal with. The oversight and data contained in their research reports are sometimes unsurpassed. The

---

47 Akira Iriye, Global community: The role of international organizations in the making of the contemporary world (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
48 On this topic, see John Boli and George M. Thomas, eds., Constructing world culture: International non-governmental organizations since 1875 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
49 Stevens, Transport, 31.
economic studies of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) form a forceful example.51 The ECE, founded in 1947, published some of the most reliable economic studies of the early Cold War containing information from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although American officials had serious misgivings about the ECE, they considered its economic surveys extremely valuable. This in part explains the hesitant support of the American government for the organization’s continuation (see chapter five). Apart from being a strategic research site for studying the relation between European integration and road networks, the tremendous growth of the number and scope of international organizations in the course of the twentieth century has not so far been reflected in historical research.52 Recently this situation has begun to change, but more work on the theme is welcome.

Using the archives of international organizations for unveiling the past of European road networks also presents serious drawbacks. For instance, a main disadvantage is that national positions cannot be completely reconstructed on the basis of these sources. For strategic or other reasons the representatives of national states at international negotiations sometimes hide crucial information in order to steer negotiations their way. Cross-examination of national archives is necessary to get a complete picture of controversies.53 Yet for research of the scope in this dissertation, the advantages presented by the rich, underused materials of international organizations outweigh this disadvantage.54

That still leaves the question open which organizations to choose. Criteria for selecting organizations are that they should explicitly deal with both networks and their operation and that they should address these issues in European ways. This point of departure leads primarily to the League of Nations for the Interbellum and to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for the post-war period. They have directed the most systematic efforts for proposing European road plans and codifying their use.55 Both were exceptional for their inclusiveness, counting the largest amount of European states among their members at any given point in time vis-à-vis other IGOs. Achieving a certain degree of integration among their

51 The organization is also named United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). In this text ECE will be used throughout as an abbreviation for this organization.
52 Boli and Thomas, Constructing.
53 An example that builds up from national points of view is Christian Henrich-Franke, “From a supranational air authority to the founding of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC),” Journal of European Integration History 13, no. 1 (2007): 69–89.
members was among the goals of these organizations. For the post-war period the work of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport has been integrated as well, as this organization attempted to give body to ECE measures for its western European members.

Application of the same criteria excludes the organizations that dominate the study of European integration today. The historically unprecedented voluntary sharing of sovereignty between nation-states in the European Coal and Steel Community or the European Economic Community has made them the object of a lively academic debate. Yet as we have seen at the start of this chapter the European Communities did not achieve substantial results in the field of transport until after 1985. The point is not to claim that the work of alternative European IGOs has been more successful than that in Brussels or Luxembourg. The point of departure is that they have not been given the interest they deserve. Existing accounts only underline their economic aspects and neglect their transport work. It is remarkable that, although historiography acknowledges that the role of infrastructure has been crucial for European integration in terms of market harmonization, political cooperation or the formation of European culture and identity, it has hardly been the object of historical scrutiny.

Part of the explanation might be that an infrastructure policy is generally considered ‘low politics,’ a notion Stanley Hoffman introduced in the mid-1960s to understand the differences between policy areas in which European integration proceeded apace and those where it seemed virtually impossible. The former policy areas belonged to ‘low politics’ and concerned technocratic, seemingly uncontroversial areas and added to ‘negative integration,’ i.e. integration through the cumulative removal of barriers in order to foster the operation of the internal market. By contrast, ‘high politics,’ such as defense or foreign policy, drew more public attention, but remained virtually immune to integrative pressures.

INGOs connected themselves to the road-related work of these IGOs. INGOs introduced themselves as important representatives of societal interests vis-à-vis the IGOs and, vice versa, IGOs invited INGOs to participate in their work to en-

---

56 European integration had been the true mission of the ECE from the start for its secretary-general Gunnar Myrdal, Jean Siotis, The ECE in the emerging European system (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1967), 5-6, 11.
59 Described in Rosamond, Theories, 77-79.
sure societal representation at the international negotiation table. The League of Nations thus committed various INGOs to its work.60 Some of the INGOs associated with the work of the League were in fact important precursors of the latter with regard to its road-related work. Automobile and touring clubs played a crucial role in the first international arrangements for the cross-border use of roads in Europe. Their work served as input for the 1909 Convention, the high-mark of international negotiations for cross-border motorized traffic before the First World War. While these clubs represented the interest of the individual motorist, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) emerged as the representative of the business user of road transport. The PIARC was the more technical engineering association.61

After the Second World War the ECE took over most of the work of the League in terms of road networks in Europe. The ICC continued to cooperate with the new organization, but more specialized organizations joined its ranks. Two prime examples are the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the International Road Federation (IRF).62 Choosing those organizations that work together with IGOs implies more specialized INGOs are not dealt with here. This thesis does not discuss the European activities of the Federation of International Furniture Removers or describe the European Car Rental Organisation in-depth, despite the fact that both attempted to attract IGO attention for their work.63

Three final remarks need to be made about international organizations in general. First of all, they were not monoliths, but consisted of different departments, working groups, committees and subcommittees and all had their own, not necessarily compatible interests. In fact, this thesis investigates only small parts of big organizations like the League of Nations or the ECE. It is important to remember that they form part of a larger whole. Second, organizations themselves and their interrelationships change over time. Their membership, financial assets, bargaining power, the interests they represent, and strategies chosen to further them do not remain the same over time. Third, the issue of membership limits should be

---

60 For an overview of the many INGOs in the field of ‘communications and transit’ during the Interbellum, see LoN, *Handbook of international organisations (associations, bureaux, committees, etc.)* (Geneva: LoN, 1929), and LoN, *Supplement to handbook of international organisations (associations, bureaux, committees, etc.)* (Geneva: LoN, 1931). See also Lyman C. White, *International non-governmental organizations: Their purposes, methods, and accomplishments* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1951).

61 Officially PIARC is an IGO that has states as members, but because the organization in general functions more as an INGO than an IGO, this thesis treats it as an INGO for pragmatic purposes.


63 Both organizations attempted to establish durable contacts with the ECMT, see respectively Committee of Deputies, "Record 5th session (24-25 January 1955)," CS/M(55)1, ECMT; Valmont to Edelman, 30 March 1965, fonds OECD, file 1487, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence (hereafter: HAEU).
addressed. Some organizations restricted their membership to ‘European’ countries, while others had universal membership.64 However, this limitation has little bearing on the presence of Europe in their activities or discourse. Therefore, organizations in both categories are relevant in this dissertation. The organizational demarcation necessary to do justice to the research strategy of focusing on international institutions is thus clear. The next section discusses the implications of the choices made for the demarcation of the research object in terms of space and time.

**Demarcation in space and time**

The concept of Europe in this thesis as an actor category makes an *a priori* geographical demarcation of the study object pointless. Rather Europe’s geographic boundaries fluctuate along with the specific road network projects or projections of their operation discussed at different points in time.65 The current debate whether Turkey should be considered part of Europe (and become a member of the EU) clarifies what this means in practical terms.66 Turkish road networks have been an unmistakable part of Europe for a long while. Turkey participated in European discussions and was included in European road plans from the Interbellum onwards.67 Turkey’s geopolitical position was a key issue during the Cold War. Integrating it in Europe through roads and improving its roads to the average European standard was considered a way to reduce security risks in the area. Underlining Turkish Europeanness thus served specific goals under peculiar geopolitical circumstances.

Yet we should not overestimate the differences in the Europes portrayed in road networks. There are broad similarities overall in what ‘Europe’ means in geographic terms; the different Europes overlap considerably. Similarly it is important to recall a central message of the transnational turn in history, which is the proposition that we should surpass the nation-state as the omnipresent unit of analysis because the national cannot be properly understood unless we also look beyond

---

64 In contrast to restricted membership, universal membership implies that any state in the world may join the international organization in question.

65 For a recent contribution on the issue of borders in the context of the European Union, see Jan Zielonka, ed., *Europe unbound: Enlarging and reshaping the boundaries of the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2002).


67 Norman Davies has described the position of Russia as the cardinal problem in defining Europe for 500 years, see Norman Davies, *Europe: A history* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 10ff.
it. The same holds for Europe. For example, the tremendous American influence on European roads certainly merits attention. The United States was the first country where mass motorization took place. Interbellum accounts of Europeans traveling across the Atlantic often noted that there even ordinary factory workers could afford to own a car. Several key individuals who will make their appearance in this thesis were inspired during trips in the United States, in the Interbellum and the post-war alike. On several occasions the American influence was translated by organizations that made use of American knowledge or in the context of specific American projects for Europe, such as the Marshall Plan. At the same time Europeans sometimes disapproved of American practices with regard to mobility on the road. The United States was both a model and a nightmare. A Transatlantic view thus provides an insightful addition to the European main storyline.

Where the spatial demarcation thus necessarily remains relatively open, the temporal demarcation can be put more precisely. As this thesis primarily views roads as structures used by automobiles, it restricts itself basically to the twentieth century. The year 1898 provides an adequate starting point. This year marked the start of international car races and also of road-related INGO formation in Europe. In 1898 the first Course des Capitales went from Paris to Amsterdam and in Luxembourg the Ligue Internationale des Associations Touristes (LIAT) was founded, the first transnational coalition of interest associations that would soon play a significant role in embedding the automobile in society from an early stage onwards.

The story concentrates on the Interbellum and the first decades after the Second World War, roughly 1920-1960, while also devoting some attention to the years before and after. This allows covering some of the early origins of important discussions, but also to provide a glimpse of the sweeping recent change in the last

69 Seely, “‘Push.’” For an example of the dystopian prospect of the American way of automobilization in the Australia of the 1970s, see Graeme Davison, Car wars: How the car won our hearts and conquered our cities (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2004), chapter seven.
decade and a half with regard to the re-linking of Eastern and Western Europe.\textsuperscript{71}
The study object of this dissertation can thus be refined to the European road network proposals and visions of their use during 1898-2007, but mainly 1920-1960. Before continuing, the next section takes stock of available accounts on the intersection of Europe and infrastructures, particularly road networks.

Roads to European integration: a brief historiography

Mobility history is a logical starting point for a historiographical section of a thesis on the intersection of roads and Europe. Historians have forcefully demonstrated the vital importance of transport to modern economic development, but this has not been matched in terms of academic historical research.\textsuperscript{72} In the fiftieth anniversary issue of the \textit{Journal of Transport History} Gijs Mom’s analyzes the content of the leading journal on the subject under the straightforward title “What kind of transport history did we get?” Railway history has dominated the pages of the \textit{Journal of Transport History}, with water-based transport coming in second. Motorized road transport received only scant attention, both in the journal and the mobility history field at large.\textsuperscript{73} In addition Merki’s description of what has been written as “little quality work, much cheap stuff” suggests its quality has not been high. Merki agitates in particular against the uncritical reproduction of opinions of automobile enthusiasts from the past or literary sources as representative for broader societal feelings and developments.\textsuperscript{74}

An additional bias is the fact that traditional transport history usually chooses an economic approach for studying its subject matter. While that is not a problem

\textsuperscript{71} Relinking played a primordial role on the discursive level, see for example ECMT, \textit{Prospects for east-west European transport}, international seminar, Paris, 6\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} December 1990 (Paris: OECD Publications, 1991).
The end of the Cold War went hand in hand with a reshuffle in the modal split in former communist countries. Under communism the railway share in total transport remained high, while in Western Europe the rails had been steadily declining after the Second World War, Kenneth Button, “East-west European transport: An overview,” in \textit{Transport in a unified Europe: Policies and challenges}, ed. David Banister and Joseph Berechman (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1993), 291-333.
\textsuperscript{73} Mom, “What kind,” particularly 128, 130.
\textsuperscript{74} Merki, \textit{Die holprige}, 24-28. Original “Wenig Qualitätsarbeit, viel Billigware.” It should be noted that Merki deals only with the period before 1930. Studies he deems worth more serious attention mostly concern product- or business-based works, such as the work of Rainer Flik and James Laux.
per se, it should simultaneously be noted that economic motives sometimes fail to provide a satisfactory explanation for transport developments. Mom reproached the *Journal of Transport History* for having remained out of tune with the historical discipline at large, thus hampering the development of novel perspectives on mobility.\(^{75}\) Where the *Journal of Transport History* has narrowly focused on British topics, this is not the case for the field at large. Be that as it may, a large majority of works has remained within the confines of the national. This is remarkable given the fact that transport is an outstanding example of a transnational phenomenon. More often than not works that claim to dedicate themselves to transport within a European context in fact reduce their study of the continent to a juxtaposition of national studies, without devoting much attention to flows across borders among these states.\(^{76}\)

The same holds for the proceedings of a session at the Eleventh International Economic History Congress in Milan (1994) on European transnational networks in the nineteenth and twentieth century.\(^{77}\) Some of the work started in Milan continued in the COST 340 project “Towards a European intermodal transport network: Lessons from history” and the Tensions of Europe initiative.\(^{78}\) Though the ambitions of these endeavors seem to indicate differently, much of these scholarly contributions continued to focus on the national. The “critical bibliography” drawn up as an output of the COST 340 project is ominously organized per nation-state. An edited volume does a better job at overcoming the national focus by zooming in on intermodal nodes, namely ports and airports.\(^{79}\)

*Networking Europe*, a more recent volume edited by Arne Kaijser and Erik van der Vleuten, clearly breaks away from the purely national angle. Most of its content relates to the intersection of infrastructure networks and projects for Europe.

---


The volume is mainly about electricity networks, but it also contains contributions on railways, telegraphy, telecommunications and the E-road network. The editors of the book take as point of departure the claim that European transnational links and networks have been a political and economic priority for centuries, and seek to demonstrate that their development has not been a straightforward process, but one fraught with ambiguity and tensions. This promising work emanates from Tensions of Europe, an academic network investigating the role of technology in the making of twentieth century Europe. The network originally divided its tasks among nine thematic groups, two of which were dedicated to European infrastructures and European mobility (see beneath) respectively.

A similar endeavor is a mini-special issue of the Journal of Transport History on European infrastructures. In his introduction “Building Europe on transnational infrastructures” Johan Schot points out how a variegated set of international regimes built up since the mid-nineteenth century enabled a massive spurt in cross-border European mobility after the Second World War. The three subsequent contributions examine three projects to construct Europe through building infrastructures. Irene Anastasiadou discusses two railway projects from the Interbellum, Alexander Badenoch investigates the fate of the transnational motorway from London to Istanbul, and Frank Schipper deals with the effects of the Marshall Plan on mobility on the road in Europe.

Moving from infrastructure networks in general to road networks in particular, it should be noted that road networks have attracted less attention than the vehicles traveling them. Existing road history is notably biased towards motor-
ways, as has been pointed out in the recent volume *Roads in history.* This thesis attempts to contribute to overcoming the distinct motorway bias in road history, demonstrating that the European ideal was cast in motorway and non-motorway networks alike. The thesis also seeks to overcome the national biases noted above. As recent as October 2005 Mom claimed that in mobility history “international approaches are few,” an assertion that holds in particular for the history of infrastructures, in this case of road networks.

A recent special issue of *Storia Urbana* that Lando Bortolotti edited under the promising title *La formazione della rete autostradale europea* demonstrates the problem. In fact the special issue deals only with individual countries, namely Italy, Spain, France and Germany. Bortolotti claims to have included the most important national motorway systems and expresses his regret, from that perspective, for not having been able to include the United Kingdom. This conflation of ‘important’ with ‘in a big country’ is debatable at best. It downplays the role of small, but crucial transit countries like Austria, the Netherlands or Switzerland in the emergence of networks and flows of continental scope.

Bortolotti should be credited however for putting European road networks on the academic agenda by publishing a series of articles in the 1990s. Unfortunately most are in Italian and have therefore not received the attention they might have. Moreover, the contributions are slightly uneven in quality. Having said that, these articles do contain a wealth of information on continental road plans during the Interbellum. Ingrid Heckmann-Strohkark has continued along these lines. Her contribution to an edited volume on motorways in Switzerland, like Bortolotti’s 1996 article in *Storia Urbana,* discusses two important European Motorway

---

85 Gis Mom and Laurent Tissot, eds., *Road history: Planning, building, use* (Neuchâtel: Éditions Alphil, 2007). This book came out of a February 2003 workshop in Neuchâtel (Switzerland) from the Mobility Group of Tensions of Europe
Conferences in the early 1930s.\(^8^9\) It draws on the work she did for her dissertation, in which Heckmann-Strohkark focuses on the relation between Autobahn and the perception of landscapes before 1933 in France, Germany and Italy, thus placing developments within an international comparative context.\(^9^0\)

Where these contributions concern the Interbellum, Pär Blomkvist has more recently discussed the E-road network, particularly the role of the International Road Federation and the diffusion in Europe of American traffic engineering as a new paradigm in road building in relation to that network.\(^9^1\) Apart from discussing the continental implications of the network, the author also zooms in on its particularities in Sweden, drawing on his earlier work on the Swedish Road Federation.\(^9^2\) A very apt starting point for anybody wanting to study road networks in an explicit European context is Gijs Mom's article in *Technology and Culture* on European motorway network building. It presents the broadest overview of the various network proposals, and is the only one to cover the entire twentieth century.\(^9^3\) Mom traces the emergence of the ‘limited-access highway’ in Europe, which he considers a “turning point in the history of mobility.”

Cross-border road traffic in a European context does not figure prominently in secondary literature. To reconstruct the story of cross-border mobility on the road, older studies on international road traffic law and comparative road traffic law form a fruitful point of entry. For the pre-First World War period the comparative road law study by F. Meili and the thesis of L. Poidebard provide some early examples.\(^9^4\) They are an informative addition to Merki's excellent article on cross-border traffic in Europe prior to 1914.\(^9^5\) For subsequent developments in the Interbellum and after the first decades after the Second World War, the reader is advised to consult the studies of international road law by Pierre Vergnaud and

---


\(^9^1\) Blomkvist, “Roads;” Blomkvist, “Transferring.”

\(^9^2\) Ibid., 277, note 1.

\(^9^3\) Mom, “Roads.”

\(^9^4\) F. Meili, *Die Kodifikation des Automobilrechts: Eine Studie* (Vienna: Manzsche k. u. k. Hof-Verlags- under Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1907); L. Poidebard, *La circulation des automobiles: Etude de droit comparé et de droit international* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne et Moderne, 1913). F. Meili was an international private law professor at the University of Zurich who had earlier published on international comparative law in telephony and telegraphy.

\(^9^5\) Merki, “L‘internationalisation.” Merki’s article forms part of a set of two special issues of the journal *Relations Internationales* appearing in 1998 under the title *Les transports dans la vie internationale.*
Dieter von Würzen, along with the multimodal dissertation on European transport integration by Pierre Michelet.96

In reviewing Christoph Merki’s *Die holprige Siegeszug des Automobils* and Kurt Möser’s *Geschichte des Autos* in *Technology and Culture* Gijs Mom describes both books as “important stepping stones toward a European history of the automobile.” He also deemed, however, that it still seemed a bit too early for the full conception of this history.97 A complicating factor in this respect is the lack of a solid source base that Merki notes in his book. This also in part explains the dearth of academic interest for the subject. The paper trail of the “triumphal march of the automobile” is rather thin when we consider the large societal impact of the automobile.98 What is true for the automobile is a fortiori true for the roads they use to move around. The next part discusses some of the methodological pitfalls and problems involved when we shift our attention more specifically to road networks in Europe, as well as how to partially overcome them.

**Sources and methodological issues**

This thesis sets out to study international organizations with regard to their work for the design of Europe’s roads and their projected use. A complicating factor is the co-existence of many organizations. They sometimes cooperated and created alliances in order to achieve their goals.99 At the same time they competed on other issues. The aim of this section is to discuss the sources available for studying international organizations and their cooperative-competitive relations. What may we expect to find in the archives of the League of Nations and the ECE at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva?

IGO negotiations on road-related issues are well documented. The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) holds abundant source materials on the League of Nations and the ECE. These can be subdivided in two kinds. The first consists

---


of official documentation: treaties, circular letters, resolutions, and official reports of meetings. UNOG holds a very complete collection of these materials. The quality of the minutes of meetings may vary considerably over time. For example, in the 1920s the League of Nations produced extensive reports on its meetings, sometimes almost verbatim, but this changed drastically with the Assembly’s 1932 decision to change the procès-verbaux into succinct comptes rendus as a spending cut. In addition to such sources bearing directly on the meetings themselves, the Palais des Nations served as a zealous publishing house for a range of official reports, usually drawn up in relation to the League’s work. A 1935 League survey of its own activities mentioned the publication of “handy collections of international information,” up to date and “absolutely reliable” as an indirect means to stimulate international cooperation.

The second type of source materials concerns archival collections of primary sources that help the researcher placing official documents in a broader perspective. In official documents the heat of the debate has undoubtedly been polished away to a certain extent, although the encountered ones did contain traces of differences of opinion and even outright conflict. Here archives help to put flesh to the bones. Personal correspondence and internal memos are less scrupulous than official documentation. Apart from correspondence the archives contained draft versions of official documents that potentially give further insight into the decision-making process. Of course the historian will never gain access to part of the international negotiations. The really tough bargains took place in between official meetings, over lunch, or in the hallways and lobbies of fancy Geneva hotels, beyond the reach of the public record. In the ECE during the Cold War the most important discussions were in fact deliberately kept out of the formal framework.

---

100 They can also be consulted at a limited number of other locations. For example, the Peace Palace Library in The Hague, which holds the official documentation of the League of Nations. The Peace Palace houses the UN-related International Court of Justice, of which the predecessor pertained to the League of Nations machinery.

101 Pierre le Marec, L’Organisation des Communications et du Transit (PhD diss., Université de Rennes, 1938), 73.


104 Harold Butler, Der verlorene Friede: Erinnerungen, Eindrücke, Erwartungen (Zürich: Europa Verlag, 1944), 27. Harold Butler was a top official of the ILO. Richard Child, an American diplomat, noted regarding the 1922 Genoa Conference on the economic reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe that “the real Conference (...) is held in luncheons and afternoon pow-wows or appointments,” Richard W. Child, A diplomat looks at Europe (New York: Duffield and Company, 1925), 33.
and never recorded.\textsuperscript{105}

The primary source situation for IGOs compares favorably to that for INGOs, which is usually very poor. Most INGOs have not systematically kept an archive because of lack of interest, space, money or all of these. From my conversations at the INGOs I have visited it has become clear that these organizations rarely feel their holdings might be a worthwhile resource to anyone. Here IGO archives serve as a backup through the files they have kept of their correspondence with INGOs, from which part of the latter’s history can be reconstructed.

Last but not least Geneva also functioned as a factory of statistics, meticulously collecting data on various quantitative aspects of communications and transit. The League made a major contribution in terms of statistical development and compiled large amounts of comparable data across nations. There was a widely shared feeling there was a dire need for such efforts.\textsuperscript{106} Eric Hobsbawm even lists the collection of statistics as the single positive aspect of the League of Nations, for the rest dismissing the institution as a complete failure in his popular \textit{The age of extremes}.\textsuperscript{107} Unfortunately the \textit{Statistical yearbook of the League of Nations} (1926-1942/1944) did not contain data on roads or road traffic.\textsuperscript{108} Yearbooks from 1927 to 1932-1933 contained figures on motor-cars and motor-cycles in circulation, and on production.\textsuperscript{109} The comparability of statistics, especially in transport, was a serious concern to the League of Nations and it installed a Committee on the Unification of Transport Statistics to propose a harmonization of the way statistics were assembled.\textsuperscript{110}

An explanation for the conspicuous absence of road networks and road traffic might be that road transport statistics were considered unreliable and notoriously incomparable among countries. According to Pierre Michelet the lack of stan-

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{105} Siotis, \textit{The ECE}, 12.
\footnote{106} See Logan G. MacPherson, \textit{Transportation in Europe} (New York: Holt, 1910), 41, in which the Johns Hopkins University lecturer on transportation complained about lack of adequate statistics, and lack of cross-country uniformity in the bases for collecting statistics regarding waterway traffic
\footnote{108} Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois, United States) has made this resource available at http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/league/stat.html.
\end{footnotes}
dardization continued until the 1960s, despite attempts to improve the situation.\textsuperscript{111} These complaints notwithstanding, the ECE turned into a prime source for pan-Europe statistical data from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Since 1949 the ECE published the \textit{Annual Bulletin of Transport Statistics for Europe},\textsuperscript{112} with data on both road infrastructures and flows. For road lengths the bulletin copied national classifications. We need to be aware that the categorization of roads used in official governmental publications is not always entirely clear and varies among different countries or state agencies. Some road categories may not even be included in official statistics.\textsuperscript{113} Nevertheless, in general, obtaining statistical data on roads for the period after the Second World War is thus simpler than for the period prior to it.

The press forms a useful source for qualitative data and can be fruitfully employed to reconstruct a factual account of what happened when this is not possible on the basis of primary sources or official publications. They also provide a window on the reception of the European plans that were launched. Potential sources include a broad range of newspapers, topical magazines, or more specialized journals. The general press has not been systematically researched for this dissertation, but appears on occasion. This is a result of the habit IGOs have developed to collect press clippings on the public response to their plans. A good example is the meticulously collected clippings on European public works by the International Labour Organisation.\textsuperscript{114}

Some observations with regard to this particular set of newspaper clippings may be helpful in assessing strengths and weaknesses of their use as a source. A major drawback concerns the selection process. Having been selected by the organization that also proposed the projects evaluated in the clippings makes them hardly neutral. The cutting has taken them out of their paper context, resulting in potential loss of cross-references. Having said that, the collection contained both positive and critical clippings, thus lowering the likeliness of a strong bias in the selection. An advantage is that clippings include materials from newspapers that would not otherwise have been systematically researched. In any case it should be noted that the large majority was short and displayed only subtle differences among them. This is undoubtedly the result of relying on identical press releases

\textsuperscript{111} Michelet, \textit{Les transports}, 33, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{112} From volume 45 (1995) the bulletin has been renamed \textit{Annual Bulletin of Transport Statistics for Europe and North America}, but in fact data on the United States and Canada were already integrated into the bulletin from an earlier date.
\textsuperscript{113} For example, in the 1960s the Dutch road network miraculously doubled in size. This was not the result of new roads that had been added to the network, but of a rediscovery of a fourth category of unpaved countryside roads that had been added to the statistics, Mom, "Inter-artifactual," 85.
\textsuperscript{114} Fonds Cabinet Albert Thomas (hereafter CAT) file 6B.7.1, Archives of the International Labour Office, Geneva (hereafter: ILO). The ILO’s European public works initiative is treated in chapter three.
from ILO or press agencies.

The specialized press forms a supplementary source for information on ‘roads’ and ‘Europe.’ This is a common method fruitfully used by many scholars. To the knowledge of this author only recently the first journal bearing both ‘roads’ and ‘Europe’ in its title has been set up in France. The European Roads Review first appeared in December 2002 and is a publication of the French engineering journal Revue Générale des Routes, which was itself established in the mid-1920s. It reflects the character of its mother journal in that it follows primarily technical developments in the field of road construction.

There are two basic strategies to find European roads in the specialized press: ‘European’ journals can be scanned for their ‘road’ content, and road engineering journals can be scanned for their European content. The former strategy has been used for the Interbellum journals Paneuropa (1924-1938) and L’Européen (1929-1936). As the journal of the influential Paneuropa-movement striving for European unification, Paneuropa was an obvious candidate. The Pan-Europa Verlag published the journal in Vienna and Leipzig, where the organization’s leader Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi also published most of his books. L’Européen was an elite Parisian journal dedicated to the European cause in the crisis years. The journal is particularly interesting because for a period of time it contained a section on European tourism, an activity that was at least in part conducted by car by its elite readership. The results of the exercise have been quite poor. The journals indicate that the European movement was well aware of the vital importance of material networks to achieve the European ideal. But in choosing a position with regard to these material networks, the journals hardly moved beyond the trivial.

There are many contenders as far as road journals go. By the early 1930s the Bulletin de l’AIPCR (1911- ) listed over seventy journals in its bibliographic sections, almost half of them from the United States. The editors of these journals

116 Until 1940 the full name of the journal was Revue Générale des Routes et de la Circulation Routière, which was subsequently changed into Revue Générale des Routes et des Aérodromes. In 1996 the journal’s title was abbreviated to Revue Générale des Routes.
118 It reminds of a similar point in secondary literature on European history, namely that also there the claim of primordial importance for infrastructure networks is made, without it being followed by an actual in-depth study of the phenomenon, Vleuten and Kajser, “Networking.”
closely followed the publications of their peers and often translated articles for their own audience. The Bulletin de l'AIPCR presented a very broad overview of the field, it being the periodical linked to the major international organization dedicated to the technical aspects of road engineering. The journal amply reported on developments in the various nation-states, but for the Interbellum period articles and clear opinions on the European road projects are few and far between. For the Interbellum I have additionally scrolled through the pages of Le Strade, the leading Italian journal on roads published by the Touring Club Italiano. Selecting this journal seemed an adequate choice, given the fact that Italy was the first country to construct motorways in Europe and that Piero Puricelli, the key figure in this endeavor, had the Italian nationality and operated from Milan. Unfortunately the harvest boils down to only a handful of articles.

Apart from the Europeanist press and road engineering magazines, there are also publications directly linked to the international organizations that are the main actors in this dissertation. The Bulletin de l'AIPCR also fell squarely in this category. Where the Bulletin did not deliver as much as it might have, the publications of the IRF contained more ‘Europe’ in comparison. This organization, the most vociferous road lobby after the Second World War, published the newsletter-like World Highways and World Highway Report. Particularly the IRF’s glossy Road International (1950-1971) devoted ample attention to and stated clearer opinions on explicitly European subjects – though never up to the point of dominating the quarterly. After all, the IRF operated worldwide.

Apart from publications directly linked to organizations, one journal on international organizations in general has helped to rescue the enigmatic European Central Inland Transport Organisation (ECITO) from oblivion. Today International Organization is a fully equipped academic journal, but in its early days it also contained short announcements on the various international organizations that were developing fast after the Second World War. In combination with the twenty volumes of ECITO’s monthly publication The Transport Situation in Europe, the journal has greatly facilitated the reconstruction of ECITO’s history in relation to roads and Europe.

---

I have already pointed out the general scarcity of adequate secondary literature with regard to the work of most of the organizations that are of interest here. Here I would like to raise an additional observation with regard to the literature that is available. In several cases this literature has been written by individuals that were at some point of their lives directly involved in the organizations they describe. Researchers can reduce the risks of relying too much on insider accounts with ‘data triangulation.’ This research strategy basically involves choosing different perspectives on the same study object. The multiplicity of perspectives increases the chances of finding inconsistencies, and thus enables the researcher to better assess the validity and generality of his findings.

Such strategies are valuable when using manifestos, brochures, or leaflets organizations published to influence transport policies or inform the general public. When used critically, they form an excellent source for assessing the public image the organizations attempted to build. The same goes for commemorative volumes, which provide a rich source for factual information on organizational activities. Usually issued in jubilee years, the last decade has witnessed the publication of several in the wake of centenary and fiftieth anniversaries.

The pitfalls become apparent from Pär Blomkvist’s work on the E-road network, for which he made extensive use of the IRF’s fiftieth anniversary commemorative volume. Blomkvist states that Georges Gallienne, a key figure in the early International Road Federation, headed the European Road Fund as the central organization for financing the post-war E-road network. Sources from the ECE corroborate that the IRF had proposed such a fund, but in Geneva the idea remained a paper reality. Gallienne had a second try at the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), but to no avail. The fate of the fund shows that the self-congratulatory content of commemorative volumes should somehow be filtered before it can be used for the purpose of academic historical research. In this case data triangulation confronting IRF sources with those available at the ECE and the ECMT gives a more trustworthy picture of what actually happened.

122 Cris Shore has noted the same for the EU, claiming “those on the EU payroll also rank among its public foremost chroniclers and interpreters,” Cris Shore, Building Europe: The cultural politics of European integration (London: Routledge, 2000), 28.
125 Blomkvist, Roads, 165. Blomkvist’s section “IRF on a European level” relies rather heavily on the commemorative volume, with nine out of fifteen notes making exclusive reference to it. Two other notes refer to Road International, and one to the IRF website. The source base is thus relatively narrow.
than relying on the information of the IRF alone.126

Developing such filters is also important when studying conference proceedings, congress reports, or autobiographies. The latter form an excellent source to explore the atmosphere at international organizations. Unfortunately, very few officers of the League of Nations or the ECE wrote memoirs. For Arthur Salter, a former high officer of the League of Nations— and an exception to the rule – there was a significant contrast in that respect between the statesman and the civil servant,

“whose professional character and habits are increasingly important to the ordinary citizen, as the range of bureaucracy extends, works in a cloistered secrecy and rarely writes about himself or what he does.”127

Salter warned against the distortions inevitably creeping into such personal accounts. Using different accounts at the same time is thus a good strategy. Having worked with several great statesmen from the privileged position of being a civil servant, Salter also found it imperative to write short biographical pieces on several of them that served as counter-biographies for their autobiographies.128 These sources have been used in particular for the section on automobilism before the First World War. The automobile-owning elite of those days wrote extensively on their international racing and touring experiences. Their personal stories form a rich source of how the early motorists experienced their activities, although Merki’s caveat that such accounts should not be viewed as representative should be constantly kept in mind.129

**Thesis outline**

The remainder of this thesis aims to give insight into the issues raised in this introduction. Its basic setup consists of two symmetrical parts. The first part discusses the period up to the Second World War. Although it starts just before the turn of the century, it mainly focuses on the period between the World Wars and is devoted mainly to the work of the League of Nations and institutions related to it.

---

126 The E-road network is the subject chapter six.
129 For such accounts this thesis has mainly relied on a valuable collection of automobile related books donated by the enthusiast collector J. van Groningen to the library of the Technical University of Eindhoven, N.a., *Een eeuw autos: Catalogus van de boeken geschonken door de heer J. van Groningen aan de bibliotheek van de Technische Universiteit Eindhoven* (Eindhoven: Bibliotheek van de Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, 1990).
The second part starts during the Second World War. This part continues to the present day, but it especially focuses on the period until roughly 1960. The main international organization here is the ECE, but others make their appearance as well.

The symmetrical setup of both parts consists of three parallel chapters. The first set of chapters (two and five) carry the title “Setting the Stage.” Each forms the springboard for the two subsequent chapters and mainly concern the emergence of the institutional settings in which European road network plans and their projected use were discussed. Chapter two deals with developments prior to the First World War and the foundations of the League of Nations. In the late nineteenth century races between Paris and other European capitals underscored the fraternal bonds between European states. Motorized tourism started its first cycle and a modest part of it crossed national borders. Both activities thus transcended the boundaries of the national and so did the automobile and touring clubs that fostered these activities and worked hard to allow their members to effortlessly cross borders. The First World War interrupted this work, but it had two important legacies for motorized mobility in Europe. First, as the first motorized war it gave a boost to mobility on the road. Second, the League of Nations resulting from the peace negotiations provided the institutional arena that would come to play a major role in negotiating cross-border mobility on European roads.

Chapter five mainly focuses on the accumulation of international organizations dealing with road transport in Europe after the Second World War. It starts with a brief depiction of developments during the war itself and how the ECITO attempted to solve the most urgent post-war transport problems. As the first recovery phase drew to an end its main tasks were taken over by the Economic Commission for Europe, a pan-European UN body. European transport matters formed a top priority for this Geneva organization right from the start. But there would be several contenders, such as the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, the Council of Europe, and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport. The latter three restricted their membership to the western half of the continent. The organization that prevailed thus had direct implications for the notion of Europe embodied in their activities.

The second set of chapters (three and six) carry the title “Roads to Europe.” Both discuss plans for continental road networks. Chapter three elaborates on the European movement during the Interbellum period and how it took hold of the League of Nations after the famous September 1929 speech by French minister of foreign affairs Aristide Briand on a European federation. In the wake of this event, Albert Thomas, the director of the International Labour Organisation, developed
a plan for European Public Works. The chapter discusses how this general program translated into two quite distinct projects that involved road-construction in a European context.

Chapter six deals with the E-road network that the ECE launched in 1950. After discussing its character and underlying ideas, the chapter traces its development patterns of extension and densification and continues with a short portrayal of the network’s controversial renumbering in 1975. The chapter finishes by zooming in on road developments in the Balkans as a case study in the context of the E-road network and the ECE’s development work for Europe’s south-eastern corner. With the Iron Curtain cutting right through it, the region provides interesting study material from a geopolitical point of view. The section focuses on two projects: a Circular Highway project around the Adriatic Sea and continuing into Turkey, and the Trans-European Motorway, which can be considered an extension of this project to the Baltic Sea.

The third set of chapters (four and seven) carry the title “Driving Europe.” They discuss the regulations for the projected operation of road networks in Europe. Chapter four scrutinizes the role of the League of Nations in facilitating transport across borders in the Interbellum. It depicts how the Geneva institution took up cross-border road traffic in Europe despite the fact that it was not originally part of its workload. The League created a specific institutional setting in the shape of the committee on road traffic to deal with issues on this subject. The remainder of the chapter examines the kind of work the League was able to do for European mobility on the road in this period.

Chapter seven continues after the Second World War. It shows how post-war conditions produced a setting in which the freedom of the road liberalized European commercial road traffic to hitherto unprecedented levels for a short period of time. While liberalization continued for personal travel among western European countries, a regime of regulated freedom was put in place for commercial road transport. The chapter discusses how this regulated freedom took shape in two specific cases. The first relates to passenger traffic and concerns the attempt to create a coherent web of long-distance bus lines across Europe. The second relates to freight traffic and the attempt to define a common European standard for trucks. The chapter closes with a brief interlude on the European pallet.

The conclusion in chapter eight seeks to draw the various lines of these three sets of chapters together. It looks at the continuities and changes in the international organizations that have intervened in European roads and the traffic they supported. It then compares the network proposals from before the Second World War with those of the post-war period in close connection to the development of
ideas on the operation of the European road network. The conclusion ends with a set of suggestions on further research that could fruitfully build upon the endeavor of this thesis. The book ends with chapter nine, an afterthought on the EU, its work on European (road) infrastructures today and what it means for the intersection of roads and Europe in the twenty-first century in comparison to the first century of the car.
Chapter 2
Setting the stage – The dawn of the spirit of Geneva, 1898-1921

All roads lead to Paris

"the space of a continent to be traversed, hundreds and hundreds of miles of road, varying in grade, in character, in scenery (...). The long winding road stretches out before you, reaching from the capital of one great country to the centre of another."

Charles Jarrott (1906)

The cup had the shape of a driving wheel, resting on the heads of two camels. Its golden splendor was put on top of a marble base with a map of the route from Peking to Paris adorned with laurel and oak leaves. Prince Scipione Borghese received the allegoric work of art representing his race of countless hardships amidst the thousands of spectators assembled in the rainy Jardins des Tuileries on 10 August 1907. Earlier that day he had paraded through the centre of Paris in his Itala automobile, preceded by a thirty-seat charabanc decorated with Italian and French flags containing a full brass band playing the Triumphal March of Verdi’s Aida.

The Peking to Paris race celebrated the global reach of automobilism, just like the 1908 New York to Paris race that sought to emulate it. The finish of both

---

1 The chapter title refers to Robert de Traz, The spirit of Geneva (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), who characterized the Swiss city as the fertile soil in which the League of Nations could grow.
4 The Protos driven by Hans Koeppen and his team was the first to reach Paris on 26 July 1908, precisely half a year after it had left Berlin on 26 January. See Hess, Wheels, 32-40; Hans Koeppen, Im Auto um die Welt (Berlin: Verlag von Ullstein and Co., 1908); E.R. Thomas Motor Company, The story of the New York to Paris race (Los Angeles: Floyd Clymer, 1951).
these extravagant events in Paris was not a coincidence. The French capital was the central stage for the automobile in its early years. The City of Light became one of the first automobilized metropoles and turned into the prime hub for automobile innovation and production around the turn of the century. The first Salon d’Automobile took place on 15 June 1898 in the Tuileries and made the city a showcase for automobility. Paris’ pioneering role in the development of the automobile was supported by the fact that Parisians widely and enduringly embraced the automobile until the 1970s. Thus the city came to play an important role in embedding the automobile in early twentieth century France and Europe.

The city highlights several relevant aspects for the development of international motorized road traffic in Europe. First, Paris served as the start for four international automobile races, the so-called Courses des Capitales between Paris and other major European cities (1898-1903). The well-publicized events symbolized fraternal bonds between major European countries. Second, France in general and Paris in particular became a prime destination for European motorists. Wealthy automobilists liked to tour to and through Paris. Part of this tourism came from abroad, Paris being an obligatory passage point on longer trips around the continent.

Early car racing and early tourism by automobile highlighted the clash between motoring and society that eventually resulted in the redefinition of the road as a motor thoroughfare. The races, for example, took place on the ordinary road, crisscrossing towns, villages and hamlets, and clashing violently with traditional functions of the road that combined awkwardly with the rush of the races. From a motorist perspective

“Sheep and hens are everywhere that they ought not to be, and there seems no way of escaping them. (...) Dogs are bad enough and ought to be exterminated. They are the silliest beasts which one finds uncontrolled on the roadways. Children, of course, one defers to, but they are outrageously careless and very foolish at times, and in short are the greatest responsibility for the driver in the small towns of England and France.”

5 For a general portrait of France in this period, and of Paris in particular, see Eugen Weber, France: Fin de Siècle (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006).
It is clear that Francis Miltoun, the author of this quote, did not care that bystanders might view motorists as an unwarranted intrusion into their daily life. Solutions were sought at the local level as well as at the national level. Yet, given the cross-border character of automobile racing and touring, problems related to the new vehicle became the object of international negotiations at an early stage of its development. In 1913 a French law scholar making a comparative study of motorized traffic laws in several European countries noted a curious contrast between national and international regulations. Where in national law the interest of the general public was the most important consideration, for international regulations the side of the automobilist was chosen.

This was in no small measure the result of the dedicated work of a group of international organizations representing the interests of motorists from the late nineteenth century onwards. Among the first was the Ligue Internationale des Associations Touristes (LIAT), an alliance of touring associations founded in Brussels in 1898. This development brings Paris in vogue again. Aided by the Touring Club de France (TCF, 1890) and the Automobile Club de France (ACF, 1895), two powerful national associations that came to represent the automobilist’s interests, the French capital became the centre for international negotiations with regard to motorized cross-border road use in Europe. In 1900 Paris hosted the first Congrès International d’Automobilisme, coinciding with the World Exhibition in the French capital. In the wake of these events the city became the seat of the Association Internationale des Automobile-Clubs Reconnus (AIACR, 1904), and the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses (PIARC, 1908). During the Interbellum the role would gradually shift to Geneva, but not without conflict.

The three themes, racing, automobile tourism and international organization, form the spinal cord of the first part of this chapter. All three are important, as they helped to establish early automobilism as a transnational phenomenon in need of

8 On resistance against the automobile in general, see Uwe Fraunholz, *Motorphobia: Anti-Automobilier Protest in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoecck and Ruprecht, 2002). Merki shows that the most drastic curtailment of motoring was simply to forbid it, as happened in the Swiss canton Graubünden from 1900 to 1925, Christoph M. Merki, *Der holprige Siegeszug des Automobils, 1895-1930: Zur Motorisierung des Strassenverkehrs in Frankreich, Deutschland und der Schweiz* (Wien: Böhlau, 2002), 141-196.

9 “Ce qui frappe dès l’abord en cette matière, c’est que, si l’on est intervenu, ce n’est plus en faveur du public, comme nous l’avons vu faire jusqu’ici à l’intérieur des États – mais dans l’intérêt des automobilistes.” Translation “What is striking from the beginning in this matter is that intervention has not been in the interest of the general public, as we have seen in domestic affairs, but in the interest of the automobilists.” L. Poidebard, *La circulation des automobiles: Étude de droit comparé et de droit international* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne et Moderne, 1913), 73.

international negotiation to facilitate flows across borders. Through racing and touring individual motorists started to experience Europe. The dedicated work of the associations representing their interests attenuated some of the problems they experienced in traveling across borders. Racing, touring and international negotiations thus formed important building blocks for the later discussions in which road networks and traffic were discussed in an explicit European fashion.

The First World War put a sudden brake on developments, but also acted as a catalyst. It was the first war in which motorized vehicles were used on a massive scale. On the institutional level, the war resulted in an intricate system of inter-allied cooperation, which eventually resulted in the creation of the League of Nations. The Geneva-based organization was based on two pillars, namely to provide collective security for its members, and to provide a forum for international cooperation on a broad range of issues. Through this latter part of its work, the League would become the pinnacle of negotiating European cross-border motorized mobility in the Interbellum.

**Early motoring in Europe**

*The Courses des Capitales, 1898-1903*

Since the end of the nineteenth century Paris has served as the starting point of a series of long-distance car races. Through extensive media coverage the races constituted a type of event-marketing *avant la lettre* and had a decisive impact on the ups and downs of the several brands that were available on the market. The public events served to test the endurance and speed of vehicles. At the same time they allowed the motorized jet set to enjoy the adventure of speed by automobile. The races thus vividly illustrated the clash between motorized mobility and society, between automobiles on the one hand and innocent spectators, bystanders, their children and domestic animals on the other.

Most early races remained within national borders. The first car race took place in 1894, going from Paris to Rouen (126 km) and being “more a reliability run than an out-and-out race.” The first true race took place on 11 June 1895, covering a distance of 1,192 kilometers from Paris to Bordeaux and back. The route was not chosen haphazardly: since 1891 it had been the itinerary for an important bicycle

---


race in France. Soon the races would cross national borders, providing an interesting example of early international motorized use of roads on a somewhat larger scale. From 8 to 13 July 1898 the Automobile-Club de France (ACF) organized the first Course des Capitales from Paris to Amsterdam. Originally Vienna had been selected as the finish of the race, but the Dutch touring association Algemene Nederlandsche Wielrijders-Bond (ANWB) successfully convinced the ACF to pick Amsterdam instead. Motorists could participate either in a tourist class or in a racing class.

The 1898 race was followed by Paris-Berlin (1901), Paris-Vienna (1902), and finally Paris-Madrid (1903). Charles Jarrott, a famous racer in his lifetime, was a typical exponent of the elite racing class participating in these events around the turn of the century. For Jarrott the Paris-Berlin race, the first in which he participated, stood "at the head of the great classic inter-country races." He deemed it a 'particularly happy idea' of the ACF to organize the event, despite enduring French sensitivities over its defeat in the Franco-German war of 1870-1871 and the subsequent loss of Alsace-Lorraine:

"The bitterness of the struggle of the seventies was still existent, and it seemed almost impossible that even in a sporting event the two nations could fraternize to the extent of opening up their roads for a race between the two great cities."

The three-day race left Paris on 27 June. Five days earlier a parallel tourist party had already left the French capital as a side-event of the race. The tourists followed a slightly different route, leaving the racing course at Rethel, crossing Luxembourg on to Koblenz, Frankfurt, Erfurt, Leipzig and arriving in Berlin on the same day as the racers (see Figure 2.1). The German capital received the racers as heroes. An enthusiastic crowd of thousands of people awaited them at the finish, dragging them out of their cars to embrace them and adorning the vehicles with huge laurel wreaths tied with the French and German national colors. For French self-esteem

13 Ibid., 248.
14 Gijs Mom et al., “De beschaving van het gemotoriseerde avontuur: ANWB en KNAC als wegbereiders bij de inburgering van de auto in Nederland,” Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis 28, no. 3 (2002): 324-325. Vincent van der Vinne claims the race took place from 15 to 17 July. The probable explanation is that the tourist class used 8 to 13 July, and the racing class 15 to 17 July, see Vincent van der Vinne, De trage verbreiding van de auto in Nederland 1896-1939: De invloed van ondernemers, gebruikers en overheid (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2007), 72-73.
15 Merki, Die holprige, 261. For a testimony of his experiences as a racer, see Jarrott, Ten years.
16 Ibid., 115.
17 Ibid., 103.
19 Jarrott, Ten years, 113-114.
it was most important that the Frenchman Fournier won the race. It did not hinder Berliners’ enthusiasm in welcoming him to their city. The event thus came to symbolize Franco-German reconciliation and made their mutual animosities seem like a thing of the past.20

The 1902 race from Paris to Vienna (28 June-1 July) could not count on the same measure of public acclaim. The organization of the race was plagued by difficulties to a larger extent than its predecessors. The Austrian, German and French governments allowed the race to cross their territories, but requests to Bern to do the same fell on deaf ears. Racing was forbidden on Swiss roads and the Swiss authorities were not willing to make an exception. After tough negotiations the Swiss government conceded to have participants cross its territory, but only if they respected certain speed limits.21

The last Course des Capitales was organized in 1903. Its route went from Paris to Madrid. With regard to the race Jean-Robert Dulier remarked “tout est grand, démesuré même.”22 Along the roads two million spectators tried to catch a glimpse of the passing vehicles.23 The race surpassed its predecessors in terms of the number

---

20 Dulier, La triumphale, 10.
22 Dulier, La grandiose, 9. Translation “all is big, outsized even.”
23 Merki, Die holprige, 260.
of brands and racers. The 275 participants left Paris on 24 May in the direction of Bordeaux, the finish of the first lap of the race. Among them was monsieur De Bay driving a *voiture légère* of the brand *Européenne*, an anecdotal illustration of the continental scope of the event.24

Like many of his competitors De Bay and his *Européenne* had to abandon the race during its course. In the afternoon reports reached Paris on the atrocities taking place en route. Indeed, the sad record for which the Paris-Madrid is most remembered is the number and gravity of the accidents that took place in the course of the race. By the time the race halted in Bordeaux it had caused various injuries

---

and had left six people dead. The death toll further increased the following days and included the well-known French industrialist Marcel Renault.\(^2\) What should have been a glorious race celebrating international solidarity was now condemned in the British press as the “race to death.” The many fatalities and injuries made the French government decide to withdraw its authorization for the race.

The ACF wanted the race to proceed and proposed to continue to the Spanish border “in tourist fashion,” i.e. without speeding. The local prefect did not allow it, but he was not opposed to closing the gap between Bordeaux and the Spanish border by train, from where racers could continue into Spain. The Spanish government decided differently: as a diplomatic courtesy it too withdrew its authorization of the race, despite the great pains it had taken to prepare for it, amongst other things by upgrading the road along the route of the race. All cars were confiscated and dragged to the nearest railway station by horses. From there a special train transported them back to Paris.\(^3\) The Courses des Capitales had come to a tragic and humiliating end.

The races highlighted several problems associated with the state of roads in those days. Several accidents were connected to the formation of dust clouds caused by passing vehicles. At the time the so-called dust problem was quickly gaining prominence on the international road agenda. In 1903 the Swiss doctor Guglielminetti founded a Ligue contre la Poussière in Monaco to study and combat the problem. The race added to the sense of urgency with regard to the dust problem and thus to the discussion on the need to fortify roads, for example through using bituminous binding agents.\(^4\) Apart from pavement issues, the race also revealed the inadequacy of level crossings between roads and railways, and of sharp turns in the road.\(^5\)

For the participants the races psychologically established connections over long distances and constituted a rudimentary European experience for them and the spectators. While the races were a competition among nations, the atmosphere among the wealthy elite racers was generally friendly, even cordial. The motorists,

---


\(^3\) Dulier, La grandiose, 93-95; Jarrott, Ten years, 165-181.


\(^5\) Dulier, La grandiose, 141ff.
who came from across Europe, often knew each other well from their sporty endeavors and their group cohesion was high. The risks and the occasional accidents, sometimes fatal, created a collective sense of identity and bred a special fraternal relationship among participants in racing events. By underlining such values the racers and the roads they used became the embodiment for hopes of enduring peace on the continent. With regard to geography, Charles Jarrott captured the feeling of long-distance connectivity by characterizing his traveling as

“the space of a continent to be traversed, hundreds and hundreds of miles of road, varying in grade, in character, in scenery, and in every other kaleidoscopic feature which makes the road the Mecca of every true automobilist (...) The long winding road stretches out before you, reaching from the capital of one great country to the centre of another. Hundreds of miles of straight road, narrow road, right-angled corners, treacherous turns, maybe mountain passes, rough surfaces, and dangerous obstacles, all enveloped in a dense pall of dust caused by the cars which are preceding you and which you are endeavouring to overtake (...) The glorious uncertainty of everything, capped by the intoxicating exhilaration of speed, would fascinate the most hardened sceptic.”

The “intoxicating exhilaration of speed” created a sense of connection between distant places, separated by geography but joined by roads. During the Courses des Capitales, speeding from Paris to other European capitals turned the land mass into a space to be traversed. In addition, the adventurous aspect of their sport appealed to racers and, consequently, the normalization of traveling by car caused a certain bitterness and nostalgia:

“when in a prosaic and matter-of-fact manner one proceeds to run from London to Monte Carlo within forty hours, practically certain of arriving there within the time prescribed; when a non-stop run from London to Edinburgh is a performance capable of achievement on most well-built cars – it gives one a vast amount of pleasure to recall those days when nothing was certain, nothing could be depended upon; when the motor-car was a box of mystery, offering infinite possibilities and impossibilities; when one started on a journey, never knowing whether the end would be reached or not.”

29 This feeling can very clearly be found in Jarrott, Ten years.
30 Jarrott, Ten years, 98-99.
31 Ibid., 266.
Nevertheless many racers were also motorized tourists and vice versa. As tourists, racers sometimes explored the trajectory of a race in which they would participate beforehand to increase their chances of victory.\(^\text{32}\) Both touring and racing were about driving the car as a form of adventure, though the adventure had a different flavor for the two activities. For racers the thrill was the speed, for tourists it was the exploration of the unknown.\(^\text{33}\) Despite the fact that the two activities were strongly intertwined, they can be separated analytically. As Miltoun observed in 1909

“The automobilist should (…) not eat up the roadway (...) at sixty miles an hour simply because it is possible. There are things to see en route, though none of your speeding friends have ever mentioned them.”\(^\text{34}\)

To Miltoun, the access roads to such interesting sites along the route formed its prime contrast with and advantage over traveling by other means of transport. The racers that sped past such sites missed something pleasurable. Yet touring, like racing, posed new questions to the operation of the road network in Europe and the motorists had to overcome some hurdles in order to be able to engage in their activity. The next section attempts to give a taste of the typical problems the early twentieth century automobilized tourist ran into.

Touring Europe during the Belle Époque
The birth of modern tourism can be located between the 1880s and the turn of the century.\(^\text{35}\) According to Catherine Bertho-Lavenir three inter-related developments transformed tourism in this period. First, bikes and later automobiles changed travel habits. Second, new guides and magazines changed norms and customs in travel, and thus the socialization of tourists.\(^\text{36}\) Third, new associations and interest groups emerged that helped diffusing tourist norms and values. Touring associations had their roots in the bike movement. Long-distance bike tourism

\(^{32}\) Vanderbilt explored the Paris-Madrid route to prepare himself for his participation in the 1903 race, see William K. Vanderbilt, *The log of my motor 1899-1908: Being a record of many delightful days spent in touring the Continent* (New York: Vanderbilt, 1908), 96.

\(^{33}\) Compare Jarrott’s statement that “when one motors for the love of it, the joy is in the open road, the wide country, the new scenes and the change of conditions with which one meets in a day’s drive, no matter where that drive is taken. The charm is in the travel – not in the speed; the pleasure is in the change of environment, and the conditions under which the change is made.” Jarrott, *Ten years*, 25-26. ‘The technology of the car and tinkering formed a third type of adventure besides the adventure of speed, and the adventure of territorial exploration, see Mom et al., “De beschaving,” 325.


\(^{36}\) These two elements (*la roue* and *le stylo*) are part of the title of Bertho’s book.
was not uncommon in the Interbellum. Travel accounts by early motorists provide a rich source on how motorists experienced Europe as a tourist destination, but also highlight the obstacles they experienced while traveling through Europe by car in the early days of motoring. Such accounts were usually intended to inform fellow travelers, sometimes out of a feeling that there was a complete lack of adequate information to help motorists on their way. The opening statements of William Vanderbilt, a wealthy American with ample traveling experience on Europe’s roads, exemplify this:

“Of late I have been requested by many of my friends, intending to tour Europe, to prepare for them trips that might lead by good roads to various points of interest, and it is owing to these demands that I have decided to issue this little volume, written up as a log, with here and there photographs taken by the author.”

Authors not only provided their audience with practical information, they also shared how they personally experienced traveling by car. Many felt liberated from the restrictions of train timetables and the inherent limits to the action radius of the rail network. The “real mission of the automobile” was to take motorists “into the heart of the life of a country instead of forcing (...) to travel in a prison van on iron rails.” Where the train funneled tourists to a limited number of large resorts, the car vastly expanded the action radius of the early motorist. Miltoun, for example, underlined how “along the highways and byways” one could discover many “beauties and charms” that remained hidden to most tourists visiting Italy “in these days of the modern railways.” Miltoun contrasted the car’s flexibility with the rail’s sluggishness by writing

“We used to go to the places marked on our railway tickets, and stopped off only as the regulations allowed. Now we go where fancy wills and stop off where the vagaries of our automobile force us to.”

---

37 For example, the Touring Club de Belgique organized collective tours through Europe by bike in the 1930s, Bertho-Lavenir, La roue, 107.
39 Vanderbilt, The log, viii-viii.
40 Miltoun, Italian, 11.
42 Miltoun, Italian, 9.
Traveling by car not only freed motorists from train schedules, but also from the need to travel with the lower classes. As with racing, class differences mattered to motorists and traveling by car became a way to underline them. For wealthy Europeans and Americans touring around Europe by means of an automobile was a way to translate social differences in geographic space. It should be underlined that at the same time travelers often combined car, bike or train travel in single trips. When Vanderbilt traveled from Paris to Madrid to prepare himself for the 1903 race, he was delighted to be able to travel back in a *train de luxe* – taking his car along in a freight wagon. The train was a welcome, comfortable relief after days of traveling through bumpy rugged terrain that he did not wish to experience again on his return journey.43

Motorized mobility on the road opened up new areas for the motorist that had previously been virtually inaccessible. The heights of mountainous areas or the dazzling depths of canyons that the train could not reach now became destinations for the adventurous motorist.44 Rail and road even cooperated in making the remote accessible. Train companies started to use buses to extend their services from certain railway stations into mountainous areas. From 1908 onwards the French *Compagnie du Chemin de Fer Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée* offered tours through the French Alps, and later the Jura, while the *Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Midi* serviced a route in the Pyrenees. The first French congress on public transport by road, assembling both railway and road interests, underlined that bus services could realize the “dreamed union” between railway hubs and hard-to-reach tourist destinations, while eliminating the otherwise lengthy waiting times necessary to construct rail lines.45

International travel gave occasion to comparing road networks. Car travelers used the road as a measuring rod for the degree of civilization of the societies they visited.46 Miltoun's description of the Netherlands as “almost an automobilist’s paradise” must surely have enticed at least a couple of European travelers to visit the

Low Countries. Yet the quality of roads could change quite suddenly. It made it all the more important for tourists to keep themselves well-informed with regard to the current situation of the roads. Moreover opinions differed among authors. It forms an important caveat against accepting such judgments at face value in absolute terms. The observations of racers and tourists still contain hints of differences among geographic areas in relative terms. French roads were lauded by all, while those in Germany were “of the most tortuous description” and the ones in Italy were not “by any means the equal of those of the rest of Europe.” Roads in Spain and the Balkans were considered among the worst in the continent. Another interesting observation is that as roads approached the border, their quality generally increased, as “along the frontiers (...) curiously enough, nations seem to vie with each other in a careful maintenance of the highroads.” In Italy the mountain roads connecting Brescia, Verona and Venice to Austria were the “best planned and the best kept.” Miltoun suspected military strategic considerations played a role there.

Because “In the excellence and maintenance of her roads France stands emphatically at the head of all nations,” France became a preferred destination for British motorised tourists. This was also the result of the conscious positioning of France as a nice tourist destination. For Miltoun automobile touring began and ended in France, where it was “more practicable and enjoyable” and, consequently, “la belle France continually projects itself into one’s horizon when viewing the subject of automobilism.” The signs erected along French roads by the Government and Touring Club de France made it easy to get around. Paris was a real magnet, but the Côte d’Azur became according to Merki the first region to open up to automobile tourism, attracting travelers from across the globe. For Miltoun during the summer the zone from St. Raphael to Menton was “scarcely more than a boulevard where the automobile tourist strolls.”

47 Gijs Mom has pointed out that care is needed when interpreting such an assessment, as it is usually biased towards primary roads, which are heavily overrepresented in the itineraries of travelers but in fact constitute only a tiny part of the entire road network. The assessment does not take due account, for example, of the large majority of unpaved dirt and sand roads. Mom, “Inter-artifactual,” 86.
48 In other words “a good road of yesterday had become a bad road of to-day, and will be perhaps a worse one to-morrow,” Miltoun, Italian, 78
49 Jarrott, Ten years, 112, 168; Miltoun, Italian, 12, 15.
50 Miltoun, The automobilist, 94; Miltoun, Italian, 72-73.
51 Miltoun, The automobilist, 41.
53 Miltoun, The automobilist, 48.
54 Vanderbilt, The log, xvii.
55 Merki, Die holprige, 56; Miltoun, The automobilist, 19.
Those who had the time, the money, and the guts could leave the trodden paths of France and undertake an automobilized version of the Grand Tour. This journey through urban Western Europe for the purpose of education or pleasure had become well established by the seventeenth century. The classical Grand Tour was restricted to male, aristocratic British travelers. Where Italy used to be the main goal of the traditional two- or three-year Grand Tour, the automobile variant took France as its point of departure and lasted for about a month. Miltoun's recommended the *Circuit Européen* started in Paris, coming down the west coast and turning towards the east along the foot of Pyrenees. Through the Northern Plains of Italy the itinerary continued to Vienna, “the outpost of comfortable automobile touring.” From there the route went on to Prague and returned to Paris via the German cities Breslau, Berlin, Hanover and Cologne, and the Belgian Ardennes (see Figure 2.3). The journey allowed one to enjoy the “whole gamut of European climate and food,” and experience a “variety impossible to equal.” In geographic terms areas like the Balkans or Scandinavia were not included in this Grand Tour, while Miltoun mentioned the Netherlands, Switzerland and Barcelona or even

---

56 For automobile tourism in the early twentieth century, it makes sense to adopt John Towner’s more flexible interpretation that does not constrain the concept in terms of social class or nationality, see John Towner, “The Grand Tour: A key phase in the history of tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 12, no. 3 (1985): 301.
58 Ibid., 90-93.
Setting the stage – The dawn of the spirit of Geneva, 1898-1921

Madrid as worthy excursions that might be included in the *Circuit Européen*. A major rationale for confining the Grand Tour to this specific set of countries was the provision of sufficient gasoline and garage facilities, which were much sparser or non-existent beyond the areas described.

Through traveling by car individual travelers could customize their own Europe. The nuisances of bad roads or the unavailability of gasoline restricted the extension of this individualized Europe depending on what the individual motorist was able to bare. But the enjoyment of the beauties and charms of the *Circuit Européen* got particularly spoilt as soon as a border needed to be crossed. The connotation of touring with the notion of freedom vanished upon motorists’ confrontation with the impracticalities of cross-border traffic. On crossing the border at the Ligurian coast between France and Italy Miltoun mocked that

“Presumably you pass your machine through the Italian customs with one of the “triptyches” issued by any of the great automobile clubs or touring associations, as otherwise you have to put down gold, and a thousand or fifteen hundred francs in gold one does not usually carry around loose in his pocket. We passed through readily enough, but a poor non-French, non-Italian speaking American who followed in our wheel-tracks had not made his preparations beforehand, and French banknotes didn’t look good enough to the Italian customs official, and a day was lost accordingly while the poor unfortunate rolled back down hill to Menton and sought to turn the notes into gold.”

Miltoun vividly illustrated the potential barriers in traveling from one country to another and demonstrates that thorough preparation for international travel was absolutely essential before hitting the road. When traveling abroad, tourists technically imported their vehicle into their destination country. They therefore had to pay the customs dues imposed on such goods. For expensive items like automobiles these dues were high, hence the need for gold in the quote above. Upon paying the duties, the driver usually received a *passavant* valid for several months and allowing multiple entries. Only upon their final return drivers returned their *passavant* in order to be reimbursed. The *passavant* described several peculiarities of the car, sometimes up to the color of the vehicle’s cushions.

---

59 Miltoun included Barcelona and Madrid despite the fact that he recommended motorists to avoid Spain, where “automobiling (...) is a thing of the future,” ibid., 89.
60 Miltoun, *Italian*, 83-84.
Good preparation saved trouble. When Vanderbilt traveled from the French Alpes Maritimes into Italy, taking “the right kind of Italian money” and bringing ample gold, he experienced “very little delay” and crossed the border in just 16 minutes. Yet few liked to travel with the necessary astronomic amounts of gold or cash. The problem was particularly acute when several borders were crossed in a single trip. Moreover smaller border stations did not usually have enough cash to reimburse returning drivers on the spot. Customs dues thus constituted a real hurdle to international travel by car. From the first column of Table 2.1 it becomes clear that there were wide differences in customs dues regulations across Europe.

The introduction of the triptyque for cars in 1903 dramatically eased the situation. Through this document, originally developed for crossing the border by bike, the touring and automobile clubs basically guaranteed that the vehicle for which it was issued would not be imported permanently, but re-exported within a certain lapse of time. The time limit for re-exportation gradually extended to one year. In case the vehicle did not return or not in time, the clubs would cover the costs. The name ‘triptyque’ referred to the document’s three-part structure. The driver handed over the first upon entry and the second upon exit when border officials signed the third as a proof of departure. The driver returned the latter to the issuing club. Belgium and Switzerland were the first to introduce the triptyque, after which the document generalized across Europe.

Further facilitation of cross-border flows resulted from the carnet de passages en douane, a creation of the AIACR (see Figure 2.4). It had first been discussed in 1910 on the initiative of the Touring Club Italiano and by 1913 AIACR’s Commission Internationale de Douanière, created for the purpose of facilitating decision-making on customs documents, managed to reach an agreement with 13 customs authorities to adopt the carnet. The document’s main advantage was that it contained various coupons, enabling the passage of multiple borders in a single trip. The carnet was basically a booklet of triptyques containing five, eleven or twenty-five sheets. Another difference between the original 1903 triptyque regime and the 1913 carnet regime was that the former had basically formed a set of bilateral agreements, while the latter constituted a multilateral arrangement. The document was initially valid in Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland.

62 Vanderbilt, The log, 172.
63 Merki, “L’internationalisation,” 340
66 The AIT centenary booklet mentions 1911 as the starting year for the carnet, but the FIA centenary booklet claims negotiations took two years before an agreement could be reached, AIT, 100, 23-24; Hutton, FIA, 57; see also Merki, “L’internationalisation,” 341.
Triptyques solved only part of the troubles tourists ran into. Regulations on driving licenses or circulation permits for vehicles (columns 2 and 3, Table 2.1) displayed a similar variety to customs regulations. Where some countries did not know a driving license, in others tourists had to take a driving test before they were allowed on the public road. Learning about the current legislation in countries off the beaten track could be a complicated affair. To obtain the necessary permits for Spain Miltoun simply recommended to pass by a certain Monsieur Lafitte in Biarritz, who was able to “‘put one through’ (at an appropriate fee), in a manner hardly possible for one to accomplish alone.”67 To sum up, international traveling was a complex undertaking only feasible for well-connected people. It involved careful preparation, considerable paperwork, and lots of time.

67 Miltoun, The automobilist, 365.
Here too travel literature had an important function in keeping travelers up to date about the situation at specific border crossings. Apart from knowing what to expect from their journey on the basis of the vivid descriptions by the author in question, Vanderbilt also provided his readers with tables of distances, the time needed to cover those distances, and sometimes even the amount of fuel used, making it easier to plan ahead.68 Thus travelogues constituted a helpful resource to be used in combination with road maps. Usefulness increased when information sources were updated regularly. This was the case for those published by the touring or automobile clubs, like the ACF’s *Annuaire de Route* that Vanderbilt listed as a “hint to the motorist.” The *Guides Michelin* would even grow into an icon among tourist guides.69

It becomes clear that tourist and automobile clubs played a pivotal role in early cross-border motoring. They provided motorists with adequate information on road networks and regulations governing their use. Fed by the concerns of their members, they started to work on problems experienced by motorists. They

69 Ibid., xvii; Harp, *Marketing*, particularly chapter two.
treated the problems relating to cross-border use of road networks in international organizations that they had founded specifically to share experiences and to cooperate. They became a force in shaping public opinion with regard to road issues and a mediator on their behalf towards policy-makers. Vis-à-vis governments the organizations presented themselves as the voice of the motorist. They would also fulfill this representative function at international forums where representatives of several states discussed common concerns, as the next section shows.

*International organizations and road transport*

In 1898 the first *Salon de l’Automobile* took place in Paris.\(^{70}\) The ACF-organized event was tailored towards club members but at the same time deliberately intended to attract broad public attention. Just like the races, events like the *Salon* soon filled the pages of newspapers, magazines, and a specialized press dedicated exclusively to automobility emerging around the turn of the century.\(^{71}\) Several automobile events came in the wake of international exhibitions. In 1877 Benz had presented his first purchasable automobile at the World Exhibition in Paris.\(^{72}\) In a similar vein, the first *Congrès International d’Automobilisme* was organized during the 1900 Paris World Exhibition in July. The scale of the Exhibition was unprecedented. As early as February 1898 the British Prince of Wales predicted on the basis of the plans for the exhibition it would treat its audience to an event of a “scale of magnificence never before approached, even in Paris” and that “the Exhibition bids fair to surpass any of its predecessors in extent and splendour.”\(^{73}\) By the time the exposition closed its doors on 12 November forty-seven million people had visited it since the opening on 14 April. Obviously, in connecting the *Congrès International d’Automobilisme* to such a splendid event, the organizers sought to transfer some of its grandeur to their gathering.

The fact that Paris was a global centre for automotive technology, production and use made it an adequate location for organizing such happenings.\(^{74}\) The ACF played a key role in getting the event organized, which was followed by a second *Congrès International d’Automobilisme* in Paris from 15 to 20 June 1903. Like the Salon, which mainly focused on the automobile itself, the *Congrès International d’Automobilisme*...
d'Automobilisme discussed questions techniques concerning vehicle specificities. Unlike the Salon, the Congrès also debated questions économiques et internationales, a catch-all term for a broad array of issues concerning road networks, maps for tourists, but also tax regimes, customs, and the rules of the road from an international point of view.75

In 1904 the automobile clubs decided to join forces in a durable institutional setting and created the Association Internationale des Automobile-Clubs Reconnus (AIACR).76 The organization became the arbiter of car racing worldwide, formulating the rules racers had to respect in order to get full recognition of their records. In addition, the AIACR turned into a powerful pre-Second World War actor speaking on behalf of the national automobiles clubs it represented in order to defend the rights of their individual members, several of whom engaged in cross-border traffic. Europe was the main stage for AIACR activities in this respect.77

In order to achieve its goals AIACR cooperated closely with the Ligue Internationale des Associations Touristes (LIAT). The Dutch touring club ANWB had initiated the foundation of LIAT by organizing a congress in Amsterdam and Brussels in July 1897. The Ligue was officially created in August 1898 at a meeting of seventeen touring and cycling clubs in Luxembourg.78 From its headquarters in Brussels LIAT worked for the promotion of velocipede tourism, but around the turn of the century several of its national members decided to take on tourism by automobile as well.79 One of the fundamental ideas of the organization was the reciprocity of services, meaning member organizations mutually agreed they would offer the services they provided to their own members to those of sister organizations abroad as well.80

---

75 ACF (1903), Deuxième Congrès International d’Automobilisme, Hotel de l’Automobile-Club de France, 15-20 June, 2 vols. As the prime car production centre of Italy, Milan was an unsurprising choice for the third Congrès.

76 With many members belonging to the aristocracy, the automobile clubs had a highly elitist character. Of thirteen club presidents participating in the second Congress, only four did not have a noble title. Eligible clubs were those of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia (St. Petersburg), Spain, Switzerland, Turin, United Kingdom and the United States. At AIACR’s first business meeting in December 1904, the Automobile Club of Hungary was admitted, and the representative of the Turin Automobile Club announced the creation the Automobile Club of Italy, which would become that country’s representative, Hutton, FIA, 26.

77 Hutton, FIA, 25, 39.

78 Gijs Mom, “Roads without rails: European highway-network building and the desire for long-range motorized mobility,” Technology and Culture 46, no. 4 (2005): 750-751. The seventeen founding members included organizations from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, AIT, 100, back flap.

79 For example, the Dutch member organization ANWB discussed this in 1900, Vinne, De trage, 115.

80 AIT, 100, 14.
Both AIACR and LIAT called for the improvement of road maintenance and the construction of new roads, but their primary concern was to ease cross-border traffic flows. The reverse was true for the first Congrès International de la Route (Paris, 1908), which institutionalized the internationalization of the road question. The conference was an important milestone, gathering as many as 1,600 experts in the French capital to discuss several road issues. Two acute and interrelated problems had motivated the organization of the conference, namely the rapid reduction of the quality of roads due to automobile traffic and the dust clouds this traffic created upon passage. To experience the problem and learn how to combat it the conference organizers offered an excursion to the Côte d'Azur (see Figure 2.5). It was in this region that the renaissance of the road had taken place.

81 Merki, Die holpige, 241.
It was also there that the road had first fallen victim to the dust problem, but the intelligent solutions of Guglielminetti and others were now curing the road of its illness.  

The conference resulted in the creation of the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses (PIARC) in 1909. During that same year the French government organized a diplomatic conference in Paris to discuss a Convention on International Motor Traffic. The German government, in turn, urged by a resolution from the automobile-clubs, had requested its French counterpart to organize the conference. Consequently two draft conventions lay on the table, a French and a German one.  

The 1909 Conference and the resulting Convention arguably formed the kick-off for intergovernmental cooperation with regard to road traffic.

The centerpiece of the Convention was surely the creation of an international traveling pass (article 3). The document assured that the vehicle for which it was issued and the driver who had obtained it complied with the conditions specified in the first two articles of the Convention that together aimed to provide a minimum guarantee for public safety on the road. The vehicle had to be equipped with a “strong steering apparatus,” a decent braking system, but also with “warning mechanisms,” namely a horn, two lights in the front and one in the rear (article 5). Before using their vehicles, drivers needed prior authorization from competent authorities or associations authorized by them and they should not be under 18 years of age. The international traveling pass ended the problem of tourists having to take a driving test or to register their vehicle upon entering a different country. Where the French and German drafts had proposed that the pass should remain valid for three and six months respectively, the plenary discussion increased the period to one year.

Besides the international traveling pass, the Convention specified four road signs, appended to the document in Annex D. The outcome was a compromise. On the one hand Annex D reconfirmed those signs that the touring clubs had already adopted in 1900 and 1902. On the other hand it defied their changed opinion adopted at a 1908 conference in Stockholm that a single sign was preferable, a preference the AIACR and the Touring Club Italiano successfully opposed.

---

83 This is how monsieur Charguéraud, conseiller d'état and directeur des routes, de la navigation, et des mines, spoke about the subject in a discourse during the excursion, PIARC, Premier congrès, 431.
84 Poidebard, La circulation, 74-75.
85 Alternatively the pass was called international road certificate. The terms are used interchangeably.
86 Poidebard, La circulation, 84-85. For a text of the Convention, see Road Committee, “Minutes 1st session (1925),” Annex 2, “Text of the Convention with respect to the International Circulation of Motor Vehicles.”
87 Mom, “Building,” 2, 5-6. Additionally, the Convention contained some special provisions applying to motor-cycles (article 6) and the meeting and passing of vehicles (article 7).
third major element was the stipulation that each vehicle should have a distinctive plate indicating the nationality of the vehicle. On the basis of Annex C of the Convention, the white oval plate 30 cm in width and 18 cm in height should contain the black letters corresponding to the country of origin as specified in the list annexed to the Convention (see Figure 2.6). The Convention went into force on 1 May 1910.88

Through all this automobile-related work, the road problem soon came to be viewed as a car problem only, without taking into account the interests of other road users like horse traffic or cyclists. In PIARC this exclusion materialized after discussions at the PIARC conferences in Brussels (1910) and London (1913). Another point of debate concerned the desirability of creating a 'new' infrastructure reserved for the exclusive use by motorized vehicles. In PIARC circles the idea was rejected: the majority favored the improvement of existing roads instead.89

The only example of what might be considered an embryonic motorway from before the First World War was the Automobil-Verkehrs- und Übungs-Straße, better known under its acronym AVUS. It was a test site in the neighborhood of Berlin.

88 At that time Austria-Hungary, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Monaco, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom had ratified the Convention, F.S.L. Lyons, Internationalism in Europe, 1815-1914 (Leiden: Sythoff, 1963), 52.
89 Mom, "Roads;" Mom "Building."
for which construction started in 1913, although it was not completed until 1921.\textsuperscript{90} The First World War interrupted its construction, but would significantly spur motorized transport in other ways – as will become clear from the next section.

‘Careful, driver!’ The Great War and motorized transport

Kurt Möser has characterized the First World War as the “first war in history in which motorized road transportation played a major role.”\textsuperscript{91} It formed a kind of silent revolution succinctly summarized by Colonel Hacking on the occasion of the 1925 congress of the International Chamber of Commerce in Brussels. His account of the historical development of motorized transport on behalf of the Society of British Motor Manufacturers reminded his audience that

“Paris was saved by Gallieni [sic] and his taxis, Verdun was saved by the Motor Omnibus, and the final victory of the Allies was secured only by the Motor Lorry.”\textsuperscript{92}

The first remark referred to General Joseph-Simon Galliéni, the military governor of Paris who on 6 September 1914 requisitioned all Parisian taxis to transport soldiers to reinforce the sixth Army, stationed near an unprotected wing of the German army close to Nanteuil-le-Hadouin. The transport continued through the night and on 7 September surprised bystanders witnessed the procession of taxis through the streets of Paris. The story left a lasting imprint on public memory and turned into an epic legend. It made the event less modest than it in fact was, having transferred a mere 4,000 men from Sevran-Livry and Gagny to Nanteuil, a distance of around 50 km.\textsuperscript{93} In any case the episode is often mentioned as the first large-scale use of automobiles in the First World War that in part enabled Galliéni to successfully launch a surprise attack on the German troops in the first Battle of the Marne.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{92} ICC, \textit{Third congress}, 73.
\textsuperscript{94} Maxwell G. Lay, \textit{Ways of the world: A history of the world’s roads and of the vehicles that used them} (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 169. During the same year London motorbuses were used for transporting troops in France too.
Hacking’s second remark on Verdun and its savior by the Motor Omnibus referred to another episode in the war that helped spreading motorized mobility. The French had constructed the so-called voie sacrée between Bar-le-Duc and the front at Verdun. From February to August 1916 the voie allowed the transport of 50,000 tons of goods and 90,000 soldiers each week. In March 1916 on some days 6,000 trucks used the road, meaning one passed every fourteen seconds. A Dutch journal even mentioned a frequency of one truck per second. In either case, the number of vehicles and the goods and people they transported in this tour de force in military logistics was unparalleled.95

The third and final remark from the quote above concerned the use of heavy motor vehicles during the war. Trucks became especially important after the United States joined the Allies in 1917, and according to General Pershing soon became an “absolute necessity” for both supply and combat.96 The sheer jump in numerical terms was impressive, particularly in France. When the League of Nations investigated the general transport situation after the war, the French government reported that the fleet of vehicles increased from less than 100,000 in 1914 to 206,000 by 1920. Particularly the proportion of heavy vehicles grew tremendously. In 1914, when all were requisitioned, there were only 8,000. In 1920 the number had grown to a stunning 93,000.97 The French case was exceptional, but although most countries reported much more modest numbers and in Germany the vehicle fleet actually diminished, the League report cited rapidity and mobility as reasons for the increased popularity of motorized mobility, but also that

“the experience of and the taste for this mode of transit acquired during the war by a great number of combatants, the sale of the stock of the Allied armies, the urgent demand caused by the resumption of economic life of the country, which has been accentuated by the crisis in rail transport.”98

The role of the automobile changed in the course of the war. In the beginning it functioned primarily as a form of individualized transport for high officials,

95 Merki, Die holprige, 83; Mom, ”Roads,” 755. One truck per second amounts to a total of 86,400 per day.
97 Of these 70,000 were private vehicles, 14,000 were in the possession of the army and 9,000 were put at the disposal of the Ministry of Liberated Regions, LoN, General transport situation in 1921: Statements submitted by the states which took part in the First General Conference on Communications and Transit Held in March-April 1921 with an introduction by Professor Tajani, engineer, Professor of the Royal Polytechnic College, Milan (Geneva: LoN, 1922), vol.1, 327.
but it gradually turned into a means to convey the masses of soldiers and heavy equipment, thus being used on an increasingly larger scale in the course of the war. When the Americans declared war, truck transport was virtually non-existent in the American army, but it increased rapidly. When scarcity was at its highest points, the demand for trucks was higher than the supply, personnel remaining deficient for as much as 70% and materials for 50%. Such discrepancies between demand and supply brought a large expansion of the European motorcar industry.\(^9^9\) Despite the fact that the absolute numbers of automobiles might seem modest today, they exposed both soldiers and civilians to motorized transport on an unprecedented scale during the war, familiarizing society at large with the phenomenon.\(^1^0^0\)

The impact of the experience on the truckers themselves was tremendous. This sounds through in the unique eyewitness account of Benjamin Nolte, who served as a driver for Motor Truck Company 441 of the eighth Corps of the American Expeditionary Forces in France. His account makes it clear that the work of those involved in the war’s logistics was not always highly appreciated. He narrates

“To drive a truck loaded with patients, some of them on the verge of death, in a three ton truck, is in my estimation one of the hardest details a driver can get. The roads were rough, being filled in shell holes, and with hundreds of trucks moving to and fro, making you drive from one congestion into another, dodging a hole here, and hitting another their (sic), were the things that made the poor patients groan with pain. To hear a patient cry “For God sake driver, Be careful! was an often heard exclamation. And the driver was doing his utmost to fulfill (sic) the wish of the unfortunate, but it was impossible to make a comfortable trip on a road of this kind, and lights being a forbidden luxury, the continued rough ride would in many cases bring a curse from the lips of the boys who couldn't understand the situation, and if ever a curse was felt, it was the CURSE FROM THE DOUGH-BOY.”\(^1^0^1\)

Of course the transportation of wounded soldiers is a peculiar type of transport and the war itself had adversely affected many roads through physical devastation. But in general terms existing roads were not equipped to support such traffic.

\(^1^0^0\) Möser, “World War I,” 201-207.  
\(^1^0^1\) Emphasis in original. 'Doughboy' was a slang term for an American infantryman. "Account of motor truck company," August 1918-April 1919, folder 3, Nolte Collection, Marshall Foundation.
This was particularly true in the case of heavy vehicles such as motor coaches and trucks, and a fortiori under adverse war conditions. The irony of the matter was that heavy vehicles aggravated the problem, as most roads were not able to support heavyweights at the speed they went. Indeed, one of the things the many military vehicles that got a civilian life after the war did, was to destroy roads.  

Thus the war left a psychological legacy of increased familiarity with automobiles, and a physical legacy in the form of an enlarged fleet of vehicles and road degradation. To that we can add the experience with the principle of limited access roads such as the voie sacrée used during the war for logistic purposes. The military role of road transport soon transferred to civilian functions. The British tourist company Thomas Cook offered six-day tours to the battlefields of the war by motor coach, “a vehicle that would change the face of European tourism during the 1920s.”

The Great War had a major impact on INGO activities too, putting them to an almost complete standstill. It also affected their members’ organizations. Only one third of the British Automobile Association (AA) 1914 number of members remained at the war’s end. This did not automatically imply big trouble for the organization though. As its activities had simultaneously come to an almost complete standstill, costs had dropped even more significantly. The AA and similar organizations in other countries were thus in a good position to restart where they had left off.

When the organizations started to resume their activities after the war had ended, they emphasized the impact the bellicosities had had on all aspects of the road network. PIARC tackled the material effects of the war. Its Commission Internationale Permanente des Congrès de la Route met on 21 June 1920 in Paris after a six-year interruption of its work. It concluded that two important factors would affect the study of technical subjects related to road matters in the immediate future. The first was the level of physical destruction and degradation of the road network due to lack of maintenance. PIARC’s officials foresaw a lengthy period of reconstruction and restoration. The second was the impact of the increased numbers of vehicles. Their augmented average weight in combination with their rapid speed could potentially have dramatic effects on road networks.

102 Lay, Ways, 169.
104 Stenson Cooke, This motoring, being a romantic story of the Automobile Association (London: Automobile Association, 1933), 187.
The automobile and touring clubs mainly devoted attention to barriers to cross-border traffic, several of which had been fortified during the war. In 1919 eight of LIAT’s founders dissolved it to create a new collaborative effort in the Alliance Internationale du Tourisme (AIT). The official foundational meeting took place a year later in Brussels, where they specified the general aim of the organization as the study and pursuit of international tourism issues and the centralization of “worldwide travel documentation for the use and distribution by its members.” Although its name referred to tourism in general, after the war the AIT would be a major player in the discussions concerning the use of Europe’s roads. During the Interbellum the AIT often consorted with the AIACR. To consolidate their cooperation the two INGOs founded the Conseil Central de Tourisme International in 1925. The joint post-war agenda of these associations sounded through at the International conference on Road Traffic organized by the Automobile-Club de France in Paris (6-8 October 1921). The agenda ranged from the passage of borders to the unification of the rules of the road, and from the need to collect reliable statistics in each country to the generalization of the international road certificate.

At the same time the clubs did not lose sight of the importance of the physical network for the automobile. At the conference’s final day the grands itinéraires internationaux formed the last issue to be discussed. Edmond Chaix, president of the conference, chaired the session that opened at 9:30 sharp with a resolution proposed by the French delegation, pleading for the creation of grands itinéraires internationaux between the capitals and other important cities of interested countries. To facilitate their use special signs in bright colors should guide travelers. The Belgian delegate Séaut doubted whether the direct connection of capitals should be adopted as a principle, pointing out that the best route from a tourist point of view might not be the shortest one. At the same time the Swiss and Dutch delegates pointed out that constructing such roads also implied the need for special maintenance.

In 1919 the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) joined the ranks of these influential INGOs, giving the business community a voice on the international political scene. The ICC dealt with all issues that were important for its constituency of large firms. Interestingly, during the course of the Interbellum we see a shift in the modalities the ICC devoted its attention to. Road transport was initially absent...
from its work. It was first taken up at the Brussels Conference in 1925. Over time, however, road mobility grew in importance vis-à-vis other transport modes. The ICC particularly insisted that companies should be completely free to choose their preferred mode without government interference steering the choice.

These INGOs became intermediaries for translating real and assumed wishes of road users at the international political level. Before the First World War they had largely undertaken this task by themselves, occasionally supported by governmental initiatives such as the 1909 Paris Conference. After the war the League of Nations, itself a legacy of the war as well, started dealing with the very same issues the INGOs had already taken up. It required painstaking mutual adaptation. In the conception of its creators the League of Nations was an IGO heralding a new, fresh phase in international relations.

The organization was firmly rooted in the Inter-allied cooperation that had emerged during the First World War. In warfare supply and logistics form a crucial factor for victory or, in the words of Jean Monnet, "Le nerf de la guerre, c’est désormais le tonnage." In line with this view Hobsbawm has identified the submarine as the weapon with a major effect on warfare in the First World War. German submarines disrupted the crucial Trans-Atlantic trade. In targeting civilian ships as well as military ones, they did a great service to the Inter-allied cooperation on logistics. Under these conditions the Allies deemed it better to cooperate in the purchase of crucial goods like wheat, a vital element in the alimentation of troops, instead of out-competing each other to the benefit of third countries like Canada or Australia. Rather than working through the usual diplomatic channels, the system of Inter-allied cooperation created direct contact between specialized ministers or their officials. The League of Nations, arguably the most important organizational innovation resulting from the war, employed this method of cooperation on a much larger scale. The next section scrutinizes the emergence of the novel institution, which came to play a major role in shaping European road transport.

110 ICC to League of Nations, 8 October 1925, Transit Section files, box S-484; Dolléans to Salter, 21 April 1925, registry file 14, box R-1130, LoN.
113 Monnet, Mémoires, particularly 77-84.
114 On Inter-allied cooperation, see Lord Hankey, Diplomacy by conference: Studies in public affairs (London: Ernest Benn, 1946), chapter one; Monnet, Mémoires, chapter three; Arthur Salter, Allied shipping control: An experiment in international administration (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).
The League of Nations

After the war the victors searched for a different principle of international relations to restore the lost tranquility to the state system. They no longer deemed the nineteenth century balance of power desirable. There were basically two different views on how to organize the League. The Wilsonian view pleaded for embedding in the League of Nations a system of collective security by which all members would agree to jointly oppose a threat to any of them. The second view opined that Germany formed the greatest security risk in Europe and therefore its power potential should be checked, a position most vigorously expressed by France. The latter view ultimately prevailed in the Treaty of Versailles, resulting in measures reducing Germany’s geographic size and imposing considerable war reparations. Also, Germany was not initially allowed to become member of the League of Nations.

Another notable non-member of the League would be the United States, despite the crucial role played by the American president Woodrow Wilson, who spent eight months in the Old World to convince his Allies that it was time for a new phase in world history. Scott even claims that if Wilson had not become president in 1916, the League might never have come into existence. Yet British Prime Minister Lloyd George and French Prime Minister Clemenceau disliked the political style of the “lofty, arrogant sermoniser.” Wilson neglected building support for his brainchild in the US Senate, where the Republican majority blocked American membership of the League. Wilson lost the subsequent presidential elections and turned over the presidency to Harding, heralding two decades of isolationism.

Despite this major blow, the League of Nations came into being, providing new ways for international cooperation. The League had a double aim. On the one hand, the Covenant of the League of Nations was an integral part of the Peace Treaties and the prevention of future war was therefore its prime aim. On the

---

116 According to some scholars, the League of Nations as well as the process of European integration after the Second World War was in fact a continuation of the Concert of Europe, see Peter Krüger, *Das unberechenbare Europa: Epochen des Integrationsprozesses vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Europäischen Union* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2005).
other hand, the organization was also set up to stimulate international cooperation in specific fields.\textsuperscript{121} This aspect became the competence of the League’s various technical committees. Indeed, despite the fact that political issues were of prime importance during the first phase of the League’s existence, the drafters of the League Convention had been well aware that political problems could not be entirely separated from economic issues, particularly not in the case of international transport.\textsuperscript{122}

Jan Smuts eloquently phrased this sentiment. The South-African general served as minister of foreign affairs at the time of the Peace Conference in Paris. Together with Lord Robert Cecil he represented the British Empire on the Committee discussing the creation of the League of Nations under chairmanship of Wilson. Smuts was not impressed by the results of the ongoing public debate on the League. In a pamphlet released on 16 December 1918, he sketched the broad lines of the organization as he deemed fit. He underlined that the League should not be restricted to the prevention of war only, but that the organization should also function as a coordination body for activities transcending national boundaries. In his opinion

“The questions of industry, trade, finance, labour, transit and communications, and many others, are bursting through the national bounds and are clamouring for international solution. Water-tight compartments and partition walls between the nations and the continents have been knocked through, and the new situation calls for world-government.”\textsuperscript{123}

His conviction was widely shared. It was a central proposition in the work of the eminent French economist Francis Delaisi. In Les contradictions du monde moderne (1925) he described how objects and products from across the globe surrounded the contemporary bourgeois Parisian, despite the fact that the world had witnessed a protectionist égoïsme sacré from the part of the individual nation-states during the six years that had passed since the end of the First World War. According to Delaisi it had delivered only disappointing results. He made a vigorous plea for the free circulation of goods instead, because whether people liked it or not

\textsuperscript{121} In The changing structure of international law Wolfgang Friedmann has characterized these two aspects as the ‘right of coexistence’ and the ‘right of cooperation,’ see P.H. Kooijmans, Internationaal publiekrecht in vogelvlucht (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1999), 15-20.
\textsuperscript{122} LoN, Communications et Transit (Geneva: LoN, 1924), 5.
“L’univers est profondément internationalisé. L’immense réseau des lignes de chemins de fer et de paquebots, traversant les continents et les mers, pénètre au fond des plus lointains pays, y pompe matières premières et denrées, les entraîne vers les centres industriels qui les transforment et les adaptent aux besoins humains, puis les renvoie aux hommes de toutes les civilisations sous tous les climats.”

The widespread sentiment that such global ties were on the rise transferred into the League and ensured that its second pillar to foster international cooperation became in fact the cornerstone of the new organization. Thus, when the League Secretariat took up its residence in the Palais Wilson on the lakeside boulevard of beautiful Lac Leman with stunning views of the Mont Blanc, it started to work steadily towards international agreements on a wide variety of down-to-earth matters, including mobility. Article 23, the so-called omnibus article of the Covenant of the League of Nations, provided the basis on which the organization could accrue its functional activities and set up specialized organs to deal with specific topics. Section five (or ‘e’) of the article formed the basis for the League’s activities concerning transport, telecommunications and electricity. It stated that

“[Members of the League] will make provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all Members of the League. In this connection, the special necessities of the regions devastated during the war of 1914-1918 shall be borne in mind.”

Although this work was intended to be universal in scope, in practice it was profoundly Eurocentric. Geneva became the focal point for initiatives concerning European infrastructure networks and their operation. Several factors explain this situation. First, European countries dominated the League’s membership. At the war’s close a dozen new states had popped up on the political map of Europe. Some major non-European states that might have diluted European dominance did not join the League. The United States is the prime example and the Soviet Union became a member only later in the Interbellum. Second, European coun-

124  Francis Delaisi, Les contradictions du monde moderne (Paris: Payot, 1925), 543. Translation “the universe is profoundly internationalized. The immense network of railway lines and passenger ships, traversing the continents and the seas, penetrates deeply into the remotest countries, transfers their raw materials and goods, carries them away to industrial centers that transform them and adapt them to human needs, then sends them back to people of all civilizations and in all climates.”


126 For the text of the League Covenant, see Scott, The rise, appendix.
tries were more willing to engage in international agreements than non-European ones. Thus a 1942 paper at a London conference discussing post-WW II reconstruction noted:

“There is no official European body whose field of activity extends to all branches of transport and communications, but the League of Nations Transit Organisation, (...), has concerned itself very largely with Europe.”

The Transit Organisation from the quote is the Advisory and Technical Committee on Communications and Transit (CCT). It was founded at the First General Conference on Communications and Transit in Barcelona (1921), one of the first major conferences the League organized. Through the creation of the CCT the conference launched the framework for the League’s activities in the field of transport for the rest of the Interbellum. Similar technical committees were set up to deal with economic affairs, epidemiology etcetera. A 1929 statement of the League’s secretary-general Sir Eric Drummond makes it clear that there was broad satisfaction within the League on the work these committees had achieved:

“La réussite des comités techniques constituera certainement un atout important en faveur de l’accroissement de puissance et d’autorité de l’institution tout entière.”

Yet preciously few studies exist on the League’s technical committees and their activities. Greaves has provided a useful overview of all technical committees, but the breadth of his book makes his treatment of individual committees rather succinct. On the CCT only a handful of contemporary accounts exists. This poor showing is due to the fact that most existing literature on the Interbellum gives a negative assessment of the League of Nations. The agreed view among historians

128 ‘Communications’ in this era was a catch-all term used for various types of networks, including transport. ‘Transit’ refers to flows passing the territory of a state that is not their origin or destination.
129 Eric Drummond, “L’avenir de la Société des Nations,” L’Européen, 1, no. 8 (1929): 7. Translation “The success of the technical committees will certainly constitute an important trump in favor of an increase in power and authority of the entire institution.”
131 Pierre le Marec, L’Organisation des Communications et du Transit (PhD diss., Université de Rennes, 1938); Jan Hostie, The Organisation for Communications and Transit of the League of Nations, typewritten manuscript (1945). Jan Hostie was a Belgian legal expert and a former secretary-general of the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine. From 1924 onwards he had been a member of the Legal Committee of the League’s Committee for Communications and Transit.
has long been that the institution was a failure and therefore unworthy of serious study.\textsuperscript{132} This has led to a dearth of academic work that carefully investigates what actually happened in Geneva. René Girault has captured the general mood among historians as

“What good does it do to analyse an institution that in practical terms failed to find a solution to the disputes existing at the time? The black legend of the League of Nations was born; one would soon forget Geneva and its sterile debates.”\textsuperscript{133}

The black legend first emerged in the League’s lifetime. Even Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, the well-known Europeanist heading the Paneuropa Union, blamed the League for being an organization of “words, not deeds.”\textsuperscript{134} Part of the blame was put on member states’ reluctance to transfer real power to an international organization. Yet according to Jean Monnet the truth of the matter was that at the time nobody (yet) thought in terms of the transfer of sovereignty. For him the League was an unprecedented institution undertaking a historic mission under very difficult circumstances. In short, the League had to work within the contemporary limits of the possible.\textsuperscript{135}

The eminent British historian E.H. Carr has passed one of the deadliest judgments with regard to the League’s work. In \textit{The twenty years’ crisis} he described those believing in the ideals the League had as ‘utopians.’ Carr argued that it was easy for these dreamers, particularly the British, to adhere to the existing international order as embodied in the League’s institutional structure, because countries like the United Kingdom benefited substantially from the status quo. In fact, Carr continued, the national interest always lay hidden behind the lofty rhetoric. Instead of getting caught in the idealistic talk, the student of international relations should rather choose a realist perspective by carefully considering the power position of the individual states and take them as a point of departure for studying interstate behavior.\textsuperscript{136}


\textsuperscript{133} Quoted in ibid., “The League,” 518.


\textsuperscript{135} Monnet, \textit{Mémoires}, 109-113. A contemporary observer claimed that the mere survival of the League under the adverse conditions in which it had to operate should be considered a miracle, Georges Scelle, \textit{Une crise de la Société des Nations: La réforme du Conseil et l’entrée de l’Allemagne à Genève (Mars-Septembre 1926} (Paris: Les Presses Universitaire de France, 1927), 2.

\textsuperscript{136} Edward H. Carr, \textit{The twenty years’ crisis} 1919-1939: An introduction to the study of international relations (New York: Perennial, 1946). Combined with works as \textit{Conditions of peace} (1942) and \textit{Nationalism and after} (1945), Carr became one of the key figures in establishing the study of international relations as an academic discipline. For a concise overview of Carr’s importance for the discipline of international relations, see Martin Griffiths, \textit{Fifty key thinkers in international relations} (London: Routledge, 1999), 7-10.
Carr’s analysis contains much that is valuable, but he does not give insight into whether the League might have been more successful in some fields than in others. It is noticeable that most negative assessments of the League are based on issues of ‘high politics,’ like foreign policies. This is easy to understand given the fact that the League’s main aim was to secure international peace and stability. The Japanese occupation of Manchuria, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia or other major international political incidents in the 1930s demonstrated that the League was not able to live up to the expectations on international security. But it is important not to let this sequence of crises taint the interpretation of the entire Interbellum. It is useful to remember Kennedy’s warning that

“with book titles like A Broken World, The Lost Peace, and The Twenty Years’ Crisis describing these entire two decades, there is a danger that the great differences between the 1920s and the 1930s may be ignored.”

Yet recent titles like The dark valley and The lights that failed have reinforced rather than debunked the gloomy picture that has existed of the Interbellum and the role of the League of Nations. Moreover, it is imperative to differentiate between the different subject matters. In contrast to an assessment of the League on the basis of ‘high politics,’ the result might be different in the case of ‘low politics,’ concerning the so-called ‘technical’ subjects that constituted the bulk of the League’s work. This work has never attracted much attention, a lack of interest for which the technical experts themselves are in part to blame. Secretary-general of the Transit and Communications Section Robert Haas acknowledged in 1927 that “the problems which my Section has to deal with do not lend themselves to spectacular treatment.” The dull image thus created did not help attracting more attention for the League’s activities in this field. At the same time it might have been instrumental in creating maneuvering space for experts outside the realm of political scrutiny.

Clavin and Wessels have recently suggested that the League’s Secretariat and its many Sections wielded more power than could be expected from a purely administrative bureaucracy. Their research shows that the dismissal of the League’s

139 For a contemporary account on the distinction between ‘technical’ and ‘political,’ see Pitman B. Potter, “Note on the distinction between political and technical questions,” Political Science Quarterly 50, no. 2 (1935): 264-271.
Economic and Financial Organisation as “the greatest failed organisation of the League” does not have a firm basis in the League’s archives, of which historians have barely scratched the surface. In the early 1950s Sir Eric Drummond, a former secretary-general of the League, confirmed this conclusion by acknowledging the conclusion from a minority report in a 1929 investigation with regard to the League's political character that “the political influence of the Secretariat, and especially of its principal officers [was], in fact, enormous.”¹⁴² It thus seems expedient to investigate the work of the League of Nations with regard to communications and transit more closely, as the following two chapters of this thesis will do.

**Conclusion**

The 1898-1921 period was a crucial era to which the roots of international negotiations on European automobility date back. Automobiles were still scarce in this period, except within the confines of some isolated pockets such as Paris or the Côte d’Azur. Yet despite low numbers of vehicles, several problems that would become pressing in the age of mass motorization were already present in embryonic form. Racing and touring were instrumental in making these problems visible. Racers and motorized tourists posed new cross-border questions concerning the use of Europe’s road network. How could and should safety be guaranteed on the public road? What taxes should be imposed on vehicles?

These questions were not always answered in the same way in different states or by sub-national authorities. Cross-border racing and touring thus added an extra dimension, as those engaging in these activities were confronted with divergent regulations. How to mitigate differences in safety regulations? How to prevent the unwarranted smuggling of automobiles through customs regulations? Touring and automobile associations, which had been taking care of these issues since the late nineteenth century, forged international coalitions to facilitate travel across borders on behalf of their members. Their dedicated work resulted in a set of arrangements that would form the foundation for later work in this field.

More importantly, the activities of racing and touring by automobile formed building blocks for experiencing Europe. Through the international negotiations automobility became something about which to think in European terms. The 1898-1903 races from Paris to the capitals of the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Spain symbolically connected these European cities by road, while the indi-

individualized Grand Tour by automobile enabled motorists to experience their own Europe. The press brought motorists’ accounts and experiences to a broader public. This early motorized Europe had its core in France and the United Kingdom and extended to the wealthier European countries beyond. But except perhaps for some urban pockets on the Iberian Peninsula, most of Southern and Eastern Europe or the Balkans were beyond motorists’ Europe and only the bravest adventurers strayed there on occasion.

The First World War was an important catalyst for motorized transport in several respects. Motor transport was used on a large scale for the first time in a conflict of this kind. Governments obtained ample experience with motorized mobility, and the societal familiarity with motorized vehicles became more widespread. Thus the war experience added to the desire for motorized mobility. In this setting the INGOs tried to pick up their work where they had left it off after the war had ended. Soon their ranks would be joined by the League of Nations, a formidable new player on the international scene in the Interbellum. Built upon the experience of inter-allied cooperation during the war, the League of Nations started to take up the issues on which the INGOs had already done a considerable amount of work before the war. Reconstruction formed its initial credo and the European mobility situation, severely affected by the war, thus became one of its first concerns. The League of Nations had to take into account and build upon what had been done in the period before the war. It did not and could not operate on a tabula rasa. Interesting instances of competition and cooperation emerged out of the friction inherent in this situation.

The next two chapters discuss how they dealt with road-related matters. Chapter three will first look at a set of road network projects that were specifically labeled as ‘European’ in the wake of the various projects for Europe launched during the Interbellum. Parts of the League of Nations machinery played a major role in these initiatives, but its specialized organ for dealing with road traffic remained aloof, preferring instead to dedicate itself to the removal of barriers of cross-border traffic.

Chapter four highlights the work of this League’s Committee for Road Traffic. It basically discusses three issues. The first is how and when road traffic, not part of the original workload of the League, was taken up. The second is how the League dealt with the work that had already been done by other organizations prior to the League’s creation. Third, it is imperative to get a grasp of the content of the League’s work on international road traffic and what impact it had. Together these chapters
aim to fill part of the knowledge gap with regard to the work done by the League of Nations on European mobility on the road and provide an adequate outlook of the international negotiations to facilitate motorized movement across borders.
Chapter 3
Roads to Europe – Albert Thomas’ European public works, 1929-1937

The Europe of Robert Mangin

"[The great international road system] would constitute as if it were a sort of central nervous system for the United Europe that it is proposed to create."

Anonymous (1931)

In 1930 the Parisian journal La Revue des Vivants organized a contest. Who could design the best Europe? The jury included diplomatic and political heavyweights who had known the Geneva machinery for years. The renowned Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Edvard Beneš was on the jury together with the British Lord Robert Cecil, a key figure in the establishment of the League of Nations at the 1919 Peace Conference in Paris. Further members were the influential veteran politician Nicolas Politis, an international law scholar and former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Greece, and the poet Paul Valéry who represented France at the League of Nations with regard to cultural affairs. Twenty-three further members seconded them and shed their light on the five hundred mémoires submitted to the journal.

The winning essay by Robert Mangin sketched a new Europe in some 120 pages. The second chapter of his study entitled “La réalisation de la fédération économique européenne” opened with the need to establish a customs union, continuing with the expected transformations in agricultural production, the prime materials sector and European industry. Mangin dedicated the fourth section to
the rationalizations of exchange. He claimed that turning Europe into a single indus-
trial and agricultural market implied a commitment to unify exchange and consequently of transport and communications.3

Being convinced that the exchange patterns in the continent should be stretched to its very borders, Mangin argued that it was necessary to reorganize and unify the means of transport in Europe. His treatment of the Europeanization of the means of transport basically concerned railways and inland navigation. Mangin devoted little attention to road transport, which he considered of secondary importance. He did not recommend the study of international motorways until after federal European institutions had consolidated. With regard to road transport he restricted himself to mentioning the potential benefits of establishing a European road code to increase safety and the simplification of border crossing formalities, issues with which the League of Nations had already been dealing for several years at that point in time.4

This anecdotal account of a 'design-your-own-Europe' contest clearly links the European ideal to transport networks. The fact that several of Mangin's competitors also dedicated attention to mobility issues suggests that there was a more general feeling that transport networks mattered for Europe. Many were indeed convinced that Europe should work more closely together and several proposals for European unification were made during the Interbellum and even during the war.5 Peter Bugge branded such "political manifestations of feelings of unity and plans for the organization of the continent." as 'projects for Europe.'6 The most influential was probably Paneuropa (1923) of Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi,7 which formed a key inspiration for Aristide Briand's famous speech in the League of Nations Assembly in September 1929. But there were many more, all of them sponsored by individuals and a host of organizations dedicated to the cause of European unification.

Two rationales underpinned such projects for Europe. First, the First World War had scattered the unbridled European optimism of the Belle Époque (1890-1914).8 Social Darwinist thought spread among intellectuals and emphasized European

3 Ibid., 63.
4 Ibid., 64-66.
5 For example, Friedrich Naumann, Mitteleuropa (Berlin: Georg Keimer, 1916), aimed at an association between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the German Empire under 'natural' German hegemony.
7 Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Pan-Europa (Vienna: Paneuropa Verlag, 1923).
8 Admittedly the period only formed a Golden Age for privileged classes. For an account of Belle Époque society in Western Europe and the United States, see Barbara W. Tuchman, The proud tower: A portrait of the world before the war, 1890-1914 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).
decadence vis-à-vis the communist Soviet Union and the increasingly assertive United States. Coudenhove-Kalergi warned that European pre-eminence in the world was under siege. European states should unite or perish in the face of increasing global competition.9 In Toynbee’s words, “The European national states (...) appeared as dwarfs in 1930 when confronted with the young giants of the outer world.”10 In this line of thought, Europe’s fragmented character, the États Divisés d’Europe, formed a source of weakness vis-à-vis other power blocs.11 This flaw should be mended.

Apart from the global power struggle many eminent Europeans did not feel attracted to either American-style capitalism or Soviet-style socialism. Within the European movement the conviction spread that European countries should together find a third way made to fit European practices. Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, a French writer and political essayist, made a plea Europe should develop a socio-political system of its own and not yield to either the New-York style ‘super-capitalism’ or the Muscovite ‘super-socialism.’12

A second rationale that gave occasion to formulating projects for Europe was the emerging conviction that technological development, especially in the field of infrastructures, was rendering national borders obsolete at a fast pace. Where large countries like the Soviet Union or the United States could make fruitful use of such developments, a fragmented Europe could not reap any benefit from scale increase unless some form of durable international cooperation was established.

A clear example of this line of thought is the work of the economist Delaisi, discussed in the previous chapter. His Les contradictions du monde moderne (1925) uncovers what he considered the nefarious effects of protective nationalism. Delaisi depicted the way what he referred to as the technical revolution had profoundly changed economic structures worldwide and enhanced interdependence to an important extent. Yet political institutions and structures had remained unchanged.13 Delaisi proposed a sweeping reform reserving a large role for three newly founded international institutions. The ICC and the ILO were to become the supreme global arbiters with regard to socio-economic affairs, the former focusing its attention on economic matters, the latter on social affairs. The League of Nations

12 Ibid.
was to become the highest political organ in the world. In Delaisi’s words


These two convictions came together in a fictitious conversation between a Paneuropäer and an Antieuropäer published in Pan-Europa, the magazine of the Paneuropa Union headed by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. In his view only technical experts had really grasped the possibilities offered by new transport and communication technologies. Their connective qualities could only prosper at the international level. In the conversation, the Paneuropäer stated transport innovations were conquering distance at a fast pace and

“through this daily increasing diminution and compression of Europe barriers at borders and internal tariffs become useless, wars become unprofitable and suicidal. (...) You can experience this senselessness when you travel from Riga to Lisbon.”

The Antieuropäer confirmed his statement enthusiastically.

“Or also from Salonica to Danzig! How I know these artificial and unnecessary quibbles! These visa, these revisions and controls, these getting up and changing! How comfortable is, in contrast, the much longer journey from New York to San Francisco!”

Paneuropäer: “Or from Moscow to Vladivostok! Because Soviet Russia too starts to understand the age of technology.”

14 Delaisi, Les contradictions, 506. Translation “From now on, the function of interdependence has found its institutions. ICC + ILO + LoN, that is the formula of the future. Those are the three pillars on which solidarity-based reconstruction and world peace have to base themselves.”


16 Ibid., 32. Original “Oder auch nur von Saloniki nach Danzig! Wie ich diese künstlichen und unnötigen Schikanen kenne und hasse! Diese Visa, diese Revisionen und Kontrollen, dieses Anstellen und Umsteigen! Wie bequem ist dagegen die viel weitere Reise von New York nach San Franzisko! Paneuropäer: Oder von Moskau nach Wladiwostok! Denn auch Sowjetrussland beginnt das Zeitalter der Technik zu begreifen.” By the end of the conversation the Paneuropäer had converted the Antieuropäer into one of his own. Coudenhove-Kalergi’s admiration for technology is a recurrent theme in his work; see Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Apologie der Technik (Leipzig: Verlag der Neue Geist, 1922), later rewritten as Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Revolution durch Technik (Wien: Paneuropa Verlag, 1932).
We should understand the multitude of plans casting Europe in technological networks against the background of such projects for European economic and political unification. The craving for European integration was built on a dual basis of intercontinental competition on the one hand and global transformations on the other. The infrastructural ‘projects for Europe’ included some ambitious road plans. Long forgotten names like Kurt Kaftan, Lucien Lainé, Edmond Pigelet, and Piero Puricelli all designed motorway networks they called ‘European.’ Apart from being projects for Europe, these road plans should also be interpreted against the background of the transformation of the automobile during the Interbellum from a luxury gadget for the happy few into an increasingly common commodity, though still out of reach for the masses. Road interests used rising levels of automobile ownership as an argument in favor of constructing a European motorway network, but like most of their political counterparts the plans remained largely a paper reality. This fact notwithstanding, the road plans do contain important clues concerning the changes in thinking about mobility in connection to Europe. A glance at the many projects quickly reveals that the often-invoked notion of Europe had in fact many different meanings. This chapter scrutinizes such network proposals and analyzes the ‘Europe’ they projected, laying bare the inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms involved in the rhetorical construction of Europe.

Such an exercise is particularly important from the point of view of the European East-West division. In a way the war had recast the so-called Eastern Question, a term used in the nineteenth century to indicate the multitude of problems emerging out of the decay of the Ottoman Empire. Traditionally the Eastern Question concerned South-Eastern Europe where the control of the Ottoman Empire had been in slow but constant retreat for some centuries. After the First World War it was stretched to cover the entire zone of Central and Eastern Europe where the borders of existing states had shifted significantly and a range of new states and statelets had been created from the rubble of the dead empires in line with the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination. There was a lively debate on what would be the further political development of this shattered zone from Finland to Greece. Western European states vied for allies among the new states, France being particularly active in this respect. Some Eastern Europeans worried the new countries would not be able to properly defend themselves against

18 A similar mechanism was at work in the Middle East. On the creation of new borders, see Zara Steiner, *The lights that failed: European international history 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chapter two.
their large neighbors. This was the position of Tomáš Masaryk, a Czech academic who fled Prague at the outbreak of the First World War and became Professor of Slav Research at King’s College in London in 1915.20 From London he started defending the cause of Czechoslovak independence and became the country’s first elected president in 1920. In L’Europe Nouvelle (1918) he proposed to create a kind of federal bond among the small states between Germany and Russia as a defense against Pan-germanism.21

Economic questions could be added to these security-related issues. Elizabeth Wiskemann has described the relative underdevelopment of the eastern half of the continent vis-à-vis the western parts as “the basic problem of Europe between the wars.”22 The roots of the division of Europe into two distinct economic zones lay in the nineteenth century, when a differentiated pattern of economic development and industrialization accentuated existing contrasts in socio-economic development.23 Various contemporaries considered such gross inequalities a source for future instability. In their view, Europe’s future depended on its ability to forge economic unity out of existing divisions. It was widely feared that thousands of kilometers of new customs barriers would not be helpful in that respect. Francis Delaisi acutely showed the continental divide in his forceful Les deux Europes.24 In the words of an observer from the early 1930s

“the break-up of Austria-Hungary and the creation of a number of new wholly independent States across Central Europe were economic disasters for a world sorely in need of consolidation into larger economic units.”25

The extent to which such thinking influenced the road projects mentioned above is a key theme developed here. The second section of this chapter elaborates the European movement during the Interbellum. The third section deals with the introduction of the European project into the heart of the League of Nations by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Aristide Briand. In terms of European infrastructure planning, the plan for European public works launched by Albert Thomas, the highly respected Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), is the most relevant response to Briand’s initiative. It forms a unique confluence of the European project and large-scale infrastructure building. The gran-

20 See his inaugural lecture, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Das Problem der kleinen Völker in der europäischen Krisis (Prague: Otto Girgal, 1922), appearing originally in English in 1915.
23 Davies, Europe, 765.
The European movement in the Interbellum

The European dream blossomed in various sectors of European society during the Interbellum. The European movement consisted of many different organizations that varied in size and provided forums for discussion on Europe. Intellectuals published a range of essays, pamphlets and books about the subject and in a range of new journals, independent or linked to one of the organizations, they stimulated debate and diffused the European idea among a broader, but still usually elitist public.26

Among the most vocal organizations was the Vienna-based Paneuropa Union headed by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. The Union set up national sections in various European countries and organized a series of highly publicized conferences.27 At the same time Coudenhove-Kalergi, a networker who liked to be surrounded by men of fame, involved as many hommes d'affaires as he could. Several of them contributed to the union’s Zeitschrift Paneuropa. Although he certainly was not always successful in attracting interest from prominent politicians, he did build up an extensive network of contacts that included high-ranking French politicians like Aristide Briand and Édouard Herriot, who would later become advocates of the European idea at the international political scene.28

27 Théry offers an in-depth account of the sections established in France and Germany and their mutual relations, see Frank Théry, Construire l’Europe dans les années vingt: L’action de l’Union Paneuropéenne sur la scène franco-allemande, 1924-1932 (Geneva: Institut Européen de l’Université de Genève, 1998).
28 Coudenhove failed to attract the support of Masaryk and Mussolini, the latter not even responding to Coudenhove’s letter, see Lubor Jílek, ”Paneurope dans les années vingt: La réception du projet en Europe Centrale et Occidentale,” Relations Internationales 72 (winter 1992): 417-418. Aristide Briand was an eminent French politician who led six cabinets as prime minister and was in charge of the ministry of foreign affairs during the crucial 1925-1932 period. From May 1927 Briand served as honorary president of the Paneuropa Union. Édouard Herriot was an equally eminent French politician, serving three times as prime minister and President of the Chamber of Deputies. As an aside, he served as a minister of transport for a very brief period from December 1916 to March 1917. For his thoughts on Europe, see Édouard Herriot, The United States of Europe (London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1930).
Coudenhove originally expounded his conception of Paneuropa in 1923.\(^{29}\) In geographical terms it excluded the British Isles, Turkey and Soviet Russia. Yet where exactly Europe’s borders lay was open to debate. In his *Vereinigten Staaten von Europa* Wladimir Woytinsky, a Russian refugee and at the time a widely read freelance publicist living in Berlin, opposed Coudenhove’s exclusion of the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and included them in ‘his’ Europe.\(^{30}\) Woytinsky’s position did not represent a majority in the diffuse European movement.\(^{31}\) Within the *Paneuropa Union* Europe’s borders were flexible too. The First Pan-European Congress in Vienna (3-6 October 1926) adopted a resolution that opened the door to the participation of the countries Coudenhove-Kalergi had excluded.\(^{32}\) The discussion continued well thereafter. As late as 1935 *Zeitschrift Paneuropa* published the results of an enquiry among its readership regarding the question of Europe’s Eastern border.\(^{33}\) Although Europe generally had a readily identifiable geographic core, the concept of the continent became blurred towards its outer edges. It was an open question what Europe ultimately included in geographic terms. Phrased differently, the various initiatives for European unification projected roughly similar but different Europes.

Developments in the European movement did not go unnoticed on the political scene. Arguably the European movement experienced its finest hour when Aristide Briand launched the European project at the international political scene. In a flaming speech to the League of Nations’ tenth Assembly on 5 September 1929 he unrolled his vision of a federal Europe, primarily in economic terms, but also in political and social terms. The federal bond would, however, not impinge on the sovereignty of participating countries.\(^{34}\)

Briand’s speech formed the culmination of an improvement of intra-European relations in the mid-1920s. During the first five post-war years, the payment of reparations had been a continuous headache dossier for all involved. The Dawes Plan of 9 April 1924 constituted a major step towards the attenuation of existing animosities, especially between the key antagonists France and Germany. The Plan

---

\(^{29}\) Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa*.


\(^{32}\) Théry, *Construire*, 41-43.

\(^{33}\) "Wo liegt die Ostgrenze Europas?" *Zeitschrift Paneuropa* 11, no. 10 (December 1935): 318-322.

was named after Charles Dawes, the Chicago banker heading the American delegation in the discussions on German reparations starting in January 1924 and resulting in a restructuring and a sharp de facto reduction of German war debts. In return France ended the occupation of the Ruhr, commenced on 11 January 1923 in retaliation of Germany’s incapacity to meet its financial obligations. A year later the February 1926 Pact of Locarno further stimulated the détente by fixing the Franco-German border, another major issue that had been spoiling international relations in Europe. Locarno cleared the way for German entry into the League of Nations and enabled the emergence of a kind of regional European policy. Briand’s speech can be considered the apex of this development.

Briand’s speech was the first step in a chain of events. Four days after his speech Briand obtained a mandate to further specify his ideas in a Memorandum, which he presented in May 1930. The European governments sent in their replies to Paris. Subsequently at the 11th Assembly in September 1930 it was decided to refer the issue to a special commission of enquiry. By that time world affairs had, however, gone through a major shockwave. Only months after Briand’s speech the stock exchange in Wall Street crashed. Perhaps the immediate effects were not felt in Europe, but by the time the Commission of Enquiry for European Union (CEEU) held its first meetings they were becoming increasingly visible. The third CEEU session in May 1931 essentially discussed the economic crisis and ways to combat it. Prominent issues that were discussed included agricultural problems, production and exchange problems, and an economic non-aggression pact. The session decided to set up four expert committees to study more specific issues in-depth (see Figure 3.1, left side).

It was in the organizational setting of the CEEU that Albert Thomas launched his bold vision of continental infrastructures to achieve European unification, international solidarity and to reduce unemployment. Thus the International Labour Organisation became deeply involved in its own project for Europe during the economic crisis. The next section deals with the plan for European public works, in particular with regard to road infrastructures. In addition, it will also highlight the response from the part of the emerging international road lobby.

---

35 On the Dawes Plan, see Steiner, *The lights*, 240-248.
37 Fleury, “Une évaluation,” 45-47.
Among the first to respond to Briand’s initiative was Albert Thomas, the inspired Director of the International Labour Organisation associated to the League. In the last years of his life Thomas proved himself to be an “artisan de l’union européenne.”

Thomas’ approach to European unification was quite different from Briand’s, whom he reproached for the improvised character of his initiative:

“M. Briand est un penseur, un rêveur […]. Il n’a pas l’habitude de travailler longuement les documents. Il ne les aime pas. (…) Lui, il prepare ses discours non pas en cherchant dans les livres, non pas en cherchant dans des notes. Il regarde la fumée de sa cigarette qui s’envole, et il rêve à l’idée nouvelle à laquelle il peut s’attacher.”

In contrast, Thomas was a “promoteur inlassable d’actions concrètes.” In a bold attempt to make the abstract concept of European unification more tangible Thomas launched an encompassing plan for European public works as a corollary to Briand’s European Federation. His plan is a textbook example of a socio-technical project that

---


39 Quoted in Guérin, *Albert Thomas*, 90. Translation “Mr. Briand is a thinker, a dreamer (…). He does not have the habit to work long on documents. He does not like them. (…) He prepares his discourses not by searching in books, not by looking through his notes. He looks at the ascending smoke of his cigarette, and he dreams of a new idea to which he can attach himself.”

40 Guérin, *Albert Thomas*, 89. Translation “indelatigable driving force of concrete actions.”
sought to combine the construction of large-scale infrastructures with European integration and European society building, while also tackling the economic troubles of the epoch. At the same time it aimed at achieving durable peace on the continent. International cooperation of a practical kind was deemed an adequate means to this end.\footnote{Ingrid Heckmann-Strohkark, “Der Traum von einer europäischen Gemeinschaft: Die internationale Autobahnkongresse 1931 und 1932,” in Die schweizer Autobahn, ed. Martin Heller and Andreas Volk (Zürich: Museum für Gestaltung, 1999), 34.} It is hard to underestimate the boldness of Thomas’ initiative, which was in part possible due to ILO’s relatively independent position within the League’s framework. League of Nations secretary-general Drummond judged that he would have surely been made to resign if he himself had made similar proposals.\footnote{James Barros, Office without power: Secretary-general Sir Eric Drummond, 1919-1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 22.}

The plan for European public works is indicative for the course of ILO in this period of time. Under Thomas’ directorship the organization moved away from dealing only with issues strictly related to labor, like working conditions, towards broader...
societal issues such as the unification of Europe. The proposal for European public works was instrumental to achieve such an outcome and could be fruitfully embedded in ILO’s fight against unemployment, which ranked high on ILO’s agenda throughout the 1930s. Thomas explained that

“en intéressant tous les pays d’Europe à des buts d’intérêt européen, ils développent cet esprit de collaboration, cet esprit européen, qui est le but de la Commission d’étude pour l’Union européenne.”

Thomas had been interested in the ideas of European unity since at least December 1925. He acknowledged that it would be premature to wish for the realization of European public works in the short term, but nevertheless opined that work on this grand scheme should start immediately. Contrary to what one might expect, combating unemployment and promoting the ailing European economy were not pivotal for ILO’s Director, who viewed them as a beneficial side effect. In the long run the plan did intend to create favorable conditions for international labor migration, but above all the key driving force was his conviction that future prosperity and peace on the continent depended on the willingness of European states to give up parts of their sovereignty and cooperate. The resulting transnational infrastructures would create mutual dependence, give rise to solidarity and ultimately stimulate a European spirit among Europe’s citizens. Indeed, the huge construction effort was just the kind of project that would push countries into cooperation,

“Le travail en commun, pour l’utilité commune, rompra le sortilège de l’universelle défiance.”

43 B.W. Schaper, Albert Thomas: Trente ans de réformisme social (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1959), 323. Translation “while motivating all European countries for goals of European interest, they develop that spirit of cooperation, that European spirit, that the Commission of Enquiry for European Union aims at.”
44 Ibid., 320. Schaper’s judgment is based on a letter Thomas wrote to the French diplomat Berthelot, in which he declared his intention to join the politics of the United States of Europe.
45 Guérin, Albert Thomas, 77, 89.
46 “S’il y a le respect constant des souverainetés nationales, il n’y a pas de Société des Nations possible, il n’y a pas d’Organisation internationale possible,” AT to unknown, n.d., CAT file 6A.6, ILO; Guérin, Albert Thomas, 91. Translation “If there is the constant respect for national sovereignties, no League of Nations is possible, no international Organization is possible.” International labor migration had been on the ILO agenda since the early 1920s, see ILO, The International Labour Organisation: The first decade (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), 185ff.
48 Thomas, Politique, 87. Translation “Common labor for common use will break the spell of universal distrust.”
Thomas prepared a first sketch of the European public works in mid-April 1931. It included inland waterways, electricity lines and railways, but its first element was a large international network of roads linking “les grandes routes européennes, souvent éloignées les unes des autres, par quelques routes principales, dorsales, longitudinales et transversales.”

Thomas' motorway scheme covered the arteries Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam, Paris-Vienna-Athens, Paris-Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow, some transalpine connections and a motorway from the Balkans to the Baltic. The proposal turned Paris into a central node in the network, in line with its central position noted in chapter two. But where the Balkans were still beyond Europe of the motorist prior to the First World War, now Thomas’ conception of Europe clearly included both its Western and Eastern half. Indeed Thomas particularly paid attention to how his ideas could be realized in Eastern Europe and actively tried to establish contacts with prominent personalities in the East.

The pan-European flavor of the proposal should be understood in the context of Thomas’ admiration for the work of Francis Delaisi. His Les deux Europes described Europe’s division in a ‘Europe A’ and a ‘Europe B,’ the former consisting of the wealthy and industrialized countries in the ‘West,’ the latter made up of the mainly agricultural countries of the East. The prosperity of the continent as a whole ultimately depended on the connection of Europe’s two halves through cooperation and trade; it was an economic necessity. Large-scale infrastructures providing a physical link formed a necessary condition to achieve any of these aims.

Albert Thomas’ bold vision gave rise to two different strands of responses. On the one hand there was Francis Delaisi himself, who elaborated some ideas for the infrastructure development in Eastern Europe. Along the same lines the Committee of Enquiry on Questions relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment (see Figure 3.1, right side), a spin-off of Thomas’ ideas, pon-

49 Schaper, Albert Thomas, 323. The railway part did not so much concern the physical network building but devoted most attention to automatic coupling, which would result in much safer working conditions in the railway sector.
51 Thomas to Fuss and Maurette, 10 November 1931, cAT file 11A.1.1, ILO.
52 Delaisi, Les deux, particularly chapter one. Earlier Delaisi had made clear that the actual fault line between ‘East’ and ‘West’ was slightly more capricious than the categories implied. Doing justice to the differential levels of development, it followed the trajectory Stockholm-Danzig-Krakau-Budapest-Florence-Barcelona-Bilbao and from there continued through the Irish Sea, crossed the Scandinavian Highlands and ended again in the Swedish capital, Francis Delaisi, “Europäische Wirtschaftsunion,” Zeitschrift Pan-Europa 4, no. 8 (1928): 14; Delaisi, Les deux, 21.
53 On Delaisi’s economic thinking, see Théry, Construire, 53-57. Mr. Aebi, Swiss member of OIAR, translated this solidarity into the credo “Un pour tous, tous pour un,” “Procès-verbal des travaux du IIème Congrès International des Autoroutes,” 18-19, file D600.1000.294.2, ILO.
dered on a series of public works projects concentrated in Eastern European countries. A very different type of response came from the emerging road lobby interested in the construction of a costly automobile-only road network crisscrossing the continent. The two sets of responses projected two different visions of Europe, which will become clear in the next two sub-sections.

*The Plan Delaisi and the Public Works Committee*

The East-West division of the continent had been a central thread running through the work of Francis Delaisi from the mid-1920s onwards. During the crisis years his work started to focus on ways to overcome the crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. Delaisi was deeply involved in the European movement. He was thus in a good position to launch a plan of his own as a corollary to Thomas’ project. He chose to do so in the *Comité Fédéral de Cooperation Européenne*.54

Roads formed the cornerstone of the so-called *Plan Delaisi*. Delaisi considered Eastern Europe a region devoid of adequate infrastructure. What it needed was roads to connect to markets, especially in Western European countries. The key to development in Eastern Europe was agriculture. Therefore the distribution of agricultural products was crucial.55 The inadequacy of transport infrastructures meant Eastern European products were more expensive than they ought to be. Delaisi contrasted the situation of a poor Romanian peasant with that of a wealthy Canadian farmer. Why were the latter’s products on the London market cheaper than those of the former? The answer lay in the unequal infrastructural endowment of both countries. In Romania poor infrastructure connections led to staggering transport costs for getting Romanian agricultural products to Western Europe. The much better connections across the Atlantic and the resulting low transport costs gave Canadian farmers a competitive edge over their poorer Eastern European peers.56

The roads Delaisi proposed were not high capacity motorways connecting distant places. Such motorways would only duplicate existing railway connections and thus constitute a waste of money, putting the economic feasibility of the en-

---


55 There were also attempts in the 1930s to increase agricultural cooperation across Central and Eastern Europe in which the League was also involved, see Gilbert Noël, “La Bulgarie et le projet de communauté agricole de l’Europe Centrale dans les années 1930,” *Études Balkaniques* 2-3 (2001), 89-107. See also Patricia Clavin, *The Great Depression in Europe, 1929-1939* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 100-105.

deavor in doubt. In Delaisi's view Eastern Europeans needed vicinal roads to connect their village to other villages and to entrepots from where their products could reach the world beyond by railway and canal. Table 3.1 shows that the lion's share of the Plan Delaisi consisted of gravel roads. The entrepots themselves should be equipped with devices such as elevators, necessary to guarantee swift delivery. The resulting drop in transport costs and hence in prices of agricultural products would increase demand for Eastern European products. This would then lead to a growth in purchasing power for the peasants, who would in return demand more industrial products from Western Europe. Thus a single European market would become a reality to the benefit of all.

Motorized vehicles could enhance the effects sketched above. Delaisi noted the important role automobiles had played in North America, where they had further decreased the prices of agricultural products. In fact Delaisi's plan bore considerable resemblance to the American program of “getting the farmer out of the mud,” the ambition to provide all farms with adequate connections to the national transport system in order to be able to sell their produce on a national market. An idea of the French automobile manufacturer André Citroën had inspired Delaisi. At a congress of automobile manufacturers in New York Citroën had proposed that in the seven most motorized countries all cars older than seven years should be bought by an international exporting society to distribute them for free in the world's remaining 107 countries, while maintaining the status quo in the seven most motorized countries. In return the states involved would suppress custom rights for the cars they received and award the exporting society a monopoly on car sales. The exporting society would also take care of the construction of an international road network in these 107 countries to enable their citizens to actually use their cars. As the plan tightly linked the sale of automobiles with a public

---

Table 3.1 – Roads in the Plan Delaisi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road type</th>
<th>Length (km)</th>
<th>Cost/km (FF)</th>
<th>Total cost (billion FF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macadam</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel</td>
<td>359,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

57 Francis Delaisi, Les grands travaux publics – Plan de financement [1933], 7, CAT file 68.7.1.1, ILO; Francis Delaisi, “Le développement des routes,” ILO.
works policy, Thomas tried to get Citroën involved in his grand scheme, but because Henry Ford blocked Citroën’s plan nothing came of it.\footnote{Thomas to Citroën, 27 October 1931; Thomas to Citroën, 9 December 1931, CAT file 11B.13, ILO. On this episode, see also Patrick Fridenson, “L’idéologie des grands constructeurs dans l’entre-deux-guerres,” \textit{Le Mouvement Social} 81 (Octobre-Décembre 1972): 61. In passing Citroën’s initiative probably also aimed at reducing sales of second hand cars in the more motorized countries.}

In the meantime Thomas’ ideas were also taken up elsewhere. The initiative received ample attention in the press.\footnote{ILO collected press clippings with reactions to the initiative, see CAT file 6B.7.1, ILO.} Many newspapers simply noted and described the initiative, others were more elaborate. \textit{Le Peuple} placed emphasis on the importance of the road part of the project. It indicated that roads were essential for all other economic sectors, while emphasizing the need to improve existing roads rather than building motorways.\footnote{H. Cordier, “Pour conjurer la crise de chômage: Les travaux publics nationaux et internationaux,” \textit{Le Peuple} (27 November 1931), copy in CAT file 6B.7.1, ILO.} \textit{Le Travail} interpreted Thomas’ plan as an effort to coordinate the different national plans. By building interconnections between emerging national motorways networks the plan would create a nervous system for the desired European unity. At the same time the prevalent political situation did not provide much hope for its realization and it was likely that nationalism would poison the negotiations before something real could be achieved.\footnote{“La réorganisation de l’Europe: Un programme de grands travaux publics européens,” \textit{Le Travail} (28 April 1931); for a similar reaction in Austria, see “Internationale öffentliche Arbeiten in Oesterreich? Das Programm des Internationalen Arbeitsamtes,” \textit{Arbeiter-Zeitung} (28 August 1931), CAT file 6B.7.1, ILO.}

The interpretation of the latter journal – coordination of national plans – was also the direction in which the European public works headed. Thomas’ visions did not meet with instant applause, not even at the International Labour Office. Thomas wrote

“J’ai essayé de lancer une idée pour laquelle j’ai été très fraîchement accueilli au Conseil d’administration du Bureau international de Travail: l’idée de travaux publics internationaux: super-réseau électrique, réseau ferroviaire européen, etc... Tout cela, m’a-t-on aussitôt objecté, ce sont des rêves. J’ai dit ‘Faisons mûrir l’idée. Encourageons les recherches; soutenons les initiatives.’ M. Lambert-Ribot a conseillé d’envisager les travaux publics pays par pays.”\footnote{Thomas, \textit{Politique}, 86. Translation “I have tried to launch an idea for which I have been coldly received at the administrative Council of the International Labour Office: the idea of international public works: electric super-network, European railway network, etc. They directly objected that those were all dreams. I have said: ‘Let’s leave the idea to ripen. Let’s encourage research, let’s support the initiatives.’ M. Lambert-Ribot has advised to consider the public works country by country.”}

In line with the latter advice the initial plan was watered down considerably, to the regret of Albert Thomas. Nevertheless he was more interested in action than po-
itical squabbles. The most obvious partner to work with was the Sub-Committee on Road Traffic, the League’s specialized organ for dealing with anything relating to roads. However the Committee’s secretary, Johan Romein, had proven to be unenthusiastic about the plans for a European motorway network. He agreed that it had become technically possible to construct such a network, but was skeptical about its realization and the presumed need for it. First, he thought that there was not a lack of possibilities for transport and communication, but rather a lack of goods and people to be transported. In other words: the existing network and other transport networks could easily satisfy current demand. Second, custom barriers hindered the international operation of a network. Third, Romein thought that certain technological developments would result in structurally lower levels of transport demand. For example, he predicted the growth of the electricity network would diminish the demand for the transport of combustibles. Hence, before the network would be built, it was crucial to assure that there would be sufficient demand for it, and it was necessary to lower barriers for the international operation of the network.64

Instead of working through the Road Committee, the CEEU created a Committee of Enquiry on Questions relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment (hereafter: Public Works Committee) as part of the Communications and Transit Committee. Its members were drawn from the ranks of the League of Nations, the CEEU itself and ILO, each of them providing one third of total membership. Interested governments could submit the projects they had in mind to the Public Works Committee. Thomas sent around a questionnaire to thirty European countries to make an inventory of national plans. Twenty countries responded, some of them elaborately, others without providing much detail.65

It became apparent that where Central and Eastern countries responded enthusiastically to Thomas’ initiative,66 Western European countries were much less willing to submit projects to the Public Works Committee studying the issue, sometimes to the dismay of their own citizens. A Swedish journal reported undignified “Sweden preferred to display her interest in a new Europe by proposing nothing at all!” A Belgian journal qualified the attitude of its government as “childish.”67 Despite such reactions, it is not difficult to understand the differences in reaction. Apart from the relative dearth of infrastructures in the Eastern half of

64 J.L. to Fuss, 5 February 1931, CAT file 6B.7.1, ILO.
65 Thomas, Politique, 86.
66 Evans to Keynes, 9 February 1932, CAT file 11A.3.5, ILO; Francis Delaisi, “Rapport sur le financement d’un programme de grands travaux publics européens,” 4/6 July 1932, 1, CAT file 6B.7.1.1, ILO.
67 Note for the Director, 23 October 1931; “L’initiative prise en Belgique paraît puérile à côté de ce qu’ont réalisé d’autres pays,” Peuples Brusselles (14 September 1933), CAT file 6B.7.1, ILO.
the continent, it also depended to a larger extent on external sources of finance to realize the works.

The dearth of project proposals did not imply the committee accepted just any project. The governments of Greece and Turkey submitted plans to the Committee but they were not included in the list of projects until the respective governments would provide further information allowing a clearer assessment of the projects’ feasibility. Neither did the Committee approve a bridge and accompanying railway link to connect Bulgaria and Romania, despite the fact that it was the only cross-border project the Public Works Committee ever considered.68

Eventually a list of projects was prepared and submitted to the 1933 Monetary and Economic Conference in London in order to discuss the ways in which they might be realized (see Table 3.2). The League organized this conference in roughly the same way as the earlier 1927 conference in Geneva.69 The list of projects submitted by the Committee of Enquiry clearly had a bias to the east. The Committee’s selection of these projects was based on their expected contribution to a reduction of unemployment, to productivity, and the international interest they represented. The combined estimated expenditure for the submitted road projects was 571.1 million Swiss francs (CHF), or 35.5% of the estimated total. Yet in the priority ranking the Committee established on the basis of expected profitability, all road projects were labeled as “indirectly remunerative.”70

Among other things these figures corroborate the earlier suggested relationship between the willingness to submit projects and the degree to which a country was dependent on international flows of capital to finance the works. In the West most countries could by and large finance the public works from their own resources.71 They probably preferred not to have the League interfere with their decisions on infrastructure investment. In the East, by contrast, realization of the plans ultimately depended on international finance. Thomas paid a lot of attention to

71 Delaisi, "Rapport sur le financement," 4/6 July 1932, 1. Probably they also preferred not to bind themselves in international agreements to retain their independence of activity in the field of public works, without political interference from outside. It underlines Steiner’s characterization of the 1929-1933 years as “the triumph of economic nationalism,” Steiner, The ligths, 635ff.
arranging the huge amount of money needed.\textsuperscript{72} It resulted in a set of bold propositions to arrange sufficient financial means for carrying out the public works. Most plans tried to ease international financial flows by using fallow capital for investment in infrastructures.

The plan of Henri Clerc forms a representative example that illustrates the mechanisms involved. His proposal aimed to provide the necessary means for immediate execution of the first part of the program of large-scale public works, which the plan qualified as “absolutely necessary.” The basic idea was to free gold from central banks holding stocks far in excess of the minimum amounts required. This was particularly the case in France, Switzerland and the Netherlands, which together could provide as much as two billion, 600 million and 400 million Swiss francs respectively. Hence a total of three billion in gold was available that could be put at the disposal of the Bank of International Settlements. This amount of gold would allow the issuance of

\textsuperscript{72} Thomas to Chavenon, n.d., CAT file 6B.7.4.2, ILO.
six billion in bank notes, to be used for the purchase of materials and the payment of wages.\textsuperscript{73}

Irrespective of the question whether such financial underpinnings were feasible to begin with, the Economic Conference of London in 1933 scattered all hope for financing the European public works internationally. Walter Runciman, head of the British delegation at the 1933 Conference, stated that Britain would lend no money for this type of grandiose project. It was for each country to decide which measures it wanted to take in the fight against unemployment. The British government had come to the conclusion that the construction of large-scale infrastructures was an inefficient means to combat idleness. In the early 1930s Britain had invested 100 million pound sterling in infrastructures, but this had resulted in the direct employment of only 2,000 people per million pounds, with another 2,000 people being employed indirectly. It was simply too costly a method.\textsuperscript{74}

According to F.P. Walters the conference ended in almost complete failure in general.\textsuperscript{75} But Geneva institutions were not the only ones to take up Thomas’ initiative: road builders too were quick to respond and organized two European motorway congresses in the early 1930s to discuss a collection of far-fetching grand designs for European motorway networks that form “an almost forgotten aspect of the history of highway construction (...), which can be described as a dream of a European Community.”\textsuperscript{76} The next section discusses these European dreams in more detail.

**European motorway networks**

Motorways were conceived as inherently international in character and, as such, fitted perfectly in Thomas’ plan.\textsuperscript{77} Just like Thomas had linked up to Briand’s initiative, organizations with an interest in infrastructure building tried to link up to

\textsuperscript{73} Evans to Clerc, n.d., CAT file 11A.3.5, ILO. The Bank of International Settlements was founded in 1930 in Basel, Switzerland, as an international organization to foster cooperation among central banks.

\textsuperscript{74} “La conférence de Londres et les grands travaux internationaux,” Temps (August 1933), CAT file 6B.7.2.1, ILO.


\textsuperscript{76} Heckmann-Strohkark, “Der Traum,” 32. Original “ein fast vergessener Aspekt der Geschichte des Autobahnbaus in Europa (...), der sich als Traum von einer europäischen Gemeinschaft umschreiben lässt.” Apart from the cited contribution, Lando Bortolotti has written an earlier, quite chaotic article on the subject, Lando Bortolotti, “I congressi autostradali internazionali del 1931 e 1932 e le prime proposte di un sistema autostradale europeo,” Storia Urbana 75 (1996): 5-26. Both Heckmann-Strohkark and Bortolotti mention the connection to the broader discussion on European public works, but they do not further investigate it. More importantly neither contribution unpacks the notion of ‘Europe’ as embodied in the plans. For a discussion of these conferences in the broader context of the Interbellum and in relation to prior and later initiatives, see Gijs Mom, “Roads without rails: European highway-network building and the desire for long-range motorized mobility,” Technology and Culture 46, no. 4 (2005): 754-763.

\textsuperscript{77} Heckmann-Strohkark, “Der Traum,” 32.
Roads to Europe – Albert Thomas’ European public works, 1929-1937

Thomas’ European public works. This becomes particularly clear from the reactions from those trying to promote the construction of automobile-only roads. The reaction of HAFRABA, the German association planning the construction of a road from Hamburg through Frankfurt to Basel, was typical in this respect. As soon as he had heard of the initiative, HAFRABA director Willy Hof contacted Thomas to inform him about his association’s project.78 Road-builders and planners from France, Italy and Switzerland also tried to get involved in Thomas’ plan, which provided them with a unique opportunity to get their ideas on the international and national political agenda. Thomas had an interest in their participation because of their broad experience and also because it provided legitimization for his public works. There was hence a strong mutual interest to cooperate.

Yet despite his public display of enthusiasm for the motorway plans, Thomas’ position was in fact rather ambivalent. He valued the fact that his plan was being taken up, but at the same time he was weary that his broader plan would be hijacked by road interests and that only the road parts would be realized. This was problematic, because Thomas considered the roads a lesser component of the overall plan. In his private correspondence Thomas declared that he was not a “fanatique des autoroutes,” holding that the construction of a European power grid was much more important. The main reason why he had kept roads in his program was due to the enthusiasm he had encountered among road builders.79

The ILO therefore put its premises at the disposal of the organizers of the first Congrès International des Autoroutes, despite the fact that ILO did not organize the Congress. The event took place in Geneva from 31 August to 2 September 1931 and Thomas took an active part in its deliberations. He publicly lauded the motorway plans, not in the least because they were bound to create jobs on a massive scale. In a “magisterial speech” he insisted that roads should not become objects of luxury but should be economically viable, and that they should form a coherent whole responding to Europe’s immediate economic needs.80

The Congress resulted in the creation of the Bureau International des Autoroutes (BIAR).81 In the philosophy of its creators, BIAR should become the focal point for the plans for European motorways, study them in-depth to investigate their rentability and technical details, and coordinate the different initiatives as they were being launched. Lucien Lainé, a prominent French industrialist and director of

78 Hof to Thomas, 8 May 1931, CAT file 11A.1.1, ILO.
79 Thomas to Chavenon, n.d., CAT file 6B.7.4.2, ILO; Guérin, Albert Thomas, 91, 95.
80 The qualification “discours magistral” appears as such in the report of the First Congress, see “Procès-verbal du 1er Congrès International des Autoroutes,” 1, file D600.1000.294.2, ILO.
81 Mom writes Albert Thomas was the founder of the organization, but ILO sources do not corroborate this statement, Mom, “Roads,” 762.
the Compagnie des Autoroutes, became acting director of BIAR. Piero Puricelli, the famous Italian road-builder who was seen as “the father of the motorway” in Europe, became its honorary president.82

Puricelli had constructed the first motorways in Europe in Northern Italy, after being inspired on a trip to the United States in the early 1920s.83 A 84 km autostrada from Milan to the Lombardian lakes for mainly tourist purposes was the first tangible result. This was part of the so-called Pedemontana, the motorway that Puricelli envisioned to run between Turin and Fiume. The Pedemontana was designed to have branch lines to the northern lakes to serve tourist traffic and from Milan to Genoa, continuing to Ventimigilia and France to serve commercial traffic.84

Puricelli had also been involved in extending the HAFRABA-project for a motorway from Hamburg to Basle towards Genoa in Italy. Preparations for constructing a road along that route had started in 1926. Puricelli was member of the board (Vorstandsmitglied) of HAFRABA and his works in Italy had been a key inspiration for its initiators Hermann Uhlfelder and Willy Hof.85 In 1927 Puricelli organized a conference in Zurich together with HAFRABA that inspired the Canton of Basel-Stadt to organize a meeting resulting in the Association pour la Route Automobile Allant de Bâle à la Frontière Italienne, later transformed into the Association des Autoroutes Suisses.86 Thus the gap existing between the constructed Italian autostrade on the one hand and the HAFRABA project on the other was closed.

But Puricelli’s ambitions were much broader. His ultimate goal was to go continental. In a conversation with professor Otzen in 1925, he had stated that the real aim of his plans was a European road network.87 At the end of a booklet published on the occasion of the opening of the autostrada from Milan to Bergamo a map showed the contours of the future European motorway network as expected by Puricelli (see Figure 3.3). The core of the future network connected Germany,
France, Italy and the Alps, with smaller isolated networks in Belgium and Spain and single motorways from Düsseldorf to Cologne and London to Brighton.

The map is one of the earliest sketches of its kind. The straight lines drawn on Europe’s map testified of their highly fictitious character, further underlined by the fact that the map did not take political factors into consideration. The feeble position of Paris in the network as a mere passage point along an axis from Southern Germany to the Channel did clearly not increase the project’s feasibility, while Puricelli endowed Milan with very good connections. The map underlined north-

---

88 An alternative explanation might be that the straight line was an ideal for the early autostrade in Italy, providing the shortest possible connections and maximum time reduction. Aerial photographs show the Milano-Laghi followed an almost perfect straight line, a characteristic that was displayed too by the roads featuring in advertisements of Italian road-building companies on the pages of the road journal *Le Strade*. Soon thereafter the ideal of the straight line gave way to the conviction it created boredom for drivers and induced speeding behavior. The *Autobahn* adopted a different viewpoint, considering driving as a way to consume landscapes, see Thomas Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama: Verkehrswege und Landschaftsveränderung in Deutschland von 1930 bis 1990* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002), particularly 142-158.
south connections over those running east-west, which is in part explained by Puricelli’s interest in connecting to Southern Italy. It was also almost prophetic in portraying the gap between the motorways in Central France and those in Spain.

The second Congrès International des Autoroutes in Milan (18-20 April 1932) came together less than eight months after the closure of the first congress. The program included an excursion to a construction site on the Milan-Turin motorway in the afternoon of the second day, allowing participants to admire the marvels of Italian road construction.89 Though absent at the congress itself, Thomas was again among its protagonists. His speech, read by his personal assistant Joucla-Pelous, underlined that motorways would give new life to international communications. They would also provide Europe with a new way of cooperation and serve as an immediate remedy against the unemployment crisis. Thomas’ final remarks must surely have flattered his audience.


The BIAR had in the meantime changed into the Office International des Autoroutes (OIAR).91 The change left its mark on the internal structure of the organization, the number of committees going up from three to five (see Figure 3.4). The final resolution of the congress charged OIAR to take all measures necessary to ensure the swift realization of motorways on an international level following the Italian example. The next conference was to be held in Frankfurt am Main, the seat of HAHRABA, and its director Willy Hof enthusiastically invited the congress-goers to continue their work in Germany.92

The technical commission chaired by Puricelli drew up a preliminary plan for continental motorways and proposed it at the first conference (see Figure 3.5). Like Puricelli’s earlier sketch it had a strong bias towards north-western Europe. The sketch formed the input for 14,000 km five-year plan (1933-1937) adopted at the second Congress. Although Thomas was mentioned as its author, Puricelli was

89 “Procès-Verbal IIème Congrès,” 13.
90 Discours de M. Albert Thomas, 12, CAT file 6B.7.2.1. Translation “You are the technicians. You are the experts. You are capable, through your calculations and your experiences, to put into practice projects that are too vague, too general. But, I beg you, study them, and realize them. Collaborate as much as you can for the immense task of reconstruction and organization that imposes itself on our generation.”
91 Bortolotti, “I congressi,” 19, states the ‘new’ organization had become necessary due to the fact that Mme. Del Becque, one of the founding members of BIAR, treated it as her personal property. The sources for this claim remain unclear, however.
92 “Procès-verbal IIème Congrès,” 13, 15.
most likely its true creator. The 14,000 km of this proposal formed the prioritized stretches of a larger plan of more than 36,000 km of motorways presented at the 1932 Congress (see Figure 3.6). Puricelli expounded his grandiose scheme again in a 1934 issue of the German magazine Die Straße. Now that motorways were being planned in several nations, notably Germany and Italy, the time had come for the next phase, “la conquista del Continente”!

The plan’s total cost of 4.2 billion Swiss francs was to be financed from a fuel tax. The financial underpinning assumed the terrains necessary for construction would be supplied free from cost by the states concerned and that no tolls would be collected from road users. The overall plan consisted of smaller segments to

93 A letter dated 7 April 1932, CAT file 11.D.1, ILO, mentions a 15,000 km plan Puricelli submitted to Thomas, to be financed by an international tax on fuel and on new cars sold. Except for the 1,000 km differential, it is otherwise identical to the Plan Thomas.
94 For this hypothesis, see Bortolotti, “I congressi,” 23, in particular note 47. Bortolotti stated the prioritized stretches more or less covered the network proposal presented at the first conference, which seems plausible on the basis of the network lengths in Table 3.4. The French journal L’Illustration published the plan adopted at the second Congrès International des Autoroutes, which Kurt Kaftan identified as a 1932 proposal by Puricelli, Kurt Kaftan, Der Kampf um die Autobahnen: Geschichte und Entwicklung des Autobahngedankens in Deutschland von 1907-1935 unter Berücksichtigung ähnlicher Pläne und Bestrebungen im übrigen Europa (Berlin: Wigankow, 1955), 188, figure 5; “La question des autoroutes,” L’Illustration 91, no. 4727 (1933): 19, figure 39.
95 The article was reproduced in the Italian journal Le Strade as Piero Puricelli, “La rete autostradale europea,” Le Strade 16, no. 12 (December 1934): 732-733. Translation “the conquest of the continent.” The article gives a total network length of 37,176 km, but the listed country lengths add up to a total of 36,576 km, see Table 3.5.
96 Tolls were levied on the Italian motorways, and later also introduced elsewhere. However, Switzerland had already blocked the introduction of direct road taxes, making it impossible to introduce them as a general means to finance the European network, Heckmann-Strohark, “Der Traum,” 38. The difference of opinion with regard to how to finance road construction related to different conceptions of whether roads should be built by the state, or by private initiative, for example when the state was unable or unwilling to serve as its promoter, a subject beyond the scope of this thesis.
be constructed step by step. The economic viability and financial feasibility of each individual project should be calculated and secured before actual construction would take place. Economic merit was to be determined on the basis of nine characteristics of the road project in question, which all related to its profitability. The most important of these was an accurate estimate of future traffic flows. The plan also linked up to the combat against unemployment. The initiators projected that a kind of multiplier effect would take place after construction and the project would employ many thousands of workers (see Table 3.3). In this type of exaggerated Keynesian economics, motorway construction was thus presented as the ultimate cure for the economic ills of the time. Once the motor would be running, there was no way of stopping it.

97 BIAR, “Programme d’activité de la Commission Financière et Juridique,” October 1931, 11, 25-45, CAT file 11A.1.1, ILO. The program underlined that, with regard to future traffic “des calculs trop optimistes pourraient nous conduire à des illusions néfastes.” Translation “overly optimistic calculations could lead us to disastrous illusions.”
The concrete projects for specific parts of the network involved several OIAR executives. In northern Italy Puricelli planned the extension of existing motorways to form an axis from Turin to Fiume, the Pedemontana already mentioned above. In Switzerland, Dr. Marcel Nyffeler worked on a project to connect Bern to Thun in the central plain of the country. In the north of France Lucien Lainé proposed to link Paris to Lille and Calais. Although these projects paled next to the overarching European master plan, the press and those involved in the project continuously invoked their international hence European character. Nyffeler stated that “tous les promoteurs de l’autostrade Bern-Thoune sont pénétrés du caractère international de cette entreprise.”

Similarly the Paris-Lille/Calais motorways proposed by Edmond Pigelet and supported by Lainé were called route flamande and route britannique respectively, leaving no doubt about their ambition to connect beyond France. Pigelet and Lainé also portrayed the project as a first step towards

---

98 “Speech Nyfeller, Premier Congrès International des Autoroutes,” 8, CAT file 11A.1.1, ILO. Translation “all supporters of the motorway Bern-Thun are convinced of the international character of that undertaking.” See also Marcel Nyffeler, Die Autobahn Bern-Thun: Ein Beitrag zur Abklärung des Autobahnenproblems in der Schweiz (n.d.), copy in CAT file 11A.1.1, ILO.
a European network, while strengthening the position of France as a point of departure for European and Trans-African motorways. 99

The European network proposals thus offered localized projects an opportunity to Europeanize their outlook. 'Europe' was mobilized as a selling point for the projects, both for the public and for governments. Furthermore, working on small individual projects and the European superstructure at the same time could prevent later difficulties in coordinating individual parts of the network and the whole. Officials in several countries who were not OIAR insiders attempted to exploit the fear that their region would become a gap in the future network if plans on how to fit in were not developed. A typical example is Leopold Örley's plea for motorway construction in Austria. The strongest image he deployed to convince his audience that Austria needed to start planning motorways was an illustration of motorways that encircled and completely bypassed Austria. 100 The fact that the first plans for a European network lay on the table created a subtle pressure to start thinking about international motorways everywhere on the continent.

With regard to the overall structure of the network, the first and foremost consideration behind the plan was to reconcile national networks and the international super-network. The point of departure for the international network was to connect all important cities, industrial centers and tourist destinations. 101 The result was a network unequally distributed over the continent, some countries being more connected than others and several not being connected at all (see Table 3.4). The fact


that the network would be paid from a petrol tax disqualified countries with limited automobile densities. The recommended tax level was two cents CHF per liter of fuel. Under this condition it would take Bulgaria a thousand years to cover the costs of its motorways. Alternatively it had to raise the tax to such astronomical levels that it would discourage their use. Hence Bulgaria was excluded from the network of prioritized stretches – along with other countries in similar situations. Neither would motorways be constructed in mountainous regions, where existing roads provided sufficient capacity to cross the Alps. In this region there would be no other traffic to hinder the vehicles, as was the case in more populated areas of the continent. Further notable exclusions were the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, which were left out “à cause des conditions topographiques.”

The expected revenue from the fuel tax and topographic conditions were not the only factors taken into account. Table 3.4 shows the considerable differences between the theoretical right of countries based on the expected revenue from the proposed fuel tax and the actual length of the roads in the network design. Basically the difference entailed the redistribution of the high French figure to all other countries except for Belgium and the Netherlands. Nyffeler did not, however, specify the precise rationale for the lengths in the scheme. It is unlikely, however, that it was a coincidence that France and Germany were allotted equal shares. At the time France was the most motorized country in Europe. Germany had a lower auto-

---

Table 3.4 - Length of the European motorway network in various countries, 1932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Theoretical right (km)</th>
<th>Necessary length (km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6,419</td>
<td>3,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3,458</td>
<td>3,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>1,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Marcel Nyffeler, "Règles," [1932], 34. The theoretical right in the first column was calculated on the basis of expected revenue from the proposed fuel tax.

---

102 Nyffeler, "Règles," [1932], 15-18. Neither was the USSR included in the proposals. Translation “due to topographic reasons.”
mobile density, but a larger territory. An educated guess would be that Nyffeler *cum suis* chose parity between the key adversaries as a guideline to prevent mutual feelings of jealousy.

Only months after the Second Congress OIAR vanished just as soon as it had appeared. Several factors help explaining its somewhat misty demise.\footnote{Bortolotti, “I congressi,” 24; Heckmann-Strohkark, “Der Traum,” 44, especially note 54; Kurt Kaftan, *Europa braucht Autobahnen! Vorschläge und Entwürfe zur Erbauung nationaler Autobahnnetze als Ausgangspunkte zur Errichtung eines europäischen Autobahnnetzes* (Berlin: Reichssportverlag, 1936), 14-15; Kaftan, *Der Kampf*, 187.} Sustaining the precarious financial plans to construct infrastructures became increasingly difficult, as was clearly demonstrated by events at the 1933 London Conference. Thomas’ sudden death on 7 May 1932 took away a key proponent and source of inspiration, deprived ILO from a strategy in the field of infrastructures and paralyzed OIAR by the end of the year. On 6 December 1932 Joucla-Pelous sent a letter to OIAR official Empeyta stating

> “les idées lancées par le Congrès de Milan ont fait leur chemin, les esprits sont préparés, on parle des autoroutes un peu partout, le moment serait mal choisi pour abandonner la partie et renoncer à l’effort.”\footnote{Joucla-Pelous to Empeyta, 6 December 1932, file D600.1000.294.1, ILO. Translation “the ideas launched at the Milan Congress have made their way, the minds have been prepared, they talk a little of motorways everywhere, it would be a bad moment to abandon the party and renounce the effort.”}

It was to no avail. OIAR had already disappeared from the scene and the third European motorway congress to be held in Frankfurt am Main never took place. The worsening political climate probably also played a major part in OIAR’s retreat into oblivion. After all, the organization assembled entrepreneurs from countries that were taking increasingly antagonistic positions with the rise to power of Hitler in Germany. Durable cooperation among them had become more difficult to sustain. The end of OIAR did not put an end to the dreams of a European network though. The projections of future continental motorized mobility lingered on, involving some familiar faces, yet drastically changing their appearance.

Former OIAR president Lucien Lainé presented an overarching European artery plan at the European Economic Congress organised by the *Union Douanière Européenne* in Brussels, 15-17 May 1935. The plan consisted of four motorway axes: the *Eurafricaine* (Hamburg-Amsterdam-Paris-Bordeaux-Madrid-Morocco-Africa), the *Transeuropéenne* (Channel Tunnel-Brussels-Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow-Siberia), the *Baltique-Adriatique* (Hamburg-Brindisi), and the *Eurasiatique* from London to Istanbul, continuing into Asia. The latter motorway was clearly inspired by the London-Istanbul road project, an initiative championed by the British
Automobile Association (AA). The initiative was immediately endorsed by the AIT and an International Conference on the London-Istanbul Trans-European Highway took place from 10-14 September 1935 in Budapest, the same city that would also host the permanent organization overseeing the project. The League’s Secretariat noted that

“it is noteworthy that this is the first occasion in Europe, and probably in the world, on which a Governmental body has been set up to supervise the creation of a land highway crossing a large number of countries and conceived on international lines.”

The plan displayed clear colonial ambitions in extending to Calcutta in India and Cape Town in Southern Africa, an addition to the original axis adopted at the general assembly of the AIT in Copenhagen in 1932. Yet despite the similarities, there were also differences between Lainé’s scheme and the London-to-Istanbul plan. The latter did not envision a motorway along the entire route, while Lainé proposed high-quality motorways. In addition, the Autoroute Eurasiatique, though running from London to Istanbul and continuing to India, followed a slightly different route. It bypassed Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Hungary and instead went from Calais via Paris to Geneva through the Po Plain, rejoining the AA proposed route in Yugoslavia.

In a similar vein former OIAR honorary president Puricelli continued to work on his European ambitions. Undeterred by the changed atmosphere in international relations, he simply adapted to Adolph Hitler’s rise to power, installed as Reichskanzler on 30 January 1933. Germany withdrew from the League of Nations, making this forum useless for the discussion of plans involving the country. At the same time Hitler enthusiastically embraced the Autobahn as a propaganda tool, building on the work done by HAFRABA. It provided Puricelli’s firm with a grandiose new business opportunity to continue promoting European long-distance mobility. Puricelli brought a 1,440 km motorway from Rome to Berlin to the attend-

---


106 Axel Valsinger visited this meeting for the League of Nations as an observateur-rapporteur, folder “Route Londres-Istanboul – Conférence organisée par le gouvernement hongrois 10-14 Septembre 1935,” registry file 9F, box R-4304, LoN.

107 “Note by the Secretariat on inaugural meeting of the Permanent International Committee for the London-Istanbul Highway, Budapest, October 27th-28th, 1937,” LoN doc. ser. CCT/682, registry file 9F, box R-4304, LoN.

tion of Fritz Todt, the Inspector General for German Roadways (Generalinspektor für das deutsche Straßenwesen) from July 1933 onwards, and also met Hitler personally on two occasions. His plan was a bold attempt to materialize the Italian-German Axis (see Figure 3.7).109

Fritz Todt also ordered Kurt Kaftan to design what would become the most extravagant network plan yet put on paper. Its astounding length of almost 65,000 km motorways has not even been achieved today. Kaftan unambiguously made national networks the building blocks of his European network, as becomes clear from the sub-title of his plan, translated as “proposals and designs for the construction of a national motorway network as the points of departure for the creation of a European motorway network.”110 The German Autobahnen formed the unmistakable core of the European motorways and formed the basis of the de-

110 Kaftan, Europa.
sign.\textsuperscript{111} As a great symbol of German prowess it deserved to become the crown of the future system:

“In some years Germany with its finished Reichsautobahnen will possess a transport network that at that point will have no equal in any other country, and on which once the important task will be conferred to be the heart of a large European Autobahn network.”\textsuperscript{112}

Kaftan specified four considerations for his plan. First, the Autobahnen should continue their natural course into the territory of adjacent states. The Autobahnen were thus inserted in the so-called Drang nach Osten, the set of expansionist dreams particularly aimed at the countries to the east of Germany. Second, the design of each national network should take economic interests and geographic characteristics into account. Third, for Germany the national network needed additions in several places. Fourth, the trunk lines of the European network would be the outcome of the sum of the resulting national networks.\textsuperscript{113} According to Kaftan, there was no time to waste.

“The goal of a European Autobahn network is on everybody's mind. Only the road to its accomplishment looks difficult. But we should have the courage to follow that road, especially because automobile traffic is bound to have increased so much in the next couple of years that the construction of European Autobahnen will directly become a necessity. Technology, created by humans, today is stronger than humans. If we do not adapt ourselves to its needs on time, than it will soon force us to deal suddenly and perhaps unprepared with what we could have done more slowly and precisely when timely acknowledged. Get to work, Europe!”\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{111} “Ausgangspunkt für meine Pläne ist (...) allein das deutsche Reichsautobahnnetz gewesen.” Ibid., 15. Translation “The point of departure for my plans has (...) only been the German Reichsautobahn network.”

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 12. Original “Deutschland wird mit seinen fertigen Reichsautobahnen in einigen Jahren ein Verkehrsnetz besitzen, dem bis dahin kein anderes Land etwas Gleichartiges zur Seite stellen kann, und dem einmal die wichtige Aufgabe zufallen wird, Mittelpunkt eines großen europäischen Autobahnnetzes zu sein.”

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 15.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid. 20. Original “Das Ziel eines europäischen Autobahnnetzes schwebt allen vor. Nur der Weg zu seiner Verwirklichung erscheint schwer. Aber man muß den Mut haben, diesen Weg zu gehen, besonders dann, wenn der Automobilverkehr in wenigen Jahren sich so gesteigert haben wird, daß der Bau europäischer Autobahnen direkt zur Notwendigkeit wird. Die Technik, die der Mensch geboren hat, ist heute stärker als der Mensch. Stellen wir uns nicht rechtzeitig auf ihre Bedürfnisse ein, dann wird sie uns zu einem nahen Zeitpunkt zwingen, plötzlich und vielleicht unvorbereitet etwas in Angriff zu nehmen, was wir bei rechtzeitiger Erkenntnis langsamer und sorgfältiger hätten tun können. An die Arbeit, Europa!”
The motorways would have two carriageways of 7.50 meter each. A separating strip filled with small trees or a fence would prevent dazzling from the opposite carriageway. Kaftan deemed a single 9 m three-lane carriageway sufficient in areas of limited domestic traffic, reminiscent of the original Italian autostrade. Kaftan underlined the importance of a homogeneous system of signs and signals and proclaimed driving on the right as the universal principle. The financial foundation of the plan remained rather vague, but it was clear that fighting unemployment was a prime consideration. In part, the motorways could also be paid from savings on maintenance for ordinary roads, once the motorways were built.

It was this latter element that made all motorway plans go against the grain of mainstream thinking about road construction in the Interbellum. Even in road circles not all were convinced of the need to construct expensive motorways and the governments in France and the United Kingdom were squarely opposed. And, while the motorways did not materialize, the ordinary road network was significantly upgraded during the Interbellum serving increasing numbers of cars in circulation. Except in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, elsewhere in Europe motorways only came in the wake of post-war mass motorization.

Conclusion

Several interesting European political projects aiming at European unification, solidarity and the creation of interdependence as a way to prevent war saw the light of day in the Interbellum. Simultaneously, several plans for European road and motorway networks were developed. This chapter has presented some occasions where contemporaries brought these two elements together. Geneva would become the centre stage where this happened. There the dreams of European unification reached their apex in Briand’s September 1929 speech for the League’s Assembly. The machinery set up in response to Briand’s bold initiative provided a setting for casting European unification in the shape of infrastructure networks. Two ambitious five-year plans were the outcome of that opportunity as far as road

115 The Italian autostrada did not always have a double carriageway, but it did become a characteristic of the German Autobahn. Kurt Möser traces the separation of carriageways back to the voie sacrée (see chapter two), ‘Die Lebensader Verduns’ having two roadbeds to increase its capacity. See Kurt Möser, “World War I and the creation of desire for automobiles in Germany,” in Getting and spending: European and American consumer societies in the twentieth century, ed. Susan Strasser et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 216-217.
116 Kaftan, Europa, 16-18.
118 Mom, “Roads.”
networks were concerned. They formed two different conceptions in terms of the kind of roads they proposed to build and in terms of the Europe they projected.

The first response came from within the League machinery itself. Through the CEEU sub-committees on unemployment and on credit, Albert Thomas launched his plan for European super-infrastructures. Francis Delaisi's proposal for road building in Eastern Europe was the result with regard to the European road network. It focused on tertiary and quartary road connections in Eastern Europe enabling better integration of rural areas that could gain access to Western European markets for their agricultural production through better transport links. Delaisi's plan resembled Thomas' ideal of interconnection of infrastructures. The agricultural roads in the East formed part of an intermodal transport vision for the creation of all-European connections. Furthermore, establishing and strengthening the internal ties of the European economy was at the heart of the plan, an aspect also crucial for Thomas – unsurprisingly as Delaisi had been a key inspiration source. Delaisi's vision did not take off though. Instead the Public Works committee watered down Thomas' grand continental vision to a nation-by-nation approach, each country proposing its own projects for different infrastructures. Roads accounted for roughly one third of the projects. The Committee remained devoid of the necessary coordinating powers and nothing resembling Thomas' original ideal could be brought about. The Public Works Committee soon became an information point for collecting and distributing information on public works projects in the various member states.

The second response came from a very different source. A coalition of road builders joined forces in the BIAR and OIAR to collectively respond to Thomas' initiative. Their pro-integration rhetoric and belief in centralized control can probably be interpreted as an echo of Thomas' discourse and the broader Europeanist discourse. The projects for Europe simply provided them with an opportunity to build motorways. But what remained in concrete terms after scratching the lofty ideals from the surface was a small set of individual projects tied together by the more encompassing network proposals. None of them crossed national borders except for a motorway stretch connecting Geneva to nearby Evian in France. These motorway dreams deviated from Thomas' ideal in another respect: they only concerned motorways. Their realization would be very expensive. It was debatable at best whether the low levels of automobile ownership justified the huge expenditure.

Human blood circulation has become a cliché metaphor for road networks. When we compare the two sets of responses to Thomas' initiative from that angle, it becomes clear that Delaisi's ancillary roads resembled capillaries, while the grandiose long-distance high-speed motorways were more akin to arteries. Delaisi
sought the road type that would best serve the overall European economy. He, therefore, regarded transport infrastructures as a whole and took care not to build roads ahead of demand, in line with mainstream thinking on road building at the time, and even going beyond that by proposing vicinal instead of regional roads. The small-scale roads would deeply penetrate the poor agricultural fringes of the continent. The genuine idealism of the road builders is more difficult to pinpoint, simply because Puricelli cum suis and their companies would greatly benefit from the huge building frenzy resulting from the proposals. In their scheme there was no place for other infrastructures, which they considered as competitors.

The various plans thus projected very different Europes. The interest of Thomas or Delaisi to establish good connections between the European core and the periphery, in combination with ample attention to penetrate into the periphery and bring it up to Western European standards contrasted sharply with the motorway plans that initially did not reach out to Eastern Europe at all, although this is less true for the successors of the original Plan Thomas. Where Eastern Europe made up less than 7% of Thomas’ prioritized stretches, it constituted 34% of Puricelli’s 1934 plan, and almost 38% of Kaftan’s scheme, clearly showing an increasing Drang nach Osten (see Table 3.5). The three schemes followed a logic of scale increase, each roughly doubling the length of its predecessor and including more countries.119 In any case, in areas devoid of well-developed secondary road networks motorways could only connect the centers of the periphery, and not their hinterland.

Moreover, the motorway plans met with resistance from within road building circles too. Among PIARC members many preferred the reconstruction of the ordinary road system over the construction of expensive motorways for which there was little need – if there was a need at all. As soon as the opportunity was gone, the coalition fell apart. Only some key individuals, like Lainé or Puricelli, continued their European proposals, but no longer in close cooperation. In addition the colonial and Nazi alternatives they proposed focused more on good connections for Paris, Rome and Berlin and shifted attention away from the European ideal.

The two plans also displayed important similarities, notwithstanding their differences. Both were five-year plans, inspired by the first Soviet five-year plan

---

119 Eastern Europe here includes Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Yugoslavia. On German transport connections to South-eastern Europe, see Robert-Werner Krugmann, Großdeutschland - Südosteuropa: Entwicklung und Zukunftsmöglichkeiten der Wirtschaftsbeziehungen (Breslau, 1939); Otto Blum, Der Süden verkehrspolitisch betrachtet (Berlin: Springer, 1941).
that had started just before the two proposals were launched.\textsuperscript{120} Just like the Soviet five-year plan intended to spurt the industrial development of the Soviet Union to the benefit of its overall economy, its motorway counterparts intended to trigger the European economy through the construction of road infrastructure. It was projected that once the first stretches of road were opened, they would lower transport costs and unemployment rates dramatically. Both would result in increased purchasing power that would further help reactivate the European economy. Once set in motion, fantastic extrapolations naively projected that the process would simply continue.

\textsuperscript{120} It should be noted that when the first Soviet five-year plan was formulated, it drew little attention. The Great Depression suddenly turned it into a subject of wide-spread public interest and imitation, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, \textit{Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933-1939} (New York: Picador, 2006), 140-141.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{European motorway network proposals compared, 1930s}
\begin{tabular}{lccc}
\hline
Country & Thomas 1931-1932 & Puricelli 1934 & Kaftan 1936 \\
\hline
Albania & - & 200 & 360 \\
Austria & 910 & 1,280 & 1,500 \\
Belgium & 630 & 335 & 1,350 \\
Bulgaria & - & 350 & 1,785 \\
Czecho-slovakia & 410 & 1,170 & 2,280 \\
Denmark & - & - & 825 \\
Estonia & - & - & 435 \\
Finland & - & - & 285 \\
France & 3,950 & 7,365 & 8,790 \\
Germany & 3,950 & 6,415 & 9,700 \\
Greece & - & 825 & 1,350 \\
Hungary & 180 & 1,175 & 1,125 \\
Italy & 1,770 & 5,061 & 5,100 \\
Latvia & - & - & 840 \\
Lithuania & - & - & 1,020 \\
Netherlands & 300 & 120 & 1,050 \\
Norway & - & - & 135 \\
Poland & 130 & 2,965 & 4,575 \\
Portugal & - & 250 & 600 \\
Romania & - & 2,865 & 2,430 \\
Russia & - & - & 4,785 \\
Spain & 1,090 & 2,650 & 6,165 \\
Sweden & - & - & 1,575 \\
Switzerland & 445 & 625 & 885 \\
Turkey & - & 325 & 225 \\
United Kingdom & - & - & 2,812 \\
Yugoslavia & 235 & 2,600 & 3,015 \\
\hline
Total & 14,000 & 36,576 & 64,997 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\footnotesize{Source: Marcel Nyffeler, "Règles," [1932], 34 (column 1); Puricelli, "La rete," 733 (column 2); Kaftan, Europa, 15-16 (column 3).}
A crucial omission was that neither plan paid sufficient attention to the myriad of hindrances with regard to the cross-border use of networks. It explains why the ILO failed to involve the Road Committee of the League of Nations, despite serious attempts to do so. The League preferred working on a regime for the cross-border operation of existing road networks to wasting time and money on expensive motorways. In a way the stance of the Road Committee can be considered a third response to the European Public Works of Albert Thomas besides the two treated in this chapter. The skepticism from the part of the Road Committee can be understood in the light of the continuous, tough negotiations on all aspects of international motorized (particularly commercial) road traffic. In the course of the Interbellum the Committee discussed issues ranging from brake requirements to road signals, from traffic lights to vehicle tax regimes. The next chapter tries to get a grasp of the activities of this most important player, the Road Committee, with regard to European motorized mobility.
Chapter 4
Driving Europe – The League of Nations Road Committee, 1921-1938

Making the European tourist


*L’Européen* (1929)

Driving a car made motorists transcend their national identity. Motorized traveling created a certain fraternity among motorists. Such fraternal bonds fitted perfectly with the vision of *L’Européen*, from the pages of which the quote above has been taken. *L’Européen* was one of several well-read publications pertaining to the blossoming Europeanist press of the Interbellum. The Parisian weekly review presented its public with an essentially economic view of Europe interlarded with political analyses and cultural articles.² The weekly was tailored towards an elite public of whom a high percentage owned or was closely familiar with the automobile.³

In 1930 the journal started dedicating its final page to "L’Européen et le tourisme."⁴ According to the magazine tourists should not simply indulge in a pleasurable leisure activity: through thorough prior preparation and planning they should turn their trip into a methodical intellectual endeavor. The *Union pour le Tourisme Européen*, an organization filling large chunks of the page, suggested the right itineraries for *l’Européen*’s readership.⁵ It initiated organized tours such

---

⁴ Its title notwithstanding, this section of the journal clearly displayed the French roots of the journal by devoting most of its coverage and holiday suggestions to France.
as the *Voyage d'Art et d'Amitié en Europe* to Italy, which it portrayed as the cradle of European civilization.\(^6\) In short, being a good European started with exploring the continent as a tourist, or:

“le tourisme européen (...) c'est un sport mis au service d'une idée, c'est l'union des Européens par le tourisme”\(^7\)

What better way to explore Europe than touring the continent by car? Certainly for *L’Européen*’s elite readership car ownership was much more common than among most sections of society. The popularity of automobile tourism increased manifold in the course of the Interbellum. In Switzerland, a popular destination country, the entry of touring automobiles quintupled from 7,284 in 1922 to 36,380 in 1925, jumping to 167,463 in 1930.\(^8\) Although the 1930s in general were a period of economic crisis, there are indications that overall automobile traffic continued to grow. Dutch traffic censuses from 1935 and 1938 provide data on cars’ nationality signs at twenty-eight counting posts equally divided between the borders with Belgium and Germany (see Table 4.1). The data suggest growth in the number of Belgians visiting the Netherlands by car in the 1930s, while those from Germany diminished slightly, probably due to Nazi authorities’ measures to deter traveling abroad.\(^9\) This picture has been confirmed in recent research by Gijs Mom and Ruud Filarks, who show that international car travel enquiries at the Dutch touring club ANWB peaked in 1938 when almost 55,000 motorists consulted the ANWB on a foreign trip they were planning, particularly to neighboring countries.\(^10\)

On the practicalities of international travel tourists could consult a range of information sources. Among the more European in character was *Europa Touring*, a travelers’ guidebook proposed by the *Touring Club Suisse* at an AIT meeting in June 1927. The plan met with wide acclaim and *Europa Touring* was subsequently published under the patronage of the AIT. Between its first appearance in May 1928 and August 1929 the trilingual (French-German-English) publication went through five editions, apparently filling a need.\(^11\)


\(^7\) Guido Patricolo, “Le tourisme Européen,” *L’Européen* 3, no. 134 (1931): 8. Translation “European tourism (...) is a sport at the service of an idea, which is the harmony of Europeans through tourism.” By September 1932 the tourism page had vanished.

\(^8\) Christoph M. Merki, *Der holprige Siegeszug des Automobils, 1895-1930: Zur Motorisierung des Strassenverkehrs in Frankreich, Deutschland und der Schweiz* (Wien: Böhlau, 2002), 190, table 18. Between 1907 and 1913 the numbers increased from 4,996 to 9,609.


\(^10\) Enquiries for international travel by car overtook those for international train travel around 1930. The enquiries significantly dipped in 1939 and were reduced to an insignificant 2,000 by 1940, Gijs Mom and Ruud Filarski, *De mobiliteitsexplosie* (Zutphen: Walburg, 2008).

The enigmatic Office de la Nationalité Européenne sought to forge a direct link between automobile tourism and the construction of a European identity. The Office, or organizations it had authorized, issued a blue card equal to its identity document or green card. The two cards differed in that the green card was akin to a passport, while the blue card was simultaneously intended as a laissez-passer for any vehicle its holder might use. Like the documents issued by automobile or touring clubs the blue card provided benefits such as discounts to its holder. The blue card was firmly linked to the European idea by requiring holders' adherence to the Proclamation of the European Federal Nationality.

This remarkable grass-roots response to Briand's initiative and the work of the CEEU suggests a rising number of organizations started to take motorists' interests aboard and to critically assess the rules applying to cross-border traffic in Europe. The “Europe by motor” formula was on offer at any travel agency by the second half of the 1920s. Increasing numbers of tourists were convinced that they could reach all corners of the continent effortlessly only by road. In comparison to the motorized mass tourism after the Second World War these Interbellum motorists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NL</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>2,904</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>2,873</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>4,455</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>4,878</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rijkswaterstaat (1936), Verkeerswaarnemingen van den Rijkswaterstaat 1935, ’s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, staat 43, ‘Aan de landsgrenzen waargenomen motorrijtuigenverkeer (aantallen per dag van 14 uur’ [Translation "Motorized vehicle traffic observed at the national borders (numbers per day of 14 hours)"]’, 50; Rijkswaterstaat (1939), Driejaarlijksche verkeerswaarnemingen van den Rijkswaterstaat, ’s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, staat 8, ‘Aan de landsgrenzen waargenomen motorrijtuigenverkeer gedurende 18 uur op Vrijdag 19 Augustus’ [Translation "Motorized vehicle traffic observed at the national borders during 18 hours on Friday 19 August"], 26. NL = the Netherlands, B = Belgium, D = Germany, these letters correspond with the international nationality signs.

12 Authorised organisations included the League of Nations, the ILO, the ICC and the Union Douanière Européenne, but none of the automobile or touring clubs, Hentsch to Moll, 20 June 1933, non-catalogued box “Nationalité Européenne,” LoN.
14 Such was at least the assessment of the Italian representative on communications and transit, Mellini to Stiévenard, 5 January 1927, registry file 14, box R-1132, LoN.
formed just a trickle. The flows were nevertheless significant because, as Merki has convincingly shown, large numbers were not necessary to trigger international negotiations on cross-border road traffic.\footnote{15}

As being a tourist was considered an essential part of being a good European, several Europeanist organizations sought to facilitate tourist flows by attempting to demolish barriers that hindered them. Chapter two discusses some of the initiatives from before the First World War. After the war the League of Nations sought to become the forum for dealing with such issues. In general, the League was cautious not to duplicate the work of existing organizations, leaving aside subjects for which it deemed an adequate institutional setting existed. Examples included (radio)telegraphy and postal services, covered by the International Telegraphy Union (ITU) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) respectively.\footnote{16}

The League's decision with regard to road traffic was strikingly different, despite the earlier work of the AIAcR and the AIT. The qualitative difference setting ITU or UPU apart from the road-related organizations was that the former were intergovernmental in character, while the latter were non-governmental. The League's incursions into matters concerning international road traffic initially met with fierce resistance from the part of existing road INGOs. By the end of the Interbellum they had changed their position and had started to lobby the League instead. From a foe the League became an opportunity to further their interests. Thus the League's Committee on Road Traffic became the institutional core for discussing European mobility on the road during the Interbellum. This chapter highlights the process by which the Committee absorbed most prior work done in this field and how existing INGOs became committed to its work.

The Committee on Road Traffic dealt with very diverse road-related issues to different degrees of success. A simple measure for investigating the differentiated picture of its achievements is to look at the international legal instruments on European road network operation. The Committee devoted most of its time to investigating and drafting such legal instruments. The Committee's ability to agree and the speed with which it was able to do so provided indicators for the ripeness of topics for international regulation, while the number of countries adhering to the legal instruments once ready formed a measure of their success.

As we have seen earlier, the universal scope of the League did not preclude shaping distinctly European mobility on the road. Like the explicitly European road projects presented in the previous chapter, proposed regulations for inter-

\footnote{15 Christoph M. Merki, "L'internationalisation du trafiic routier avant 1914," \textit{Relations Internationales} 95 (1998): 329-348.}
national road traffic could also have a European flavor. In many ways the 1931 European Conference on Road Traffic formed the apotheosis of the League’s work with regard to motorized traffic on the road. As the name of the Conference indicated the resulting set of measures restricted their application to Europe, at least in an initial stage. As in the previous chapter the question remains which countries agreed on what. To phrase it differently, the Europe covered by triptychs might be different from the geographic reach of a European set of road signs. This chapter seeks to bring some of this geographic variety to the fore.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The second section discusses how the League took up the issue of road transport. It basically deals with the results of the Barcelona conference, resulting in the creation of the institutional setting for dealing with European communications and transit during the Interbellum. The third section shows how within this setting road traffic was taken up and gave occasion to the formation of a Road Committee. The subsequent sections investigate the work on road traffic in detail, especially in relation to two conferences in Paris (1926) and Geneva (1931). The final section discusses the general legacy of the Interbellum in this respect.

**Barcelona and the Committee on Communications and Transit**

Transport problems were an important issue after the First World War and they formed an obvious theme for one of the first large conferences organized under auspices of the League of Nations. Between 10 March and 20 April 1921 representatives from forty-four states, of which twenty-six were European, assembled in Barcelona for the First General conference on communications and transit. During the war restrictive measures had been introduced that curtailed international travel. Not all of these were lifted after the war had ended. Passports are the prime example. Before the First World War only Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Turkey obliged entering foreigners and exiting citizens to obtain a passport. After the war the obligation to carry a passport on international journeys had become ubiquitous. The Barcelona Conference constituted a major effort to attenuate the impact of this and other barriers to cross-border transport that remained after the war.


18 For an account of the conference and the texts of the conventions and recommendations, see LoN, *Barcelona Conference: Introduction and complete text of conventions and recommendations adopted* (Lausanne: Payot, 1921).
The deliberations on the Convention and Statute on Freedom of Transit took up most of the time in Barcelona. Traffic was considered to be in transit when it crossed the territory of a state that was neither its origin nor its destination. Transshipment, warehousing, breaking bulk, or a change in the mode of transport did in principle not affect the transit character of the traffic. After the First World War transit traffic had become more vulnerable through the multiplication of borders and hence potential barriers. To guarantee minimal interruption for such traffic the Convention and Statute instituted special protection, in particular for land-locked states that depended on transit for their imports and exports from seaports.19

The Secretariat prepared a report on the transport situation in 1921 to get a thorough overview of European transport facilities after the war.20 The League sent out a questionnaire to its members. A total of thirty-seven states responded, of which twenty-five were European. The main focus of the report was the war’s impact on railways, but it also discussed other modes. With regard to motorized traffic the report noted that the prime obstacle to the development of motor transport had been the high cost of vehicles. During the war motor transport had undergone a marked increase, which would have been impossible without the large number of cheap vehicles that had become available on the market during the war. The disorganization in the railway sector gave an additional boost to road transport.21

Maggiorino Ferraris, a member of the Italian Senate and vice-president of the Barcelona Conference, wrote a separate short report appended to the general report. In it he noted the “remarkable (...) progress” in aerial navigation, which remained outside the scope of the Conference. He further distinguished four legacies of the war that in his view constituted a form of material progress. The first three were the impetus to electric railway traction, the use of liquid fuels (both related to the high coal price), and the improvement of inland navigation. The fourth and in his opinion most conspicuous feature was the great increase in motorized transport. He predicted that it appeared “likely to assume exceptional importance for passenger traffic,” especially in less developed countries and colonies.22 The Statute on Freedom of Transit resulting from the Conference nevertheless excluded road

---

19 Article 1 of the Statute on Freedom of Transit defined ‘transit,’ LoN, Barcelona, 9-10. On the multiplication of borders, see Haas to Attolico, 19 December 1921; “Report transportation conditions in Europe,” [1922], 17, Transit Section files, box S-483, LoN.
20 LoN, General transport situation in 1921: Statements submitted by the states which took part in the First General Conference on Communications and Transit held in March-April 1921 with an introduction by Professor Tajani, engineer, Professor of the Royal Polytechnic College, Milan (Geneva: LoN, 1922).
21 Ibid., lxxii-lxxiv.
traffic and only called for facilitating free transit by rail and waterway.\textsuperscript{23} The report of the Provisional Transit and Communications Committee that the Conference had prepared indicated that inclusion of transit by road had been proposed, but rejected because the Committee thought it would create customs difficulties. In addition the report stated road traffic had not yet grown sufficiently to justify immediate inclusion.\textsuperscript{24}

Road traffic was therefore not part of the specialized conventions discussed at the conference. The conference successfully arranged a Convention and Statute on the Regime of Navigable Waterways of International Concern. For the arguably more spiny discussions on rail traffic participants had to content themselves with a set of mutually agreeable Recommendations relative to the International Regime of Railways. Similarly, the conference issued Recommendations relative to Ports subject to an International Regime and a Declaration recognising the Right to a Flag for States Having No Sea-Coast.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite the absence of road traffic in its discussions, Barcelona had at least two important implications for cross-border road traffic regulations in Europe in the long run. First, the Barcelona Conference established freedom of transit as a general principle. The underlying ambition was to eventually apply this principle for all modes of transport.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, at the 1929 conference of the International Chamber of Commerce in Amsterdam Johan Romein, the road traffic specialist of the Transit Section of the League Secretariat, ascribed road traffic’s exclusion to the fact that the tremendous further advance of road traffic had not been foreseen when the Statute on Freedom of Transit was drawn up. By 1929 it was clear to him that the freedom of transit should be extended to motor transport.\textsuperscript{27} The second long-term effect consisted of the framework the conference created for multilateral transport negotiations. Apart from the rules for the organization of general conferences, the conference created an Advisory and Technical Committee on Communications and Transit (CCT) to make arrangements for international communications and transit.\textsuperscript{28} The later Committee on Road Traffic was a subcommittee of the CCT.

\textsuperscript{23} Article 2, Statute on Freedom of Transit, LoN, Barcelona, 40.
\textsuperscript{24} LoN, First General Conference on Freedom of Communications and Transit: Preparatory documents (Geneva: LoN, [1921]), 33. The same holds for transit by air.
\textsuperscript{25} See LoN, Barcelona.
\textsuperscript{26} Marec, L’Organisation, 90.
CCT’s membership fluctuated between fifteen and eighteen in the course of the Interbellum. Council members of the League had permanent representatives in the CCT. Non-European membership fluctuated between a high of seven out of sixteen members at the first sessions and a low of four out of seventeen members at the seventeenth session in 1932.29 In total CCT sponsored twenty-two meetings. At its first session, the CCT created three sub-committees for transport by rail, for transport by water and for general affairs and statistics, but the number grew after the mid-1920s (see Figure 4.1).30

Regular CCT meetings took place annually and spent most time on the preparation of conferences, which the Council of the League had the right to call. Conferences defined the working rhythm in Geneva and typically discussed conventions regulating specific aspects of communications and transit. Participants also formulated resolutions and recommendations calling for specific action and intended to serve as guidelines for member states. After Barcelona three more general conferences on communications and transit took place in Geneva (see Table 4.1). Attempts to organise a fifth conference in the mid-1930s foundered on lack of available funds.31

29 Total membership of the League stood at twenty-four European and twenty-seven non-European members (eighteen from the Americas) when the CCT started its work in 1921. In 1932 both categories stood at twenty-nine (eighteen from the Americas). For a complete overview of the fluctuations in the membership of the League of Nations, see http://www.indiana.edu/~league/nationalmember.htm.

30 CCT, Minutes 1st session (1921), 3-4.

31 Initially the conference was postponed from 1935 to 1936 due to financial difficulties, but in the end it never took place. See Lukač to Dreyfus, n.d., registry file 9A, box R-4275, LoN.
The Secretariat of the League provided staff members to assist the CCT. The Italian professor Bernardo Attolico served as the first director of the Transit Section of the Secretariat, the Frenchman Robert Haas was appointed as CCT’s secretary-general. Sir Arthur Salter, who would become one of the most influential officials working in the service of the League, succeeded Attolico in the early 1920s. In his memoirs Salter characterized this period as “by far the happiest (...) in my life.” He wrote

“I cannot imagine a better personal life than we enjoyed in the early years of the League. We had work which gave full scope for everything we had in us and for a purpose which combined our most ardent hopes and deepest convictions. We were engaged in constructive and successful tasks. The future was mercifully hidden; and we thought that what we were building would endure.”

His words capture the optimistic, constructive spirit in the Palais Wilson, the building in which the Secretariat took up its residence, during what Salter in retrospect called “years of happy illusion,” basically the first decade of the League’s existence. Geneva assembled a group of some of Europe’s ablest men, several of whom had worked arduously during the war to make the inter-allied logistic apparatus work. Given the unusual concentration of talent and dedication a 1935 League report singled out the work on communications and transit and claimed CCT held “one of the most impressive records of all the technical organizations,” most progress again being made in the early years of the League.

Salter simultaneously headed the Transit Section and the Financial Section, the latter consuming most of his time and attention. Robert Haas therefore became the most important individual in the Transit Section. He formally took over

---

34 This becomes apparent from Salter’s memoirs, which devote ample attention to his economic and financial work, but barely mention his directorship of the Transit Section, Salter, Memoirs.
Salter’s directorship by the tenth session in 1927. The small, dedicated staff of the Transit Section played a primordial role in preparing conferences. Comparable in structure to the Economic and Financial Sections, it was the spider in a web of committees. Thus the Section definitely left its mark on the CCT in general. In the Transit Section the Dutch civil engineer Romein served as the secretary of the Road Committee until his death in 1932 at the age of thirty-five. Haas too died in office in 1935, just like his successor the Frenchman Watier in 1937. His position would be filled ad interim for the remainder of the 1930s.

Clavin and Wessels’ recent study of the Economic and Financial Section enhances our understanding of the League’s technical committees, including the CCT. Their otherwise excellent article does not point out the strong involvement of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in the League’s framework, which is essential for grasping the work on communications and transit. These interest groups represented important societal interests, molded public opinion and acted as spokespersons for road users. INGO participation also created friction. Some Committee members and League officials showed disdain towards INGO representatives, a hindrance some INGOs were better able to overcome than others. The ICC commanded very high esteem and Lyman White singles it out as the most influential among its peers in Geneva. According to White the ICC’s participation in the 1927 Economic Conference formed “the high water mark of private collaboration in intergovernmental conferences during the period preceding World War II.” Not unimportantly, the ICC was very active on transport issues.

A second element that needs to be expanded is the participation of non-member states. Clavin and Wessels highlight the important role of the United States in the League’s economic and financial work, despite its non-membership. American officials staffed the Secretariat and INGOs also provided a channel for American influence. American members were very influential in the ICC, making it a medium to communicate American views on mobility. American companies actively

35 CCT, Minutes 10th session (1927), 2.
37 [Haas?] to Drummond, 19 June 1920, Transit Section files, box S-483, LoN. The author of the letter, most likely Robert Haas, wrote to Drummond he had met four Dutch engineers who were willing to join the Transit Section. Romein, despite being young, seemed the best qualified; his studies in Delft had been excellent. Romein was then the secretary in charge of organizing the first Dutch Road Congress.
contributed to this development, as motorization elsewhere in the world created new market opportunities for their products.\textsuperscript{40}

For international financial and economic affairs, Clavin and Wessels’ emphasis on the United States as an influential non-member makes sense. For European transport and communications, the position of Germany as a non-member until 1926 should be underlined.\textsuperscript{41} Given its central position in the European continent, the German state and the League had a mutual interest in German participation. The German government was therefore invited to participate in the CCT’s work. The German government sent A. Seelinger to participate at the fourth meeting in 1923. Although full membership only became a fact at the tenth session in 1927, the CCT thus contributed to German emancipation on the international political scene.\textsuperscript{42}

This brief sketch of the CCT provides the institutional background in which the League of Nations took up issues related to mobility on European roads, after their initial exclusion. Soon after the first road issue was brought to its attention, the CCT created a specialized committee to deal with it. First set up as a temporary committee of enquiry, it became permanent by the mid-1920s and turned into the central forum for European road traffic discussions.\textsuperscript{43} The committee worked arduously to cut red tape in Interbellum European travel, but this proved no easy task.

\textsuperscript{40} In 1922, 229 of 680 delegates (representing ICC member organizations), and 279 of 524 associate members (individuals or firms) were American, see ICC, The organization of the International Chamber of Commerce, brochure 20 (Paris: ICC, 1922), 4. Victoria de Grazia demonstrates American ideals of distribution dominated in the ICC, which disseminated these views elsewhere, Victoria de Grazia, ‘Changing consumption regimes in Europe, 1930-1970: Comparative perspectives on the distribution problem,’ in Getting and spending: European and American consumer societies in the twentieth century, ed. Susan Strasser et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 59-83. See also ICC, American Section, Highways of progress: Motor transportation as a world factor in the development of new standards of social, economic and national life, (Washington D.C.: ICC, American Section, 1927).

\textsuperscript{41} It should be noted that despite overtures from the part of the League, the Soviet Union and the United States remained aloof from the League's communications and transit work, “Confidential memorandum on the relations between the Russian government and the 2nd general conference on communications and transit,” [1923]; Snow to Sweetser, 24 November 1923, Transit Section files, box S-485, LoN.

\textsuperscript{42} CCT, Minutes 4\textsuperscript{th} session (1923), 4; Minutes 10\textsuperscript{th} session (1927), 8. Austria had acceded in December 1920. German participation also attracted criticism, see for example Marin to Haas, 18 April 1925, Transit Section files, box S-486, LoN. Upon entry Germany immediately acquired the status of permanent member of the Council of the League, causing resentment among non-permanent members. Brazil renounced its membership over the issue. For further details, see Georges Scelle, Une crise de la Société des Nations: La réforme du Conseil et l'entrée de l'Allemagne à Genève (Mars-Septembre 1926) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1927).

\textsuperscript{43} Temporary committees were called ‘special committee of enquiry’ in League terminology.
The Sub-Committee on Road Traffic

In March 1922 ILO’s Deputy Director Butler requested the League to consider the introduction of an international driving license for chauffeurs on behalf of the International Transport Workers’ Federation. Thus driving licenses formed the first issue relating to road transport that reached the CCT’s agenda. The issue was discussed extensively at the fifth session in the late summer of 1923. The Secretariat had sought contact with the AIACR. Edmond Chaix, then vice-president of the Automobile-Club de France (ACF), represented AIACR at the meeting. Chaix’ high positions in both the ACF and the Touring Club de France (TCF) made him a key figure in the international road lobby. Chaix underlined that the AIACR, while being sensitive to issues of national sovereignty, also thought travelers should not be subjected to radically different regulations when traveling abroad. The international road certificate of the 1909 Convention could only be used for a single journey and applied simultaneously to an automobile, its owner, and his mechanic (if any). Drivers hence needed to request a new certificate every time they switched vehicle. Chaix pleaded to split the single document in a separate vehicle certificate and a license for the driver, and to extend their validity beyond a single journey.

The committee subsequently broadened the issue and recommended to organize a conference to revise the 1909 Convention on Motor Traffic entirely. CCT specified the minimum end result should be the split-up of the existing international road certificate. Thereupon it appointed a Committee of Enquiry for Road Traffic to deal with the revision. Dr. A. Stiévenard, inspector of the Belgian Railways, became its chair and F. Amunátegui and Chaix joined him as members representing Chile and the ACF/AIACR respectively. The remaining vacant positions were

44  CCT, Minutes 2nd session (1922), annex 12, “Butler to Secretary-General League of Nations, 18 March 1922,” 45; Minutes 5th session (1923). Butler refers to the International Transport Workers’ Federation as the International Federation of Transport Workers, a term that was more often employed in the documentation of the League.
45  It took almost nine months before AIACR responded to Haas’ attempts to establish contact. Chaix claimed he had not received Haas’ letters, but perhaps we should interpret this as an early indication of the cold relations between AIACR and the League of Nations shortly thereafter. See Haas to Fédération des Automobile-Clubs (sic), 23 June 1922; Haas to president Fédération des Automobile-Clubs, 15 January 1923; Haas to Charguéraud, 17 February 1923; Chaix to Charguéraud, 9 March 1923, registry file 14, box R-1130, LoN.
46  At the ACF the jurist headed the Commission de Tourisme (1905-1925) to deal with governmental traffic policies. After that he became vice-president (1924-1927) and president (1927-1938) of the TCF. For Chaix’s large portfolio of functions for a range of other organizations, see Merki, Die holprige, 204-205, particularly note 19.
47  Technically the sixth session turned the recommendation of the fifth session into a resolution, an instrument with a higher status. CCT, Minutes 6th session (1924), 3. See also Road Committee, Minutes 1st session (1924), annex 1.
filled by O. Bilfeldt (Denmark), Ernest Delaquis (Switzerland), P.C. Franklin (UK), Enrico Mellini (Italy), F. Pflug (Germany) and J.F. Schönfeld (the Netherlands). Secretariat official Johan Romein served as the sub-committee’s secretary, as indicated above.48

The special committee status indicated that the Committee was conceived to be temporary, but its members opined that the continued growth of international motorized traffic made it necessary for the Committee to continue its work in order to adapt international traffic regulations to a continuously and rapidly changing environment. The Committee unanimously endorsed a resolution to this effect proposed by Delaquis and Mellini.49 The latter two proposed further consolidation just prior to the 1926 conference in Paris, being convinced that it was desirable to have a central body for collecting documentation and coordinating the work of other organizations dealing with similar issues to avoid the duplication of work. They recommended

“the Special Committee should be instructed to continue, after the Paris Conference of April 1926, its investigations into the unification of all regulations concerning road traffic, taking special account of the practice in the country in which motor traffic has been developed to the greatest extent, in view of the unification of the system of traffic in all countries in Europe.”50

The last phrase hints that when it came to motorized road traffic the sphere of action was de facto confined to Europe, despite the universal outlook of the League. Committee membership strongly reflected this European bias (see Figure 4.2). Membership was overwhelmingly European throughout the Interbellum. The League’s permanent members except Japan were continuously represented on the sub-committee, although France was originally not represented by a government delegate, but by Edmond Chaix. Argentinean and Chilean representatives gave the non-European world a voice, but by the early 1930s both Amunátegui and Enciso had left the Committee. Small transit countries like the Benelux or the Alpine countries were strongly represented on the Committee too, but Eastern

48 CCT, Minutes 6th session (1924), 5, sub 4; the nationalities of the members who had not yet been appointed were defined at the sixth session, see ibid., 6; Minutes 7th session (1924), 3.
49 Road Committee, Minutes 2nd session (1925), 12, annex.
50 Road Committee, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 12. Romein indicated he did not see the difference with the resolution adopted at the second session. Franklin, Pflug, Schönfeld and Stiévenard did not support the proposition, because they thought the “Committee would inevitably become more and more important in the future” and it had already acquired “a certain amount of international authority,” see Road Committee, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 12-13.
Europe remained largely absent unlike in the CCT. Another notable feature of membership was the gradually emerging pattern of continuous representation for blocks of European states. Limited membership made rotation necessary, but in this way the representation of countries with presumably similar interests would be ensured. For example, when the Dane Bilfeldt left the Committee, the Swede Valsinger joined and the Fin Nordberg became chair, thus ensuring representation for Scandinavia on the Committee. The Scandinavian representative often defended positions on behalf of all Nordic countries.\footnote{See, for example, Rasmussen to Bilfeldt, 22 January 1925, registry file 14, box R-1130, LoN. The same mechanism occurred at the level of CCT. It was also the guiding principle applied to the designation of the rotating members of the Council of the League, see Jan Hostie, The Organisation for Communications and Transit of the League of Nations, typewritten manuscript (1945), 44.}

Another remarkable element in Figure 4.2 is the visible break in the composition of the Road Committee between the sessions in 1930 and 1933. It probably relates to a coincidence of several factors. First, Germany renounced its membership in 1933, meaning Pflug had to leave the Committee. Second, the chair and secretary of the first hour vanished. Romein died in March 1932 and Stiévenard had held his position for an exceptionally long term, a factor explained by the broad support he enjoyed among Committee members.\footnote{In late 1927 Stiévenard was pressurized to step down as chair. At the Committee’s fourth Session Schönfeld made a speech in which he insisted Stiévenard’s continued chairmanship was a \textit{conditio sine qua non}. His statement enjoyed broad support in the Committee, see François to Haas 28 October 1927; Schönfeld to Romein, 6 December 1927; Stiévenard to Romein, 6 December 1927; Reinhardt to Romein, 8 December 1927; Franklin to Romein, 9 December 1927, Transit Section files, box S-488, LoN.}

Third, the entire League was virtually put on hold during 1932 when all attention focused on disarmament.\footnote{On the Disarmament Conference, see Mark Mazower, Dark continent: Europe’s twentieth century (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 66-67.} Thereafter dramatic budget cuts made it necessary to downsize the League, hence the reduction of the Committee in 1933.\footnote{Hostie, The Organisation, 225, 238.}

The Committee sponsored twelve multi-day meetings in total. In the 1920s they took place at different locations, in the 1930s they typically gathered in Geneva (see Table 4.2). Organizing a meeting had a certain prestige. It allowed putting together a social program to display road building achievements. The Secretariat or the Committee sometimes chose the location strategically. The 1924 and 1926 meetings took place in Paris to allow maximum cooperation with the French authorities in preparing the revision of the 1909 Convention.\footnote{Stiévenard to Haas, 20 March 1925, registry file 14, box R-1130, LoN.} The 1927 meeting took place in Vienna, despite the fact that Dutch representative Schönfeld had offered to organize it in The Hague. In his reply to the offer secretary Romein pointed out no meetings resorting under CCT had taken place in Vienna yet.
Driving Europe – The League of Nations Road Committee, 1921-1937

from the correspondence it becomes clear that additionally the Secretariat hoped to trigger a debate on the direction of traffic in a country that in part still drove on the left, running counter to what was common in most of Europe.\footnote{In the days of early automobilism driving on the left side could be found in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy (in specific urban settings only), Portugal, and Sweden, see Merki, "L'internationalisation." All of these countries changed to driving on the right during the Interbellum, except for Sweden where the change was made in 1967. Today only Ireland and the United Kingdom drive on the left in Europe.}

The revision of the 1909 Convention was the only topic of discussion at the first sessions. The Committee treated the 1909 Convention article by article to investigate its spirit and discuss what the Road Committee members wanted to change and retain. It took facilitating international automobile traffic as a point of departure.\footnote{Road Committee, Minutes 1st session (1924), 3.} They drafted a new convention, but as the 1909 Convention had been the result of a conference hosted by the French government, the new conference should also take place in Paris. The French representative Silvain Dreyfus informed the CCT at its eighth session that the French government intended to arrange for the convention's revision.\footnote{CCT, Minutes 8th session (1925), 18.} The next section scrutinizes the all but smooth revision process.
Preparing for Paris: Revising the 1909 Convention, 1926

The 1909 Convention had been concluded at a time when motorized transport was still rare. By the mid-1920s motorization had risen and the Convention was, according to Mellini, “no longer adapted to modern motor-traffic.” Indeed the Special Committee for Road Traffic had been explicitly installed with the aim to draft a new convention. Chaix pointed out that INGOs had already unambiguously declared themselves in favor of a complete revision of the 1909 Convention, in particular to split up the road certificate in two separate parts.\(^59\)

The first session of the Road Committee in October 1924 discussed the content and spirit of the 1909 Convention at length. The main discussion revolved around article 3 on the international road certificate, a document guaranteeing that the vehicle for which it was issued complied with certain minimum conditions making it suitable for use on the public road and that the driver similarly commanded the required minimum ability to drive. The international road certificate hence protected public safety. In practical terms the certificate made new examination of the vehicle at the border unnecessary. The documents were valid for one year after date of issue by public authorities or associations authorized by them. The Committee broadly supported the separation of the document in two parts.\(^60\)

---

\(^{59}\) Road Committee, *Minutes 1st session (1924)*, 2; *Minutes 2nd session (1925)*, 4.

\(^{60}\) Only German representative Pflug originally pleaded against separation, but by the second Session in 1925 he had changed position. Road Committee, *Minutes 1st session (1924)*, 4, 9; *Minutes 2nd session (1925)*, 4. For further details on the 1909 Convention, see chapter two.
Besides the division of the certificate in two parts the discussion mainly addressed the introduction of compulsory automobile insurance against third-party damages. Mellini hesitated, fearing detrimental effects for Italy’s vital tourist trade. Pflug opposed an obligatory insurance by referring to common practice in the United States, where it was at that time only compulsory for taxis and omnibuses, not for private vehicles. He failed to mention that the situation in the United States was about to swing in the opposite direction. Their Belgian colleague Gevaert pointed out that though the tourist sector was certainly important, the protection of human life should equally be a concern to all. Other committee members agreed, called for a thorough examination and adopted a resolution proposed by Franklin that countries where insurance was compulsory had the right to require it from foreign visitors. The Danish arrangement of supplying temporary visitors with an insurance policy upon entry in Denmark inspired the Committee, although the fact that countries not always recognized each other’s insurance companies was problematic.

Traffic signs were a subsidiary issue on the agenda. The 1909 Convention specified four such signs, warning road users for uneven roads, sharp turns, level crossings and dangerous crossroads. The session discussed the benefits and drawbacks of the 1909 system and the alternative used in Scandinavian countries of a single sign for all dangerous traffic situations. The Swedish government had informed other signatories of the 1909 Convention of its intention to establish a red triangle as a unique danger sign. Bilfeldt informed the session that besides the Swedish automobile club, those of Denmark, Finland and Norway too had embraced the red triangle. Mellini coldly received the proposal, remarking it had taken Italy ten years to introduce the 1909 signals. Any change implied considerable costs for replacement and take a similarly long time to implement. The committee decided to retain the four signs, adding to them a fifth featuring a locomotive to indicate

61 Road Committee, Minutes 1st session (1924), 6-8.
62 Massachusetts was the first state to introduce a compulsory automobile insurance against liabilities, see Harry J. Loman, "Compulsory automobile insurance," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences (March 1927): 144-153; see also Harry J. Loman, "Automobile insurance," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences (May 1932): 72-76.
63 E. Gevaert was Director-General of Bridges and Roads at the Ministry of Public Works of Belgium. Though not formally part of the Committee, he assisted at the first part of its first session.
64 Road Committee, Minutes 1st session (1924), 8.
65 Mellini pointed out that no Italian insurance company was recognized in Denmark. Road Committee, Minutes 2nd session (1925), 5.
66 Kungl. Automobil Klubbens, Varningssignaler och Vägvisare, n.d., Transit Section files, box S-493, LoN. The lower part of the sign's red margin was used to insert a speed limit, a weight limit, a warning for the approach of a school etcetera. In addition the signs displayed a small emblem of the Swedish Royal Automobile Club.
The discussion was taken up again at the second session in March 1925. The representative of the International Federation of Professional Motor-car Drivers A. Förstner, who had been absent at the first session, indicated that the 1924 International Drivers Conference had proclaimed that the signs adopted in the 1909 Convention were excellent. To accommodate the different opinions Pflug proposed to add the Scandinavian triangle to the list of international signs, to be used for dangers not covered by the other signs. On behalf of the Nordic countries Bilfeldt wholeheartedly supported the proposal and the amendment was adopted. Undeterred by this discussion, the Scandinavian states proposed the use of the red triangle as a unique danger sign again at a meeting of the Conseil Central de Tourisme International in October 1925, where they walked out when the representatives of other countries refused to accept the proposal.

67 Road Committee, Minutes 1st session (1924), 12. The original article had already opened the door to later modification of or additions to the signs used. The Convention stipulated, “Governments of the Contracting States may agree in common to modify this system of notices.” As advantageous additions to the four-sign system it suggested a sign for indicating a customs house and one ordering a halt, see article 8, 1909 Convention.

68 Road Committee, Minutes 2nd session (1925), 8.

69 Road Committee, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 4; see also annex 2, “Memorandum submitted by the Royal Automobile Club of Sweden to the Swedish Department of Roads and Bridges on the Draft Convention on International Motor Traffic prepared by the Special Committee of the League of Nations.” The Conseil Central de Tourisme International had been founded in 1925 as a cooperative body between the automobile and touring clubs, AIT, 100 Years of Mobility 1898-1998 (Geneva: AIT, 1998), 28.
A more serious threat to the Committee's work was that at its third session it learnt that the French government had proposed its own draft alongside the one by the Committee. The French proposal had been drafted in close cooperation with the Conseil Central de Tourisme presided by Edmond Chaix. AIACR had proposed in October 1925 to add the rules of the road to the 1909 Convention when it would be revised. At the meeting the Dutch and Swiss representatives pointed out that consensus on that issue would be difficult to achieve. In a personal letter to Schönfeldt Romein noted that Chaix, the “almighty president” of the Conseil Central du Tourisme, apparently wanted to be in charge of regulating international traffic and viewed the Road Committee as a second rank organ on that issue.70

The French government promised to circulate both its own and the Committee's draft to participants of the conference, but when the Committee met in early March 1926 Mellini, Delaquis and Reinhardt declared their governments had only received the French proposal on the revision of the 1909 Convention.71 The Committee's draft did not substantially differ from the text of the French draft, the sting was that the latter added the rules of the road to the Convention along the lines proposed by AIACR in 1925.72 Monsieur Noulens, ad hoc replacing Edmond Chaix in the Committee's March 1926 session in Paris, defended the French draft by pointing out that regulation of road traffic was in line with the Committee's recommendation to harmonize laws and regulations to such an extent that the obligation to provide people crossing the border by automobile with a summary of the road traffic regulations in force would become obsolete.73

Yet Noulens failed to convince other Committee members. Delaquis observed that adoption of the French draft would oblige Germany to admit lorries hitherto not allowed on its territory and force road users in the United Kingdom to keep to the right. This seemed to him a bridge too far.74 The general hostility to inclusion of the rules of the road forced the French government to split up its single draft into two separate instruments, both signed on 24 April 1926 in Paris. The International Convention relative to Motor Traffic contained the revised 1909 Convention with all administrative, customs and fiscal rules for cross-border, non-commercial motorized traffic, with the international driving license and the international vehicle

---

70 Schönfeldt to Romein, 11 January 1926, registry file 14, box R-1131, LoN.
71 Road Committee, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 2.
73 Road Committee, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 6; Road Committee, Minutes 1st session (1924), “Recommendation 1.” This obligation was contained in article 9 of the 1909 Convention, corresponding with article 6 in the Committee's draft for a new Convention.
74 Road Committee, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 7.
certificate at its core. The second, the International Convention relating to Road Traffic, contained the rules of the road. It governed all traffic on the public road and did not restrict itself to motorized traffic only.\footnote{Exemplars of the conventions can be found in registry file 14, box R-1131, LoN.}

Animosities between the Committee and CCT on the one hand and the French government supported by the \textit{Conseil Central de Tourisme} on the other thus characterized the preparations for the 1926 conference. Chaix’ all but satisfactory participation in earlier Road Committee gatherings added insult to injury. The relation between the Committee’s work and the preparations of the French government for the revision had been a matter of concern from the start.\footnote{Delaquis was the first to express his fear of duplication of work at the first meeting, see Road Committee, \textit{Minutes 1st session (1924)}, 2; see also \textit{Minutes 2nd session (1925)}, 4.} The Committee had especially arranged its first meeting in November 1924 in Paris to be able to count on active French participation, but at both the first and second sessions Chaix had left on the first day.\footnote{Road Committee, \textit{Minutes 1st session (1924)}, 7; \textit{Minutes 2nd session (1925)}, 4.} CCT secretary-general Haas had by then already written a bitter letter to the French delegate Sylvain Dreyfus in the CCT.

\begin{quote}
"en ma qualité de Français, je n’ai pu manquer d’être peiné des commentaires que j’ai entendu au sujet de l’absence réelle de la France à notre réunion de novembre, absence qui paraissait être en contradiction avec les déclarations politiques du gouvernement français, et je voudrais faire tout au monde pour que cela ne se reproduise pas."
\end{quote}

Due to the death of his wife Chaix could not be present at the March 1926 meeting, organized in Paris just before the Conference that would revise the 1909 Convention. His substitute Monsieur Noulens, however, was also only present one morning out of four days. The conflict was also one between the Road Committee and its INGO competitors, particularly the AIACR. The uneasy relation endured, but a \textit{modus vivendi} emerged in the years after the Paris Conference. The 1926 debacle clearly indicated the Road Committee had not yet acquired the central position for drawing up international road traffic regulations in Europe it aimed at.\footnote{Haas to Silvain Dreyfus, 22 January 1925, Transit Section files, box S-486, LoN. Translation “as a Frenchman, I have not been able to prevent being hurt by the comments that I have heard with regard to the real absence of France at our meeting in November, an absence which seems in contradiction with the political declarations of the French government, and I would like to do all that is possible to prevent a repetition of this situation.” See also Haas to Stiévenard, 23 February 1925, registry file 14, box R-1130, LoN.} But the Road Committee would not resign itself to this state of affairs and decided to usurp some of the tasks it had until then left to other actors. The main result of this change in attitude was the organization of The European Conference on Road Traffic held in 1931 on the shores of Lake Geneva.
From Paris to Geneva: The European Conference on Road Traffic, 1931

After the Paris Conference the Road Committee soon got back to work. The run-up to 1926 had given the Committee a clear focus, now it dedicated itself to a variety of themes. Most of the work between the 1926 and 1931 conferences falls within the scope of two broad categories, namely road safety on the one hand and economic aspects of road traffic on the other. A further notable feature is that INGOs, including the AIACR, started to participate more fully in the Committee’s work than before. With Chaix and Crespi among the Committee members, automobile and touring clubs could count on staying closely in touch with the Committee’s work. Organizations like the ICC and the International Transport Workers’ Federation now joined their ranks.

More active INGO involvement did cause a certain degree of friction. Probably due to his earlier unpleasant experience with AIARC’s ambivalent attitude towards the Committee, Stiévenard displayed his dissatisfaction with INGO participation in March 1930. In a letter to Romein he suggested to further disregard the AIACR or the International Transport Workers’ Federation, which always seemed the first to minimize the value of the work to which they had supposedly contributed.80 He had already uttered a similar complaint two months earlier to Haas:

“Weavions trop de délégués d’A.I.A.C.R., Association Professionnelle, etc. à nos dernières séances. Cela faisait beaucoup de paroles inutiles et de temps perdu.”81

Nevertheless INGOs influenced the agenda. For example, they stirred up the ongoing debate on road safety by drawing the Committee’s attention to experiments with the establishment of first aid stations along main roads. As early as 1893 the TCF had started to provide first-aid boxes in inns, forest huts and other locations with a view to give aid to cyclists in the case of accidents. In 1928 the French Union Nationale des Associations de Tourisme, a consortium of fifteen organizations including the ACF and TCF, championed a plan for first-aid stations along

---

80 Stiévenard to Romein, 3 March 1930, registry file 9f, box R-2578, LoN. Stiévenard wrote “Par ailleurs ne pourrait on se passer de l’Association International du Tourisme et de la Fédération des ouvriers de transport? Les gens qui déclament pour s’entendre parler font perdre aux autres leur temps et cela coûte à la S.D.N. Les phraseurs sont d’ailleurs toujours les premiers à minimiser la valeur du travail auquel ils aurait dû collaborer plus sérieusement et à dénigrer l’oeuvre de la Société. Ecarts-les si moyen!” Translation “Moreover could we not forego the AIT and the IFTW? People who declaim to hear themselves talk are a waste of time for others and it costs the League dearly. In addition the talkers are always the first to minimize the value of the work in which they would have had to collaborate more seriously and to belittle the work of the League. Let’s simply discard them.”

81 Stiévenard to Haas, 8 January 1930, registry file 9f, box R-2578, LoN. Translation “We have had too many delegates of AIACR, Professional Association etc. at our last Sessions. This has produced many useless words and wasted time.” Stiévenard did call for the involvement of INGOs on topics that were directly of their concern, mentioning the ICC for international commercial road traffic as an example.
the main roads of France at 5 km intervals. The stations should be clearly recognizable from the public road and provide their services free of charge. By 1930 private companies also started to put telephone boxes to decrease delays in reaching the wounded. A year later Pierre Behague, president of the Permanent International Committee for First Aid on Roads, reported that twelve countries had established first-aid stations.82

Road safety became a primordial concern for the Road Committee. Several factors contributed to this state of affairs. The death toll on roads was on the rise, and measures to increase safety were taken across the continent, resulting sometimes in a huge variety of local or national solutions. Traffic lights are a case in point, as Hans Buiter and Peter-Eloy Staal demonstrate for the Netherlands. Rotterdam was the first Dutch municipality to introduce traffic lights. Other municipalities followed suit, but in the absence of a clear national rule of thumb the solutions they chose varied widely.83 Several actors advocated authorities should at least establish rules that applied nation-wide. The Committee considered it as its task to prevent such emerging national practices from differing to such an extent that cross-border traffic would become dangerous as a result of international divergences.

Despite the Road Committee’s opposition to the French proposals at the 1926 Conference to start an international discussion on road traffic regulation, it discussed the idea extensively at its first meeting after the Paris Conference in Vienna. To improve safety the Committee now decided to throw its weight behind the harmonization of those rules of the road that it deemed could be achieved for continental Europe “without undue difficulty.”84 A year earlier Road Committee chair Stiévenard had already suggested to Haas that the Secretariat should seriously investigate such a possibility for continental Europe as a CCT contribution to European unification.85

The Committee focused in particular on left-hand versus right-hand driving. Mellini had proposed the unification of the direction of traffic on the right as a goal for the Committee in 1925, and the 1926 Convention relating to Road Traffic

84 Road Committee, Minutes 4th session (1927), 1-2.
85 As a first step Stiévenard suggested to translate road regulations in the possession of the Secretariat. Stiévenard to Haas, 20 March 1925, and Stiévenard to Haas, 22 February 1925, registry file 14, box R-1130, LoN.
had also chosen the right side of the road.86 In response to the pre-circulated draft
Austrian delegate Reinhardt acknowledged that changing sides upon crossing the
border was a “serious cause of perplexity” for drivers. Austria at that time still
drove on the left. He also proposed a convention that unified the direction of traf-
fc, but in contrast to the French draft he left open which side of the road would be
chosen and created a period of deferment for states that had to change sides.87 The
Road Committee therefore decided to strategically organize its first meeting after
the Paris Conference in Vienna. It argued that existing practice clearly showed that
an overwhelming majority of continental states drove on the right, thus keeping to
the right should be achieved throughout continental Europe at the earliest possible
date.88 By restricting the discussion to continental Europe the Committee neutral-
ized opposition from the British Isles, which also drove on the left.

The committee members left a more general discussion on rules of the road
for a later occasion, as they deemed road signs and signals a more urgent matter.
In its work on traffic signs the committee sought to prevent introducing too many
of them, as this would distract the attention of drivers and thus create a new dan-
ger.89 The discussion concentrated on shapes and colors. National practices with
regard to colors varied considerably (see Table 4.3). With regard to shapes, the
triangle indicated dangerous traffic situations, in agreement with the stipulations
of the 1926 Convention on Motor Traffic. For speed limits the Committee recom-
ended the use of rectangular plates. All other signs should have a circle of sixty
cm in diameter.90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Colour signs</th>
<th>Background colour</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France, Italy</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>dark blue</td>
<td>visibility, durability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>white, red edges</td>
<td>most conspicuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Road Committee, Minutes 4th session (1927), 4.

86 Road Committee, Minutes 2nd session (1925), 10. For a succinct overview of this subject see Maxwell G. Lay, Ways of the world: A history of the world's roads and of the vehicles that used them (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 197-201.
87 "Remarks concerning a Draft Convention on International Road Traffic submitted by M. H. Reinhardt," LoN doc. ser. CCT/CR/8, 9 February 1926, particularly articles 6, 10. Reinhardt had submitted this draft out of regret that the French draft Convention included road traffic regulations, making it impossible for Austria to sign the Convention, while it supported revision of the 1909 Convention. For a similar Swedish reaction, see "Memorandum en date de février 1926 exposant le point de vue des Autorités techniques suédoises, relativement au projet de Convention sur la circulation routière internationale, élaboré par le Gouvernement français," LoN doc. ser. CCT/CR/16, 25 March 1926.
88 Road Committee, Minutes 4th session (1927), 2.
89 Road Committee, Minutes 5th session (1927), 3-4.
90 Road Committee, Minutes 4th session (1927), 3-5.
In addition, the Committee debated the use of signals by drivers and by officials directing traffic, and mechanical devices replacing them, namely headlights and traffic lights. Concerns about safety were especially acute in urban settings, but with regard to local circumstances the Road Committee was ambivalent. On the one hand local caprice should not create too much confusion for road users, on the other hand it was necessary to adapt traffic regulations to local circumstances. The discussion on road signs illustrates the former position clearly. The Committee wanted to ensure a minimum degree of coherence in urban traffic signs. First, road safety would be best served if road signs were intelligible for foreign visitors. Second, although there were costs involved in harmonizing signs, the sooner it was done, the lower they would be, for the simple reasons that when more signs would be put up at a later stage more would have to be replaced. To increase the chances of success of the meeting during which the Road Committee discussed the signs, Dr. De Schulthess, representative of the International Union of Towns, joined the Committee’s deliberations at its fifth session.91

The discussion on speed limits illustrates the latter position. In an emotional letter on behalf of the Gesellschaft zum Schutze der Bevölkerung gegen die Ausschreitungen des Automobilismus and his own Vienna-based Verein zur Förderung der Verkehrssicherheit,92 Dr. S. Stimmer described a drastic cutback of the maximum allowable speed as the most pressing need for unifying European traffic rules. In his view the absence of a general limit to reckless speeds was the disturbing cause for the horrifying regularity of severe accidents. Smelling trouble, Committee member Crespi wrote Romein that as far as the automobile-clubs were concerned introducing such measures limited human progress. Crespi squarely denied automobile traffic caused more death on the road than other non-motorized traffic. Improved braking systems further diminished the need for a speed limit.93

The Committee unanimously expressed the conviction that local authorities should always remain completely free to adopt speed limits they deemed appropriate given specific local circumstances. With regard to a general European speed limit the Committee was split. Some believed introducing an absolute speed limit in addition to local restrictions would be a good thing at the national, not the European level. Others objected that speed was but one of several factors contributing to the occurrence of accidents. The Road Committee could therefore only

91 Road Committee, Minutes 5th session (1927), 1.
92 In the Committee’s Minutes these organizations were called the Society for the Protection of the Public against Dangerous Driving, and the Association for the Promotion of the Safety of Traffic.
93 Stimmer to Road Committee, 27 April 1927; Crespi to Romein, 29 September 1927, registry file 14, box R-1132, LoN.
agree on the requirement that drivers should remain in control of their vehicles at all times, and on standardizing the road signs indicating local restrictions to speed (see Figure 4.4). 94

The economic aspects of international road traffic were the second major concern after 1926 besides the harmonization of road safety measures. The ICC became a powerful player on this subject. As stated in chapter two, the ICC took up what it called highway transport at its third Congress in Brussels in 1925. The American National Committee of the ICC had put road-based traffic on the agenda. In Brussels the ICC created a Committee on Highway Transport as one of several new transport committees in the organization. 95 Roy Chapin, at the time chair of the Board of Directors of the Hudson Motor Car Company and vice-president of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce of the United States,

95 ICC Council, *Minutes 16th meeting,* 7 November 1924, 27; *Minutes 17th meeting,* 6 February 1925, 9, ICC; Ridgeway, *Merchants,* 293.
became chair of the Committee on Highway Transport. In his maiden speech he reminded his audience that by enabling the free flow of people beyond their immediate surroundings motorized traffic had significantly contributed to the rise of “a truly national spirit.” Through a similar mechanism road traffic across borders should now help to put an end to international misunderstandings and promote international peace. 

There was a long road ahead in this respect. So far discussions on international road transport regulations had concerned non-commercial travel. The Road Committee had briefly discussed international commercial road traffic in March 1925 in relation to the obligation to comply with national law articulated in the 1926 Convention draft. At the meeting Franklin expressed his fear that foreign vehicles would outcompete national ones after entering Great Britain, as tax exemption gave them a competitive advantage. Pflug indicated that the regulation of commercial passenger and goods traffic should therefore be left to individual states. This was also the line followed by the Paris Conference and the Convention relative to Motor Traffic explicitly excluded commercial road transport from its application in article 1.

This made road transport an outsider in the transport field. Discussion on combined transport reinforced this eccentric status by also excluding road transport in an initial stage. Within the League the Rail Committee originally took up this issue, which was subsequently extended to inland navigation, port facilities, maritime navigation and air transport. Road transport remained the longest time out of the picture. Discussions on combined transport had a significant impact in the long run. In 1929 the ICC announced a contest for the best system enabling the combined transport of rail and road; the container became its winner. 

---


97 Compliance with national regulation was laid down in article 6 of the draft, corresponding with the general provision of article 9 in the 1909 Convention.

98 Road Committee, Minutes 2nd session (1925), 6-7. Mellini adopted a similar stance at the next Session, Minutes 3rd session (1926), 3. letter from secretary-general International Institute at Rome for the Unification of Private Law, 2 May 1931, registry file 9F, box R-2582, LoN.

99 This was at least the case in 1926, see CCT, Minutes 9th session (1926), annex 4, “Note on the question of combined transport.”

100 CCT, Minutes 17th session (1932), 27-28; "Internationale Kamer van Koophandel: Het ‘container’ stelsel," Wegen 5, no. 12 (1929): 310-311; ICC, Proceedings of the congress, Amsterdam July 1929, Supplement 2 to World Trade (October 1929), 64; "Containers," World Trade 5, no. 7 (July 1933): 32. As an alternative to the container a vehicle was developed that could both travel on road and rail, for an example of the camion-autorail, see photograph “Un camion-autorail Willème de 1933,” Jean-Louis Loubet, L’industrie automobile 1905-1971 (Geneva: Droz, 1998), photo page.
Due to the continued growth of commercial road traffic the issue returned to the Road Committee's agenda. In agreement with Geneva working methods the Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a note to ascertain the specific aspects ripe for international consideration. Dutifully Haas submitted a “purely provisional” memo for discussion. It noted commercial international motor transport differed from other modes in that the freedom of transit did not apply to it, nor did a general convention regulate road vehicles engaging in im- and export. Haas acknowledged that it was not uncommon for other modes to reserve inland transport for national vehicles. The difficulty in the case of road vehicles was that it was near to impossible to keep track of them once they had entered a country. Preventing abuse was illusory, though Haas proposed a solution by limiting the length of stay of vehicles.

After discussing Haas’ draft the committee requested him to furnish a draft convention as soon as possible based on three principles. First, commercial motor vehicles should have free entry, exit and transit. Second, countries had the right to reserve transport remaining within their national borders for domestically registered vehicles. Third, countries could impose a tax on foreign vehicles to assure they contributed a fair share in road construction and maintenance. The Committee explicitly invited the ICC, the AIACR and the AIT to communicate their visions. At its 1927 conference in Stockholm the ICC had still concluded that transport barriers resulted from the failure to apply the various available international conventions rather than from lack of conventions.

Nevertheless the ICC decided to throw its weight behind the moves of the Road Committee. Hurdles to cross-border road traffic hindered its members. A 1929 issue of its journal World Trade illustrated the situation by recounting the story of a sawmill in country A at 30 km from the border that derived its wood from neighboring country B. When buying wood it would send motor-trucks to fetch it, but given the prohibition in country B of export by foreign trucks the sawmill’s vehicles could not retrieve the wood and had to return empty. In retaliation authorities of country A introduced the same rule, resulting in the need to transfer the wood from trucks of one country into those of the other at the border, blocking the road for hours. Usually governments took such measures out of fear for fraud by foreign trucks, but the ICC pointed out that the revenue derived from vehicles

101 Road Committee, Minutes 5th session (1927), 12-13.
102 Road Committee, Minutes 6th session (1928), annex 4, “Memorandum by the Secretary-General of the Advisory and Technical Committee relating to commercial motor transport.”
103 Road Committee, Minutes 6th session (1928), 5.
104 ICC, Resolutions passed at the Stockholm congress (June 27-July 2, 1927), brochure 60 (Paris: ICC, 1927), 14.
engaged in international traffic was much larger than the estimated sums lost due to fraud. Therefore the ICC wholeheartedly supported the League’s endeavor to put a regime in place similar to the ones for other transport modes, although in most countries fiscal administrations’ fear to “lose a solitary franc” would be hard to overcome.105

By the late 1920s several issues had ripened sufficiently to warrant the organisation of an international conference. CCT planned a European Conference on Road Traffic to take place in Geneva from 16 to 30 March 1931. The event testified of the preoccupation with the operation of the international road network rather than the network itself. Four instruments lay on the table, namely an agreement concerning lost or undischarged triptyques, and three draft conventions on taxation of foreign motor vehicles, signs and signals for road traffic and international commercial road traffic.106 Without doubt the latter was the most important to be discussed.

By now the road transport sector was becoming a formidable competitor for railway business. Discussing the regulatory framework for cross-border road transport could not be decoupled from road-rail competition.107 The issue divided the Committee. Pflug pleaded to grant commercial road transport “the greatest possible freedom,” but Mellini and Reinhardt only wanted to discuss the transport of passengers. Austria also put reciprocity from its neighbors as a necessary condition for its own cooperation.108 Due to the diverging positions reaching consensus failed utterly, indicating the real limits to European states’ willingness to cooperate on this issue. The assembled delegates suspended the work on commercial motor transport and called for further investigation, advising dissatisfied countries to resort to the conclusion of bilateral agreements.109

The worsening economic climate contributed to the collapse of the endeavor. As the Depression started to kick in, governments increasingly sought national

105 Grahame, C.E., “Permanent Committee on Road Traffic of the League of Nations,” World Trade 1 (January 1929), 75-76; Road Committee, Minutes 6th session (1928), annex 9, “Note regarding international commercial motor traffic, submitted by M.C. Blum, representative of the International Chamber of Commerce.”
106 For the draft texts, see LoN, European Conference on Road Traffic – Preparatory documents, LoN doc. ser. Conf CR/1, 30 September 1930, LoN.
108 LoN, Proposal by the Italian delegation concerning the draft Convention on International Commercial Motor Transport, LoN doc. ser. Conf CR/TC/3, 16 March 1931; LoN, Observations by the Austrian delegation relating to the draft Convention on International Commercial Motor Transport, LoN doc. ser. Conf CR/TC/4, 16 March 1931. The only ‘goods’ Mellini and Reinhardt were willing to consider was the luggage passengers carried with them.
solutions to their economic troubles. But the Convention on Commercial Motor Transport also failed against the background of the coordination debate on the proper division of labor between different transport modes, the main contenders being rail and road. The state was an important stakeholder in this debate, having a crucial role for the necessary investment in infrastructure and as owner of the railways. The suspension did not put a complete end to activities relating to commercial road transport though. To prepare for future negotiations, the CCT instructed the Secretariat to continue to collect documentation on laws prevalent in the various countries.

The Conference did manage to pass the Convention on the Taxation of Foreign Motor Vehicles, but agreement had only been possible by excluding commercial road traffic from its sphere of application. Pflug perceived difficulties when traffic between any two countries was unequal in strength. Germany’s central position in European traffic networks implied receiving a disproportionate amount of traffic. The German government preferred to strike its own deals and negotiate bilateral treaties instead of a general international agreement. The drafting committee hence decided to restrict its draft to private touring vehicles, or privately hired vehicles, and excluded commercial vehicles transporting freight or passengers (including taxicabs) from the ninety-day exemption from taxation for foreign vehicles.

The last major item on the agenda concerned signs and signals for road traffic, a topic entrusted to a committee chaired by the respected Stiévenard. The aim was to harmonize signs to avoid confusion for motorists crossing borders. The draft convention divided signs into three categories, each with an exclusive shape. Triangular signs indicated dangerous situations, obligation signs were circular, and rectangular signs gave indications. In terms of color use, the convention stipulated the color red should predominate in signs indicating any kind of prohibition. The AIAcR had had an important role in drafting the convention presented at the

---

112 Participating countries also agreed on an Agreement between Customs Authorities in order to facilitate the Procedure in the Case of Undischarged or Lost Triptyques. The short Agreement ruled that a certificate from customs authorities instead of a consular certificate should be accepted when triptyques got lost or had not received the proper exit stamp. The Touring Club of Germany had demanded attention for the issue, *Road Committee, Minutes 7th session* (1930), 4. The Agreement basically complemented the existing triptyque system and will further be left out of consideration here.
conference. The final version the Conference adopted hardly differed from what the AIACR had proposed.\textsuperscript{115} Signs did not become uniform all across Europe, but a short glance at the many available alternatives shows the tremendous scope of the reduction of existing differences.\textsuperscript{116} During the next years the collection expanded with new signs, such as those prohibiting overtaking or the use of sound signals.\textsuperscript{117}

The results of the conference suggest that it was easier to agree on measures facilitating individual mobility than to achieve concrete results for international commercial road transport, which touched upon the difficult issue of transport coordination among transport modes. According to Pflug the key bottleneck was that the various countries treated coordination differently. It made it difficult to devise a solution acceptable to all.\textsuperscript{118} The harmonization of road signs suggests that when few commercial interests were at stake participating countries were able to agree more easily. But above all the field of road traffic was very much in flux. Upon closing the conference its president Paul Eckardt, German envoy extraordinary, observed that though motor traffic “was still in its youth, it had already grown to the size of a giant,” thus creating uncertainty among those who should draw up the rules governing it.\textsuperscript{119} Its turbulent development would continue through the remainder of the Interbellum. The Road Committee did not convene again until 1933, picking up where the Conference had left off, but by then the placid atmosphere in Geneva had transformed completely.

\textit{Years of decline? The remainder of the 1930s}

In his assessment of the League’s communications and transit work, Jan Hostie distinguished three eras. He characterized 1921-1927 as “years of growth” and 1927-1931 as the “summit of the curve.” By 1931 the worldwide problems that came in the wake of the Wall Street crash of 1929 started to hurt the League in its work. The conference on Disarmament paralyzed the organization for a year in 1932 and ended in complete failure. It went downhill from there. Consequently

\textsuperscript{115} Letter by Perón, 4 February 1931, registry file 9F, box R-2584, LoN.
\textsuperscript{116} LoN, \textit{Final act}, 10 April 1931, 9. The ICC shared this concern for the need to educate motorists, pedestrians, and children in particular. It adopted a resolution expressing this concern at its 1927 Congress in Stockholm, see ICC, \textit{Resolutions passed at the Stockholm congress (June 27-July 2, 1927)}, brochure 60 (Paris: ICC, 1927), 32.
\textsuperscript{117} CCT, \textit{Minutes 19th session (1935)}, annex 7, “Signs adopted by the Permanent Committee on Road Traffic.”
\textsuperscript{119} LoN, \textit{Records}, C.438.M.185.1931.VIII, 6 July 1931, 43. An envoy extraordinary is a diplomatic representative with plenipotentiary powers below the rank of ambassador.
Hostie tagged 1931-1945 as “years of decline and war.” The work on road traffic went against the stream in that the League remained very active on the subject.\(^{120}\) The results were probably not as large as the Committee would have liked, but Hostie’s observation certainly reverberated in the breadth of the Committee’s work on a wide array of topics.

The first task was to ensure that the instruments signed at the 1931 Conference would be ratified and implemented. The League did not wish for a repetition of what happened to the 1926 Convention relative to Motor Traffic. When the Convention was ready to come into force in October 1930, not all of the countries bound by the 1909 Convention had ratified it yet. Following some suggestions by Pflug, the Road Committee created a transitory regime in which the 1909 documents continued to be recognized until 1 March 1932 and the new documents would be recognized from 24 October 1930.\(^{121}\) Figure 4.5 represents the number of countries that had ratified or acceded to the 1931 instruments. It is important to note that ratification or accession did not necessarily imply implementation, nor did the fact that a country applied certain instruments necessarily imply prior ratification or accession. Of the 1931 instruments the rate of ratification and accession was the lowest for the Convention on Road Signs, but several countries that had

\(^{120}\) Hostie, *The Organisation*, 244, 260.

\(^{121}\) The *Conseil Central de Tourisme International* had adopted this position on 28 March 1930, see Pflug to Romein, 12 May 1930, LoN doc. ser. CCT/CR/61; CCT, *Minutes 16th session (1931)*, 38; Pflug to Romein, 12 May 1930, registry file 9F, box R-2579, LoN. For the recommendation, see Circular letter, LoN doc. ser. C.L.276.1930.VIII.
not formally put their signature under the Convention on Road Signs did apply its signs. By the late 1930s this was the case for Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany and Yugoslavia.122

Regardless of the fact that the Road Committee had officially suspended its work on commercial road transport, it remained on the agenda. The ICC continued to underline the importance of what it considered to be a vital subject and the Secretariat continued to amass information on this subject. Committee members did not want to restart the discussion on an international regime governing international commercial road transport, insisting the only convenient solution for the time being was to conclude bilateral agreements instead.123 Yet a 1937 study of the ICC had found that the bilateral agreements “had not yet developed to any great extent.”124

Coordination, particularly of road and rail transport, remained the root of the problem. Academic circles took the view that the two modes complemented each other, rail transport being the most efficient on long distances, while trucks held a competitive edge in short-distance haulage.125 The ICC too started to issue reports on the theme of coordination and discussed it extensively at its conferences.126 The increasing importance of road traffic caused considerable concern in governmental circles. French officials proposed the League should investigate the issue to provide governments with sound information.127 The Secretariat prepared a lengthy questionnaire containing many different factors influencing the market position of transport modes. It sought to map the rules regulating the coordination between transport means, including administrative measures, tariff structure, fiscal regime, liability and insurance, and the social regime. The query resulted in a heavy report.128

122 Signatories included most continental European powers, excluding the countries mentioned, and Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and the Baltic States. Scandinavia and the British Isles did not accede, but the USSR did. LoN, *Essential facts about the League of Nations* (Geneva: Information Section, Secretariat of the League of Nations, 1938), 240.
In the meantime easing personal travel on the road continued apace. At the instigation of AIACR the Road Committee hinted at the abolition of the international driving licenses and vehicle certificates introduced in 1926 and proposed the mutual recognition of national documents instead.\(^\text{129}\) Scandinavia led the way. Between 26 April 1930 and 8 August 1931 Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden concluded agreements in which they mutually recognized each other’s driving licenses and registration certificates. During 1935-1936 all but Finland also concluded such an agreement with Germany, and France decided to unilaterally recognize national documents presented at the border by way of trial.\(^\text{130}\) Inspired by these developments the AIACR wondered whether it would be possible to do away with the 1926 documents altogether. Its International Commission on Tourist Traffic examined the difficulties experienced in France and came to the conclusion that it would be best to standardize the national driving licenses and registration cards. Analogous to the *carnet des passages en douane* the bilingual documents were to be formulated in both the national language and French. Through its members the AIACR consulted competent authorities through a questionnaire. Of the twenty-two responses received, fourteen were strongly in favor of the AIACR proposal.\(^\text{131}\)

The AIACR even broadened its proposal to a full-fledged revision and fusion of the two 1926 Conventions with the 1931 Convention on the Unification of Road Signals. It basically entailed the drawing up of a kind of European Highway Code.\(^\text{132}\) To prepare it a Committee of Experts for the Codification of Road Law was installed, which held three sessions during 1938-1939 with a view to fuse the existing conventions into a single document.\(^\text{133}\) The League seemed ready to embrace the discussion on the rules of the road more fully than it had done in the past.


\(^{130}\) Road Committee, *Minutes 11th session (1937)*, 4; annex 5, “Standardisation of National Road Traffic Documents;” annex 6, “Note on the various bilateral agreements concluded between the governments of certain states in order to facilitate the crossing of frontiers by motorists.”

\(^{131}\) The countries in favor were Albania, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Palestine, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Eight Countries, namely Egypt, Finland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Austria, and the United Kingdom declared they opposed changing the current legislation, but the two last countries indicated they might change position. Road Committee, *Minutes 11th session (1937)*, annex 5.


But in terms of road safety the most dramatic discussion concerned the gruesome side of the coordination debate. Accidents regularly occurred at unguarded level crossings, the physical contact points between rail and road networks. Due to increasing motorization levels they were on the rise and received ample coverage in the press. It triggered a discussion on how best to put a halt to the rising death toll at level crossings. The discussion on level crossings was by no means new. In May 1926 the International Railway Union had adopted the St. Andrew’s Cross as a fixed signal indicating level crossings, and at the Paris Conference just earlier a road sign for unguarded level crossings had been adopted. But from 1933 the issue gained prominence with the appointment of a mixed Committee of road and railway experts working on signals for level crossings.

CCT appointed a Special Committee on Signals at Level-Crossings, which laboriously worked on the topic. No sooner had the Special Committee presented a draft convention to CCT, or the latter forwarded it to the Council with the request to convene a conference to adopt it. The Council provisionally scheduled the conference for April 1939. Of the invited countries fifteen responded positively, but twenty replied in the negative. The League decided to postpone the event. Thus Geneva negotiations on road traffic had slowly come to a complete standstill just before the German assault on Poland later that year. The issues remaining on the negotiation table had to wait until more propitious times.

Conclusion

Taking stock of two decades of the work of the League of Nations in the field of transit and communications for international European road traffic results in a variegated picture. On behalf of the British Fabian Society, M. Zwalf assessed the

134 The Italian journal Le Strade reported on the issue on various occasions. A 1922 article showed the harsh reality by putting a photograph of an American level crossing where authorities had put a crashed car on a scaffold to warn passing motorists. The accompanying sign read “Did the driver of this STOP LOOK LISTEN?” (emphasis in original), see Italo Vandone, “Una singolare segnalazione di passaggio a livello,” Le Strade 4, no. 10 (1922): 343.
135 CCT, Minutes 13th session (1929), annex 4, “Decision by the International Railway Union on the international standardisation [sic] of warning signs to be placed on roads in the vicinity of unguarded level-crossings,” Minutes 15th session (1930), annex 5, “Report of the Special Committee for the Study of Signals at Level Crossings,” Minutes 21st session (1938), annex 13. The International Railway Union is better known under its French name Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIc).
137 Hostie, The Organisation, 261; CCT, Minutes 22nd session (1939), 9-10.
results of this work after the Second World War. His 1946 publication portrayed transport as a means to the end of European unification. When it came to the documents one needed for international travel he bitterly lamented

“Towards the end of the inter-war period peoples’ lives were dependent on the possession of one or another miserable piece of paper, besmeared by hosts of officials at excessive costs.”

Was Zwalf’s assessment true? Those who had lived through the period before passports existed were bound to be disillusioned with anything short of complete abolition of the obligation to carry such documents. But the investigation of the Road Committee’s work presented here suggests it produced some robust results, and not just with regard to the simplification of documents. What made consensus on regulations facilitating (personal) cross-border travel even more remarkable is that it was reached during a time in which international relations in Europe significantly deteriorated overall.

The most important feature in the context of this thesis is that regulations drawn up in Geneva were restricted to Europe, either explicitly or implicitly. Only at the end of the 1930s did the non-European world enter into the picture. For example, the Road Committee received instructions from CCT to extend the discussion on the direction of traffic to non-European countries as late as its twelfth – and last – session.

Geneva thus unmistakably emerged as the central forum for discussing issues of European road traffic. In the early Interbellum alternative organizational settings still existed alongside each other, enabling actors to handpick the one that best suited their purposes. Yet by the end of the period the accumulated weight in Geneva was hard to get around. An indicator for the new state of affairs is that the AIACR, which initially had a rather strained relation with the League, shifted its attention towards Geneva after the Paris Conference of 1926.

The (European) road network remained notably absent from the discussions in the Road Committee. Except for an occasional call for road upkeep in the service of safety, the road network was hardly mentioned at all. Only road-related artifacts like traffic lights or road signs, received ample attention. Apart from such objects intended to steer driver behavior on the road, the material side of the discussion received scant attention: it was the operation of the network rather than the network itself that interested and inspired the Road Committee in its work.

139 At CCT’s twentieth session the Uruguayan representative A. de Castro had indicated that the direction of road traffic was a universal problem, CCT, Minutes 20th session (1937); Road Committee, Minutes 12th session (1938), 8.
140 Road Committee, Minutes 4th session (1927), 10.
The international conferences of 1926 and 1931 strongly determined the rhythm of work of the Committee and the Transit Section, which prepared and discussed draft conventions at the sessions. The influence the Transit Section was thus able to exercise suggests that Clavin and Wessels rightly claimed that the role of the Secretariat in the work of the League should be taken seriously. The stock of the League's Interbellum work consists of five instruments in total. If we consider ratification as a measuring rod for the success of a particular legal instrument, a differentiated pattern emerges.

Why, we might wonder, was the League more successful with some of the issues relating to international road traffic in Europe than with others? The underlying reason might relate to the earlier mentioned difference between high and low politics. Commercial road traffic touched upon the economic policy of states, a politically salient area in which sensitivities were large and governmental convictions diverged. When it came to issues of road safety the stakes were minor in comparison, making agreement on standard road signs relatively easy. But in road safety too we should contrast the achievements for road signs and the much tougher discussions on the rules of the road, despite serious efforts and backing from the part of INGOs.

In all this it should be remembered that bold proposals were rarely made. When chances were big that a proposal would fail to attract sufficient support, the Committee preferred not to propose anything at all and devoted its attention to a subject with better chances of success. In addition the Committee preferred modest, but widely acceptable agreements over more robust ones for the happy few. The indignation over the French government's attempt to harmonize road traffic regulations at a time when few states were willing to adopt such measures jointly, clearly showed the limits of the possible in this respect.

The same mechanism probably underlies the Road Committee's pragmatic stance to existing practices in member states. This becomes apparent from its lenience towards the Scandinavian red triangle in the discussion on road signs. It also becomes apparent in the discussion on traffic lights, where the Committee's original proposal was kept flexible on purpose, including three different solutions that were being used in practice (single, double and triple lights). Thus, an international arrangement was able to accommodate divergent practices, while also preventing an unwarranted proliferation of new solutions. Though its terms of

---

141 Their claim concerns the work of the Economic and Financial Organisation, and focuses on the level of the technical committee, while this thesis concentrates on the sub-committee level, see Clavin and Wessels, "Transnationalism."

142 Road Committee, Minutes 4th session (1927), 10.
reference did not empower the League to impose the unification of administrative regulations upon its members, the organization was nevertheless quite successful in preventing the other extreme of complete anarchy too – at least when it came to road traffic regulations in Europe.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{143} Ridgeway, Merchants, 292.
Chapter 5
Setting the stage – The parade of organizations, 1942-1953

The reconstruction of a continent

“It is not always easy to find a way through the jungle of institutions, concealed under their confusing and sometimes indistinguishable acronyms, or to know exactly what are the tasks performed by each.”

David Luard (1977)¹

If there is one development that makes the period after the Second World War different from prior epochs, it would certainly be the enormous increase in wealth during the 1947-1973 period in many European countries.² Combined with an increase in leisure time this provided one of the necessary conditions for an upsurge in tourism. Part of this tourism moved by bus, but the booming economy of the Trente Glorieuses especially turned the car into a mass commodity in several countries. Car ownership changed from a privilege into a normality during this period, and the annual family holiday by car became the epitome of a modern, wealthy, twentieth century European.³ The increase in wealth also entailed an increase in trade and, consequently, freight traffic on the road increased many-fold in the post-war period. The unbridled growth of road transport vis-à-vis its competitors created huge financial problems for the railways from the mid-1950s onwards.⁴

⁴ This thesis cannot deal in detail with the problems haunting the railroad sector. The crisis in the railroad business was a prominent theme in the ECMT from the mid-1950s, see for example ECMT, “Resolution on the Financial Situation of the Railways,” Resolutions V (1957).
None of this was obvious in 1945. There seemed few reasons for optimism in the direct aftermath of the war. Rising geopolitical antagonism among the former Allies did certainly not give cause to it. The belligerents had been defeated, but the war had left deep psychological and physical scars through the loss of human life and the devastation of buildings and infrastructure. The latter was particularly problematic as demand for transport was enormous. Large numbers of displaced people roamed around the continent, wanting to return to the places they once called home. Food and other goods had to be transported, but, on top of the inadequate infrastructure, transport equipment was short in supply.

The first priority was to reconstruct what had been destroyed. In the post-war situation any transport was most welcome due to scarcities, and road transport did not fail to play its part in restoring the European transport system to normality, not in the least place due to the level of destruction in the railroad sector.\(^5\) The dire transport situation in the immediate post-war years temporarily set aside the coordination question and in comparison to the pre-war situation a less stringent regulatory framework for international road transport in Europe emerged. In fact, preparations for the post-war transport situation had already started during the war itself.

The League of Nation’s Communications and Transit Organisation had remained in function from 1939 to 1945, although its capacity was greatly reduced and it had to work with scarce and unreliable information. But there would be no room for the tainted League in the post-war world, however, and a wholesale institutional reshuffle in the European transport scene occurred. On the IGO level the stake was who would control shaping post-war European mobility. New European institutions mushroomed and in the resulting parade of organizations each tried to establish a useful role for itself. It is difficult to give a clear-cut answer to the question which one prevailed. Different organizations wanted different things, and so did the various nation-states. It resulted in a complex whole of solutions for cross-border traffic issues.

Powerful new actors joined the ranks of existing INGOs representing road interests. The main examples were the network-oriented International Road Federation (IRF) and the operation-oriented International Road Transport Union (IRU).\(^6\) In

---


6 Pierre Michelet has identified these two organizations as the most important post-war INGOs engaged in international road transport discussions, Pierre Michelet, *Les transports au sol et l’organisation de l’Europe* (PhD diss., Université de Lausanne, 1961), 158-160.
combination with the fact that an existing organization like the ICC threw its full weight behind road transport, a much more powerful road lobby emerged out of the rubbles of the Second World War than had existed before. The road lobby claimed that mobility on the road needed an improved infrastructure to support flows, projected future flows in particular, and that regulations similar to the ones used for the international operation of other modes of transport should be introduced in the road sector. The INGOs communicated their opinions to the various IGOs. They initially did so in relation to the Marshall Plan, launched by the United States when recovery seemed to slump in 1946-1947. A clear geopolitical agenda underpinned this largest aid program ever, which should assure Western European recovery and prevent it from falling into the communist camp.

The remainder of this chapter seeks to clarify the complex emerging institutional picture. The following section briefly depicts road developments during the war, particularly on the German side, and the preparations of the Allies for the post-war situation in transport terms. Subsequent sections discuss two institutional complexes dealing with mobility that arose out of the post-war negotiations. On the one hand the United Nations (UN) became the successor to the discredited League of Nations. Where the League had de facto focused almost completely on European affairs, the UN was destined to become a genuinely worldwide institution. Dealing with European communications and transit did not fit its purposes. The UN assigned this task to the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), created as part of the UN machinery in 1947. In many respects the ECE would become the true heir organization of the League's defunct Communications and Transit Committee.

On the other hand an alternative institutional setting emerged out of the European Recovery Program, better known as the Marshall Plan. The Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), the organ in which the sixteen participating European countries cooperated, duplicated the ECE's functions to a considerable extent. The OEEC's transport branch remained in the shadows of its ECE counterpart, but the European Conference of Ministers of Transport to which it gave birth became a serious contender of the Geneva institution. This chapter seeks to provide the necessary background on these various organizations in order to better understand the work on European road networks and operational regimes in chapters six and seven.
Another war – another aftermath

The war put most of the activities of the League of Nations in the area of communications and transit on hold. The organization attempted to keep tracing developments with regard to infrastructures and traffic, but above all it dedicated itself to preparing the post-war situation. Given Hitler’s ambition to create road connections all the way to the “southernmost point of the Crimea and to the Caucasus,” tracking German activities during the war was one of the prime tasks the few remaining officials of the Transit Section had set themselves. A 1942 report noted that in Poland, where infrastructures had been severely devastated during the German invasion, which started 1 September 1939, infrastructures serving German military and economic interests were reconstructed and the road network planned extensions to Poznan and to Eastern Prussia through the Polish Corridor. Similarly the Autobahnen were extended on paper to Luxembourg and Alsace-Lorraine, which Nazi authorities considered part of the German heartland. Consequently traffic going to or coming from these areas was no longer deemed cross-border as of August 1941. The League also reported construction had been taking place in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia to connect the Reich to areas beyond its territories.

On the Allied side there were many ideas about the future transport organization of the continent after the war’s end. Most called for a stronger transport organization than had existed before the war. They emphasized it should remain autonomous and that more authority – and financial (decision-making) power – should be delegated to the new institution. This was true not only for someone like Transit Section official Branko Lukač, but also for a persistent League critic like E.H. Carr. Such ideas eventually resulted in bold proposals in the vein of Édouard Bonnefous’ supranational European Transport Authority, inspired by the Schuman Declaration.

Chapter two dealt with The Twenty Years’ Crisis, Edward Carr’s eloquent, biting denunciation of the League and how it worked. In much of the book the author

---

8 The Polish Corridor ran along the river Vistula and formed the Polish outlet to the Baltic Sea. It separated Eastern Prussia from German territory.
9 “Situation des transports dans l’Europe continentale au cours de la présente guerre,” LoN doc. ser. CCT/730, 15 August 1942, copy in registry file 9A, box R-4264, LoN. The process had in fact started when Germany signed an agreement with Czechoslovakia October 1938 to extend the network from Breslau to Vienna.
looked back at past achievements. In 1942 Carr published a more forward-looking book under the title *Conditions of Peace*. At the end of his book Carr sketched the post-war situation and the contours for a “New Europe.”\(^{11}\) In an argument strikingly reminiscent of Interbellum rhetoric Carr explained that the need for a “New Europe” resulted from the fact that “The size of the units which effectively count in international politics grows steadily larger.”\(^{12}\) The first task was to offer relief to the exhausted population, which would not be easy given the expected destruction of transport facilities and concomitant distributional problems. Undertaking this task was closely connected to the transport problems:

“The problem of relief (...) brings us automatically and necessarily to the problem of transport; and here the case for international or “European” organisation is overwhelmingly strong. (...) There is no single field in which the old national unit has become more intolerably restrictive, or where there is more patent need for treating “Europe” as a whole, than in that of communications.”\(^{13}\)

A European Relief Commission and a European Transport Corporation should respectively supervise the relief work and transport in Europe. Carr completed his post-war institutional setting with a European Planning Authority to reorganize Europe’s economic life as a coherent whole, and a European Reconstruction and Public Works Corporation responsible initially for reparation of war damages and subsequently for designing large-scale development plans.\(^{14}\) It is almost possible to hear Albert Thomas speaking when Carr argued

“International public works have in the past few years entered the public consciousness as something calculated not merely to remedy unemployment but to promote practical international cooperation as a psychological substitute for war.”\(^{15}\)

Carr’s sketch gave ample powers to the new institutions. A memorandum by Branko Lukač argued along similar lines that a more durable and coordinated peacetime European transport system was expedient. Lukač was one of the few Transit Section officials who transferred to New York to continue his career in communications and transit in the service of the United Nations. The American Interstate Commerce Commission was the model he had in mind for shaping the

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 190.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 247.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 253-256.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 252.
European organization.\textsuperscript{16} For the long term it should draw up an overall plan for the main continental arteries with homogeneous technical characteristics for each transport branch and also determine the principal points of “intersection, junction and transshipment, as well as terminuses.”\textsuperscript{17}

The emergency organizations that actually grew out of the war came in the shape of three relief and rehabilitation organizations.\textsuperscript{18} The Emergency Economic Committee for Europe (EECE), created in London on 28 May 1945, advised on economic issues during the last phase of the war and the transitional period directly thereafter, but also on subsequent reconstruction and longer-term development. The European Coal Organisation (ECO), functioning provisionally since the same month, received a formal basis per 1 January 1946. More restricted in scope were ECO’s tasks to facilitate increased coal production, its distribution, and to disseminate information on the coal situation.\textsuperscript{19}

The first of three post-war relief and rehabilitation organizations was the European Central Inland Transport Organisation (ECITO). The Allies founded it on 8 May 1945 but its roots dated back to September 1941. ECITO dealt with the restoration of mobility in Europe. According to the Dutch engineering journal \textit{De Ingenieur} it was the first official European organization founded after the Second World War.\textsuperscript{20} It would most certainly not be the last. Its foundation was the start of a parade of new international organizations. Many gave mobility issues a prominent position in their terms of reference. In doing so they took into account what other organizations had done earlier and tried to establish policy niches for themselves. ECITO being the first in the parade, the next section describes what the organization did exactly.

\textit{Planning European post-war transport during the war}

The Allies’ first discussion on European transport after the war took place at the St. James Conference in London (September 1941) that deliberated on the post-war

\textsuperscript{16} The Interstate Commerce Commission’s often used acronym ‘ICC’ will not be employed here, as it might lead to unwarranted confusion with the International Chamber of Commerce. The idea that Europe should have an institution similar to the Interstate Commerce Commission had already been suggested in the League of Nations in the early 1920s, “Memo for Mr. Sweetzer [sic],” 29 August 1922, Transit Section files, box S-483, LoN.

\textsuperscript{17} “Memorandum by Lukač for secretary-general,” Geneva, April 1944, registry file 9A, box R-4264, LoN. Lukač underlined that provisional restoration was the most urgent task initially, as prompt and satisfactory ‘relief and rehabilitation’ depended on it.


situation in general. One outgrowth was that the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements set up the Technical Advisory Committee on Inland Transport (TACIT) in the British capital in October 1942. The rationale underlying TACIT was the fear that devastated transport infrastructures would hamper European recovery after the war’s end – whenever that would be. To prevent such a situation, TACIT made estimates of equipment requirements and planned an organization to expedite the movement of relief and priority traffic in Europe after the war. Its terms of reference specified two main challenges. First it should allocate displaced, confiscated or newly produced transport equipment. Second it should coordinate what was referred to as “traffic of common concern.”

In the fall of 1944 the Allies felt the end of the war approaching and at a conference in London in October they discussed the creation of a successor organization to TACIT. On 8 May 1945 seven states founded a Temporary European Inland Transport commission, succeeded on 27 September 1945 by ECITO in its final form for a period of at least two years. In contrast to the membership of the temporary organization, it now included Eastern European States.

Like its predecessor the organization had its seat in London, but on 15 June 1946 the organization’s headquarters moved to Paris for three political reasons. First, the Soviet Union wanted the organization to move out of what it perceived as an Anglo-American bloc. Second, France thought the presence of the organization added to its prestige. Third, the United Kingdom wanted to do France a favor. Some of the meetings would continue to take place in London. Thus meetings of the international movements program promoted participation of representatives of the London-based UNRRA and the EECE, for example.

The highest organ within ECITO’s structure was the Council in which all member states were represented. A smaller Executive Board taking care of day-to-day business consisted of four permanent members (France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and three rotating temporary members. Additional assistance came from a small Bureau headed by the Dutch professor

---

21 The name TACIT is ominous when it comes to its Latin meaning: virtually nothing is known about the organization.
23 In September Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia joined ECITO’s ‘May members’ Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Denmark became a member at ECITO’s first meeting. The double foundation was a result of differences of opinion on the scope and goal of the organization, Janssen, De Internationale, 9-11.
Hondelink, who had been teaching road construction at the Technical University of Delft. 25 Despite Hondelink’s expertise, ECITO did not primarily deal with road transport, but focused mainly on the railroad sector. The organization assumed a crucial role in the painstaking process of identifying rolling stock and returning it to its rightful owner, and also set up a framework through which member states could exchange rail equipment.

The most important task ECITO fulfilled in the field of road transport concerned the provision of fuel for vehicles engaged in international transport. During the immediate post-war years fuel was in very short supply and most countries had rationed it. Fuel shortages exacerbated as of mid-1946 when the number of automobiles in Europe started to rise again. Many vehicles were in a dilapidated state and would have to be replaced very soon. At the same time there was a huge shortage of tyres. 26 ECITO took care that vehicles engaged in international road transport would be able to get fuel when traveling through foreign territory. To this aim it created a letter of credit for fuel, or “motor spirit.” 27

By 1947, as the immediate post-war problems became less pressing, the general conviction was that a permanent body should assume ECITO’s tasks. In early 1946 Branko Lukač had made such a suggestion in UN circles. 28 In the meantime the position of ECITO itself had become untenable due to a deficit in Soviet payments and the American refusal to continue compensating it. 29 Under these circumstances, ECITO’s Council stipulated that the newly founded Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva should take over its essential tasks, including its work on railway rolling stock, but also the routing of international traffic and the organization of international forms of transport. 30

This is indeed what happened. The ECE did not only take over the tasks of ECITO, in addition the Geneva organization started an ambitious series of initiatives of its own dealing with anything from the production of coal and steel to housing, and from the harmonization of statistics to increasing agricultural production. Among the various subjects transport gave occasion to the highest num-

28 Branko Lukač, “Suggestions as to the future international collaboration in respect of transport and communications within the framework of the UNO,” Geneva, January 1946, registry file 9A, box R-4264, LoN. This document was an update of some earlier preliminary observations from July 1943.
ber of meetings, produced the largest amount of agreements and conventions and had the biggest budget allotted to it. Yet the ECE’s attention for transport issues was not equally divided among transport modes. Particularly in the early period of the organization’s existence road transport received disproportionate attention. The next paragraph scrutinizes the setting in which this happened.

*The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*

When the United Nations system replaced the interwar League of Nations after the war, the ECE was the first regional economic organization the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) founded on 28 March 1947. The aims of this intergovernmental organization were to facilitate the reconstruction of Europe, to raise the level of economic activity and to strengthen mutual economic relations among all European countries. Given the fact that transport issues ranked high on the political agenda in the post-war period, the resolution founding the Commission asked specific attention for the European transport situation. Arrangements for absorbing ECITO’s tasks were made at the second session of the ECE in July 1947 and ECITO was subsequently dissolved on 29 September 1947.

The ECE would become the official successor organization of the Communications and Transit Organisation of the League of Nations. As noted above the latter’s work had focused on Europe with regard to road traffic. Formally there would now be a distinction between dealing with transport matters on a world level by the UN and dealing with them on a European scale in the ECE. On the global level the UN had founded a Temporary Transport and Communications Commission by resolution in February 1946. Its tasks were to make recommendations on the definitive composition of a full Commission and determine its terms of reference.

---


33 Simultaneously ECOSOC created the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), following up on a resolution of the General Assembly (11 December 1946) that recommended its establishment.

34 Part B of the resolution asked specific attention for transport, drawing ECE’s attention to the first report by the Transport and Communications Commission (TCC) on European inland transport requesting the organization *inter alia* to meet with transport experts of member and other European governments in order to formulate recommendations.


36 Most clearly on this latter point, see J.E. Wheeler, "The international machinery of European transport and communications," attached to Wheeler to Lukač, 6 October 1942, registry file 9A, box R-4264, LoN.
It devoted particular attention to the work already done by other organizations and the transfer of tasks from the Communications and Transit Organisation, not only to itself, but also to other bodies when it deemed this appropriate. Thus overlap with the work of other organizations should be prevented.\textsuperscript{37}

An essential characteristic of the ECE was that it was an all-European organization in which the East and the West sat together to discuss seemingly uncontroversial technical subjects. The ECE itself did not fail to underline this characteristic. The ECE’s fortieth anniversary commemorative volume pointed out that thanks to the ECE

“The vital link between the eastern and western parts of the region was maintained, however tenuously, through the annual plenary sessions of the Commission attended by all participating countries, and by the secretariat which systematically reported on the economic situation and developments in the entire region.”\textsuperscript{38}

Scholars shared this opinion. According to Jean Siotis the annual plenary meetings provided the only regular multilateral setting that brought together all European countries and the United States to discuss their economic relations.\textsuperscript{39} This is not to say that relations between East and West within the ECE were always harmonious. Tenuous relations prevailed at times, exacerbated by the fact that the Soviets in the beginning used the organization to slander Yankee imperialism. It made the United States rather skeptical about the ECE’s usefulness.\textsuperscript{40} Yet to differing degrees at different moments in time cooperation did materialize. Moreover American diplomats had to accept that European governments warm-heartedly supported the organization precisely because of the link it established with the Soviet satellite states. This made the ECE the place \textit{par excellence} where détente became visible whenever it occurred.

The personality of the Swede Gunnar Myrdal, the first secretary-general of the organization (1947-1957), played no small role in this. Myrdal was deeply troubled by rising East-West antagonism and made an effort to overcome it. He actively sought to promote East-West cooperation in his organization, much to the dismay

\textsuperscript{37} Tomlinson to Lukač, 25 February 1946, registry file 9A, box R-4264, LoN. Branko Lukač had already proposed the institution of a Temporary Transport and Communications Commission in January 1946, underlining the need to avoid overlap, see Branko Lukač, “Suggestions,” January 1946, LoN.


\textsuperscript{40} Phillips to Cohan, 31 October 1951, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State (hereafter: RG 59), Records of Offices Responsible for European Affairs, Lot file 54D388, box 23, National Archives at College Park, Maryland, United States (hereafter: NACP).
of the United States that found him too lenient towards the Soviet Union. Myrdal’s long time personal assistant Melvin Fagen considered the comprehensive participation from all European countries a major innovative principle Myrdal had been able to establish over the course of the organization’s first decade.41

The ECE’s program of work comprised all sectors of the European economy. The organization soon established a reputation as an excellent source for reliable economic data from both sides of the Iron Curtain. The ECE published thorough long-term economic surveys on a yearly basis starting in 1948.42 Its studies were of high academic quality and the Secretariat could undertake studies and publish the results almost without interference from the member states. The level of its output, unparalleled at the time, was surely also the result of the fact that the ECE pumped a lot of money into it.43 Even the American government praised its quality. Apart from the general economic and statistical surveys the organization performed in Europe, it also did a large amount of work in specific fields of expertise for which it installed a host of technical committees.

Myrdal considered the committees the main pillars of the ECE. Together with the Coal Committee, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) was among the first the ECE established in October 1947 soon after the ECE had begun its work.44 The ITC dealt with the tasks assigned to the ECE in matters of mobility. Inland transport was defined in such a way that it included transport by railroad, road, inland waterway and pipeline, but explicitly excluded civil aviation and maritime shipping for which universal organizations on a worldwide level were deemed more appropriate.45 As has been noted above, the ITC sponsored more meetings than

43 The ‘academic’ character of the ECE contrasted with the politically more influential OEEC, Lincoln Gordon, “The Organization for European Economic Cooperation,” International Organization 10, no. 1 (1956): 1, 3. In 1954 the costs for economic analysis amounted to a quarter of ECE’s budget and thus usurped its largest share. Together with the costs for producing statistics, economic analysis was placed under ‘general activities’ and the two consumed over 40% of the organization’s budget, see ECE, The Commission’s Programme of Work for 1954/1955, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/182, 20 January 1954, Appendix A, “Approximate budgetary costs of major fields of activity of the ECE – 1954.”
44 Fagen, “Gunnar Myrdal,” 428-429.
any other ECE body and received the largest budget of the ECE committees. In his study of the ECE, Wightman therefore noted

“By comparison with the other Committees of ECE, the Inland Transport Committee is something of an empire in itself; no other Committee has so many subsidiary bodies, calls so many meetings or produces so many documents.”

The ITC dedicated itself to general, overarching European transport issues. In fact it decided to restrict its attention exclusively to general transport policy at its ninth session in July 1952, specifying under that heading themes like investment, tariffs, transport costs, the coordination of transport, the international comparability of statistics, and accountancy. It also decided to favor long-term over short-term questions. The ITC created sub-committees to deal with each individual mode of inland transport. It set up ad hoc sub-committees to temporarily study more specific issues concerning one or more modes. The modal sub-committees themselves also created a range of working parties investigating particular topics.

At its first meeting the ITC extensively discussed matters of international road transport. Swiss representative Raphael Cottier was the first to suggest the ITC should create a road sub-committee, a proposal immediately supported by the Dutch representative Jan Oyevaar. The American delegate Russell McClure underlined that in the short term road transport formed a partial solution easing some of the problems emanating out of the post-war situation and proposed a draft resolution calling for the set-up of a working party that could examine what role road transport should come to play. The ITC decided to install two ad hoc working groups for road transport, one dealing with short-term problems, the other with long-term problems.

The working party on long-term problems drew up a report in which it meticulously studied the work done before the Second World War by the League of Nations and important INGOs like the ICC and the AIACR. The working party concluded that many road transport issues had been taken up during the Interbellum, but

46 UN, In the service of Europe: Ten years of international cooperation in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (New York: UN, 1957), 25. In 1954 the ITC had the highest budget estimate of the ECE’s technical committees. The ITC’s expected budget of US$ 230,300 was more than 70% higher than the estimate for the Coal Committee, the second highest, see ECE, The Commission’s Programme of Work for 1954/1955. The budget items ‘economic analysis’ and ‘statistics’ consumed the largest share of the budget.
48 ECE, 8th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/153-E, 27 January 1953, 14-15. This decision was probably a response to simultaneous developments at the Council of Europe.
they had not resulted in concrete measures facilitating international road transport. The breadth of the work that the working party deemed necessary justified the appointment of a permanent sub-committee for road transport in which all member countries should be allowed to participate. Non-UN member countries directly affected by European road traffic should be given the possibility to associate themselves with the work of the committee. The ITC embraced the recommendation of the working party on long-term problems and at its second session in February 1948 set up a Sub-Committee for Road Transport (hereafter: Road Committee) “to consider and deal with matters essentially concerning road transport.” The establishment of a railway equivalent followed suit, but it would take until 1957 before the ITC established a Sub-Committee on Inland Transport.

The Road Committee held its first session on 17 March 1948, electing the Dutch representative Vonk as its chair. It carved up its work and divided it among an initial set of four working parties, in which groups of specialists prepared a policy on specific topics. The Working Party on Highways decided which routes should be especially equipped for international traffic. The Working Party on Road Traffic Conditions prioritized the discussions on the obligatory conditions for vehicles and drivers and the associated documentation (vehicle certificates, driving licenses, etcetera). Its second priority concerned road signs and the rules of the road. The Working Party on Customs Formalities dealt with both private and commercial traffic, while the Working Party dealing with Legal Questions studied road transport contracts as well as questions of liability and compulsory insurance for motorists.

The ECE’s pan-European approach made it different from other organizations, but it also made it vulnerable. Whenever the East-West conflict soured, cooperation through the ECE framework became tenuous and stalled. Siotis warned this made studying the organization a hazardous affair. For political reasons the paper trail of ECE’s history can only display the political feuds and differences of opinion up to a certain limit without showing the full depth of the political conflict.

What was true for the ECE as a whole also applied to its constituent parts. Just as East-West relations are the key to understanding the ECE in general, they had a

54 Siotis, The ECE, 12.
significant impact on ECE activities in the field of transport. Yet not all was bipolar antagonism in the ITC. Notwithstanding American misgivings about the ECE as a whole, it was helpful that the United States looked favorably upon the ITC’s work. Further thaw came when Soviet obstruction of the ECE ended in March 1954. In November that year Soviet representatives participated in the ITC for the first time. This opened new venues for the ITC. For example, issues concerning inland waterways were only taken up in November 1954, when countries from both sides of the Iron Curtain agreed on including them in the program of work of the ITC.

In subsequent years the ITC devoted more explicit attention to East-West relations. In 1957 its report to the ECE included for the first time a section on “Development of contacts between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe.” The ITC highlighted its East-West exchange function for information of various types. More concretely the Transport Division stimulated East-West contacts through study trips of rail, road, and inland waterway experts from the Soviet Union and Poland to infrastructure projects in Belgium, France and Switzerland in 1956. As a counter gesture, the Soviet Union invited representatives from these host countries to visit the Soviet Union, resulting in a 1958 study tour of road and motor experts from Belgium, France, Italy, and Switzerland and the Transport Division director.

By that time the ECE was no longer the only organization dealing with European transport. Earlier tensions within the ECE had provided other organizations with an opportunity to usurp some of the terrain the latter considered its own in the field of transport. The ECE became an important player in shaping post-war European mobility patterns, but various contenders rivaled it over time. The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) became the most important. The next section depicts how this organization eventually emerged out of the framework formed in relation to the Marshall Plan.

“M-aid for motorways:” the Marshall Plan and motorized mobility

Post-war reconstruction was challenging, to put it mildly. By late 1946 and especially over the course of the harsh European winter of 1947, there were increasing...
worries in the United States that the pace of European recovery was slackening. In order to overcome this undesirable situation, running counter to American interests, the American government embarked on the unprecedented European Recovery Program (ERP), remembered today as the Marshall Plan.

American Secretary of State George C. Marshall launched his Plan in a speech at Harvard University on 5 June 1947. The Marshall Plan has been the object of a lively academic debate, which cannot be represented here in any depth. This section restricts itself to discussing the mobility aspects of the Marshall Plan. For one, the ERP formed a huge logistic operation in which goods were transferred from the United States to Europe and within Europe itself. In addition, Marshall funds were used for investment in European production capacity for mobile equipment, transport infrastructure and training specialized personnel in the transport sector through the technical assistance program that formed part of the ERP.

Thus the program could become a vehicle for the conscious or unconscious promotion of American ideas on mobility in Europe. In this context it is not unimportant that Paul Hoffman became a key figure in the ERP. American president Harry Truman appointed the former president of the Studebaker company (1935-1948) to head the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA). The 1948 Foreign Assistance Act created this specialized governmental agency to keep oversight of the Marshall Plan from Washington. Its European look-alike was the Office of the Special Representative (OSR) in Paris. Its location ensured close contact with the European institutions that came in the wake of the Marshall Plan, which had their seat in the French capital.

When Marshall formulated his Plan at Harvard, he stated that the initiative should lie with Europe. Nevertheless, there were certain tacit assumptions about the response. For example, American policy makers deemed good transport facilities essential to secure a return on their huge investment in Europe through the ERP. In that context transport was identified as a bottleneck, possibly preventing the Marshall Plan from having success. Yet American and European opinions on good transport facilities differed considerably. This became apparent from

---

60 This was not the first instance at which the option of such an aid programme was discussed. On 8 May of that same year, Under-Secretary of State Dean Acheson had hinted at the programme, James Chace, “Marshall and Acheson: Extraordinary partners,” Foreign Affairs 76, no. 3 (1997): 191-194.


62 For further details, see Frank Schipper, “Changing the face of Europe: European road mobility during the Marshall Plan years,” Journal of Transport History 28, no. 2 (2007): 211-228.
the response the sixteen countries participating in the program formulated to
Marshall’s initiative. They joined forces in the Committee for European Economic
Cooperation (CEEC) under guidance of France and the United Kingdom and de-
levered a report in autumn 1947. It consisted of a general part and more specific
technical reports concerning specific sectors, one of them being inland trans-
port.63

The CEEC Report fell short of American expectations. The sections devoted
to inland transport made clear that the general European aim was to restore the
railway sector, while road-based transport remained virtually absent. Marshall
Planners thought highway transport should have a larger part, as it did in the
United States.64 If we consider Hogan’s claim that American policy makers were
convinced that Europe’s best course was to resemble the United States as much
as possible, then this necessarily meant that the share of road transport should be
increased.65 Marshall Planners considered road transport more flexible than both
rail and inland waterway transport in the difficult post-war circumstances.

The Marshall Plan machinery subsequently sought to enhance the role of road
transport, using both subtle and more overt means to achieve this aim. The central
player spreading the gospel of the road was the Transport Section of the Industry
Division of the OSR. Several American representatives involved in the Marshall
Plan machinery simultaneously represented the United States in transport matters
at the ECE, enabling them to work through different diplomatic channels in Paris
and Geneva if necessary.

They employed several mechanisms to support road-based mobility. Road ve-
hicles were transported to Europe, although the CEEC Report had not requested
any. In some countries, notably Greece and Turkey, there was a road construct-
program with heavy American involvement in the projects’ finance, the ma-
chinery used for constructing the roads and the accompanying transfer of road-
building knowledge. American policy makers advertised the American regime for
interstate road transport governed by the Interstate Commerce Commission as a
model for Europe. Some key American policy makers were important in achiev-
ing the so-called freedom of the road agreements in late 1947 (see chapter seven).
Marshall Planners were also actively involved in attracting American tourists to

1947). The transport part of the report can be found in Vol. II, Technical Reports, 227ff., section F, Inland
Transport.
64 “Certain aspects of the European recovery problem,” 23 July 1947, 16, Clark Clifford Papers, box 5, Tru-
man Library, Independence, Missouri, United States (hereafter: Truman Library).
65 Michael J. Hogan, The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the reconstruction of Western Europe,
the Old World. The proclaimed need to adapt to the American tourist along with their growing numbers created subtle pressure to provide taxi services, car-hire facilities, an adequate system of long-distance bus connections – and good roads.66

The Marshall Plan provided fertile ground for INGOs to further their interests. Stimulated by its American members, the ICC vociferously promoted road transport within the European Recovery Program.67 As Secretary of State Marshall was giving his speech at Harvard University, the ICC held its first post-war congress in Montreux (2-7 June 1947). It underlined the crucial importance of the restoration of transport and called for the elimination of barriers to international traffic. Highway traffic had been able to expand due to shortages in other transport sectors in the direct post-war period. The ICC claimed that the time had now come to put road transport on equal footing with rail transport, claiming it should “benefit from the system of international transit that had been granted to railways many years ago.”68

The most vocal proponent of more and better roads was without doubt the International Road Federation (IRF).69 The IRF established an office in London in 1948 under chairmanship of Georges Gallienne, who had worked for Peugeot, General Motors and Renault between 1919 and 1945 (see Figure 5.1). As a key person in the Union Routière de France, Gallienne moved to Paris when the IRF set up an office there in 1951. The IRF did not waste a chance to promote the construction of roads. In relation to the Marshall Plan the IRF reprinted a vigorous plea for M-aid for motorways in a 1948 issue of its London Bulletin.70 Marshall Planners were interested in enlisting its cooperation too. In fact Douglas M. Clarke, the American road transport advisor at the OSR in Paris, became the chief executive heading the IRF office in Paris from its creation in 1951 until his retirement on 1 January 1960, when André Rumpler succeeded him.71 Clarke’s career shows just how much the stories of the IRF and the Marshall Plan were intertwined.

---

66 For further details on each of these subjects, see Schipper, “Changing.”
71 Clarke first appeared as chief executive on the frontispiece of Road International 3 (Winter 1951), when the Paris Office was still in formation; “New director general for the I.R.F. Paris office,” Road International 35 (Winter 1959/60): 21.
To strengthen cooperation among the European participants in the Marshall Plan, the temporary CEEC became the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) on 16 April 1948. Like the ECE, the OEEC set up vertical committees to deal with particular subjects, among others an Inland Transport Committee (ITC) chaired by the Briton Brigadier Walter. He considered the ITC-ECE a body for conducting preparatory studies rather than anything else. In contrast, the ITC-OEEC portrayed itself as a body of action, yet it met only twice during 1950-1951.\(^7\) In practical terms the technical assistance missions authorized under the Marshall Plan for transport and communications or in the field of tourism formed the most tangible outcome of the work of the OEEC in the field of mobility.

In late 1949 the ECA proposed to send a mission of experts to attend courses on highway improvement and utilization from mid-May to mid-September 1950. Thus European inland transport could benefit from the latest improvements in American technology. After five weeks of introduction and orientation participating engineers received specialist training regarding anything from highway administration to the

\(^7\) "Memorandum by Secretary General on programme of work of the inland transport committee," CE/M(51)26, 24 August 1951, fonds OEEC, file 133.26, HAEU.
study of physical road structures. They took a field trip every Friday to study roads in their natural habitat. In addition the apprentices toured around various parts of the United States for five weeks after the end of their courses to have a closer look at “typical projects under a wide variety of topographic and climatological conditions.” After a week-long evaluation in Washington, the engineers returned home to put what they had learned into practice. The mission was repeated in 1951.73

In institutional terms, the mission that had the largest long-term impact was without doubt Technical Assistance mission 103 to study the organization and regulation of inland transport in the United States, and particularly the role of the Interstate Commerce Commission therein.74 The Mission left for the United States in March 1952. Participants were impressed how the Interstate Commerce Commission successfully mitigated the interests of the individual states and those of the union. Similar arrangements might be fruitful in Europe, where the relationship between member states and IGOs was always a sensitive subject. Specialized and separate governmental agencies, rather than the Interstate Commerce Commission, handled infrastructure. For road infrastructure this was the Bureau of Public Roads.75 The mission also visited several sites related to the transport business. Gawking at the Union Motor Bus Terminal in New York City the mission noted that it

“was deeply impressed by the motor carriers’ dynamic approach to transport problems and by their awareness of their share in the responsibility of providing a flexible transport system, adaptable to the changing needs of an expanding economy.”76

Upon return the specialists who had participated in the mission jointly presented a report of their findings from across the Atlantic to the OEEC. Although Europe lacked many of the American institutions, they concluded that it would be a good idea to organise the transport sector in Europe similarly to the one in the United States and also along the lines of the recently established European Coal and Steel Community (ESCC). They recommended calling a conference at an early date to

73 ECA covered the costs of the courses and also paid participants a daily allowance of US$ 12, see “Despatch of experts to the United States,” C(50)61, 27 February 1950, fonds OEEC, file 1049; Executive Committee, “Minutes 172nd meeting, 20 and 24 April 1951,” CE/M(51)15, fonds OEEC, file 131.15, HAEU.
75 On the BPR, see Bruce E. Seely, Building the America highway system: Engineers as policy makers (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).
76 OEEC, Federal, 43.
discuss the idea. The OEEC Council took over this recommendation and installed a working party to prepare the conference.\textsuperscript{77}

Three ad hoc conferences took place between March and June 1953. In January 1953 the French transport minister Morice had already taken the initiative to invite eight countries to come to Paris to discuss transport issues. The meetings concluded that the multiplicity of international organizations had resulted in a hodgepodge of overlapping competences. Europe needed an organization to provide some badly needed coordination in the activities of these actors.\textsuperscript{78} This view put the new organization a priori at odds with the organizations of which the new institution was supposed to coordinate the work, including the ITC-ECE.

\textit{The European Conference of Ministers of Transport}

On 17 October 1953 the European Conference of Ministers of Transport was founded in Brussels with the usual pump and circumstance. Although at the rhetorical level the organization underlined its supposedly inclusionary aims,\textsuperscript{79} there can be no doubt that an exclusionary logic formed the rationale for its foundation. The ECMT dealt with exactly the same issues as the ECE.\textsuperscript{80} Their membership was the main difference. The ECE had members from across the continent and made establishing connections across the Iron Curtain the central goal of its organization. The ECMT was basically restricted to the non-communist part of Europe. Interestingly it included Spain, a country that was an outcast at the time and had not yet become a member of the United Nations and therefore did not participate in the work of the ECE.\textsuperscript{81}

The exclusion of Eastern Europe was a conscious move. Some countries shied away from potential complications implied in working through the ECE machinery.\textsuperscript{82}

For those European countries wanting to move their cooperation in certain policy

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{78} Morice invited the ECSC countries, Austria and Switzerland for the meeting in Paris. ECMT, \textit{First report of the activities of the conference} (Paris: ECMT, 1955), 11.


\textsuperscript{80} Siotis, \textit{The ECE}, 44, note 72.

\textsuperscript{81} Spain joined the UN in on 14 December 1955. Spanish membership of the ECMT made it necessary to associate Spain with the OEEC through a liaison committee ensuring Spain could participate in OEEC work with regard to inland transport or the ECMT, see OEEC Council, “Minutes 250th meeting, 27 April 1954,” C/M(54)14; “Memorandum on the association of Spain in the work of the organisation on matters of European inland transport,” 20 April 1954, C(54)109; “Minutes 252nd meeting, 21 May 1954,” C/M(54)16, fonds OEEC, file 1179, HAEU.

\textsuperscript{82} Executive Committee, “Minutes 224\textsuperscript{th} meeting, 2 October 1952,” CE/M(52)25, fonds OEEC, file 138.25, HAEU.
\end{footnotesize}
areas forward, it was therefore necessary to set up a separate structure excluding the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Only then could they move ahead without the complications of members obstructing technical discussions for political purposes (like the Soviet Union) or those that most probably did want to cooperate, but could not do so given the geopolitical circumstances (like Czechoslovakia and Poland). Apart from differences between the ECE and the ECMT in terms of membership, it should also be noted that the latter organization had a Council of Ministers, which was absent in the former. Having the ministers responsible for transport sit together at regular intervals gave the ECMT a higher status and potentially speeded up the decision-making process, as those politically responsible were directly involved.

Thus the creation of the ECMT was in part a reaction to the ECE. Simultaneously it also was a response to important developments in the field of European transport.

Figure 5.2 – Chateau de la Muette, Paris
Source: OEEC, At work for Europe: An account of the activities of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, 3rd edition (Paris: Chateau de la Muette, 1956), 4. The Chateau served as the location for every second conference of ministers and also housed the OEEC headquarters.
in the early 1950s. When the French minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman announced the intention to create a European Coal and Steel Community in May 1950, many were convinced this was only the first step in a series of similar arrangements for other economic sectors. Many considered the transport sector a prime candidate in this respect.\(^8^3\) Thus in August 1950 Édouard Bonnefous proposed the creation of a European Transport Authority as a supreme decision-making body. At the time Bonnefous was president of the Special Committee for Transport of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Authority should have the necessary supranational powers not only to shape a common European transport policy, but also have the financial means at its disposal through member states’ contributions to help finance works of European interest, such as tunnels under the Channel and the Strait of Gibraltar, and eventually create a common European transport system in participating countries.\(^8^4\)

Bonnefous’ proposal struck a sensitive chord with the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Schuman Plan impinged on the Assembly’s self-image as Europe’s most comprehensive political body. A second force driving Bonnefous’ proposal was the general dissatisfaction with the achievements of the ITC-OEEC. He submitted a blueprint for the Authority on 24 January 1951 along the lines of the High Authority of the ECSC.\(^8^5\) The Authority’s supranational character was unacceptable to the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries and to overcome the resulting deadlock, at least for the time being, Assembly president Paul-Henri Spaak forwarded the Bonnefous Plan to the Committee on Economic Questions.\(^8^6\)

The latter Committee set up a sub-committee of representatives from the national transport ministries. The sub-committee drew up the Van de Kieft Plan, named after the Dutch social democrat who served as its chair. Instead of an Authority, the Plan proposed a European Transport Office, a coordination forum that would study and recommend on European transport matters. Van de Kieft’s approach was decidedly liberal and put transport policy squarely within the competence of mobility experts. Although he retained some supranational elements, Van de Kieft watered down Bonnefous’ proposal significantly.\(^8^7\) In contrast to the

---


\(^8^5\) “Memorandum,” 24 August 1951, HAEU.


\(^8^7\) M. van de Kieft, “Report on the establishment of a European Transport Office,” 17 November 1951, AS(3)66, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/2/26-10278, UNOG.
Authority’s broad decision-making powers, the European Transport Office would only recommend on transport coordination. Bonnefous considered it a fundamental flaw in the set-up of the Office, which would become too much of a clone of existing organizations:

“Il n’est guère besoin de démontrer que la création d’un nouvel organe de coordination n’apporterait pas de solution au problème des Transports européens.”

Van de Kieft’s brainchild did not prosper. The Consultative Assembly decided eventually to recommend only a European Inland Transport Council as proposed by the French Gaullist Maurice Lemaire, then president of the Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC) and former director of the French Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer. The proposal intended to counteract article 70 of the ECSC Treaty, the legal basis for binding member states to tariffs for coal and steel. This ran counter to common practice in France and Germany to make the aspects of transport policy part of social and regional policies. The Assembly could adopt Lemaire’s project because it lowered its more ambitious predecessors to the lowest possible common denominator. Moreover, the Assembly considered the proposal an opportunity to broaden the scope of European transport policy beyond the six ECSC states.

As a consultative body devoid of substantial powers, adoption of the Lemaire Plan did not result in the creation of a serious contender on the European road transport scene. When the ECMT came into being, the Council of Europe abandoned its transport initiatives and positioned itself in the role of a parliamentary body assessing the executive decisions taken by the Council of Ministers in the ECMT. Each annual report contained a reference to the presentation of the ECMT’s annual report at the Council of Europe, and the resolution issued by the Council of Europe’s Consultative Assembly in response. Thus the Council of Europe sought to transfer some of its democratic aura to the Paris institution.

A more antagonistic relation developed with the ECE in Geneva, though this was not intended in advance, but probably an emergent unintended consequence. The ECMT provocatively started to advise the ECE. The first ECMT resolutions were almost purely concerned with work the ECE had done in the past. ECMT resolutions were subdivided per mode of transport. The first six resolutions on

---

88 Bonnefous, L’Europe, 218. Translation “It is hardly necessary to demonstrate that the creation of a new coordination organ would not bring a solution to the problem of European transport.”
89 The UIC was established in 1919 in Paris as an INGO of railway administrations.
90 Foch to Charguéraud-Hartmann, 30 September 1952, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/26-10278, UNOG; Henrich-Franke, “Mobility.”
road transport all referred to important work of the ECE. The first resolution concerned the main international traffic arteries. It testified of the competitive relationship between the ECMT and the ECE on many transport issues. Not being able to agree on a clear division of tasks acceptable to both, the inevitable result was a considerable overlap of their activities despite the fact that they were often mutually represented at each other’s meetings to prevent this. At the same time, the ECE was an organization strong enough to respond firmly to the ECMT’s impingements on its terrain of work.

In contrast, the creation of the ECMT had rendered the position of the OEEC’s own ITC untenable. The ITC-OEEC was subordinated to an executive committee and therefore had little independent maneuvering space. After the ECMT was established, the ITC-OEEC muddled through until it was abolished in 1956 due to the overlap with the ECMT. Yet general OEEC-ECMT relations were splendid. The OEEC was in a way the ECMT’s mother organization. More importantly, the OEEC took care of housing the ECMT and covered its administrative costs. This meant that the ECMT secretariat, although independent with regard to the content of its work, was directly dependent on the financial support of the OEEC for its survival.

To distinguish itself from the ECE and others, the ECMT tried to move into road transport topics that other organizations did not manage. Probably the most important road related issue in that respect was road safety. The ECMT has concerned itself with various aspects of this issue, including the coordination of traffic rules and the attempt to establish a European Highway Code. The prominent position of road safety, as well as the prominence of road transport issues vis-à-vis other modes, becomes clear from analyzing the resolutions of the organization. In the period 1953-1989 the council issued fifty-three resolutions on road traffic, twenty-four on rail traffic, and only eleven on inland waterways traffic. Of the fifty-three explicitly road-related resolutions, thirty-five or 66% related to road safety, covering issues ranging from seat belts to the role of alcohol in traffic accidents. Moreover, while most of the sixty-nine general resolutions were multimodal in character, twenty of them were in fact restricted to road traffic too.

91 Siotis, The ECE, 44, supra note 72.
93 When the OEEC was dissolved in 1961 its successor organization, the OECD, became the new maecenas for the ECMT secretariat.
Conclusion

Various organizations co-existed, providing many arenas for discussion when it came to shaping the European transport scene after the Second World War. If we restrict ourselves to all-encompassing IGOs dealing with both infrastructure issues and matters of network operation in Europe for all modes of inland transport, two institutional complexes emerged out of the rubble of the war (see Figure 5.3).

Within each of these institutional settings transport came to play a primordial role. The ITC became one of the ECE's most active components at the Palais des Nations, building upon the fruitful work of ECITO. In an initial stage it was the single heir of the work of the League of Nations in the field of communications and transit and had positioned itself as an adequate forum to discuss European inland transport. But where the League of Nations managed to concentrate international negotiations in relation to transport matters in Geneva, in the Cold War world of the post-war divergent forces prevented the ECE from playing the same role. The
Marshall Plan became a western European affair and resulted in the creation of the Paris-based OEEC. Yet despite ample attention for transport matters in the Marshall Plan, the ITC-OEEC was by no means the equal of its counterpart in Geneva. This is perfectly in line with the assertions of participating countries. As the CEEC was formulating a response to Marshall's initiative it showed no sign it wanted a more exclusively Western European competitor of the ECE, and it kept in close contact with the latter during the 1947 Paris conference in order to prevent duplication of work.95

Triggered by the launch of transport concerns in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe, the OEEC sent a technical assistance mission to the United States to study the functioning of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Stimulated again by an initiative of French transport minister Morice, who organized a conference of the ECSC countries plus Austria and Switzerland in Paris in January 1952, the OEEC thus stood at the cradle of the ECMT. Though the ECMT would remain independent from the OEEC, the mutual ties were close, if only because the ECMT budget came out of that for the OEEC and the latter took care of housing the organization in Paris.

After some unsuccessful attempts at transport integration, the Council of Europe durably linked its own work in the field of transport to that of the ECMT. Thus the ECE and the ECMT became the two main remaining contenders. Who would prevail in shaping post-war European mobility patterns, continental infrastructures and the accompanying regulatory regimes? Both institutional settings worked hard to become the one. Through its earlier start the ECE had taken the lead in some areas, being the first to draw up a series of international agreements in the field of transport. Moreover, it could catapult discussions towards a worldwide level through its position in the UN machinery. The ECMT had the important advantage of being more homogeneous and less sensitive to East-West frictions and also had the benefit of the direct involvement of transport ministers.

Thus a complex competitive-cooperative pattern emerged, each organization trying to find out which characteristics made it different from the others. Eventually each covered some policy niches (for the most part) not touched by the others. A clear example is how the OEEC dealt with tourism, for which it installed a vertical committee and a European Travel commission. Tourism was a less prominent activity in the ECE or the ECMT, thus the OEEC would become the place to discuss it. Through joint publicity campaigns in the United States and an office in New York, the organization became well positioned for discussions

95 "Washington Conversations on European Economic Co-operation," USD/43, 27 October 1947, President's Committee on Foreign Aid 1947, box 3, Truman Library.
Setting the stage – The parade of organizations, 1942-1953

The balance was different for each individual subject.

Above all it should be noted that the efforts of the ITC-ECE and the ECMT were not divided equally among modes of transport, but concentrated on road-based mobility right from the start and much more prominently than had been the case during the Interbellum for other organizations. The primordial importance of road transport becomes apparent, for example, from the analysis of the resolutions of the ECMT presented above. Post-war conditions were conducive to this state of affairs. An additional stimulus came from the unremitting, vocal support of INGOs, particularly the IRF and the IRU.

Thus road transport became an important potential bone of contention among the various organizations. In which organizations specific road-related discussions took place was not a neutral affair. Differences in membership put a priori geographic restrictions on agreements. The ECE was usually the most encompassing among its peers, but Spain was not a member of the UN until the mid-1950s, while it did participate in the ECMT from 1953 onwards, aided by American support and geopolitical interests and despite resistance in various European countries.

A final factor adding to an already complex picture was that INGOs remained deeply involved in the international policy process regarding road traffic, just like during the Interbellum. But where their attention had gradually shifted, rather exclusively, towards the League of Nations in the period between the wars, now the co-existence of different IGOs provided just as many platforms for furthering their interests. They therefore participated in all, although they also cautioned against too much proliferation.

The next two chapters highlight the debates on European road networks and proposed regimes for their operation arising out of this messy institutional setting. Chapter six discusses the E-road network, the main successor to the failed Interbellum dreams of continental networks. The chapter shows the various particularities of the E-road network, the revisions it underwent and its overall development. The chapter ends with a short case study of the construction of roads in the Balkans as part of the broader European project. As seen earlier, the Balkans

---

96 “The I.C.C. Proposes...,” *World Trade* 23, no. 6-7 (1957): 13. The complaint was not restricted to INGOs. Janssen claimed it would be regrettable to have organizations existing alongside one another that basically performed the same tasks, Janssen, *De Internationale*, 35. In the meantime governmental officials complained about the proliferation of INGOs, particularly American officials who were not used to dealing with so many organizations. Douglas Clarke remarked “There are hundreds of doctors’ associations, insurance associations, and police associations in Europe, and what I think is needed is to group them under an organization such as the National Safety Council in the United States,” Clarke to McClure, 30 October 1950, RG 84: Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Switzerland, US representative to the Economic Commission for Europe, Classified and Unclassified ECE and ECA files 1947-1951 (hereafter: US representative to ECE), box 8, NACP.
had for a long time been in a peripheral backwater when it came to road networks, but after the Second World War the ECE, backed up by the IRF, made a major attempt to turn it into an integral part of the European road network.

Chapter seven shows that after the Second World War proposals for networks and use became much more entangled than had been the case during the Interbellum. In the latter period European road network plans and proposed regimes for their use remained somewhat separate. Under post-war conditions most recovering states mobilized road transport to partially solve the dire transport situation. The so-called freedom of the road agreements temporarily formalized these liberalized conditions, but soon thereafter discussions started on a permanent regulatory regime. The chapter then zooms in on two more specific aspects of the resulting regulatory regime until roughly 1960. The first concerns international road passenger transport and deals with the creation of long-distance bus services. The second concerns international road freight transport and discusses the attempt to agree on common weights and dimensions for trucks in Europe.
Chapter 6
Roads to Europe – The E-road network, 1950-2007

Get your kicks on the E3

"The map shows yet another pan-European face, namely the formation of European unity through a common road network."

Gerhard Schulz-Wittuhn (1948)¹

Under the title “Get your kicks on the E3” the Dutch journalist Tijs van den Boomen wrote a series of articles for the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad between 12 June and 28 August 1999. The series concerned the fate of the E3, one of the former arteries of the so-called E-road network. The E3 formed part of an extensive network of European main international traffic arteries spanning the continent since 1950. The Inland Transport Committee of the ECE sponsored the network. The route of the E3 was renumbered in 1975, but as one of the former large transversals of the network Boomen nevertheless wanted to trace the impact it still had today on the places it used to connect.

Boomen reconstructed the story of the E3 by traveling from Vaalimaa on the Finnish-Russian border to Lisbon. Boomen found the old E3 was still very much alive. He stumbled upon the Swedish roadside café E3 Baren, the transport firm E3 Spedition & Transport in Padborg, Denmark, the E-DRY discotheque in the Ruhr area near the German-Dutch border, and the E3 beach at a sand quarry in the Dutch village Eersel. The former artery also gave its name to the E3 Prijs Vlaanderen, a single day semi-classic bicycle race in Flanders, which had its first official edition in 1958 and is organized yearly up to today.²

The E3 also appeared in the stories of passers-by the journalist met on his quest. A former migrant worker effortlessly summed up the passage points along the E3 stretch that used to bring him from Portugal to his work at the Renault factories in Paris. A man traveling with his family to Morocco had been undertaking the journey regularly ever since 1966 when he emigrated to the Netherlands to work in a chicken slaughterhouse in the Dutch town Barneveld. In Belgium Boomen found Rogier Claerhout, who had worked in maintaining the Belgian part of the E3 after it was finalized in the early 1970s. The Belgian road worker happily presented the Dutch journalist with an E3 memorial book and a bright orange overall with the E3 sign sawn on it.

Today the E-signs decorate many roads across Europe. The 2000 census on the E-roads indicates that almost all countries had marked the large majority of their E-roads with the agreed standardized green signs. Ireland was the single notorious laggard in this respect, not having put a single sign on any of its four E-roads nor having concrete plans to do so in the near future. Yet most Europeans do not know what the signs represent. Boomen’s experience in starting up his research for the article is typical in this respect. He narrates

“It turns out to be difficult to find out when the E3 was wiped off the map, road builders prefer making plans for the future over archiving their past. The [Dutch] Ministry of Transport and Water Management initially refers to Brussels, but neither the European Union nor its predecessors have had anything to do with the road. It was the United Nations, or to be more precise the [United Nations] Economic Commission for Europe. Only the UNECE was capable of bridging the political sensitivities between Western and Eastern Europe. But the Geneva headquarters too lacks call-able knowledge on the realization of the E3. Christopher Smit, secretary of the Transport Divisions [sic] was prepared to descend ‘into the dusty cellars.’ Two weeks later an envelope plopped down my letterbox, made of brown wrapping paper that seemed to date from Kafka’s time. It contained carbon copies of typed sheets full of declarations and annexes, all neatly formulated in both French and English.”

3 UN, 2000 combined census of motor traffic and inventory of standards and parameters on main international traffic arteries in Europe (Geneva: UN, 2003), Table 8, “Status of E road signposting as of 31 December 2000,” 394-401.

4 Tijs van den Boomen, Asfaltreizen: Een verkenning van de snelweg (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij 521, 2002), 130-131. Original “Het blijkt moeilijk te achterhalen wanneer de E3 van de kaart werd gevaagd, wegenbouwers maken liever toekomstplannen dan het verleden te boekstaven. Het Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat verwijst in eerste instantie door naar Brussel, maar de Europese Unie noch haar voorlopers hebben enige bemoeienis met de weg gehad. Het blijken de Verenigde Naties te zijn geweest, de Economic Commission for Europe om precies te zijn. Alleen de UN ECE was in staat om de politieke gevoeligheden tussen West en Oost-Europa te overbruggen. Maar ook op het Geneesee hoofdkwartier ontbreekt parate kennis over de totstandkoming van de E3. Christopher Smith, secretaris van de Transport Divisions, is wel bereid (sic) om af te dalen ‘in de stoffige kelders.’ Twee weken later ploft een envelop in mijn bus, gemaakt van bruin pakpapier dat uit Kafka’s tijd lijkt te dateren.”
The anecdote contains several relevant elements. First, it highlights the role of European organizations other than the EU and its predecessors in planning European infrastructures. They have become largely invisible due to the current dominance of the EU. Second, the story of the E3 interconnects the history of large-scale infrastructures and European integration. It is significant that the network included both Eastern and Western European countries, despite the Cold War context. Thus, by studying the E-network we can get a glimpse of European integration beyond the Iron Curtain, the major divide in contemporary European history. Overcoming the East-West divide was a central goal for the ECE and its secretary-general Gunnar Myrdal in particular. In his conception transport had an important role to play in this respect. In an August 1954 statement he noted

“Our Inland Transport Committee is proud of the fact that it has been the centre for practically all the real work of European integration in the transport field accomplished since the war.”

Two recent scholarly contributions have rescued the E-road network from oblivion and constitute important steps to a better understanding of the E-road network. Gijs Mom places the E-roads in the context of the desire for long-range mobility, especially for tourism purposes. The E-road network shortly appears in his article as a post-war episode. Pär Blomkvist's “Roads for flow – Roads for peace” is more elaborate. The title of his contribution indicates the two underlying intentions of the roads of the network. Blomkvist devotes most of his attention to the “roads for flow” aspect, which refers to the influence of traffic engineering on the network. Traffic engineering was an American road-building paradigm primarily developed at Yale University's Bureau of Highway Traffic at that time. Blomkvist identifies the IRF as a key player with regard to the E-road network and its role in diffusing the paradigm in Europe through a system of generous stipends for European engineers to study in the United States. He characterizes Myrdal’s ECE as a technocratic bulwark where traffic engineering found fertile soil through its ability to technify the debate on roads. Blomkvist ends his contribution with a demonstration of how these themes played out in the case of Sweden.

It is difficult to assess the exact contribution of IRF scholarships to establishing traffic engineering as a road building paradigm in Europe. Elsewhere Blomkvist

and others convincingly show the preponderant influence in Scandinavian countries, but Scandinavia was overrepresented in Yale scholarships. Between 1949 and 1975 the IRF awarded a total of 658 scholarships, of which 158 went to European engineers, of whom 32 came from Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (see Figure 6.1). We can therefore not automatically transpose an assessment based on the Norwegian or Swedish case to other European countries. An additional problem is that the discussion on the E-road network had already started before the IRF was founded.

Nevertheless, the characterization of the E-roads as “roads for flow” is still valid. Yet in the context of this thesis the “roads for peace” aspect of the network is the more important one. Blomkvist points out that the E-roads effortlessly connected Europe from north to south and from west to east. On the map the roads served as a powerful metaphor and visual symbol for international cooperation and European identity. The large geographic reach of the E-road network is beyond dispute, yet its distribution across the continent was markedly uneven. In

---

9 Interestingly scholarships were also awarded to Eastern European students from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia.
10 This point on infrastructure maps, particularly of transport systems, has recently been made in Alexander Badenoch, “Myths of the European network: Constructions of cohesion in infrastructure maps,” in Europe materializing? Transnational infrastructures and the project of Europe in the 20th Century, ed. Alexander Badenoch and Andreas Fickers (London: Palgrave, forthcoming).
addition network maps can be deceptive in silencing barriers or suggesting connections where in fact there are none. This is a fortiori true for maps of planned networks. The considerable change of the network over time, both in terms of geographic stretch and in terms of technical characteristics, has so far remained elusive. This chapter seeks to clarify these aspects and shed light on the in- and exclusions that came in the wake of the E-road network. Only then can we discover which continent lies hidden under the surface of the main international traffic arteries.

In order to address these themes the next section deals with the E-road network of main international traffic arteries on the basis of sources at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Today the E-road network is still the most encompassing road network that Europe has or, alternatively, the road network that projects the largest Europe. In several ways it is more inclusionary than the Trans-European Transport Networks that are currently in vogue. Through continuous change in shape and extension the E-network now runs all the way to the borders of China. This chapter traces the network from its earliest conception and its early stages, through its 1975 revision until today. The chapter subsequently zooms in on a case study of what was for long a major gap in the network. A quick glance at the E-road map shows that notably in the Balkans the network did not display the same density as elsewhere in Europe. In addition developments in this region are particularly interesting from a Cold War perspective.

The E-Road network

Main international traffic arteries for Europe, 1947-1957
The concern for continental road networks reappeared soon after the end of the Second World War. Several of the failed motorway plans developed before the war and the related utopian prospects of free (auto)mobility for everyone had cast their shadows forward and caught the minds of those designing similar post-war networks, for whom they appeared as an obvious reference point. An example is the Puricelli plan from 1932, which circulated in American policy circles in its revised 1940 version.

13 "Puricelli plan 1940," RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 8, NACP.
From 1947 onwards the ECE started making similar proposals with fresh zeal. The proposals referred to a European network of trunk roads running from the northern tip of Sweden to the southern coast of Sicily suitable for high road traffic densities. As in the Interbellum plans, connecting key cities was a prime consideration. The creation of a European road network of continental dimensions was a way to literally build peace in Europe. Creating road links would increase mutual

14 "Report," 20 September 1949, 2, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 10, NACP.
contact, interdependence and thus eventually result in an increase in mutual understanding and fraternity. In order to get a grip on the exact timing of events, it is necessary to go back to the work of the ECE’s Working Party on Highways mentioned in chapter five. The terms of reference of this working party included the determination of routes to be equipped for international traffic flows, and the specification of characteristics of such routes in conjunction with the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses (PIARC). The ITC expressed the wish that the composition of the working party should be a mix of economic experts and technical specialists trained in road building, and that it should keep the door open for countries from the Middle East and North Africa.

The Dane Bang chaired the first session of the Working Party on Highways in Geneva early April 1948. The working party attached a tentative map of the main international traffic arteries to its report. To a large extent, the Europe embedded in the network sketch formed a fair representation of the countries participating in the first meeting. The preliminary network connected the Benelux, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland. Luxembourg was the only country that formed part of the network without participating in the meeting. The network reached out to the rest of Europe by including desirable roads from Berlin to Warsaw, from Bavaria to Prague, Bratislava, Budapest and ending in Beograd. An extension to Vienna and a German-Italian connection through the Brenner completed Europe’s roads.

Figure 6.2 contains an October 1948 version of this network as it appeared in the Dutch road journal Wegen.

The working party worked arduously, discussing technical characteristics and routing in the course of the next couple of years. The fruit of its work was the Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries, signed in Geneva on 16 September 1950 (hereafter: 1950 Declaration). The original five states that were party to the agreements were Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The Declaration was a straightforward

---

15 This argument is reminiscent of the argumentation brought forward by the touring clubs, see for example “Mémoire du Comité Général A.I.T./F.I.A. au sujet des problèmes routiers à long terme,” 29 December 1947, registry fonds GIX, file 12/3/3-2733, UNOG.
16 PIARC was an adequate choice for such a task. The organization dedicated itself to the exchange and diffusion of technical knowledge with regard to road-building.
19 They were later joined by Austria (1951), Greece and Sweden (1952), Norway (1953), Portugal and Turkey (1954), Germany and Italy (1957), Poland, Spain and Yugoslavia (1960), Bulgaria and Hungary (1962), Finland and Romania (1965), Denmark (1966), Ireland (1968), and Czechoslovakia (1973), Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries, of 16 September 1950, "Contracting Parties," http://www.unece.org/trans/conventn/legalinst_01_TINF_CMITA.html.
document. It kept the usual lofty phrases of preambles to a minimum, proclaiming that the signatory states were conscious of the need to develop international road traffic in Europe and that they considered it “essential, in order to establish closer relations between European countries, to lay down a coordinated plan for the construction or reconstruction of roads suitable for international traffic.”

The actual substance of the Declaration came in the three much larger annexes that followed the short text of the Declaration itself.

The first of these annexes specified the routes of the E-roads, each receiving a unique number. Numbers E1 through E30 were reserved for main traffic arteries; roads receiving a higher number were considered branch and feeder roads to the main arteries. The original Declaration specified twenty-two main routes

---

20 Declaration on the construction of main international traffic arteries, 16 September 1950, preamble, copy in registry Fonds GIX, file 12.7.1.5-14627, UNOG.
21 Although routes received a unique number in principle, they joined in with other routes on several occasions. This could lead to the assignment of double numbers along certain stretches of road.
Roads to Europe –The E-road network, 1950-2007

The E-road network, 1950-2007 (E1-E22) and sixty-two branch routes (E31-E92). The third annex laid down the characteristics of the sign used to indicate the E-roads. These were crucial for the recognition of the roads by travelers. The signs consisted of a green rectangular plate with a white inscription of an ‘E’ followed by the corresponding number of the road (see Figure 6.3).

The second annex was the largest and arguably the most important of the three. It specified the “conditions to which the main international traffic arteries shall conform,” concerning both the characteristics of the E-roads themselves (chapter A) and ancillary services that should be provided along these roads (chapter B).

E-roads came in three different categories (see Table 6.1). The second category could be roughly equated with motorways as defined in the introduction, but this was not the case for the first category. There was no one to one relationship between E-roads and motorways: not all E-roads were motorways, nor did all motorways belong to the E-road net. The third three-lane category was provisional and occurred at the time in Italy, for example.

Apart from the roads themselves, the annex stipulated that separate cycle tracks and footpaths should be provided where densities of such traffic required them. E-roads should avoid built-up areas and eventually all level crossings and intersections should be suppressed. Ancillary services also formed an important aspect

Table 6.1 – Road categories 1950 declaration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Carriageways</th>
<th>Lanes</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7 meter (6 m)</td>
<td>&lt; 600 vehicles/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 x 7 meter</td>
<td>&gt; 600 vehicles/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.50 meter (9 m)</td>
<td>not specified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1950 Declaration, annex 2. The numbers between brackets (fourth column) represent the widths allowed in exceptional cases, for example in mountainous terrain.

24 These three-lane roads had one lane for each direction, reserving the middle lane for overtaking from both sides, Massimo Moraglio, “Between industry and tourism: The case study of the Torino-Savona motorway,” Journal of Transport History 28, no. 1 (2007): 93-110.
25 A joint road-rail working party within the ITC had been trying to reach an agreement on this subject. In June 1951 it concluded that eliminating all level crossings was impracticable. Suppression should be the rule in cases of high traffic density or poor visibility, ECE, 7th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/142-E, 28 January 1952, 10-11.
of the E-roads and smoothed traffic in several respects. Four such services were specified. First, border-crossing facilities should be adequate for the expected traffic density. The Declaration recommended to establish frontier posts at the same spots on both sides of the border and to harmonize opening times. Second, parking lots along the road should be provided, especially along stretches with few access points. Provision posts, garages and places to eat and rest should also become part of the network, particularly in underdeveloped regions. Third, first aid posts should be established in accordance with the regulation of the International Federation of Red Cross Societies. Fourth, emergency telephones should be provided at regular intervals along E-roads.

Ever since the Declaration was signed, amendments shifted the location of E-routes constantly giving the network the character of a meandering river. Typically, the route would shift to a nearby itinerary once a better road had been opened there. On the amendment procedure the Declaration remained deliberately silent in order to give the Declaration “a less formal character,” according to the Legal Advisor of the ECE Secretariat. In absence of a positive statement in the text, he opined that amendments would only require the consent of signatory or acceded states.26

The maps of the E-road network accompanying the Declaration made it clear that some countries were more connected than others. Table 6.2 gives an overview of the lengths of the network in 1955. Some Eastern European countries, notably in the Balkans, were not connected at all, because they had not submitted any stretches for the network. Countries like Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania would remain white spots on the E-road map for over a decade.

The density of the network varied strongly from one country to another. The United Kingdom, among the most motorized countries of Europe in terms of car ownership, vied with Turkey for being the country with the least E-roads per square kilometer (6 m/km²). This contrasted with the density in important transit countries such as the Benelux, the Alpine countries and Germany (22-35 m/km²). The UK figures looked even bleaker when the ratio per inhabitant or vehicle was calculated. National E-road lengths depended on the roads the governments in question had submitted. However, Geneva procedures were not always clear for the outside world. In a biting article Henry Gasquet, president of the Touring Club de France (TCF), criticized the large gaps in the E-network in (western) France

26 Austria, Yugoslavia and Turkey, none of them signatory to the 1950 Declaration, raised this issue when they proposed new E-roads on their territory to be included in Annex I. See WP 17, Report 2nd session, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/TRANS/WP.17/8, 6 February 1951. To be part of the E-road network or to amend routes it was not a requirement that a country had acceded to the 1950 Declaration.
and claimed the ECE had turned his country into “un territoire vierge comme l’était encore, sur les cartes de mon enfance, le Sahara.” In his equally bitter response, the director of the ECE’s Transport Division Charguéraud-Hartmann, a Frenchman himself and long-time member of the TCE, tried to clear his organization of the implicit accusation, pointing out that the ECE depended on the input of member states.27

Gaps of the kind Gasquet complained about gradually filled up over time in a process of constant revision that resulted in a considerable densification of the network. The ECMT fulfilled an important role here. It adopted its first resolution with regard to road traffic at the same conference in Brussels (13-17 October 1953) at which the organization itself was created. The resolution concerned the E-road network and it instructed its Committee of Deputies to propose measures to effectively coordinate the international arteries, and to propose statutes for an international road financing institution.28 The resolution also amplified the network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>E-roads (km)</th>
<th>E-roads/km²</th>
<th>Persons/km E-road</th>
<th>Cars/km E-road</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1,877</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>5,217</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6,675</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5,968</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2,425</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>3,130</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6,671</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>7,100</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2,140</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>7,150</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4,271</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>6,555</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3,805</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>4,835</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>4,320</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>32,800</td>
<td>2,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>49,485</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.011</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRF, Main international traffic arteries, brochure ‘Europe no. 2’ (1955), registry fonds GIX, file 12/1/32-12168, UNOG.

27 Henry Gasquet, “Un défi à la géographie,” extract from La Revue du Touring-Club de France no. 589 (September-October 1949); Charguéraud-Hartmann to Gasquet, 1 November 1949, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/2/9-6069, UNOG. Translation “an untouched territory like the Sahara was still on the maps from my childhood.”

28 “Road transport, resolution 1 on the development of international traffic arteries,” ECMT, Resolutions 1 (1953), 33-34. In its sixth resolution the Council observed that border crossing facilities were not wholly adequate along all E-routes, resulting in traffic congestion and considerable delays. It recommended to re-equip frontier posts where possible.
with E-roads across the Iberian Peninsula. While not yet a member of the United Nations (and hence not of the ECE), Spain did participate in the ECMT.

Finance was crucial for turning the expensive long-distance European arteries of the E-road network into a reality. To prevent trouble a very simple principle formed the point of departure for designing the network: apart from having international significance the designated E-roads should also represent “a paramount national interest.” Consequently the appropriate principle for financing the network would be that each country financed its own sections. The main function of the international discussions thus became to coordinate national plans to ensure they would match at the borders and to establish a joint scheme of priorities.29 To guarantee that each country earmarked sufficient funds to road-building the ITC recommended member countries to set up road funds similar to the ones in Belgium and France.30

International discussions were also important to highlight international possibilities for finance, such as through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). At one of the meetings on finance, a representative of the IBRD was present to explain what the role of international financial institutions might be. The policy of the IBRD was to give priority to projects that enhanced productivity. Road projects did not typically fall into that category. At the meeting the Austrian representative enquired whether the bank would also be willing to extend loans for projects that were located in countries other than the applicant.31 The bank had, up to that moment, never extended a loan of that kind. Nevertheless the IBRD representative saw no fundamental legal obstacles against such financial constructions, on the condition that the country in question would attach a supplementary guarantee to the primary obligation assumed by its neighbor. Thus the Bank could rest assured of the interest on the part of the government of the country where the highway would be built.32 Countries like Austria and Yugoslavia claimed to be entirely dependent on international help to finance their parts of the network in the foreseeable future. The IBRD announced that it would look favorably at requests for loans.33

30 ECE, 7th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/142-E, 28 January 1952, 5. See also E/ECE/TRANS/312, 15 January 1952. Ironically, these two countries were at the same time generally considered very pro-railway.
33 Clarke to McClure, 30 October 1950, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 8, NACP.
Apart from financing roads from the state’s general budget or using international financial means, there was a third option of introducing tolls. This was a contentious matter. ECE circles thought tolls could only be satisfactory when there was very heavy traffic. There was always the fear that local traffic would avoid the toll roads. It seemed only appropriate in exceptional cases, such as expensive bridges or tunnels at prime bottlenecks for international traffic where a large traffic flow could be expected.34

Among INGOs the IRF was arguably the most involved in the E-network. It recognized the tremendous boost the E-road network could give to road construction across Europe. It was particularly insistent that the main international traffic arteries should be upgraded in order to comply with the E-road standards. Through publishing E-road brochures it kept the public informed on developments, but it also issued E-road maps and E-road censuses.35 The IRF deplored the fact that the Declaration did not contain any financial specifications and that it did not specify a concrete time schedule for the work.36 The IRF did understand that several countries needed external help to realize their sections of the network. Therefore, the IRF paid special attention to methods of international finance that would allow funds to flow from richer to poorer countries. In line with the various proposals for new European institutions in the transport sector (see chapter five), the IRF made a bold proposal to create a European Road Office that should play a coordinating role in financing and improving the network of main international traffic arteries by administering a European Road Investment Fund.37 The ITC welcomed the IRF’s initiative and requested it to draw up a plan for possible methods of international finance, recommending to call on the IBRD in this respect.38

The IRF insisted the gist of its proposal was to guarantee the financing for network construction and upgrading by earmarking for that purpose a proportion of the revenue derived by governments of participating countries from road users through taxes on traffic, vehicles, and fuel. This would decrease the dependence of the realization of the network on finance ministries of the respective countries. Although the working party agreed that this was a novel, interesting idea that deserved serious study, it also pointed out that the proposal was likely to run into

---

34 WP 17, Report 2nd session, 6 February 1951.
35 IRF, IRF, Main [1952]; IRF, Main (1955); IRF, Main international traffic arteries, brochure ‘Europe no. 3’ (1958); IRF, Main international traffic arteries, brochure ‘Europe no. 4’ (1960), registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6/9002, UNOG.
36 IRF, Main [1952], 7.
37 WP 17, “Financing of main international traffic arteries: Proposal of the International Road Federation for the setting up of a European Road Office,” UN doc. ser. TRANS/WP17/7, 27 December 1950; Clarke to [Myrdal], 9 July 1952, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/8/9223, UNOG.
constitutional difficulties as earmarking was not a generally accepted principle in public finance. Soon the ITC ritualized its satisfaction with the IRF’s work and invited it to “continue the effort” and “pursue its studies.” It requested governments to assist the IRF in its endeavor, but the ITC could only recommend and was in no position to enforce anything. Not long thereafter the IRF decided to have a second try at the ECMT. At the January 1953 meeting organized by French Minister for Public Works André Morice the assembled ministers assigned the highest priority to the main international traffic arteries. However, in most countries, the network could not be completed out of ordinary resources to an extent consistent with the development of road traffic. It therefore decided to set up an intergovernmental commission composed of representatives from the countries present in Paris (the ECSC plus Austria and Switzerland) to coordinate their construction and improvement work. Recognizing the contribution of the IRF, the assembled ministers recommended its cooperation. In its first resolution on road transport the ECMT reaffirmed the urgency of upgrading the international traffic routes and proceeded to call for drawing up the statutes for an international road financing institution.

A year later the bold scheme was completely abandoned. It did not seem likely to the Council of Ministers that the Fund would “attract enough signatories to warrant its adoption.” The reasons listed concerned inter alia the difficulty of assessing the effects of the financial commitments and the fact that few countries were likely to make use of the Fund. As an alternative the ECMT proposed the creation of restricted groups that would enquire into the technical, economic and financial aspects of specific bi- or trilateral projects. The German and Belgian transport ministers Seebohm and Anseele were the first to announce their intention to create a restricted group at the same meeting where their creation was proposed. A decade later sixteen such groups existed, but most of them did not meet regularly – if they met at all.

---

39 WP 17, Report 2nd session, 6 February 1951, 7-9.
42 ECMT, “Resolution no. 1 concerning the development of international traffic arteries.”
43 “Report of Sub-Committee no. 2 (Road Transport) on the development of international traffic arteries,” ECMT, Resolutions 2 (1954), 16-18.
44 Council of Ministers, “Record 1st session (21 October 1954),” CM/M(54)1, 19; Committee of Deputies, “Record 31st session (20 January 1959),” CS/M(59)1, 9; “Record 49th session (24 October 1961),” CS/M(61)5, 9; ECMT, Eleventh annual report, May 1965, annex I, “Organisation chart of the E.C.M.T. as at 1st January 1965.” Germany had created restricted groups with all of its ECMT neighbors (seven in total). The other nine were between Belgium and Luxembourg, France and Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, Italy and France, Italy and Austria, Italy and Switzerland, Switzerland and France, Switzerland and Austria, and Austria and Yugoslavia.
Thus the initial phase in the development of the E-road network had come to an end. The IRF had done its best to mold the modest concept of the network into a centralized scheme of the kind we have also seen being proposed in the Interbellum. Yet the organization failed to have its proposals accepted. National networks became the building blocks for the flexible, pliable E-road network. The next section depicts the network’s further development until its major revision in 1975.

_E-road network development, 1957-1975_

The ECE revised the technical specifications of Annex II of the 1950 Declaration in 1957.\(^{45}\) The main effect of the revision was not so much to change the technical characteristics of the E-roads, but rather to cut out the various exceptions that had been allowed under the 1950 Declaration. For example, the original Declaration allowed deviating widths of the roads in mountainous or otherwise difficult terrain. These were now cut out of the Declaration. Where the original Declaration stated that level crossings of roads and rails needed to be suppressed as soon as possible, the revised Declaration no longer allowed them for E-roads.

Around the mid-1950s the visibility of the network had not improved much. The Secretariat noted that in 1957 only the Netherlands and Portugal had fulfilled their promise to mark the main international traffic arteries using the designated sign of Annex III. The United Kingdom claimed to use a slightly modified sign on some, but not all, of its E-roads. Countries used various arguments to excuse themselves for not having fulfilled the obligations of the 1950 Declaration. They pointed to budgetary difficulties, the fact that the roads in questions had not yet been brought up to the necessary standard, or that neighboring countries had not yet adhered to the Declaration.\(^{46}\) Devoid of means to oblige states to put up the signs, there was little the ECE could do about the situation.

At the same time a steadily increasing number of countries actually signed the Declaration. Signing the 1950 Declaration was not required to become part of the network, nor was it obligatory when a country wanted to amend its E-road stretches. Non-signatory and signatory states alike proposed a sheer endless stream of minor amendments and shifts to the routes of the network specified in Annex I. More spectacular additions only occurred on occasion. In 1967 the ECMT embarked on a landmark extension of the E-network, particularly in France and the United Kingdom. It was the outcome of a joint review of the E-roads, still dismissed in 1963 by the ECMT’s road investment sub-committee, which concluded it was for each country to submit the changes it deemed necessary. The issue was

\(^{45}\) Myrdal, circular letter, 10 April 1956, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/1-8232, UNOG.

taken up again in 1965 triggered by the joint review upon which the six member states of the EEC had by then decided. It reflected the conviction that the network was insufficiently homogeneous, particularly in terms of density.47

Densification of the network went hand in hand with expansion to areas not previously connected. As part of the same package deal resulting in the Anglo-French extensions mentioned above, Ireland, ECMT member since 1963, yielded and joined the E-network. Ireland had insisted earlier that it would be absurd to have E-roads on an island not physically connected to the European mainland.48

The Balkans formed a prominent white sport on the E-road map when it was initially conceived. This gap was gradually filled in the 1950s and 1960s.

Despite the major additions to the network discussed above, the overall pattern of E-network development was one of relatively slow expansion and long periods of stasis. Table 6.3 illustrates the overall pattern and shows that sometimes lengths even contracted. Though peculiar at first sight, this phenomenon becomes understandable when we remember that the network shifted route numbers to shorter connections between nodes in the network as soon as these were established. Shrinkage thus indicated an upgrade of the network.

47 Committee of Deputies, "Record 69th session (12 January 1965)," CS/M(65)1; "Record 70th session (13 May 1965)," CS/M(65)2; "Record 85th session, 26-27 April 1967," CS/M(67)2 Revised, EcMT.

48 "Road transport problems, Resolution 22 and 23 concerning the Revision of the International Trunk Roads Network," ECMT, Resolutions 17 (1967), 55-62. On Ireland, see Secretary of External Affairs to Charguéraud-Hartmann, 18 February 1949, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/2/12-6072, UNOG.
Increases in length did not necessarily reflect the construction of new roads. Existing roads became part of the E-network at the moment they were labelled as E-roads. The label should be considered an ambition level rather than a material reality. In 1950 there were very few E-roads that actually complied with the requirements of the road category assigned to them. This number increased as construction and upgrading proceeded over the years. Table 6.4 indicates the percentage of E-roads in selected countries that actually complied with the standards of the E-road category assigned to them. The table indicates that in the relatively short period between 1967 and 1975 the quality of the E-roads increased considerably. For example in 1967 Belgium had 1,037 km E-roads, of which 850 km had the motorway label of category II E-roads. In reality a meagre 267 km or 31% of these 850 km complied with the 1950 Declaration specifications for category II. The corresponding figure for all E-roads in Belgium (including non-motorways) was only 371 km or 36%. In 1975, Belgium’s entire 1,126 km national E-road network had been assigned category II status. Now 810 km or almost 72% of the total had been upgraded to the motorway standard of the 1950 Declaration.

To monitor actual use, the ECE organized road censuses on the E-roads every five years, starting in 1955. The main purpose of these censuses was to ascertain whether there was a need for new roads or that the improvement of existing roads was sufficient with a view to ensure the free flow of international traffic, to prevent

### Table 6.4 – E-road Length in final form and future totals (km), selected countries, 1967, 1975

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Portugal</th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1967 E-Motorways</td>
<td>370 (25%)</td>
<td>267 (31%)</td>
<td>3,321 (66%)</td>
<td>575 (46%)</td>
<td>57 (100%)</td>
<td>175 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 All E-Roads</td>
<td>1,523 850 5,048 1,245 57 1,025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 Future E-Roads</td>
<td>494 (27%)</td>
<td>371 (36%)</td>
<td>3,910 (68%)</td>
<td>797 (51%)</td>
<td>485 (39%)</td>
<td>272 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 Future E-Motorways</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>5,762</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>1,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 E-Motorways</td>
<td>619 (38%)</td>
<td>810 (72%)</td>
<td>4,468 (78%)</td>
<td>950 (70%)</td>
<td>61 (100%)</td>
<td>634 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 All E-Roads</td>
<td>1,610</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>5,709</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 Future E-Motorways</td>
<td>672 (39%)</td>
<td>810 (72%)</td>
<td>4,804</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 Future E-Roads</td>
<td>1,704</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>6,045</td>
<td>1,353</td>
<td>1,436</td>
<td>1,287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ECMT, Annual reports. Numbers between brackets represent the percentage of future totals.
accidents and to ascertain the use by various categories of users and traffic.\textsuperscript{49} The censuses were organized on the same day across Europe at different locations along the network. This resulted in a collection of maps showing the traffic densities in bright green and red colors. As mass motorization took off, the use of the E-roads increased dramatically. In 1955, the average daily density amounted to less than 2,000 vehicles on more than half of the E-roads in Austria (60%), Norway (95%), Portugal (90%), Spain (81%) and Yugoslavia (100%). By 1965 this was only the case in Norway (59%), Portugal (66%) and Yugoslavia (53%), but the percentages had dropped significantly. In West European countries densities were much higher, but the increase in average daily density was equally astounding. Between 1960 and 1965 the percentage of roads reaching an average of 10,000 vehicles a day went up from 20% to 47% on the E-roads in Belgium, from 11% to 42% in Italy, from 29% to 48% in the Netherlands and from 25% to 49% in Western Germany.\textsuperscript{50}

The assigned road categories were related to traffic densities (see Table 6.1). This meant that the category assigned to a certain road might over time no longer be adequate. The European road network developed against the background of mass motorization from the 1950s onwards when car ownership grew exponentially in many European countries.\textsuperscript{51} Table 6.5 shows the adequacy levels for motorways and overall adequacy for 1967 and 1975 for the same set of countries as Table 6.4. The table shows that adequacy levels for motorways were generally higher than for E-roads overall. For example, for Belgium the adequacy for all E-roads taken together in 1967 was 73%, meaning over a quarter (27%) of the E-roads had average traffic densities that were higher than the maximum density allowed for the assigned road category. The adequacy for its E-motorways was 81%. For category II E-roads inadequacy indicated extra lanes should be added to support even higher traffic densities. The figures in the table suggest that between 1967 and 1975 overall adequacy levels rose in all listed countries except Austria.

This section has thus given a succinct impression of E-road network developments up to 1975. In sum, the E-road network basically came down to a label that was assigned to roads across the continent. This label did not have a one-to-one relationship with the actual quality of roads, although the data presented here suggest that the network did improve over time. With regard to the general development of the network we have seen that it grew increasingly dense and expanded gradually in the years up to 1975, when a major revision was undertaken.

\textsuperscript{49} ECE, 9th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/177-E, 20 January 1954, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{50} Percentage of total length of E-roads classified by average daily motor traffic densities, ECE Transport Division, Annual Bulletin of Transport Statistics for Europe 19 (1968), xxvii.
\textsuperscript{51} Tony Judt, Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945 (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), particularly chapter ten.
Towards a grid: the 1975 revision and thereafter, 1975-2007

If Boomen would have elaborated his quest for the E3 mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, surely he would have stumbled upon the story of the E3 - Fédération Route d’Europe 3. A colorful group of local administrations from towns and municipalities along the E3 founded the Federation in 1957. It included members from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France that met at annual “general meetings.” The Federation attempted to pump real life into the E-road artery (see Figure 6.4). In November 1974 the Federation sent a letter to the ECE Secretariat requesting that the organization would be allowed the exclusive use of ‘E3’ in its name. In his response, director Halbertsma of the Transport Division informed the unfortunate representatives of the Federation that the number E3 was about to be assigned to a secondary branch road of the network, entirely on French territory. The E3 Federation thus became the first victim of a renumbering operation of the E-road network as part of a revision of the 1950 Declaration in 1975.

The 1975 revision transformed the 1950 Declaration into the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR-Agreement). The main change consisted of a renumbering operation. Although this might seem a cosmetic undertaking, the heat of the debate was quite substantial. The revision was a cooperative venture between the ECE, the ECMT, the IRF, the OTA and the PIARC. The E-road network’s steady expansion had led to the situation that almost all main arteries (E1-E30) had been assigned, catalyzing a discussion on revising the network. Among themselves the INGOs involved had decided on a division of tasks based on

---

**Table 6.5 – Adequacy of E-roads in selected countries, 1967, 1975**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Portugal</th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Motorways</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Motorways</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All E-Roads</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All E-Roads</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ECMT, Annual reports.*

---

52 Persin and De Decker to President ECE, 14 November 1974; Halbertsma to De Decker, 27 November 1974, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/10-50522, UNOG.
53 Note du Directeur de la Division des Transports, 8 June 1971 (on meeting 7 June), registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG.
Like it had done before, the PIARC handled the technical characteristics of the network, while the IRF and the OTA devoted their attention to the list of arteries as codified in Annex 1 to the Declaration. The INGOs probed the opinions of the countries connected by the network. The E-road states wanted to see as little change as possible, a position the PIARC held as well. The Organisation Mondiale de Tourisme et de l’Automobile (OTA), but above all the IRF, were dissatisfied with the unsystematic way in which numbers were assigned to the E-roads. Under the 1950 system numbers were simply assigned based on the order in which stretches of E-road had been submitted.

The INGOs probed the opinions of the countries connected by the network. The E-road states wanted to see as little change as possible, a position the PIARC held as well. The Organisation Mondiale de Tourisme et de l’Automobile (OTA), but above all the IRF, were dissatisfied with the unsystematic way in which numbers were assigned to the E-roads. Under the 1950 system numbers were simply assigned based on the order in which stretches of E-road had been submitted.

Figure 6.4 – Frontispiece of map of the E3, around 1970
Source: Communauté de Travail Française-Belge-Hollandoise-Germanique-Danoise-Norvégienne-Suêdoise ‘Grand-Route Européenne 3,’ E3 Map, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG. The map in short described participating municipalities, indicating the number of inhabitants, the number of hotel beds and the principal tourist attractions.

54 Arco to Despicht, 14 January 1971, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG.
earlier a stretch was approved, the lower its number. The IRF and OTA thought the haphazard result was incomprehensible to road users. The IRF underlined the revision should provide a clear logic behind the E-road numbers. But as complete revision met considerable resistance from the part of governmental circles, both advocated a modest revision and not a complete overhaul of the network.55

Opposition was to be expected because of the costs of the renumbering operation. What was even worse is that renumbering punished obedient countries that had already put up the E-road signals as agreed, while sparing those that had not done so.56 Reasoning along the same lines, the renumbering was hardly an incentive to actually start putting the E-road signs along the E-roads. Calculating countries might prefer to wait until the next revision before installing the signs. The most vigorous opposition came from Scandinavia. Swedish diplomat Larsson contradicted the supposed incomprehensibility of the E-road numbers as the INGOs had brought forward. He claimed drivers had familiarized themselves with and grown accustomed to existing numbers. Changing them implied considerable costs for putting up new signs and changing maps and other information materials. As an alternative, Larsson proposed to limit the exaggerated expansion of the E-roads in continental Europe. If the number of main arteries could remain under 30, the rationale for the renumbering operation ceased to exist.57

Germany was the main proponent of renumbering. The intention was to give the E-road network a grid structure. The new numbers should be assigned in such a way that the structure of the grid would be obvious for users.58 The key inspiration for the new numbering system was the grid-shaped American Interstate Highway System, which was based on a similar logic.59 In the discussions the grid variant was referred to as “system Q,” short for quadrillé (square) but also referred to as maillé. The old system allowed for only thirty main routes; once they were used only branch roads could be added to the network. The new grid-like system stipulated ten trunk routes from north to south (two numbers, all ending in five) and ten from east to west (two numbers, all ending in 0). Branch roads started with the same digits as the main roads of which they were a branch.60

55 Ibid.; Arco to Despicht, 27 May 1971; Perlowski to Dente, 21 May 1971, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG.
56 Hondermarcq to Halbertsma, 12 April 1974, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG.
57 Larsson to Stanovnik, 5 July 1974, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/10-50522, UNOG.
58 Hondermarcq to Despicht, 25 June 1971, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG.
60 Ibid.
The main remaining alternative was called “system N,” a modestly revised form of the existing network on the basis of the 1950 Declaration. The German-backed “system Q” did not initially enjoy a great deal of support, but as the discussion proceeded, the Belgian Hondermarcq noted opposition against it lessened. The shift in the positions of France and the United Kingdom to back up the German position helps to explain why the grid structure was eventually adopted as a new guiding principle for the E-roads. The choice for the German preference infuriated some of its opponents and created durable irritation. One result is that it took several years before countries signed up for the new Agreement.

A series of Ad Hoc Meetings on Implementation of the Agreement on Main International Arteries monitored the implementation of the renumbering operation. At the first meeting in May 1983 the Danish representative, also speaking on behalf of Finland, Norway and Sweden, indicated that Scandinavian countries had no intention to implement the 1975 AGR-Agreement and considered themselves bound only by the 1950 Declaration and not by its successor.

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the network entered its latest round of amendments and above all extensions. By the mid-1990s the network was ready to embrace the successor states of the former Soviet Union. The ECE took the work of the Intergovernmental Council of Road Administrations of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which was working on an intergovernmental agreement of international roads in these states, as a guiding principle. For the Central Asian republics, these were the same as their routes for the Asian Highway Network administered by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Countries in the former periphery of the network greeted such developments enthusiastically, as they could now take a more central position. For example, Turkey proposed ferry services connecting its Black Sea harbors to the Caucasus. At the same time the EU’s Trans-European Networks (TENs) entered Geneva discussions too. Shortly after the Treaty of Maastricht had entered into

---

61 Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland were also in favour of the grid system, Hondermarcq to Halbertsma, 12 April 1974 (in relation to Hondermarcq to Halbertsma, 5 November 1973), registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/6-9002, UNOG.

62 Hondermarcq to Duquesne, 2 February 1980, registry fonds GIX, file 12/7/3/10-50522, UNOG.


force, the 13th ad hoc meeting on the implementation of the AGR-Agreement in 1994 decided that all new amendments to the E-road network should take the Trans-European Road Network into consideration.66

Today the network has reached the borders of China. The ECE hailed the latest extension into the Asian heartland as an “important milestone in [the ECE’s] endeavour to integrate the transport networks of its Caucasus and Central Asian member countries into European transport networks.”67 Moldova acceded to the current European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries on 25 May 2006.68 To highlight some of the issues at stake in the processes of expansion and densification, the next section will explore the development of roads in the Balkans, a region that is particularly interesting from a geopolitical point of view for the period under study here. The Iron Curtain cut right through it. The next section discusses whether the E-roads could perform their assumed connective qualities despite this major hurdle.

Fill in the blanks: building roads in the Balkans

“Balkan roads were always proverbially bad roads. Between the World Wars, when I travelled frequently on the roads of Yugoslavia (…) I found them dusty, productive of flat tyres and broken springs, and permitting of no more than 150 miles a day. Very rarely did I run across a stretch of asphalt – more often, a fine selection of horse-shoe nails stuck in my tyres.”69

Thus Ernst Wiese started a 1955 article in Road International. Indeed, building roads in the Balkans’ rugged terrain had been problematic for centuries.70 The same was true for other infrastructures and putting the area under effective governmental control had therefore been a major challenge for the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, as the area formed a remote backwater far removed from

the imperial heartlands. Yet by 1955, Wiese continued,

“the motorist travelling today on international route E.5 from London to Ankara or Bagdad (...) will be amazed that motorisation and road construction have progressed far more rapidly and widely in the Balkans, west of the Iron Curtain, than in Central Europe.”

The assertion is revealing for three reasons. First, it indicates the dramatic improvement in the quality of post-war Balkan roads. Second, the quote shows how the quality of infrastructures could become a measuring rod for the quality of life within a Cold War context and thus hints at the adequacy of Mazower’s assertion that by 1950 the Balkans had become a “laboratory for the competition between the Free World and Soviet communism to lead traditional agrarian societies towards modernity.”

Third, and above all, by referring to the E5 Wiese embedded Balkan roads in the larger European whole of the E-road network. The E5 followed the itinerary of an older plan originally proposed by the British Automobile Association for a road from London to Istanbul – and beyond.

The latter remark highlights that road building in the Balkans involved the construction of both adequate internal connections and links to the European world beyond. The Balkans remained a white spot on the European road map for a long time. We have already seen that the density of the E-roads varied greatly (see Table 6.2) and that Turkey had the least amount of E-roads per square kilometer (6 m/km²). Yet the amount of E-roads per inhabitant in Greece and Turkey was relatively high compared to other countries. E-road lengths per automobile were the lowest in Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey, a reflection of the low levels of motorization in these countries – and the concomitant difficulty in financing the road network. The picture would surely not have looked very different for other Balkan countries, but Bulgaria, Hungary or Romania had by then not submitted any E-roads yet.

Road censuses on the E-road network revealed the fast pace of change in the actual use of the network in the Balkans. Yugoslavia illustrates this nicely. In 1955 the average daily density on Yugoslav roads amounted to less than 2,000 vehicles on the entire network, but by 1965 only 53% of Yugoslav roads still had an average daily density under 2,000. In the same period the overall quality of the Yugoslav road network increased dramatically. The share of paved roads grew from an in-

---

72 Mazower, The Balkans, 118.
conspicuous 2% of the entire network in 1946 to over 40% thirty years later (see Table 6.6). Overall the network grew by about a quarter over the same period. The increased availability of adequate transport infrastructures formed an important part of the Yugoslav program of economic modernization, providing the increasingly important farm-to-market and distribution links that could accommodate the prospected rise in productivity resulting from the country's Five Year Plan. Roads were also a key factor for developing tourism in Yugoslavia by attracting Western European tourists who increasingly traveled to their holiday destination by means of their own car. They brought foreign currency into the country that could ease balance of payment problems. Last but not least, an adequate road system presented a strategic interest too. In case of an armed conflict, the transport system in general had to enable the necessary logistics.74

The discussion on roads in the Balkans was firmly embedded in a broader debate on the development of Southern Europe taking place in the ECE. Accordingly, the upgrading of roads and construction of new ones in the Balkans became a project for Europe. Yugoslavia lay at the heart of the debate. Neighboring countries had an important stake in the construction of roads on Yugoslav territory. The ECE installed an Expert Group on Economic Development in Southern Europe in 1954. The Group originally comprised representatives from Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy and Turkey, thus involving countries with a recent history of non-friendly relations. Yugoslavia, for example, had supported the communist insurgency in Greece at the end of the 1940s and its relations with Italy had only recently improved with the settlement of the dispute over Trieste in 1954.

The task of the Expert Group was to investigate specific possibilities to develop the region taking due regard of financial issues.75 Yugoslavia suggested increasing

---

74 "Progress report no. 54," 19 April 1953, 7, RG 469: Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Mission to Yugoslavia, Defense Production Division, subject files, box 1, NACP; Kohler to Dillon, 7 May 1958, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records relating to Yugoslavia, 1947-1963, Box 1, NACP.
75 Expert Group, Summary of questions considered and decisions taken at the 1st meeting, UN doc. ser. ECE/SE/2, 30 July 1954, 2.
cooperation in the field of transport at the second meeting in October 1954, especially in order to develop tourism in the region, for example through tourist bus services connecting the four countries.\textsuperscript{76} At a subsequent meeting early January 1955 the experts concluded that the establishment of good road connections was essential for further development of the tourist sector. The amount of Northern Europeans travelling to their holiday destination in their own car was booming and only adequate highway facilities, along with an infrastructure for holiday accommodation, could entice them to come to the Balkans.\textsuperscript{77}

By May 1955 cooperation on transport issues in general had been narrowed down to the improvement of highway links in particular. Attention focused on two links, a highway between Trieste and Istanbul and a ferry service between Brindisi and Patras. This would enable tourists to make a circular tour rather than return along the same route. In July 1955 the Expert Group installed a working group of “highly qualified experts” to prepare the broad lines of this so-called Circular Highway Project (see Figure 6.5), to coordinate national programs, to provide an accurate estimate of costs and time needed, along with measures to minimize both.\textsuperscript{78}

The first meeting of the working group created high expectations. The project would reduce transport costs and thus enable the establishment of new industries, the enlargement of the market for products that had so far been consumed only locally, and regional specialization allowing each individual region to fully benefit from its comparative advantages. Furthermore, the roads would open up hitherto virtually inaccessible regions to northern European motorists.\textsuperscript{79}

The meeting decided to add the stretches Rome-Brindisi and Athens-Salonika to complete the circle, and introduced a branch route from Istanbul to the Turkish border with Lebanon. The largest national stretch of the Trieste-Istanbul segment ran on Yugoslav territory for 1,239 km, coinciding with the country’s transport backbone connecting Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade, the three main cities of the country. From this axis all other corners of the country could be reached. The route followed the course of the rivers Sava and Danube.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{76} Expert Group, \textit{Report 2\textsuperscript{nd} meeting}, UN doc. ser. ECE/SE/3, 23 October 1954, 5.


\textsuperscript{78} Expert Group, \textit{Report 6\textsuperscript{th} meeting}, ECE/SE/11, 12 July 1955, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{79} Working Party on Transport Questions, \textit{Report 1\textsuperscript{st} session}, ECE/SE/TR/1, 30 November 1955.

\textsuperscript{80} La Route: <Trieste> - Sežana – Postojna – Ljubljana – Zagreb – Beograd – Niš – Skopje – Gevgelija - <Salonique>, n.d. [1955], registry funds GIX, file 13/1/29-18657, UNOG. The route formed the main traffic axis in the country. A second followed the Dalmatian coast and joined the first in Skopje. Connections through the Dalmatian coastal mountain ridge from the coast to the Yugoslav heartland were costly and difficult.
At three points the roads of the Circular Highway Project were not yet open for traffic or barely passable. First, the Patras-Brindisi ferry did not yet exist. Second, a 44 km stretch was to be built between Greece and Turkey connecting the two countries at Ipsala on the river Evros. The most formidable hurdle was the missing link between Belgrade and the Greek border of which a large proportion lacked a proper foundation or surface and suffered from occasional floods. The appalling quality of this segment chased away potential tourists. A small group of brave motorists reached Greece by car, defying the potholed routes through the rough Macedonian hills. In the first ten months of 1955 Greek border officials tallied 9,000 of such rare adventurers, a number far below the tourist potential from the north.81 Project estimates predicted that as soon as the Yugoslav-Greek gap would be closed, an extra 75,000 tourists and 500 tourist buses would reach Greece by road through Yugoslavia. To keep tourists informed of the current situation of the roads, the government issued booklets describing their condition.82

In 1957 the IRF attempted to boost the initiative to develop roads in the Balkans. It organized a conference in Salonika, Greece to bring together the highway directors

---

from Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia. Representatives of road associations from these countries, their Italian counterparts, and an American observer from the International Cooperation Administration participated as well. The objectives of the meeting were to develop a firm construction program, explore the possibilities of mutual assistance to accelerate construction and establish a coordinating committee for future consultations. The conference paid special attention to the E5 in the participating countries and more generally how the Balkan might fit into the E-road network. At the end of the meeting, the participants expressed the wish to meet on a regular basis, and to invite Italy and Austria as well.

The conference also served to underline the precarious financial position of the participating countries. For Yugoslavia financing the road backbone of the country on its own would be impossible. The $30-40 million necessary to assure the sufficiently rapid construction of the road formed too heavy a burden for public finance. If foreign financial aid would be supplied the work could be finished in less than five years, but it would take the country fifteen years to build the necessary roads on its own. The international financial community stimulated the road construction frenzy by lending considerable sums of money. The IBRD granted its first loan for highway development in Yugoslavia in 1963. In that year two thirds of Yugoslavia’s 3 million visitors arrived by car or bus, the Adriatic coast being the most popular destination. The IBRD loan helped finish the road along the Adriatic coast. In 1963, 1 million foreign cars crossed Yugoslav borders, but in 1970 this number had risen to an astronomic 14 million. These developments resulted in a dramatic shift in the share of transport modes in total transport figures (see Table 6.7).

As time passed, the project started to attract attention from across the Iron Curtain. Bulgaria was the first country that expressed interest in joining the working group. The Bulgarian government emphasized that a shortcut to Istanbul

---

83 "Final report Salonika highway conference for international roads of South-East Europe (15-17 November 1957)," registry fonds GIX, file 13/1/29-18657, UNOG (hereafter: Salonika report); "The Salonika conference November 15th to 27th 1957," Road International 28 (spring 1958): 33-34. The International Cooperation Administration was an agency of the American government administering aid for economic, political, and social development.
84 "Salonika report."
85 IRF, E road census maps 1965, 3.
86 "Salonika report." Ensuing meetings took place in Istanbul (1958), Belgrade (1959), and Brindisi (1961).
87 "Development of the Road Network in South-East Europe," section 23, UN doc. ser. W/TRANS/263, 17 June 1959; Clarke to McClure, 30 October 1950, RG 59, Lot File 54D388, box 23, NACP.
through Bulgaria saved travelers 363 km.\textsuperscript{89} Cooperation across the Iron Curtain depended on East and West relations, so after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, marking a low point in East-West relationships, it took until 1965 before a next meeting took place in Varna, a Bulgarian seaside resort. Here further E-roads for South Eastern Europe would be defined, transforming the Balkans from a gap in the network to an integral part of the E-road network.\textsuperscript{90}

Thus Balkan roads changed profoundly. Examining them from a European angle is essential to understand their development. Aided by international flows of money and accompanied by technical expertise Balkan roads reached unprecedented levels in quality and quantity. The real improvement in the Balkan road situation supported growing flows of tourists, which in turn stimulated further improvements. The two developments were mutually reinforcing. The roads discussed being part of the E-road network made it possible to turn the drive to improve the Balkan road situation into a project that had the ability to transcend the Iron Curtain.

In the early 1970s an even more encompassing program was put on the table. In 1971 the Polish government took the initiative to launch the Trans-European North/South Motorway (TEM). Together with the Hungarian government it submitted a request for assistance to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) a year later, to enable them to undertake preparatory research regarding the TEM’s design and construction. Subsequently the ECE got involved in 1974-1975 and together with the UNDP it undertook an exploratory mission from 29 April to 8 May 1975 visiting Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia. The immediate purpose was to find out whether the governments were in fact interested in the project, to which extent their national road plans matched the TEM, and to develop a sense of the number and kind of studies needed in order to start the project. If the mission could ascertain the feasibility of the project,

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & \multicolumn{3}{|c|}{Freight} & \multicolumn{3}{|c|}{Passenger} \\
 & Rail & Road & Other & Rail & Road & Other \\
\hline
1960 & 74\% & 15\% & 11\% & 67\% & 30\% & 3\% \\
1970 & 47\% & 41\% & 12\% & 25\% & 71\% & 4\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Traffic by transport modes, percentage of total, 1960-1970}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{89} Velikov to Le Vert, 28 May 1958; Belineki to Myrdal, 24 April 1959, registry fonds GIX, file 13/1/29-18657, UNOG.

it might involve seven other countries as well.\textsuperscript{91}

The goals of the project will sound remarkably familiar to the reader by now. The broader, noble aim was to encourage international cooperation through the exchange of know-how with regard to modern road planning. Where calls for the need of continental road networks often mobilize references to the Roman road network, for the TEM the Amber Route was invoked as the ancient example that should be emulated. The artery would open up possibilities for fast transport of agricultural products to the North, while bringing wealthy Scandinavian tourists to the South. Poland cleverly positioned itself as the crossroads of the main East-West and North-South routes in Europe. The motorway would start in Gdansk and from Zilina in Czechoslovakia bifurcate towards Padua (Italy) and Niš (Yugoslavia). It seemed logical to continue from there through Bulgaria to Istanbul. The program included three supplementary highways that had been discussed earlier for the Balkans in the context of the Circular Highway Project.\textsuperscript{92}

By 1977 ten countries had committed themselves to the project, setting 1990 as the target year for final completion. Every country had its own reasons to participate. Poland championed the initiative and Warsaw became the seat of the Project Central Office that administered the project. Austria was generally interested in projects aiming at cooperation across the Iron Curtain.\textsuperscript{93} Moreover it was easy for Austria to commit itself, as it had already constructed the majority of the Austrian sections of the TEM. Turkey wanted to exploit its roles as an overland bridge to the Middle-East, but the Greek national coordinator of the program feared the inclusion of routes on Turkish Asian territory might add to an already latent indifference from the part of some of the participating countries. He preferred restricting the effort to just its European part.\textsuperscript{94}

Like the E-road network the TEM continues until today and has become ever more encompassing over time. But in terms of infrastructure development the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} Heppling to Stanovnik, 26 March 1975; "UN/ECE-UNDP mission on European North/South motorways (29 April-8 May 1975)," registry fonds GIX, file 12/1/39-51854, UNOG. The list of countries included Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Norway, Romania, Sweden, and Turkey. Tom Rallis and Uno Helk, \textit{The story of the motorways}, paper 1993-6 (Lyngby: Institute of Roads, Traffic and Town Planning, Technical University of Denmark, 1993), 23-25.
\item \textsuperscript{92} "Transeuropean North-South Motorway," n.d.; "First draft – Report of the mission of the UNO on the North-South Motorway," registry fonds GIX, file 12/1/39-51854, UNOG.
\item \textsuperscript{93} We find a similar pattern with regard to electricity infrastructure, Vincent Lagendijk, \textit{Electrifying Europe: The power of Europe in the construction of electricity networks} (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{94} UN/ECE-UNDP Mission (29 April-8 May 1975); Shelton [?] to Halbertsma, 7 October 1976; National [Greek] coordinator to Halbertsma, 4 November 1976, registry fonds GIX, file 12/1/39-51854, UNOG. The Turkish authorities successfully managed to make some roads from Istanbul to the country's oriental borders part of the network, \textit{Communiqué de presse}, UN doc. ser. ECE/TRANS/1, 4 March 1980, registry fonds GIX, file 12/1/39-51854, UNOG.
\end{itemize}
Balkans still lag behind considerably, even today.95 We can only speculate what the situation might have been if the projects for the Circular Highway or the TEM would never have been proposed. The important point here is that as parts of the E-road network both served the purpose of firmly embedding the Balkans into Europe. While the region had remained a backwater with unclear delineation for centuries, now it became connected with the rest of the continent, despite the existence of the Iron Curtain that cut right through it. This worked not only on a symbolic level by putting lines on the map, but also in the shape of real flows of agricultural products traveling north and tourists traveling south. From a region on the fringe, the Balkans became an integral part of the continent.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sketched the development of the E-road network and zoomed in on the position of the Balkans therein. The continuous extension of the network, lately towards the Far East, demonstrated the E-road network enjoyed wide popularity. Two broad patterns emerge out of five-and-a-half decades of network development. The first is the E-roads’ extension to virgin territories over time. Initially the E-roads connected a modest set of countries. Its continuous expansion ever since started with Spain and Turkey in the early 1950s. South-Eastern Europe followed suit, and even the island republic of Ireland submitted some stretches of road after its accession to the 1950 Declaration in 1968. With the network’s recent conquest of Central Asia it seems that it is well underway to reach its maximum extension. Only a fusion with its Asian counterpart would produce a network of even more gigantic proportions. The outward extension has gone hand in hand with inward branching, making the network denser than ever before and reducing the large difference in densities at its start. A second pattern that is clearly discernible is the network’s leap-like development. Lengths increased in particular through landslide additions to the network like those of France and the United Kingdom in 1967. Stasis or mild contraction characterized the intermediate periods between such big bangs.

The E-road network has a prominent position in the self-image of the ECE. When the organization celebrated its fortieth anniversary, it listed the E-road network first among the ITC’s “main achievements.”96 Moreover, the fact that several other or-

ganizations have tried to claim the network is another indication of its relative success. The ECMT illustrates the point. The very first resolution on road traffic it issued at its founding meeting in 1953 concerned the extension of the E-road network to Spain, which was not a member of the ECE at the time.\textsuperscript{97} The committed involvement of the IRF from an early stage onwards points in the same direction.

Whether the E-roads in the end reflected the large-distance flows of a busy continent remains to be seen. The E-road censuses indicated sustained growth – but that was no different than the rest of the road network. Whether traffic grew faster on E-road stretches than on other routes is a question that can only be answered through careful consideration of flows on both kinds of road, by all means not an easy exercise. Only origin/destination surveys could demonstrate whether individual E-routes actually funneled traffic over significant distances, but to the knowledge of this author no such surveys exist.

The network remained somewhat soulless. In choosing the title “Get your kicks on the E3” Boomen overtly referred to Route 66, the American ‘Mother Road,’ which has its own song, appears in countless travel guides, and even figures on the bottles of a brand of eau de toilette. Nothing similar happened to any of the main international traffic arteries, on the contrary. When the E3 aroused some genuine grass-root enthusiasm in the \textit{Fédération Route d’Europe 3}, the ECE embarked on a renumbering operation that robbed the Federation of its artery.

Of late serious competitors of the E-road network have entered the scene. The EU’s Trans-European Transport Networks come to mind here. The ECE might have been the first to extend its network to Central Asia but Brussels’ reach is spreading to that area as well, for example through the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) program, involving both technical assistance and investment projects.\textsuperscript{98} And, for that matter, there have been competitors throughout the E-road network’s existence. National numbering continued alongside the E-numbering. Belgium is the only country where the E-numbers have been adopted for the national system too. It relates to the network’s point of departure that any E-road should represent both a national and an international interest. In combination with the considerable national infrastructure programs of various European countries in the post-war period, this has led to a substantive number of motorways that do not form part of the E-road network. Administered by a forgotten organization, the origins of this large European network remain hidden under the dust in the archive cellars of the \textit{Palais des Nations} – until another curious journalist comes along to retrieve them.

\textsuperscript{97} ECMT, “Resolution no. 1 concerning the development of international traffic arteries.” In fact, all of the first six resolutions related to road transport bear reference to work of the ECE.
\textsuperscript{98} See http://www.traceca-org.org.
Chapter 7
Driving Europe – The operation of Europe’s roads, 1949-1960

Danish butter for France

“Ever-flowing [trade]? Yes, until it reaches national frontiers. There, food and goods and those who carry them must stand waiting, held idle by the sluggish machinery of frontier bureaucracy. (...) Such is the cost when a continent knows no unity.”

Marshall Plan movie 1...2...3..., episode 4 (1952-1953)

Loudly blowing its horn the truck proceeded towards the French border. In a suburb of Copenhagen the Danish trucker had picked up his fellow driver. Together they went full speed ahead across the fields. In the distance a building loomed ahead on the side of the road. Austere border officials summoned the approaching vehicle to stop. They closely examined the content of each and every barrel of butter in the truck’s cargo. Precious time was lost, but as soon as they entered France the truck drivers forgot all of that. During one of their stops at a roadside café, they even succumbed to a great French tradition and hesitantly sipped some wine.

The Marshall Plan film from which these scenes are taken cleverly selected Strasbourg as the final destination for the journey of the Danish truckers. There the Council of Europe engaged in lofty discussions on European cooperation to guarantee fraternity and peace in Europe. In their documentary the filmmakers therefore interspersed a second story line of a simultaneous interpreter working at the Council of Europe. The depiction of the lives of a Dutch barge shipper and his

---

1 1...2...3...: A monthly report from Europe, no. 4, (1952-1953), film 306.103D, NACP.
wife traveling down the Rhine from Strasbourg completed the film. The choice of riverine transport on the Rhine was certainly not coincidental either. Protected by the liberal inland navigation regime on the Rhine dating back to the Congress of Vienna (1815), the Dutch captain only needed to have his cargo of drainage pipes checked at Strasbourg, his port of departure. There customs officials sealed his cargo, which would further remain undisturbed at other ports along the Rhine, customs officials merely glancing at his paperwork and briefly checking if the seals remained intact.

The case of the barge shipper formed a shrill contrast with that of the truck drivers – both in the movie and in reality. The professional road transport sector publicly voiced its discontent over the restrictions imposed on road traffic that did not apply for inland navigation or railroad traffic. The ICC too vigorously pleaded for a liberalization of road transport, and the attention it gave to the sector rose tremendously after the war in comparison to other modes of transport. It published several booklets that spelled out the problems as perceived by business users, turning the ICC into a staunch ally of the road transport sector.

The Marshall movie formed quite a contrast with a late 1960 advertisement “Austin Across Europe” that the British automobile manufacturer published in Road International (see Figure 7.1). It showed truck driver Fritz Zurbrugg receiving a load of frozen chickens in the busy Dutch port of Rotterdam. Fritz worked for Bischofberger A.G. in Zurich, a firm specializing in international food transport. After loading his cargo Fritz proceeded to Germany where he spent the night in Montabaur. During transit through Germany the cargo could remain sealed and would only be unsealed again at the Swiss border, thanks to the TIR carnet of which Fritz’ truck visibly bore the plate on the front.

---

2 Ibid. All films were tripartite in structure. The three stories were usually independent and not interwoven, but shown consecutively. Albert Hemsing, “The Marshall Plan's European Film Unit, 1948-1955: A memoir and filmography,” Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 14, no. 3 (1994): 290. For a complete filmography of films that were produced as part of the Marshall Plan, see http://www.marshall-films.org.

3 Lyons has characterized the freedom of navigation on international rivers as “one of the earliest and most remarkable experiments in nineteenth century internationalism,” F. S. L. Lyons, Internationalism in Europe, 1815-1914 (Leiden: Sythoff, 1963), 53.


5 TIR is an abbreviation for transports internationaux routiers.
The TIR scheme abolished customs duties for goods in transit transported by road. The first TIR cargo transport took place on 5 September 1951, slightly over two years after the initial agreement had been concluded in June 1949. The ICC and especially the IRU had made important contributions to the scheme. The IRU and its member organizations distributed the carnets, while the IRU arranged the financial guarantees underpinning the scheme. The TIR carnets did not become a worldwide but an explicitly European affair. Hence it was partly due to a European ideal that Fritz’ nine-tons of frozen poultry no longer needed to be checked at every border crossing.

The choice for perishable foodstuffs in both the advertisement and the Marshall movie served a purpose. Trucks were thought to be particularly suitable for the transport of perishable merchandise. Long waiting times at the border due to frontier formalities, customs checks and other border-related controls directly endangered the quality of the products they transported. Thus perishable foodstuffs

---
7 At its 1947 Montreux meeting the ICC made this claim, see ICC, Resolutions XIth congress, Montreux, 2nd-7th June 1947, brochure 117 (Paris: ICC, 1947), 53-54.
could more clearly lay bare the hindrances of international road transport than other goods. Less than ten years separated the release of the movie and the publication of the advertisement. But where the former underlined the sluggish machinery of frontier bureaucracy that put the quality of the butter from Denmark to France in peril, Austin in its 1960 advertisement put some real achievements in the spotlight.

The TIR scheme was but one element in an elaborate legal framework regulating cross-border road traffic in Europe emerging after the Second World War. The ECE became a central player in drawing up fresh conventions, agreements and declarations to replace Interbellum predecessors. Today fifty-six legal instruments regulate international mobility in the ECE region. Road related arrangements are by far the largest category, comprising twenty-three of the total (see Table 7.1). Although numbers do not tell all, they do suggest to what the ECE devoted most of its time and energy. Unsurprisingly the facilitation of crossing borders comes second in terms of the amount of instruments.

The most significant achievement was a set of multilateral agreements for international commercial road transport in Europe, something that had until then proven impossible (see chapter four).8 The next section will first discuss the so-called freedom of the road agreements, which liberalized mobility on the road in post-war Europe.9 As the immediate problems of the post-war were pushed to the background, the temporary freedom of the road gave way to a so-called regime of regulated freedom. A rough overall picture will be presented of the vast post-war legal landscape that emerged thereafter. Two case studies on specific aspects of this regime elucidate the process of international negotiations of which the regime was the result. Both relate to views of the use of the E-road network discussed in chapter six. The first is the aim to create a comprehensive, coherent network of long-distance bus connections that would interconnect all major points of interest in Europe. The second concerns the technical specifications for trucks, perhaps the most down-to-earth measure on which the parties involved deemed international agreement necessary in the context of international commercial road transport in Europe.

---

8 The European Commission uses the term “commercial road transport” to cover road haulage and passenger transport for hire or reward, “Commercial road transport: The European Commission wants to ensure fair competition and an efficient and uniform system of checks,” press release IP/07/697, 23 May 2007. In this chapter the term similarly covers both freight and passenger transport.

9 The actors themselves employed the phrase ‘freedom of the road,’ probably as an expression of the flexibility the automobile allowed, enabling, in Urry’s words, “the car-driver to travel at any time in any direction along the complex road systems” that link the home, workplaces and leisure sites, John Urry, “The ‘system’ of automobility,” Theory, Culture and Society 21, no. 4/5 (2004): 28.
The freedom of the road

The operation of the road network received more attention after the Second World War than it did directly after the First. The 1921 League report on the post-war transport situation in Europe had observed the remarkable growth of road-based transport during the war, but it nevertheless remained excluded from the Barcelona Conference (see chapter two). In contrast ECITO did devote attention to road transport. It was especially in the work of the ECE that mobility on the road received a prominent position vis-à-vis other modes of inland transport (see chapter five).

Under post-war conditions the supply of transport facilities fell short of demand due to the devastation of networks and the lack of vehicles. It meant that any transport opportunity was welcome. Still road carriers had to go through considerable troubles to operate the road network across borders. In the context of the Marshall Plan the President’s Committee on Foreign Aid, a fact-finding committee chaired by Secretary of Commerce Averell Harriman, drew up an authoritative report in November 1947. Transport being one of the issues it discussed, it stated that cross-border truck traffic was not generally allowed and that at the border goods often had to be transferred from one truck to another in order to reach their final destination. American policy-makers involved in the Marshall Plan underlined the need for properly regulating international trucking in Europe either by convention or bilateral agreement.10


Table 7.1 – International legal instruments, ECE region, 1947-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of legal instrument</th>
<th>Number of instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road traffic and road signs and signals</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road vehicles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other road transport</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport infrastructure</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland water transport</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border crossing facilitation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport of dangerous goods</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport of perishable foodstuffs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Categorization based on http://www.unece.org/trans/conventn/legalinst.html. It should be noted that rail transport does not appear as a separate category.
Subsequently American Marshall Planners actively contributed to the liberalization of international road transport. After the CEEC had delivered its report in the autumn of 1947 the State Department organized the so-called Washington conversations with European officials to discuss the results (see chapter five). The final report on European inland transport of November 1947 based on these conversations indicated that in the American view a permanent arrangement should entail the regulation of international road transport along the lines of the Berne Conventions for international railway transport. The two conventions, both signed in the Swiss capital, contained the legal provisions applying to the international transport of goods and of passengers and their luggage. They went into force in 1893 and 1924 respectively and covered virtually all countries in Europe.

At the first session of the ITC-ECE American representative Russell McClure proposed a resolution stating that road transport formed a remedy for the transport crisis and calling for the creation of a working party to study its potential and to propose measures to liberalize network operations. During the meeting the ITC displayed “a marked tendency to examine road transport problems as a whole on the European plane,” while recognizing the role road transport might play in easing the general transport shortage. In the same fall American official Cecil Calvert played a primordial role in stirring up the discussion on the later freedom of the road agreements. Calvert had earlier worked for the Interstate Commerce Commission, a federal body governing all modes of the American transport sector. The Interstate Commerce Commission had over time set up a framework for commercial interstate road traffic in the United States that was much more liberal than its counterpart for commercial international road traffic in Europe.

The initial freedom of the road agreements liberalized transit traffic for six months starting 6 December 1947. The sixteen member countries of the OEEC, as well as Hungary and Czechoslovakia adhered to them. The agreements remained unwritten, but the countries that had committed themselves to them nevertheless

11 “Final Report of Inland Transport Committee,” USD/56, 4 November 1947, 14, Lot 123, ERP Collection, box 2, NACP.
implemented them. The agreements were based on reciprocity and applied mainly to administrative measures. When a license was required to operate a transport business, foreign haulers obtained one simply by requesting it.\textsuperscript{16} After the first six months, the ITC extended their validity to the end of 1948, followed by another extension to the end of 1949. The agreements then became indefinite without further need for periodical renewal, and notwithstanding countries’ right to denounce them.\textsuperscript{17}

Organizations like the ICC wholeheartedly supported the freedom of the road agreements and opposed factors hampering the free flows of trade on the road. The ICC had already taken up road transport during the Interbellum as part of a broader concern for transport matters (see chapter four), and as part of a concern to ease trade flows across borders. In publications like \textit{Barriers to International Travel} and \textit{Barriers to the International Transport of Goods} the ICC drew attention to what it considered unwarranted hindrances to movements across borders in Europe, because

\begin{quote}
“The regulations, requirements and “red tape” which have surrounded international commerce since World War I have become, subsequent to World War II, so aggravated by commodity allocations, priorities, export and import licenses, quotas, exchange controls and added consular and customs regulations as to make efforts at compliance a virtual nightmare for importers, exporters and others concerned. These handicaps and delays, which we believe are largely unnecessary, have the force of additional taxation on trade.”\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

The freedom of the road agreements formed part of an attempt, supported by road-based INGOs, to put international commercial road transport on equal footing with international commercial rail transport and inland navigation. They also sought to transfer some of what had been achieved for traveling tourists to the professional road transport sector. The agreements were intended to be temporary. Soon after their conclusion the ITC started to work on a permanent regime for

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17} ECE, 6\textsuperscript{th} session, \textit{Report of the ITC to the ECE}, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/127-E, 24 April 1951, 6; Committee of Deputies, “Record 54\textsuperscript{th} session (10 July 1962),” CS/M(62)4, ECMT.
\end{flushright}
international road transport in Europe. American transport experts played an important role again. On the initiative of Douglas Clarke, the American road transport advisor at the Office of the Special Representative (OSR) in Paris (see chapter five), the Road Sub-Committee installed a Team of Specialists for the Development and Improvement of Transport of Passengers and Goods by Road in Europe to determine impediments to the “progress” of road transport in Europe.19

To ensure the American voice would be well heard on the Team Clarke arranged the temporary appointment of Cecil Calvert. He wrote to Calvert that he felt that the OSR had “the bull by the horns” and that there was a genuine opportunity for American diplomats to do “a very constructive piece of work for the improvement of European road transport.” But Clarke needed help “to steer the bull in the right direction.”20 Calvert was the right person to reinforce the American delegation. European transport experts working in Geneva held him in very high esteem for his role in setting up the freedom of the road. The Team of Specialists met four times between June and September 1949. When the Team delivered its report, Clarke enthusiastically proclaimed

“The mice have laboured and brought forth a mountain! It has many valleys and a few high peaks, but as a whole, I think that it is well above the average terrain of the country.”21

Clarke’s euphoria can in part be explained by the fact that in the Interbellum so little had been achieved in this dossier on a multilateral level. Adverse conditions after the war stimulated liberalization, but when the peculiar conditions faded away, the mood of European governments tilted towards renewed regulation.22 The bad reputation that the trucking business had acquired across the continent aided this development. Trucks were frequently overloaded. The ICC warned truckers to avoid the hostility of other road users, which was all the more likely given the fact that not all roads had yet been adapted to truck use. The ICC’s recommendations to limit the damage to public opinion ranged from supervising trucker behavior on the road to the proper adjustment of engines to avoid heavy exhaust fumes.23

19 “Resolution 7,” UN doc. ser. E/ECE/TRANS/155, 31 May 1949, attached to Clarke to Kelly, 10 June 1949, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 10, NACP. The Team consisted of representatives of Belgium and the IRU, several Secretariat officials, and Clarke himself.
20 Clarke to Calvert, 24 May 1949, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 10, NACP.
21 Clarke to Whitnack, 14 October 1949, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 10, NACP.
Divergent opinions on the position of road traffic in the overall transport system had been an important explanation for the fiasco of the Draft Convention on Commercial Motor Transport in 1931. They resurfaced when the ITC created an Ad Hoc Working Party on the Development and Improvement of Transport of Passengers and Goods by Road in 1950 to negotiate the move towards a regime of regulated freedom. The Netherlands, for which road transport services were an increasingly important export product, continued its warm support for the freedom of the road. France propagated a much more dirigiste stance, particularly with regard to commercial passenger transport on the road. Irritated by abuses from road transport haulers overstepping the rules of the game that French authorities had imposed, France had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the freedom of the road agreements as they stood. Germany felt that the large amount of transit traffic making use of its roads formed an unfair burden for which it received no compensation. It had therefore grown rather unhappy with the liberalized agreements too.

Meanwhile the ECE sought to consolidate and extend the work of the League of Nations on road safety and the facilitation of personal travel in Europe. The first major event comparable to the Interbellum conferences was the United Nations Conference on Road and Motor Transport in Geneva. From 23 August to 19 September 1949 delegates discussed four subjects: the rules of the road, traffic signs, vehicle specifications, and the competence to drive a car. At the closing ceremony a Convention on Road Traffic and a Protocol on Road Signs and Signals were signed. A draft convention prepared by the ITC-ECE provided the basis for the 1949 instruments, along with the 1943 Convention on the Regulation of Inter-American Automotive Traffic. The Convention basically fused the two 1926 conventions, while the Protocol replaced the 1931 Convention concerning the Unification of Road Signals (see chapter four). Most European countries that signed the 1949 Convention and Protocol wanted to go a step further and concluded three European agreements as add-ons on 16 September 1950, the same date they signed the Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries (see chapter six). Two of the add-ons concerned the maximum weights and dimensions for trucks discussed in the next section. The third was a European Agreement supplementing the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic and the 1949 Protocol on Road Signs and Signals.

25 Clarke to McClure, 30 October 1950; Cohan to Phillips, 7 June 1952, RG 59, Lot file 54D388, box 23, NACP.
26 Clarke to McClure, 30 October 1950, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 8, NACP.
The 1949 Convention introduced the reciprocal acceptation of national registration documents for private vehicles, effectively abolishing the international registration certificates along the lines already proposed by AIACR in the mid-1930s (see chapter four). The measure heralded further actions easing the administrative burden for travelers engaging in cross-border traffic in Europe. The mutual recognition of national driving licenses was deemed a logical additional measure. But the clearest example was the rapid demise of the triptyque. Between the summer of 1956 and early 1957 the OEEC’s Tourism Committee, the Council of Europe’s Comité Spécial pour la Simplification des Formalités de Frontière, and the ECE’s Working Group of Customs Experts took up the issue of customs documentation required for the temporary importation of personal vehicles in tourism, such as the triptyque.

Existing documentation had diversified with the creation of new documents beside the classical triptyque and carnet de passages en douane. In a bilateral agreement France and Italy had introduced the dyptique for those traveling between the two countries. The main difference with the triptyque was that only the authorities of the visited country controlled the re-exportation of the vehicle. Travelers received a vignette on their windscreen when they received the document. German authorities had introduced the Zollvermerk carte, which motorists could obtain in their country of origin or at the German border. They had to keep it with them during their stay. Germany had done away with the requirement that an automobile or touring club should guarantee the financial consequences of non-re-exportation of the vehicle for which a triptyque had been issued. A date stamp on the card would ensure motorists not crossing the time limits for the temporary importation of their vehicle. The German police was authorized to review the cards anywhere on German territory.

In an explanatory note ECE Transport Division Director Paul le Vert indicated that his Secretariat thought the control systems for the temporary importation...
of vehicles presented multiple inconveniences. Getting documents was a waste of
time, their control caused queues at the border and was a great burden for cus-
toms officials at frontier posts. Above all the documents were a nuisance to tour-
ists. The most radical solution to the discomforts was to abolish all documents for
temporary importation of vehicles altogether. The Benelux had already taken this
step for all Benelux vehicles, and Scandinavian countries had done the same for
Scandinavian vehicles. The latter announced to abolish controls for all individual
travelers by 1 January 1958.32

Developments followed each other rapidly thereafter. By October 1957 Austria,
Germany and Switzerland had unofficially indicated that they would abolish all
frontier formalities before the start of the tourist season in 1958. When ECE
Transport Division official Masson was asked whether he thought these unilat-
eral decisions would “break the ice and encourage other countries to follow their
example,” he responded that he did not expect “anything very spectacular” for
the upcoming session of the Group of Customs Experts, but he would be most
satisfied to see his forecast proved wrong. Yet complete abolishment elsewhere put
countries where tourism was an important economic sector under pressure to take
similar measures, while countries that had abolished the customs documents were
unwilling to discuss the generalization of alternatives, such as the dyptique.33

By late 1957 the ECE therefore decided to aim for complete abolishment of
the triptyque and the carnet.34 A remaining hurdle was that some governments
feared they would incite fraud by abolishing the documents. The French delegate
explained that with an import tax of 62% to protect the French car industry his
government hesitated strongly.35 Just some months later he announced that France
was ready to take a plunge into the deep by abolishing the triptyque on 1 April
1958; the Benelux did the same. France did keep the vignette accompanying the
dyptique, but in early July it announced that the vignette too would go halfway
the month.36 By 20 April 1961 all Council of Europe member states except Iceland
and the United Kingdom had abolished the triptyque, and Portugal, Spain and

32 Ibid.; hand-written note 13 May 1957, attachment referring to the deliberations on the simplification of
frontier formalities (meeting 16-17 April 1957), registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/2/26-10278, UNOG.
33 Waters to Masson, 23 September 1957; Masson to Waters, 27 September 1957, registry fonds GIX, file
9/2/2/25-9611; Le Vert to Guerlet, 18 October 1957, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/2/26-10278, UNOG.
34 The OEEC supported the measure, see Gisèle Gueronik, “Expansion of tourism in the member countries
of the OEEC,” in OEEC, At work for Europe: An account of the activities of the Organisation for European
35 “Procès-verbal 5e session,” CE/FF(57) PV 5 Provisoire, 9 December 1957; see also CE/FF(57)PV 2, 2 May
1957, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/2/26-10278, UNOG.
36 “Procès-verbal 6e meeting, 3–6 March 1958,” “Press release, simplification in Benelux,” CE/FF(58)16,
30 May 1958; “Report comité spécial,” CM(58)74, 4 July 1958, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/2/26-10278,
UNOG.
Yugoslavia had followed the example.\textsuperscript{37} The triptyque had died a swift death across Western Europe.

Apart from facilitating personal travel, road safety was the other major theme on which the League of Nations’ Road Committee had done substantial work. The 1949 Convention had elaborated on some of the Committee’s achievements, and so did the 1949 Protocol on Road Signs and Signals adopted along with it. The European Agreement supplementing the 1949 Protocol made its facultative signs obligatory and added some extra ones.\textsuperscript{38} In the early 1960s the ITC started to draft a new European Agreement as an accessory to the 1949 Convention and Protocol.\textsuperscript{39} However, in May 1965 the ECE noted “a European agreement of this nature could only supplement these texts, whereas some of their provisions require revision.”\textsuperscript{40} With a request to ECOSOC to convene a revision conference no later than 1967 the ECE catapulted the issue to the global level, a suggestion ECOSOC readily took over. The ITC-ECE prepared the basic document that would be submitted to the conference.\textsuperscript{41}

The revision process reached its apogee with a month-long conference in Vienna lasting from 7 October to 8 November 1968. Two legal instruments were signed in the Austrian capital. The Vienna Convention on Road Traffic replaced the 1949 Convention. Among other things it stipulated the mutual recognition of the legality of vehicles of other signatory states as long as they displayed a registration number in the front and on the rear, and carried the standardized sign indicating its country of origin. The Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals replaced the 1949 Protocol. The ink of the Vienna Conventions was barely dry or the ITC started to discuss a European Agreement supplementing them. It concluded the respective additional agreements on 1 May 1971.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{37} The thirteen member states that abolished were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Turkey, CE/FF(60)PV 1 Provisoire, 1 April 1960; CE/FF(61)PV 1 provisoire, 10 July 1961, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/2/26-10278, UNOG.
\textsuperscript{38} The results of the implementation of the latter were hailed as a great help to the international tourist, Didier Merlin, “Un tour d’Europe (Occidentale) de la circulation routière,” Transmondia (August 1956): 9.
\textsuperscript{39} ECE, Annual Report (5 May 1963 – 30 April 1964), ECOSOC Official Records 37\textsuperscript{th} Session, Supplement 7, 18.
\textsuperscript{40} “Resolution 1 (XX) Revision of the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic and the 1949 Protocol on Road Signs and Signals,” in ECE, Annual Report (1 May 1964 – 8 May 1965), ECOSOC Official Records 39\textsuperscript{th} Session, Supplement 3, 60.
An interesting development pattern thus emerged. Some regulations already in force for international road traffic in Europe moved to the global level in the post-war period, but agreement on a worldwide basis came at the price of watering them down. European countries did not always deem this outcome satisfactory enough. As a solution they opted for adding European Agreements to worldwide instruments. Thus the European situation remained slightly different from the global one. In the case of the triptyque and the carnet, these documents spread across the globe too after having been used in European traffic for decades. Yet in the late 1950s Western European countries decided to go a step further and abolished the document for traffic crossing national borders among them, again making the European situation slightly different from that elsewhere.

The outlook for international commercial road transport diverged from this pattern. It was under these conditions the European countries gradually abandoned the freedom of the road in search for a new equilibrium. They found a broad array of issues on their path – more than this chapter can possibly chew on. In two case studies and a more modest interlude the next section looks more closely into the vicissitudes of the issues concerning the international commercial transport of passengers and trucks in Europe. It thus seeks to highlight that not only roads were imbued with the European ideal, but that the same can be said of the proposals for regimes in relation to views of the continental use of roads in Europe.

Towards a regime of regulated freedom

*Clearing the Lines*, a nineteen minute portrait of the reconstruction of European transport, linked the ideal of having a European road network with visions of its use. It formed the fifth episode in a series of six movies that put the achievements of the Marshall plan on display. The Film Unit of the Information Division at the Parisian OSR produced the series near the end of the Marshall Plan. The films were shown in movie theatres across Europe. Among other things the film showed a group of hard-working men constructing a new motorway in Belgium. The voice-over indicated it would become a section of the road from Oostende to Istanbul, one of the big transversals of the E-road network. The film optimistically stated

“When such bold projects are complete, new vistas will open for long distance international traffic on the road. Already the big diesels are rolling

day and night covering mileages and hauling loads unknown before the war. (...) Tourism especially will benefit from these new routes, (...) the idea of the international bus manned by two drivers and a hostess, cruising leisurely through half a dozen countries, is already appealing to many a visitor from overseas (...).”

In combining the E-road-building scene with trucks and buses driving across the screen, *Clearing the Lines* lay bare an implicit ideal of the E-road network. Sustained by a road network of continental scope trucks could bring essential spare parts from Germany for a power station in Strasbourg, or refrigerated fresh fish “straight from the keys of Denmark to the markets of Berne and Zürich.” The film featured a bus of Viking, a Danish bus company offering long-distance passenger transport in the early 1950s. The film thus portrayed the E-roads as part of the endeavor to heal “the veins of Europe’s transport” to allow “the beat of commerce throbbing through them.”

To allow buses and trucks to move effortlessly across borders, the countries involved needed to agree on the boundary conditions governing this traffic. The first case is the attempt to forge a coherent European network for long-distance bus lines allowing tourists to travel between destinations far apart. The second is the attempt to agree on a common European standard specifying the maximum width, length, height, and weight of trucks. For many this down-to-earth matter in international goods transport was an essential component of European economic integration. The section closes off with a short discussion of the ups and downs of the European pallet.

Taking the bus: the quest for trans-European bus lines, 1947-1956

“See Europe from an armchair” was a slogan with which travel brochures from the late 1920s sought to get potential tourists to explore the continent by bus. By then long-distance services for passengers had developed more fully by rail. Some of them, for example the famous Simplon-Orient Express, were imbued with expressly European connotations. Cross-border bus services in Europe dated from before the First World War. During the later phases of the war battlefield sites

45 *Clearing the Lines*, series *The Changing Face of Europe*, for ECA/OSR (London: Wessex Film Productions, 1951), film 111-MSA-1135, NACP. The title in itself also refers to the attenuation of the effects of the presence of borders, consistently referred to as “painted lines” in the movie to underline their artificial character.

46 *Clearing the Lines*.

47 Cover of a Motor Pullman Travel brochure, 1929.

48 For an elaborate account of railways and the European ideal in the Interbellum, see Irene Anastasiadou, *In search of a railway Europe: Transnational railway developments in interwar Europe* (Amsterdam: Aksant, forthcoming).
could be visited by bus, forming a stepping-stone to more widespread services after the war, of which a part turned Europe into a commodity for the consumption of travelers.49

After the Second World War tourism played a major role in the context of the Marshall Plan. Selling tourist services to visitors from across the Atlantic was a good method to bring in desperately needed dollars to ease the so-called dollar gap resulting from the mismatch between the huge imports from the United States and the low exports towards it.50 Shipping cars across the Atlantic Ocean and offering car hire services were ways to stimulate mobility on European roads, but what Americans were thought to be particularly fond of was the package tour by motor coach.51 The Grand Tour of Europe by bus and other tours were projected as an appealing product that could attract flocks of American tourists from across the Atlantic.52 On the basis of technical assistance missions to the United States, the OEEC recommended the expansion of such services. The American Automobile Association (AAA) offered its first escorted tours through Travel Agency Services in 1949. Soon thereafter it carried most participants of its annual European tours by bus (see Figure 7.2).53

50 On this aspect, see Christopher Endy, Cold War holidays: American tourism in France (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 2004), especially chapter two.
51 For a more elaborate account on how Transatlantic tourism stimulated mobility on the road in Europe, see Schipper, “Changing,” 220-222.
In transport jargon the escorted tours of the AAA were ‘closed circular tours.’ They were circular in the sense that they usually began and ended in the same place. They were closed in the sense that during the journey the same group stayed together for the entire trip. Closed tours were not allowed to pick up or set down passengers en route. After the Second World War private bus companies expanded their services with new types, as circular tours were no longer deemed suitable for all types of tourist. Shuttle services traveled back and forth between two locations as feeders for popular holiday destinations. Line services traveled along a specific route allowing passengers to get on and off the bus at various stops along the route. Douglas Clarke deemed the lack of this type of service “the most serious bottleneck in the tourist trade,” and thought it likely that line services had the potential to attract more American tourists from across the Atlantic.54 Together the line services lay a web across the continent of which the contours formed the boundaries of the Europe available to tourists traveling by bus.

The Swedish company Linjebuss pioneered offering international line services in 1947, connecting Sweden with several European countries. Having remained neutral during the war, Sweden did not face the problem of having to rebuild its national transport system. In its publicity and on the side of its buses Linjebuss identified its services as “trans-European bus lines,” emphasizing its continental scope.55 The longest connection on offer ran from Stockholm to Rome, a distance Linjebuss motor coaches covered in four days traveling six hours a day. Two drivers and an English-speaking hostess did their utmost best to make traveling on the snack bar and lavatory equipped Linjebuss as pleasurable as possible.56

The freedom of the road agreements covered bus services, freeing 89% of international bus movements from all administrative obstacles.57 Nevertheless the ECE trimmed down their application for bus services in October 1948, less than one year after the agreements had come into force and well before the discussion on the regime of regulated freedom on the road had caught steam. Instead of applying them to all types of international passenger transport, the agreements now applied only to circular tours and shuttle services starting at an air- or seaport in one country and terminating in that of another under the condition of empty return.58

54 Clarke to Calvert, 24 May 1949, RG 84, US representative to ECE, box 10, NACP.
55 For an illustration see http://www.posters-nor.com/psmaler/poster_details.asp?thisId=1109021340, displaying a deer jumping in front of a Linjebuss on a forest road.
58 Würzen, Internationales, 105.
Bus line services in principle needed to obtain a license. Opinions on how such licenses should be acquired were split between two contrasting positions. Some propagated bilateral agreements but others were fiercely opposed to the bilateral option, as

“bilateral agreements would not make it possible to achieve efficient organization of transport in Europe, which could not be secured by the addition of a series of partial agreements because it constituted an indivisible whole. (...) a policy of bilateral agreements would not be consistent with European integration.”59

For them multilateralism was the only method consistent with continental ambitions. They placed their faith in the set-up of an organization equipped with sufficient authority “to ensure the efficient and rational operation of all transport in Europe.” ‘Bilateralists’ did not think such a position was realistic and held that only bilateral agreements were possible “at the present juncture.”60 A Sub-Group on International Passenger Transport Services by Road, created as part of the Working Party on the Development and Improvement of Transport of Passengers and Goods by Road, further battled out these differences of opinion. The Sub-Group held its first meeting in Geneva from 22 to 24 May 1951 under the chairmanship of the Belgian J. Vrebos and departed from the point of view that there was a need for a coordinated network of regular tourist services by road.61 The UIC and the IRU shared the desire for an integrated network. They stated they wanted to avoid “sterile competition” and proclaimed themselves willing to cooperate closely on combined tickets, joint publicity, and the adaptation of time schedules.62

The UIC’s involvement was not primarily by virtue of its function as representative of the railroad branch. Rather it negotiated on behalf of the Union des Services Routiers des Chemins de Fer Européens (URF) 63 The URF was a cooperation of railway administrations from eleven Western European countries. They had met in Berne in May, October and December 1950 to discuss a joint course of action with regard to the growth of international tourist services by road, of which they wanted to capture a fair share. The URF resorted under the Chemins

59 WP 14, Report 2nd session, 2-3.
60 Ibid., 3.
62 Sub-Group, Report 1st session, annex, “Joint statement by the IRU and UIC representatives.”
63 English ECE documents refer to the URF as the International Conference of Railway Road Transport Services.
In March 1951 Swiss authorities organized a meeting in Berne where government representatives deliberated and granted licenses for railway-administered international road services for 1951. Under the brand name Europabus the URF started offering bus line services in April 1951 (see Figure 7.3). Most lines had a tourist character and ran from late spring to mid-autumn. Services were not exclusively road-based; customers could include stretches by rail.

The exploitation of Europabus was governed by a number of basic principles. Jointly the administrations planned a network of services with harmonized time schedules. They provided international tickets and organized collective publicity. The first year Europabus covered twenty-eight routes of 18,500 km in length, including 1,600 km by rail mainly on French territory. In contrast to the private long distance line services, Europabus did not consist of long trans-European connections but formed concatenations of services that usually crossed only one border. Thus Europabus customers had to change vehicle on several points in their trip.

The Swiss government, key initiator in the endeavor, referred the issue to the ECE to reach international agreement on the common principles for this type of service. For the purpose of granting licenses, the sub-group put Europabus con-

---

64 These countries were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.
65 Sub-Group Report 1st Session, 2.
67 Setten “Internationaal;” Vinay, “Europabus.”
Connections on equal footing with private bus lines. Licenses were issued for one year, a period the IRU claimed was too short. It pleaded to lengthen the validity to three years to “ensure a certain degree of economic stability.” Under these conditions the sub-group started to deliberate the license applications it had received for 1952 from the UIC for Europabus lines and from the IRU on behalf of private bus companies. The result was a network of bus services that covered the larger part of Western Europe (see Figure 7.4). A comparison of the services of Europabus with those of Viking Continentbus, Linjebuss, the Dutch company Trans-European Buslines, and others, reveals a broad overlap, but differences as well. Private undertakings connected the United Kingdom, but Europabus did not. Europabus’ Paris-Casablanca service went all the way through Spain thanks to the participation of the Red Nacional de Ferrocarriles Españoles, while the private undertakings did not go any further than Barcelona.

As the delegations were forging a European network of line services, the French representative indicated that the French government had denounced the freedom of the road agreements for circular tours. Some transport undertakings had not observed the conditions set by French authorities by trespassing the rule that the passengers carried on the inward and outward journey should be the same. Thus their service had de facto become a regular line service, not sanctioned as such by

---

68 WP 14, Report 2nd session, 8-10; Sub-Group, Report 1st session, 2, 4.
70 The details of the lines and licenses can be found in the three annexes to Sub-Group, Report 2nd session.
French authorities. The sensitivities related to the near unconditional support for its state-owned railways when it came to passenger transport. American policymakers complained

“The French representative seemed to be wholly preoccupied merely with the possibility that bus tours from other parts of Europe into France would take some traffic away from the French railways.”

Simultaneously German authorities granted Europabus more privileges than its private counterparts by giving it the right to pick up and set down passengers in Germany for the operational year 1952. Scandinavian bus companies were the only private undertakings receiving the same favor, but only for Bremen and Hamburg. More differences of opinion came to the fore during the meticulous examinations of the applications. As a result the network became stagnant after its initial fixation, delegates typically renewing the licenses that had already been approved in earlier years. In 1954 they accepted only two new applications, but withdrew two existing ones at the same. As the delegates muddled along, a dissatisfied Dutch representative complained that “insufficient account had been taken of the needs of travellers.”

INGOs like the International Union of Official Tourist Organizations, the OTA and the International Federation of Travel Agencies closely followed the work of the sub-group. In June 1952 they had provided the sub-group with a report on tourist requirements. Thereupon the delegates requested their American colleague to provide full information on the wishes of American tourists, and also to inform the Sub-Group on long-distance bus services in the United States itself. The Port Authority Bus Terminal of New York City alone processed 10,000 long-distance passengers each day, on top of 60,000 passengers staying inside the agglomeration. The 2,500 daily buses included mastodons of seventy-five seats. To tap some of this business Europabus opened an office in New York in 1953, where American customers could purchase tickets for their European tour.

Increasingly frustrated the Dutch delegate qualified the achievements of the deliberations in the sub-group as “meager.” Too many issues were earmarked for

---

71 Ibid., 2-3; Report 3rd session, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/TRANS/WP14/15, 31 October 1951, 4-6.
72 Cohan to Phillips, 7 June 1952, RG 59, Lot File 54D388, box 23, NACP.
74 Ibid., 6; Report 4th session, E/ECE/TRANS/WP28/2, 4.
bilateral negotiations up to the point that “he wondered whether there was any further point in speaking of multilateral negotiations.” According to him the situation was unfortunate, as only a multilateral attitude could deliver the coordinated network the sub-group aimed for. The IRU and OTA vigorously upheld the Dutch view. Yet the delegates were unable to reach consensus. Under these circumstances the Sub-Committee on Road Transport decided to abandon the quest for an ideal network of international tourist services by road in 1955, although the Working Group on International Passenger Transport Services by Road would continue to discuss carriers’ license applications on a yearly basis. Many new licenses continued to be blocked. ECE’s Transport Director Le Vert indicated that the main victims were those who did not own a car and for whom traveling by bus was an affordable way to enjoy their holiday.

Despite the abandonment of the search for a coherent European network, a web of long-distance line services had been woven all the same. Moreover, the network was expanding, though not on the multilateral basis that was initially propagated. From twenty-eight routes covering 18,500 km in its first year of operation, in 1956 Europabus had more than a hundred lines and circular tours covering 40,000 km in seventeen countries. By 1959 the widely used Fodor’s Jet Age Guide to Europe called Europabus “the giant of the buslines” and euphorically proclaimed

“Europe’s bus lines and bus touring companies have brought travel by motor coach to a peak approaching perfection.”

Fodor explained the “increasing popularity of exploring Europe by bus” by pointing at comfort and the wide choice of routes. According to the French magazine Transmondia the charabancs of the past had transformed into pleasant Pullmans. These modern vehicles were equipped with heating and ventilation and provided passengers with the means to protect themselves from the sun. Such amenities

79 Sub-Group, Report 5th session, 2-3.
80 ECE, 10th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/195-E, 31 January 1955, section 8. The amount of new licenses continued to fluctuate from year to year. For 1956 the working party licensed five new lines, but a year later only one. ECE, 11th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/226-F, 28 February 1956, section 15; ECE, 12th session, Report of the ITC to the ECE, UN doc. ser. E/ECE/265-F, 12 March 1957, section 10.
81 Council of Ministers, "Record 7th session (22-23 October 1957), "CM/M(57)2, Annex 2, "Statement by Mr. Le Vert," 16, ECMT. Ironically the expansion of business among lower income groups had just been identified as the perfect target for the bus branch, see Sub-Group, Report 5th session, 3-4; Groupe de Travail ad hoc du Comité du Tourisme, “Transports Internationaux de Voyageurs par Route,” DIT/TOU/54.24, 24 February 1954, fonds OEEC, file 1299, HAEU.
brought comfort while the presence of fire extinguishers and emergency exits secured safe travel. Those fed up with the Mediterranean sun could take a trip with the line of the North Cape, proceeding by train to Swedish Luleå and from there to exotic places like Narvik, Rovaniemi, and Tromsø where the sun never set in the polar summer. In eight days Parisians could travel to Casablanca, first taking the train to Bordeaux and then continuing by Europabus through Spain. Although admittedly not all places were as well provided with bus connections as Paris, Europe lay more clearly at the feet of the motor coach traveler than it had ever done before.

**Weights and dimensions: the quest for a European truck, 1949-1960**

When Handley Stevens joined the British Foreign Office in March 1964, the first dossier ending up on the desk of the fresh Temporary Assistant Principal concerned the maximum standards for trucks in the European Economic Community (EEC). The fact that the Foreign Office assigned the topic to a junior official is most likely indicative for its minor importance in circles of British administration. Yet among the six EEC member states the issue had according to Stevens become “a long-running feud” that was hard to solve, despite its high priority status. Other international organizations had been dealing with this outstanding headache dossier before the European Commission did so. It shows how a deceptively dull subject could in fact be the object of heated debate. According to Nigel Despicht

“This problem gives a good indication of how matters of a very technical nature can become political issues of international importance when their harmonization involves a definite step towards closer Economic Union.”

Why was agreeing on standards for heavy vehicles so troublesome? The basic difficulty is that the bigger and heavier the vehicles are, the more economically their owners can operate them. This implies that when countries have different standards, bigger, heavier foreign vehicles have a competitive edge over the domestic fleet in a country with more modest standards. Truck standards have a direct impact on road quality. If roads and vehicles are not properly adapted to each other, the inevitable result is that considerable damage is done to the road network.

---


86 Ibid., 284.
Upgrading standards, however, can have tremendous financial consequences due to the investment needed for road construction and maintenance. The discussion on weights and dimensions is thus intimately related to the road network itself.

As one of only few scholars Marine Moguen-Toursel has worked on truck standard controversies in Europe. Her work mainly focuses on the maximum allowed tonnage per single axle from the mid-1960s onwards and centers round the question whether American standards effectively spread to Europe or not. She particularly highlights the role of the automobile industry in the process of standard setting and has an institutional focus on developments in the EEC. In passing she mentions that the process of harmonizing weights and dimensions started in 1949 in the ECE, but the elements of this earlier discussion remain opaque. Nor does she point out the Interbellum roots of the discussion on weights and dimensions for trucks.

This chapter closely investigates developments in 1949-1960. They reveal that not only the weight of vehicles was at stake, but also their dimensions, particularly length. By looking closely at standard settings within the context of the EEC Moguen-Toursel clearly embeds her topic in the context of European integration. The interesting aspect of the discussion on truck standards in this thesis is that the main actors discussed them in close relation to the E-road network prior to the foundation of the EEC. The technicalities of the subject thus came to reflect their vision of the use of the main international traffic arteries as corridors for long-distance road freight transport.

Soon after the Second World War ended road interest groups started to press for a common truck standard that would apply across Europe. The ICC called for a joint standard at its first post-war gathering in 1947 in Montreux, Switzerland. Article 23 of the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic stipulated that the weights and dimensions of the vehicles admitted on the roads of signatory states were subject to the national regulations in that country, but it also created the possibility for regional agreements designating roads for which the maximum weights and dimensions of annex 7 of


the Convention applied. The Annex contained a dozen combinations of weights and dimensions for different types of vehicles. It permitted a single axle load up to 8 tons and a vehicle width of 2.50 m. Total length ranged from 10 m for an articulated vehicle to 22 m for vehicles towing two trailers.

In Geneva the ITC put reaching an agreement in the sense of article 23 of the 1949 Convention on the agenda of the Ad Hoc Working Party on Main International Traffic Arteries. The ITC wished for standards in excess of those in annex 7 for Europe and started to work on an Agreement specifying routes for in excess vehicles. While the ECE acknowledged that heavy vehicles could not be admitted on all roads, it made clear that the annex 7 standards and those in excess should apply on a significant proportion of E-roads to fulfill their ambition to become main corridors for long-distance commercial transport of freight and passengers. The initial discussion took place in a smaller group composed of representatives for the Benelux, France, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States on behalf of the Western Zones of Germany. The set of countries is unlikely to have been a random selection, as together they formed a contiguous zone in the Europe's North-Western corner. A draft European Agreement lay on the table by the end of July 1950.

The larger part of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Party on Main International Traffic Arteries concentrated on the maximum weights and dimensions of the vehicles that the arteries were supposed to serve. The close connection between the E-road network and the discussion on weights and dimensions was symbolized by the fact that the ECE managed the conclusion of the Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries on the same 16 September 1950 as the European Agreement on the Application of Article 23 of the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic concerning the Dimensions and Weights of Vehicles Permitted to Travel on certain Roads of the contracting Parties, and the European Agreement on the Application of Article 3 of Annex 7 of the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic concerning the Dimensions and Weights of Vehicles

---

91 Vergnaud, Les transports, 179.
92 An articulated vehicle, a term used in the 1949 Convention, is a combination of a tractor and a semitrailer, hence the American equivalent 'semi-trailer truck.'
93 Annex 7 created the possibility for such an agreement in its article 3, which stipulated that states could conclude regional agreements increasing the weights of vehicles up to an absolute maximum of 13 metric tons per axle.
Permitted to Travel on Certain Roads of the Contracting Parties.96 Few countries committed themselves to the two unpronounceable agreements. Belgium, France and Luxembourg signed and ratified the Article 3 Agreement. Given the low rate of ratification and accession, France withdrew in the spring of 1954, effectively killing the Agreement on 27 November 1954 because it required a minimum of three parties.97 The Article 23 Agreement did not draw much more support: only the Benelux, France, Greece and Yugoslavia had ratified it by late August 1955.98

The tricky issue became one among many dealt with in the run-up to the creation of the ECMT. At its founding conference, the ECMT adopted a resolution calling on its members to ratify or accede to the Article 23 Agreement and specify the routes on which they allowed vehicles complying with annex 7 with the goal to achieve uniform standards across ECMT member countries as soon as possible.99 The institutional focus for this discussion therewith moved from the ECE to the ECMT. The resolution underlined the fruitful work done by the ECE in this field and Paul le Vert, Director of the Inland Transport Division of the ECE Secretariat, actively and constructively participated in the ECMT’s Committee of Deputies on this matter – an indication that the ECE was not overly worried that the ECMT dealt with the subject.100

Reporting on the status of the Article 23 Agreement Le Vert noted disappointingly that “on the whole little progress [had] been made in recent years.” He expressed the hope that ECMT deputies would receive instructions to bring about the European standardization so extremely important for vehicle manufacturers and carriers.101 As 1955 was nearing its end German deputy Bergemann indicated that special circumstances could make it difficult to apply decisions with regard to weights and dimensions taken in Geneva. It was therefore “quite possible that certain Ministers would be compelled to contemplate adopting a less liberal position.” Le Vert indicated there was in fact a broader “retrograde tendency,” as had become clear from the debacle of the Article 3 Agreement. It was by now almost certain

---

96 For the sake of brevity, these agreements will hereafter be referred to as ‘Article 23 Agreement’ and ‘Article 3 Agreement’ respectively.
97 Stavropoulos to Myrdal, 13 January 1956, registry funds GIX, file 12/7/3/2-8233, UNOG. French representative Corbin had announced the withdrawal of France in ECMT’s Committee of Deputies in March, Committee of Deputies, “Record 2nd session (2-5 March 1954),” CS/M(54)2, ECMT.
98 Committee of Deputies, “Record 8th session (28-29 August 1955),” CS/M(55)4, ECMT.
100 Committee of Deputies, “Record 11th session (1-3 February 1956),” CS/M(56)1; “Record 13th session, (21 March 1956),” CS/M(56)3, ECMT.
101 Committee of Deputies, “Record 8th session (28-29 August 1955),” CS/M(55)4, ECMT.
that also some of the standards in the 1949 Convention would soon be revised. In retrospect Bergemann’s remark should be interpreted as a hint for subsequent developments in 1956. In March 1956 German transport minister Seebohm put the cat among the pigeons with a short statement at a ministerial session in Paris. Seebohm announced that a day earlier he had decreed a reduction of the maximum axle load allowed on German roads from 10 to 8 tons, except for buses, and a reduction of the maximum length from 20 to 14 meters. The measure took almost immediate effect for new vehicles. Trucks already in use could remain on German roads until 1960. Several rationales underpinned the German move. The 1949 standards had been set higher than the German transport minister deemed wise in retrospect. In combination with the large amounts of transit traffic German roads processed this led to a continuous rise in road upkeep costs. Seebohm also hoped the reduction would increase road safety and smooth traffic flows, which were growing exponentially. The German move displeased several ministers and Dutch official Vonk, replacing his minister Algera, observed that it went counter to the 1949 Convention. The appreciable reduction of hitherto permissible weights and dimensions led the Council to assign technical standards for road vehicles a priority status in the ECMT.

Seebohm had based his decision on the Western Association of State Highway Officials and Maryland road tests, two recent experiments in the United States. To convince his colleagues Seebohm showed two films demonstrating the wear and tear trucks caused on concrete and asphalt surfaces. After the film session each delegation had the opportunity to state its opinion on the advisability of revising the standards in annex 7. All replied in the negative. French minister Pinton expressed his surprise that Seebohm went along with the pessimistic results of the American road tests. On the basis of research by French engineers he was inclined to draw more optimistic conclusions with regard to effect of trucks on road deterioration. Pinton underlined

“This question (...) is in my opinion of great importance to the good relations and spirit of loyal co-operation which must inspire us all. One can obviously suppose that in this matter everyone is free to do as he likes.”

---

102 Committee of Deputies, “Record 10th session (8-9 December 1955),” CS/M(55)6, ECMT. Vergnaud noted a restrictive tendency too, Vergnaud, Les transports, 180.
103 Council of Ministers, “Record 4th session (22 March 1956),” CM/M(56)1; “Record 5th session (17 October 1956),” CM/M(56)2, ECMT.
104 The decision was taken based on the proposition of Vonk, Council of Ministers, “Record 4th session (22 March 1956), CM/M(56)1; “Record 5th session (17 October 1956),” CM/M(56)2, ECMT.
105 On road tests more generally, see Maxwell G. Lay, Ways of the world: A history of the world’s roads and of the vehicles that used them (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 247-249.
Unfortunately, vehicles cannot be modified as they cross the frontier and, in adopting over-strict rules for vehicles of other countries entering the territory to another, I can see a danger to the good harmony which should prevail between us.”

Three groups were becoming discernable among the quarrelling countries. Germany headed the first, but Austria and Switzerland belonged to it too. Though quieter in the discussions and not in favor of revision, they did not apply the annex 7 standards either. Second came France, Italy and the Netherlands, which did not see any justification for modification and strongly disapproved of the German move. They underlined that the 1949 standards had been the result of a difficult compromise they did not want to break open. Moreover their vehicle fleets were based on the 1949 standards. The drastic reduction inflicted considerable losses on their transport sector. The third group was less intransigent and would support any solution likely to be backed by all important transit countries. Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark chose this pragmatic course. Inconsistencies in the German policy bred irritation with its opponents. German authorities did not apply their strict standards to buses, and Swiss authorities too tolerated vehicles crossing the 2.4 m limit in width they strictly applied to other vehicles. Pinton sarcastically noted

“In such circumstances one could scarcely prevent the malicious-minded from supposing that the Swiss Authorities are tolerant towards motor coaches because they bring in tourists who spend foreign currencies. I admit that it seems unthinkable that the strict measures that seem necessary for the safety of goods should be far less necessary where it is a question of the safety of passengers.”

As complete deadlock became ever more apparent, Belgian minister Anseele proposed an enquiry from a purely technical point of view as a compromise. He stated that in truth none of the signatory states applied the stipulations of the 1949 Convention properly and overloading of up to 130% of the maximum permissible tonnage had been found. This behavior on the part of professional drivers obviously exacerbated the antagonistic situation. The International Transport

106 Council of Ministers, “Record 5th session (17 October 1956),” CM/M(56)2, ECMT.
107 Council of Ministers, “Record 5th session (17 October 1956),” CM/M(56)2; Committee of Deputies, “Record 16th session, (25-26 September 1956),” CS/M(56)6, ECMT.
108 Council of Ministers, “Record 5th session, EcMT.
109 Council of Ministers, “Record 5th session, EcMT. An American study had found 20% of lorries operating in the territory of Ohio infringed the laws in force there in this respect, Committee of Deputies, “Record 14th session (7-8 May 1956),” CS/M(56)4, ECMT.
Workers’ Federation too called for further detailed study by independent experts, in order to establish a European truck standard once and for all. Such calls disregarded the inherently complicated nature of the issue and naïvely assumed that the multiple and diverging interests in the international regulation of weights and dimensions could be steered in the same direction on the basis of expert opinions.

The road lobby underlined the importance of keeping existing standards. At one of the regular INGO hearings at the ECMT, ICC representative Lemaignen requested the assembled ministers to stay with the 1949 Convention. IRU representative Schweizer sided with him. IRF founder-president Gallienne recalled one of the first actions by the first chairman of the Conference was to send off a European train of standardized wagons from the Parisian Gare de l’Est. Gallienne expressed the hope the ministers would now do their utmost best to achieve tangible results for road traffic too – by adopting as soon as possible a set of mutually agreeable truck specifications.

The ICC took the lead in organizing opposition. It organized a so-called user-carrier consultation assembling nine road-friendly INGOs in July 1956 to determine a common position on weights and dimensions. The nine unanimously denounced the German reduction of the maximum permissible load as irreconcilable with European integration. Apart from increasing the price of goods, they also argued the measure deteriorated rather than improved road safety by increasing the number of vehicles on the road. In December 1956 the ICC Commission of Transport Users indicated its conviction that the unhindered movement of trucks over borders was a “decisive requirement” for the free flow of goods characterizing common markets. The ICC Congress in Naples in May 1957 reiterated its alarm over the reduction. Through subtle references to the foundation of the EEC the ICC hinted at the considerable enthusiasm for the European project at the time. It was thus able to portray the German decree as a rearguard action. Le Poids Lourd, the leading French journal for professional road transporters and heavy vehicle manufacturers, called on the new

110 Council of Ministers, “Record 7th session (22-23 October 1957);” CM/M(57)2, Annex 11, “Statement by Mr. Imhof representing the International Transport Workers’ Federation,” ECMT.
111 Council of Ministers, “Record 5th session;” “Record 7th session, Annexes, “Hearing of the International Organisations.”
112 Besides the ICC, IRF, and IRU, regularly represented at ECMT discussions, the AIT, FIA and World Touring and Automobile Organization also participated. The party further included the International Permanent Bureau of Motor Manufacturers, the Council of European Industrial Federations, and the International Federation of Forwarding Organizations.
French minister of public works, transport and tourism Bonnefous, to resist the German measures and keep the French standard weight of 13 tons.114

The positions among the ministers remained antagonistic. A Dutch-French plea requesting Seebohm to postpone implementation of the March 1956 Decree until some technical studies already underway were finalized, fell on deaf ears.115 The Netherlands was Germany’s most vociferous adversary.116 The Dutch fervor in this discussion – and in others related to road transport – should be understood in the light of the fact that professional Dutch haulers carried more than 50% of European cross-border road transport. The German measures made over three quarters of the Dutch vehicle fleet obsolete for transport through Germany. Enraged Mr. Collette, a key figure in the Netherlands International Road Transport Organization NIWO, declared at an ICC meeting on the common transport policy of the EEC

“Comment peut-on parler de Marché Commun (...) si dans les pays mêmes où le transit est le plus important sont prises des mesures désastreuses pour tout le transport routier européen.”117

However, the discussion reached a condition of stasis except for some occasional firework. An example is an intervention of UIC leader Tuja when he suggested heavy vehicles did not generally bear the costs they incurred for road infrastructure and recommended special caution in the case of an appreciable increase in truck weights and dimensions to assure they covered the corresponding infrastructure costs. IRF president Gallienne furiously responded with a gibe in kind. He noted the UIC meddled into anything from pipelines to the weights and dimensions of trucks to such an extent that he thought the railway administrations were perhaps under the assumption that they still enjoyed a monopoly.118 In the meantime the end of the transition period was nearing fast. By 1 July 1960 all road vehicles passing through Germany needed to comply with the stringent standards.

114 Alfred Theodor, "13-11 ou 8..?,” editorial, Le Poids Lourd 42, no. 504 (1957): 1. The French acronym for the ministry was TTT, namely Travaux Publics, Transports et Tourisme.
115 Council of Ministers, "Record 6th session (16 May 1957)," CM/M(57)1; “Record 9th session (15 October 1958),” CM/M(58)2, ECMT.
116 Compare official Schoenewald’s qualification of the situation as “extremely serious” and “very urgent,” and minister Algera’s description of the issue as a “crucial test of the efficiency and utility of the Conference,” see Council of Deputies, “Record 14th session (7-8 May 1956),” CS/M(56)4; Council of Ministers, “Record 7th session (22-23 October 1957),” CM/M(57)2, ECMT.
117 ICC, “Minutes Meeting 23 June 1958,” doc. 330/50, 9 July 1958, registry files GIX, file 9/2/24-9131, UNOG; the acronym stands for Nederlandse Internationale Weegtransport Organisatie. Translation “How can we speak of a Common Market (...) when most important transit countries take measures that are disastrous for European road transport.”
118 Council of Deputies, “Record 34th session (22-23 September),” CS/M(59)4, Annex; see also Le Vert to Tuomioja, 28 September 1959, Accession of Retired Records (hereafter: ARR) 14, number 1360: Files of Office of Executive Secretary Gunnar Myrdal (1947-1957), box 109, UNOG.
In September 1959 Le Vert decided to intervene, formulating a Franco-German compromise involving sacrifices on all sides. Beforehand Le Vert had informally contacted the German delegation to make sure it would accept 10 tons per single axle. He knew this was too high for Scandinavian countries, but disregarded their position on the basis of their peripheral location. The biggest hurdle was the Dutch and Italian protest he expected against lowering the standard length of 18 m for trucks with a single trailer. The final aim was to reach a compromise among Western European countries as a building block towards a general European agreement later:

“Si un accord intervient un jour en Europe occidentale, je proposerai ensuite ici son extension à toute l’Europe, mais il serait trop ambitieux de vouloir commencer par un accord général.”

In exchange for sticking to the maximum weight of 10 tons per axle in agreement with the 1949 Convention, German authorities insisted maximum length should be set at 15.50 m instead of the 18 m in the Convention. The Committee of Deputies called a special meeting on 9 March 1960 to finally settle the issue. The ICC, the IRF, and the IRU were the first to express their opinion that the 18 m limit should remain untouched. They suspected the actual goal of the French-German compromise was to penalize vehicle combinations, while their own conviction was that carriers should be able to choose their equipment as freely as possible. They also scoffed at the projected improvement of road safety and traffic flow. ICC representative De Vita indicated that the length reduction to 15.50 m shortened overtaking time by a futile 3/10th of a second, while it negatively affected the grip of vehicles on the road and thus supposedly heightened the risk of swaying. In economic terms the measures would be disastrous. With a length of 15.50 m it became virtually impossible to reach the maximum allowed tonnage. It made German acceptance of 10 tons a void gesture. Unimpressed German deputy Linder countered all arguments. He played the safety card once more by pointing out that in 1958 heavy vehicles had caused 8.5 times more fatal accidents than other vehicles, while their total mileage had been just 2.5 times as high.

---

119  Le Vert to Central Office, 26 November 1959, ARR 14, file 1360, box 149, UNOG. Translation “If one day an agreement is reached for Western Europe, I would subsequently propose to extend it to the rest of Europe, but it would be too ambitious to start with a general agreement.” See also Council of Deputies, “Record 36th session (24 November 1959),” CS/M(59)6; Council of Ministers, “Record 10th session (20 October 1959),” CM/M(59)1, ECMT.

120  Committee of Deputies, “Record 37th session (3-4 February 1960),” CS/M(60)1, 8.

121  Linder did not indicate how the standard reductions would lower this figure, Committee of Deputies, “Record 38th session (9 March 1960),” CS/M(60)2, ECMT.
Subsequently all deputies clarified their national positions in turn. The standardized width of 2.5 m now only produced difficulties for the United Kingdom, but no longer for the Alpine countries. As for tonnage, many countries supported 10 tons per axle, although several indicated they could only implement the standard after upgrading their road network. Even Germany’s key adversary was in a conciliatory mood. If the transition period would be long enough, Dutch spokesman Raben indicated that his government agreed to make concessions, though reluctantly and “with the sole idea of reaching a compromise at European level.” For the sake of escaping from deadlock, the Dutch delegation was willing to overcome the fact that it remained unconvinced by the technical rationales given to justify the new standards.\(^{122}\)

The sole exception to Dutch flexibility was to reduce vehicle length to under 18 m. Other countries shared the Dutch intransigence on length. The mountainous territory of Austria and Switzerland did not allow encouraging articulated vehicles over vehicle combinations. Scandinavian countries generally transported goods of a low specific weight. Despite the length issue the chair optimistically concluded that at the end of the session the atmosphere seemed more favorable to compromise than before. It seemed the results of the meeting could fruitfully serve as input for the ministerial session planned for May 1960.\(^{123}\)

Positive results were most welcome. Pressure to reach an agreement mounted from all sides. Seebohm had gone to great lengths to convince the Bundestag to postpone application of the strict standards to new vehicles until the ECMT reached agreement. If the ministers failed, German politicians would surely choose to go it alone. Lambert Schaus, the European Commissioner for Transport, indicated he would put weights and dimensions on the EEC agenda if the ECMT failed to act. Even so positions rigidized rather than converged. French minister Buron praised the Franco-German compromise. Seebohm reiterated that road traffic densities in Germany were the highest of Europe, and that heavy vehicle combinations were inherently dangerous. Both their pleas failed to have the intended effect. Other ministers persisted in their opposition. The only constructive proposal came from Yugoslav minister Dapcević, who added one meter to the proposed German figure. Seebohm indicated it might stand a chance in the Bundestag. On the verge of despair the ministers referred the issue back to the deputies, giving them full powers to find a solution and forwarding them the Yugoslav proposal to settle for 16.5 m.\(^{124}\)

\(^{122}\) Committee of Deputies, “Record 38th session,” ECMT.
\(^{123}\) Ibid.
\(^{124}\) Council of Ministers, “Record 11th session (24 May 1960),” CM/M(60)1, ECMT.
The deputies had barely started on 3 June when Austrian delegate Fenz proposed to stretch the Yugoslav 16.5 m to 17 m. His government clearly preferred 18 m and actually allowed lengths up to 22 m, but in the interest of international cooperation it could live with 17 m. The underlying rationale for the new figure was that it would still make it possible to use vehicle combinations in the mountains. The proposal immediately drew overwhelming support including from the Yugoslav deputy, but Corbin (France) and Ter-Nedden (Germany) remained adamant in their support for 16.5 m. Nevertheless the Belgian chair Vrebos hopefully stated that “there were now only 50 centimeters to be covered.” He urged all representatives to ponder thoroughly on the importance of half a meter from a safety and economic point of view. Ter-Nedden did not relent. In the interest of road safety the use of semi-trailers should be encouraged. While 17 m deprived them of their economic value to the benefit of vehicle combinations, 16.5 m created equal opportunities for both semi-trailers and vehicle combinations. Vrebos final bid for consensus on 16.80 m in combination with a stimulus for the use of semi-trailers by allowing them to carry 33 instead of the 32 tons for vehicle combinations failed to win Ter-Nedden over.\(^\text{125}\)

The countries remained split between three positions. Most flexible were Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Yugoslavia, which could agree on all lengths the deputies had reviewed. France, Germany, and Spain promoted 15.50 m. The first two were willing to increase it to 16.50 in case of a general agreement, while Spain could also support 17 m. Austria, Denmark, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland favoured 18 m. All but Greece were prepared to downgrade to 17 m if a general agreement could thus be reached.\(^\text{126}\) Despite the narrowing gap, the positions remained irreconcilable.

German domestic developments placed the other countries for a *fait accompli* when the deputies met again a month later. On 1 July 1960 the German *Bundesrat* had approved an Order Amending Road Traffic Regulations containing the maxima of 10 tons per single axle and 16.50 m in length along the lines of the Yugoslav proposal. As British deputy brigadier Walter remarked, the most realistic course to take was to accept the new German order as the inevitable basis for future regulations. Instead of focusing on the standards as such, the Committee now concentrated on the transitory period and several deputies made a bid for more time.\(^\text{127}\)

Buron drafted a resolution for the second ministerial session in 1960. He took the German measures, hence the Dapcević compromise, as point of departure.

\(^{125}\) Committee of Deputies, “Record 40th session (3 June 1960),” CS/M(60)4, EcMT.

\(^{126}\) Ibid.

\(^{127}\) Committee of Deputies, “Record 41st session (5-6 July 1960),” CS/M(60)5; “Record 42nd session (15 September 1960),” CS/M(60)6, EcMT.
Most ministers gave in to German demands. On 5 October 1960 Buron’s resolution bore the signatures of thirteen states, but not those of Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland; the ever-reluctant British abstained.\textsuperscript{128} The discussion on weights and dimensions had reached its apotheosis. With a twist of irony the Dutch representatives, fiercest in rallying against the German measures, had to witness the ministers reaching an agreement in The Hague, the political heart of the Netherlands where the Knight’s Hall at the \textit{Binnenhof} served as venue for the session. As Schaus had indicated earlier, the EEC Transport Council indeed started its own discussion among its six member countries, but it would take until 1999 before the same standard applied for the entire territory of what had by then become the European Union.\textsuperscript{129} Ironically the standards were virtually identical to those proposed in 1960.

\textit{Interlude: the quest for a European pallet, 1952-1960}

Thus the search for the ideal network of bus line services covering Europe and a European standard for trucks ended, at least for the time being. Meanwhile the coordination debate on the proper division of tasks between rails and roads continued unabated, a factor which perhaps in part explains why it was so difficult to come to an agreement on both subjects. Transport coordination was a state policy to curb competition among transport and favor their commercial and technical collaboration. It had been introduced after the First World War and since the second half of the Interbellum mainly concerned rail versus road traffic (see chapter four). In the early 1950s the start of mass motorization and burgeoning road freight transport spelled deep trouble for the railroad sector and embittered the debate on transport coordination. Many of the introduced measures sought to protect the railways from loosing too much trade or to at least attenuate the effects of the fierce competition and the resulting financial crisis.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{128} The signatories were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Yugoslavia. Council of Ministers, "Record 12\textsuperscript{th} session (5 October 1960)," CM/M(60)2, ECMT.
\textsuperscript{129} The EEC Council of Ministers came close to reaching agreement in 1963 and 1972, but failed on both occasions. In 1972 the agreement foundered on pending accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, which were all three opposed to "juggernaut lorries." Only at the end of 1984 the Council adopted Directive 85/3 on the weights, dimensions and certain other technical characteristics of certain road vehicles. Although the preamble condemned differing regulations for commercial road vehicles as an obstacle to traffic, a uniform standard would only apply across the EU after Irish and British derogations expired in 1999. See Stevens, \textit{Transport}, 111-112.
Although much of their work was split along modal lines, the coordination of transport modes was equally an important concern for most international organizations working on European transport including the ECE and the ECMT. There were mainly two reasons why transport coordination had high priority on their agenda. First, the coordination debate and particularly the rapidly deteriorating position of the railway sector formed a severe problem facing all of their members. Second, by discussing the problem in the forums they provided, they could help prevent that their members would choose highly divergent solutions that in practice created new hindrances for international traffic.

This brief interlude addresses the introduction of the European pallet as part of European technical transport coordination. Issues of technical coordination transcending single transport modes played a role in several debates in the ECE. Some of them concentrated on specific types of flows, such as the transport of perishable foodstuffs, or of dangerous goods. Other discussions focused on intermodal transport equipment to enable the technical cooperation between modes of transport. The pallet provides an excellent example of a device used in different transport modes. In 1952 the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) had drawn up four pallet standards in conjunction with the ICC. By the mid-1950s several millions of pallets circulated across Europe. In 1957 the ECMT issued a resolution stating that member states should choose a single standard among the four ISO-approved alternatives. The ICC organized user-carrier consultations with a dozen transport organizations in September 1957 and January 1958. A majority favored the 80 x 120 cm standard, but Germany and the Netherlands had by then already adopted the 100 x 120 cm standard. Germany was willing, however, to sacrifice its standard in favor of an international interchangeable pallet. the Netherlands gave up its preference for 100 x 120 cm in January 1958.

The final aim was to create a European pallet pool for the exchange of standardized pallets. The Dutch-German suppleness in giving up their standard cleared the
way for a compromise at the April 1959 bi-annual ICC congress in Washington, where the ICC approved the creation of the European pallet. In order for the pool to work properly, participating countries also had to liberalize the customs position of pallets. Negotiations on a draft Customs Convention in Geneva started in May 1959 to tackle remaining fiscal barriers. The ICC aimed at a minimum of paperwork and formalities for companies using pallets and favored a German proposal to exempt pallets from customs, as they were not themselves part of commercial transactions. The last obstacle was the unwillingness of one of the railway administrations to accept hard wood instead of the more common soft wood pallets. The ICC called upon the ECMT to intervene. To the relief of ICC representative De Vita Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC) representative Tuja described the issue as a “minor technical dispute” and predicted it would end soon. De Vita stressed

“it seems surprising, at a time when increasingly greater efforts are being made to ensure that vehicles such as motor cars which cost several hundred thousand francs or nearly a million may circulate without Customs papers, that it should be necessary to set up a whole organisation at the frontiers to calculate how many pallets have entered a certain country at a given period, how many have left it, what they are worth, etc. I wonder whether all this work is really necessary.”

As soon as this last issue was settled, the pallet pool was ready to start. Parties pooling their pallets agreed to exchange them amongst each other. They kept track of the numbers of pallets they received and dispatched and settled the balance at certain intervals. By the end of 1960 a European Convention on Customs Treatment of Pallets Used in International Transport lay on the table. It granted pallets admission without the payment of customs dues under the condition that the pallets in question were marked with a distinctive stamp and that Customs authorities were notified of the pallet pool under which they resorted. The European pallet pool for the exchange of standardized pallets in European cargo traffic had become a reality and it expanded rapidly in the 1960s.

---

137 Committee of Deputies, “Record 34th session (22-23 September 1959),” CS/M(59)4, annex, ECMT.
139 This was pointed out in the preamble of an ECMT resolution on combined transport, see ECMT, “Resolution no. 17 on combined transport and on problems concerning large container transport and roll-on/roll-off services,” Resolutions 17 (1967). Combined transport is the term the ECMT used to refer to transport movements involving more than a single mode.
Conclusion

This thesis, dedicated to European road networks, concerns itself with units transcending the boundaries of the national. In pondering over the use of these networks, the organizations under scrutiny had to deal with the effects the presence of national borders had on the flows that crossed them. Indeed a significant part of the work of IGOs and INGOs can be summarized as an attempt to attenuate border effects. As spokesman for international business the ICC started a virtual crusade against the red tape associated with national borders. In a pamphlet appearing in 1953 it noted:

“Less than a century ago Jules Verne surprised his readers with “Round the World in 80 Days.” (...) The modern paradox is this: that whereas 80 days are more than sufficient for the journey itself, yet that length of time would probably not suffice to overcome all the difficulties and delays due to “red tape” and the obtaining of all the necessary papers. The modern traveller finds himself entangled in a mass of red tape which he must manage to unravel if he wishes to take advantage of modern progress in engineering and the speed of modern transport.”

We find the same message reflected in the Marshall Plan movie Clearing the Lines. On the one hand the film celebrated the achievements of engineers in transport in Europe through displaying cutting-edge technologies. On the other hand the film accused short-sighted human behavior of hampering flows over borders, called "painted lines" throughout the film to underline their artificial, human-built character. The film title was a call to do away with the old-fashioned formalities that stood in the way of “the great vision of a single continent knit together by the triumphs of the engineer.” The final scenes of the film take place at the brand new Parisian airport Orly. As we see passengers struggle with sanitary and passport controls, currency declarations and luggage inspections we hear the voice-over say:

“Man-made achievements. Shall we go on hampering them with man-made restrictions? Fritter away the contribution that they offer in endless wrangles with officials, that is with each other? Shall our grand design be drawn with the cautious, hesitating hand of yesterday? Or with the bold vision that this, our century holds before our eyes?”

141 Clearing the Lines.
The fading image of a plane taking off underlined the rhetorical character of the last question. The ICC and Marshall Planners alike were convinced that some of the border-related burdens in Europe needed to go. *Red Tape in Travel* and *Clearing the Lines* carried this message for all means of inland transport. However, after mass motorization in Europe started in the 1950s road transport grew into the single most important mode for the transport of goods and passengers in Europe. This chapter has taken stock of some of the initiatives that sought to “cut red tape” and “clear the lines” in relation to the “grand design” of a European road network in the one-and-a-half decade after the Second World War.

During this period, international organizations set up an elaborate legal framework specifying the various aspects of international road traffic in Europe. At countless meetings and conferences the national experts continued where the League of Nations had left off. The documentation introduced earlier among European countries to ease personal travel by car across borders started to attract attention from beyond Europe itself. Similarly the European road sign system based on the use of symbols instead of text started its advance across the globe. It suggests that the European experience with its relatively high international traffic densities had delivered solutions to issues related to trans-border traffic that were also attractive in other geographic settings.

Simultaneously the transport pundits abolished the triptyque for those who traveled between Western European countries and formulated European agreements to supplement the global conventions of 1949 and 1968. The result was that the administrative burdens related to going on holiday by car lessened significantly. Although traffic signs had not become identical across Europe, travelers could recognize the most important ones abroad as a result of the harmonization the international organizations were able to achieve. Thus red tape was cut and the lines were cleared for individual Western European motorists to a considerable extent.

This was less the case for European commercial transport. Although the freedom of the road created an unprecedented liberalization of commercial road transport among European countries in the aftermath of the war, it turned out to be only the temporary result of specific post-war conditions. The forces the freedom of the road unleashed soon backfired and Western European countries set on a course towards a regime of regulated freedom. The chapter has illustrated how the search for this regime played out for two cases in which those involved sought to give substance to the ambition of turning the E-roads into the main international traffic arteries of the continent. The first was the attempt to achieve a coherent network of long-distance bus lines allowing travelers to reach the corners
of the continent. The second was the attempt to agree on the technical specifications of the trucks that should sustain flows of goods criss-crossing Europe as part of the ideal to spurt economic integration.

The portrayal of the bargaining on these two specific topics suggests there were limitations to what governments wished to agree upon in the period under scrutiny, despite the fact that important actors involved strongly advocated that agreement on these two issues was crucial in the broader context of European integration. One might argue this could be the accidental outcome of the selection of these two specific cases. Yet the case studies fit into a broader pattern in which a European road transport policy, much desired and advocated by road INGOs and a country like the Netherlands, did not come about. The ensuing disillusionment should also be placed against the background of the general expectation in the 1950s that transport integration would happen soon.

The legacy of the League can account for part of the difference between the outcomes for triptyques or traffic signs on the one hand and long distance bus lines or the European truck standard on the other. Chapter four demonstrated how the League was able to achieve the most for personal travel and road safety issues. In that respect the ECE and other organizations could build upon prior Interbellum achievements. In contrast the results of the League's work for commercial road transport had been poor. Hence negotiations on commercial and non-commercial transport subjects had different points of departure to start with. Additionally, the dire position of the railways and the heated coordination debate certainly played their part in the difficulties involved in the discussions on bus lines and truck standards.

At the same time the achievements of the TIR scheme or European palletization were equally real and made it clear that we need to take care not to write off the period until 1960 as a lost decade after a brief interlude of freedom of the road. Each international legal instrument provided a new benchmark in a slow, steady expansion of regulations governing international road traffic in Europe. Moreover a tremendous growth of international commercial and non-commercial road traffic during the 1950s and 1960s was able to take place irrespective of the fact that European countries had not (yet) been able to agree on all aspects of a European road traffic framework. We can only speculate whether a hypothetical agreement would have further spurted already exponential growth. Bilateral agreements might be a key in explaining the growth. The attractiveness of such

142 At the same time some skepticism vis-à-vis international conventions and agreements is healthy, as there is an important difference between signing and ratifying them on the one hand, and implementing them on the other.
agreements for individual states was that they then retained more control than in
the case of multilateral agreements.

The material presented here unveils the first decades after the Second World
War as a period unusually rich in initiatives for the regulation of cross-border road
traffic in Europe – and beyond. The overarching result was not the smooth, com-
pletely integrated road transport system that some longed for, but a variegated,
complex patchwork. The lack of a completely coherent result did not prevent or
deter traffic from flowing across borders, on the contrary. European road traffic
could thrive just fine on the basis of the rich assemblage of overlapping regulations
and ideas regarding international traffic on European roads.
Chapter 8
Conclusion

Via Europa

"Du point de vue de la circulation,
l'Europe constitue depuis longtemps un espace intégré;
et l'on ne peut en ignorer les conséquences
sur la formation d'une conscience commune européenne."

E. Tuchtfeld (1958)

When asked to assess the state of the process of European integration, economists like E. Tuchtfeld were often exuberant in the late 1950s. They projected European integration would proceed full speed ahead. Tuchtfeld's quote above demonstrates he was convinced of the important role mobility played in the process. The citation comes from a compilation of essays resulting from two gatherings of twenty-five economists organized by the Centre Européen de la Culture with a six-month interval. The question mark of its title Demain l'Europe sans frontières? might just as well have been replaced by an exclamation mark. The compilation came at a moment of unbridled optimism about European integration, a period in which many pundits predicted that a Free Trade Area would be forged from the young European Economic Community and other wealthy European regions like Scandinavia or the British Isles. The essays echoed the more general, genuine positivism reigning at the time.

1 E. Tuchtfeld, “Intégration économique et progrès technique,” in Demain l’Europe sans frontières?, ed. Raymond Racine (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958), 99-100. Translation "From the traffic point of view Europe had constituted an integrated space for a long time; and one cannot ignore the consequences on the formation of a common European consciousness."

Would the same exercise have been undertaken a decade later, it is likely that the results would have looked much darker. We know from available literature that the cheering sentiment of *Demain l’Europe sans frontières?* faded away when the integration process got stuck some years later. The same borders that Tuchtfeld and others claimed were on the verge of disappearing then came to represent the bumps in the road towards more unity. Border checks and customs hassles made it clear for travelers that Europe had still not reached a stage of completion. In 1967, when European integration looked much less rosy, the Dutch journalist Aben wrote

“Still there are those barriers that separate countries and that mark the economic dismemberment of Europe. (...) Still the trucks line up at border posts. It may be that the customs control on TEE trains and on other somewhat less comfortable train connections increasingly obtain the character of a folkloric, only formal event. The presence of these men on our roads, at our airports and ports indicates that the European Community is still in the making.”

A year after Aben wrote his words, the EEC abolished the last remaining intra-Community customs duties on industrial and agricultural products. A short animated film from the epoch hailed it as a victory over Europe’s stubborn borders. The film showed a tourist driving a car and squeakily coming to a halt in front of a striped barrier. The scene was subsequently repeated for a train, a truck, a motorbike, and a tourist packed with suitcases at an airport. Round customs signs were omnipresent as markers of the existing impediments to the free flow of people and goods. The film then showed a calendar moving from 30 June to 1 July. A map displaying the member states’ borders appeared, but they evaporated. In the final scene a truck, a train and a ship moved freely across the map, no longer hindered by the EEC’s internal borders – though the ones to the non-EEC countries remained firmly in place.

---

4 H.J.M. Aben, “Beloften aan het bedrijfsleven,” in *Europa onderweg: Ooggetuigen brengen verslag uit*, ed. H.J.M. Aben (Amsterdam: Agon/Elsevier, 1967), 97. Original “Nog zijn zij er die slagbomen die landen van elkaar gescheiden [sic] en die de economische versnippering van Europa markeren. (...) Nog steeds rijen de vrachtwagens zich aaneen bij de grensposten. Al moge dan de douanecomtrole in de TEE-treinen en in de andere iets minder comfortabele spoorverbindingen steeds meer het karakter krijgen van een folkloristisch, slechts formeel evenement, de aanwezigheid van deze mannen op onze wegen en vliegvelden en in onze havens duidt erop dat de Europese gemeenschap er een in wording is.” At the time of his writing Aben was the editor in chief for the economic section of the *Algemeen Dagblad Rotterdam*, and a member of the Europese Beweging (European Movement) in the Netherlands.
The animation also appears in an EU film on the history of the internal market since 1957 produced for the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. Interestingly it almost exclusively focuses on road transport, implicitly underlining the crucial role of road transport in the process of economic integration. The scenes preceding the animation display a group of men tearing down a border pole and burning it together with customs signs. Notwithstanding such visual rhetoric on the abolishment of tariffs, the need to clear customs continued unabated until the late 1980s when customs offices were closed between the countries bound by the 1985 Schengen agreement. The film does not silence these aspects. Its potpourri of original footage portrays truckers as victims of border bureaucracy, showing trucks coming to a halt in front of barriers and ludicrous rubber-stamping scenes that drag on endlessly. In between come solemn signature ceremonies for European treaties after which the passage of trucks is somewhat relieved. In the final scene, trucks and cars rush past country signs and empty border posts. For private travel a study of citizens’ opinions on the EU in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom found that the “possibility of traveling across Europe without hindrances, such as passports and border controls” constituted an “attribute with significant salience in people’s imagined European Union.”

To sum up, all images mentioned above use mobility on the road and perhaps mobility in general as a thermometer for the process of European integration. They display a recurrent rhetoric of hampered mobility going against the grain of European integration, while increasing mobility promotes it. These images inserted themselves into a traditional discourse of European integration closely focused on Brussels’ institutions, but this thesis demonstrates that complaints about


8 The Danish truck driver who is described at the start of chapter seven appears in the film too.

9 Juan Díez Medrano, *Framing Europe: Attitudes to European integration in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 31-32. One of his respondents remarked “I think that from a psychological viewpoint, one gets a totally different feeling when one travels and there are no borders.”

10 For a more elaborate account of EU rhetoric in relation to infrastructures, see Alexander Badenoch, Rafaella Broft, Marloes van der Heijden, Ingrid van der Heijden and Johan Schot, “Co-ordinating visions: Trans-European Networks and narratives of European integration,” paper presented at the 3rd Tensions of Europe Conference, Rotterdam, June 2007.
borders as barriers to motorized road transport are as old as the automobile itself and that solutions to attenuate their effects were repeatedly cast in European terms from an early date onwards – but in very different settings from the ones we normally associate with European integration.

To understand these dynamics, this thesis has looked at three different aspects, namely the institutional settings in which the attempts were undertaken, the ‘roads to Europe,’ or proposals for road schemes covering the continent, and ‘driving Europe,’ or regimes proposed for the use of these roads across borders. These alternative organizational settings and the fruits of their work have received scant attention in the study of European integration, dominated by the European Union and its predecessors. The fact that a multitude of international organizations has laid a firm basis for the work the EU and its predecessors have undertaken on mobility on the road has remained neglected; their role in European integration has been downplayed.

This conclusion joins together the themes and issues running through the twentieth century with regard to international motorized road transport in the European continent. It discusses in turn the key elements that have provided the skeleton for this thesis. The next sub-section discusses the international organizations that provided platforms for making European plans, both of continental road networks and operational frameworks regulating their use across borders. The archival collections of these institutions provided the empirical basis on which this thesis rests. The next sub-section discusses the schemes for ‘roads to Europe’ and ‘driving Europe’ emanating from these institutional settings. After that the text continues to make some suggestions for further research that could fruitfully build upon the scientific endeavor undertaken here.

Institutional proliferation and European road transport
International organizations are the buttresses on which this thesis rests. They have provided the source materials that underpin the empirical part of this dissertation. They have been the protagonists in discussing the ‘roads to Europe’ and ‘driving Europe’. Chapters two and five discuss two periods of unusual institutional proliferation in which various institutions emerged that would become major players in international road transport in Europe. The resulting organizations have made their appearance throughout the thesis.

Notwithstanding the fact that both IGOs and INGOs have been identified as crucial actors in shaping international mobility on Europe’s roads, IGOs have been the true pivot for this research. The pragmatic rationale is that their archival holdings provide a more solid research base than private collections of INGOs.
The League of Nations was the first IGO leaving its mark with regard to the intersection of roads and Europe. Infamous for its failure to prevent a new war in Europe, the organization's role in down-to-earth matters like the facilitation of international road traffic has by and large remained forgotten. In part this might be the result of the fact that at the League's foundation it was not obvious that as a universal institution it would come to play an important role in negotiating mobility on European roads. Initially road traffic, unlike other modes of transport, was not even part of its terms of reference. When the League took it up, it did so in a singularly Eurocentric way, as contemporary observers already pointed out. The analysis of the work of the Road Committee in chapter four merely confirms this contemporary assessment. The exclusively European Conference on Road Traffic (Geneva, 1931) formed a culmination in this respect. In fact the European focus of the League's work was more marked for road traffic than for the other modes of transport with which the League of Nations dealt.\(^\text{11}\)

New IGOs emerged during the Second World War and in its aftermath. After the war the formal heir of the League's Communications and Transit Committee and the Committee on Road Traffic came from the United Nations machinery, the successor of the League of Nations. The UN more clearly separated universal and regional tasks within its framework. When the Economic Commission for Europe took up residence in the Palais des Nations, its Inland Transport Committee was the specialized organ taking over most of the Committee for Communications and Transit's work (see Figure 8.1).\(^\text{12}\) Despite its regional status and the fact that most work in Geneva continued to concern European mobility, the ITC prepared several worldwide conventions in the field of road traffic. Eurocentric or even colonialist thoughts might be put forward to explain this, but an alternative explanation seems equally compelling. Europe was simply a place where the experience with cross-border traffic by automobile had been frequent and widespread. The attempts undertaken there to devise rules governing such traffic made its experience useful in other parts of the world as well.\(^\text{13}\)

Unlike the League of Nations the ECE was an explicitly European IGO. It would not remain the only one of its kind created in the aftermath of the war. Although

\(^{11}\) Maritime transport is probably the best example of an issue that was taken up in a global fashion by the League of Nations. On this aspect, see Jan Hostie, *The Organisation for Communications and Transit of the League of Nations*, typewritten manuscript (1945), 244.


they were more restricted in membership, the OEEC and the Council of Europe were similar European organizations devoted to a broad array of topics. The main difference with the ECE was their membership; while the OEEC and the Council of Europe were restricted to Western European countries the ECE had members from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Both the OEEC and the Council of Europe took up transport themes. They could have developed into serious competitors of the ECE, but did not. The ECMT, to which both the OEEC and the Council of Europe were loosely associated, became a more serious rival. The result was a complicated set of overlapping terms of reference and activities, along with their continuous mutual adaptation. When on top of that transport also became a major topic discussed in the run-up to the EEC, director Cottier of the Office Central des Transports Internationaux par Chemins de Fer in Bern became confused:

"Bien que représentant d’une organisation européenne, M. Cottier déclare ne plus savoir ce qu’est l’Europe, celle des six, celle des dix-huit, ou celle plus vaste qu’il représente."14

14 "Document 301/129," 2 November 1955, registry fonds GIX, file 9/2/24-9131, UNOG. Translation “Although he was a representative of a European organisation, Mr. Cottier declares that he no longer knows what Europe is, the Europe of the six, the Europe of the eighteen, or the vaster one he represented himself.” The ‘six’ refers to the member states of the ECSC that were then talking about more elaborate economic cooperation. The ‘eighteen’ most likely refers to the original number of participants in the OEEC, although by the time Cottier made his remark the participation of the Free Territory of Trieste had already come to an end after its dissolution in 1954, bringing the number down to seventeen.
This thesis has argued that 'Europe' was all of these things at the same time. After the war the place of the League of Nations was taken by a set of juxtaposed international institutional settings displaying a complex pattern of cooperation and competition. Inter-organizational dynamics made European road network proposals and regulating European road traffic a stake several organizations wanted to command. When different organizations deal with the same or similar subjects and their opinions on them differ, quarrels are the likely result. But under different circumstances consensus may emerge or organizations may reach a common understanding of how they complement each other.

Cottier made his remark at an ICC meeting on the organization of transport in Europe in mid-October 1955. The ICC itself had warned against the uncured proliferation of organizations meddling in European transport affairs. Other INGOs called to wait and see which organization was most susceptible to the road lobby. IGOs were after all not only cooperative forums for governments, but also platforms for INGOs. Historically INGOs started dealing with international aspects of road traffic in Europe prior to the League. The LIAT and the AIACR come to mind as the first in this respect. Their work too concentrated mostly on Europe. An explanation for their Europe-centeredness is that of the geographic areas where motoring reached significant levels before the First World War, it was in (Western) Europe that motorists most often crossed national borders. In 1903 the triptyque was among the first tangible results of their enduring endeavor to mitigate the difficulties motorists experienced in international travel on European roads. Alongside the AIACR and the LIAT representing the interests of upper- and middle-class motorists, PIARC became the central player for professional road engineers. After the First World War the ICC joined them as an advocate of business users of the road. Particularly after 1925 road transport became more important in the ICC as a result of its adherence to freedom of choice for businesses, but also under influence of its American members, which underscored the value of road improvement – particularly in Europe.

After the Second World War business interests in roads further specialized. The IRF became the most vocal proponent of more and better roads. Its main members were national road federations, which the IRF itself helped to set up in many countries. In addition it counted large companies with an interest in road construction among its members. The IRU represented professional road haulers

---

15 Figure 8.2 presents an overview of the most important INGOs that have appeared in this thesis.
and had an important role in setting up the post-war operational regime for roads in Europe. The ICC vigorously pursued its Interbellum work in the first decades after the war. Before the Second World War it had joined forces with the AIACR and the AIT on several occasions, after the war it often worked with the IRF and the IRU.

None of these INGOs was formally restricted to Europe in terms of its membership, nor in terms of its activities. Nevertheless, when it came to international road networks, or making arrangement for international travel and commercial transport, their work often concentrated on Europe until at least the early 1960s. They did so in close cooperation with the IGOs described above. INGOs helped the League become the central locus for formulating international road policies in Europe during the Interbellum. After the Second World War the Interbellum convergence of international actors dissipated, but most INGOs remained in or moved to Geneva to lobby the ECE (and through it the United Nations more generally), while also establishing ties with new organizations. In the first decades after the war Europe remained the area to which they devoted most initiatives. Over time many developed regional programs for all continents, but the European program continued to have a prominent position. This was in part a response to the regionalization of the UN framework, but should perhaps also be considered an autonomous development.

As a final note it is important to observe that there was not one single hegemonic institution steering developments in European mobility on the road, but a broad variety. Which organizations were important depended on the specific topic that lay on the table and the positions of the various organizations at different points in time. In the end all commanded chunks and bits of the overall European policy framework. This thesis has looked at two distinct, but interrelated sets of policies that are relevant within the context of the intersection of roads and Europe. First and foremost it has sought to give a taste of the materialization of the

---

**Figure 8.2 – Overview of road related INGOs, 1898-2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-World War I</th>
<th>Interbellum</th>
<th>Post-World War II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIAT (1898)</td>
<td>AIT (1919)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIACR (1904)</td>
<td>FIA (1947)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil Central de Tourisme (1925)</td>
<td>OTA (1947)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIARC (1908)</td>
<td>ICC (1919)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIAR/OIAR (1931-1932)</td>
<td>IRF (1947)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRU (1948)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European ideal in plans for continental road networks. In addition it has unraveled several themes concerning continental regimes for road network operation and use. In this quest it has drawn on the archives of international organizations. They have proven a rich source for scrutinizing the negotiation of the European dream by means of and on European roads throughout the twentieth century. The next section highlights what we can learn about the relation between roads and European integration from the plans and policies proposed.

Roads to Europe and driving them

When the car came on the scene, a road network spanning the continent already existed. This network had not been explicitly conceived as European, nor had it been intended for the use of automobiles. Soon the question arose on how to adapt road systems to the vehicles now increasingly making use of them. Most proposed to simply upgrade existing roads to satisfy the needs of their new users. There were some, however, who argued there was a need for constructing roads for the exclusive use of automobiles. Most thought of these motorways as fundamentally international structures. They envisioned that motorways would or should facilitate long-distance traffic, despite the fact that in practice short distance use was the rule.

Both ideas appeared in European plans proposed in the institutional settings described above (see Table 8.1). During the Interbellum there were basically two alternative visions of the European road network. The first was to have enough capillary capacity connecting centers with peripheral areas, especially in Eastern Europe. Francis Delaisi most elaborately developed this theme in his plan for vicinal roads in Eastern Europe. Despite the local appearance of the modest farm-to-market infrastructures, Delaisi's underlying ambition was continental in scope. He worried about the potential for an enduring division in Europe. He thought it could be prevented through creating continental trade patterns and fortifying existing ones. Reasoning that transport costs made up a disproportional share of the costs of agricultural produce from Eastern Europe, he argued that by lowering these costs Eastern European grains and vegetables could become competitive on Western European markets. If bread could be baked from wheat of the Argentinean pampas, why not from that of the Hungarian puszta? The proposed vicinal roads would enable peasants to get their harvest to regional towns with adequate infrastructure links to a large hinterland. The roads themselves did not cross borders, but connected to existing transnational rail or river infrastructures. Thus the roads opened up markets previously beyond the reach of local peasants.

A group of road builders developed a vision of a European motorway network
for the exclusive use of automobiles. Theirs was an opportunist coalition meeting at two *Congrès Internationaux des Autoroutes* in 1931 and 1932 and founding a joint organization, the OIAR, to formulate a proper response to Thomas’ initiative for European public works. Most individuals who gathered there were engaged in serious motorway proposals in their respective countries. Thomas’ plan provided them with a golden opportunity to mold these pre-existing plans as parts of an overarching future continental network. To ensure the realization of the scheme OIAR proposed to centralize decision-making on priorities and to put the oversight of construction under its own supervision.

The two visions differed in terms of the Europe they projected. The vicinal roads attempted to make the less developed regions of Eastern or Southern Europe an integral part of a European whole, departing from the tacit assumption that in the western parts of the continent the observed problem of inaccessibility was much less acute. In seeking to create complementarity between transport modes, it did not focus exclusively on automobiles. In contrast the motorway plans were all about automobiles and initially excluded Eastern Europe completely. Although it was later included on the maps of the plan, the fact that the size of traffic flows formed the financial bedrock of the motorways entailed that states had to pass a vehicle density threshold prior to de facto inclusion in the European motorway network. Under these circumstances Eastern Europe had to wait before being connected and the plan de facto concentrated on the North-Western part of the continent.

To these two contrasting visions we may add a third of a very different kind. This vision sounded through in the reaction of the League’s Road committee when Albert Thomas brought his initiative for European public works to its attention. The Committee’s secretary Johan Romein wrote that in his view road construction formed the wrong starting point. Before engaging in the costly undertaking of building continental road networks, a framework for the use of roads across borders should be established. In fact the impossibility of arranging international finance for the grandiose road projects formed a major factor in their ruin. Working on a regulatory framework seemed like a cheap alternative. Throughout the Interbellum the Road Committee worked frenetically to establish such a framework. Despite the fact that the League was in principle a universal organization, its work in this field became an almost exclusively European affair.

The League could build upon earlier work that had already been done in other settings. The automobile had after all come into a world in which an elaborate set of rules for cross-border flows already existed. INGOs had already created the triptyque and the *carnet de passages en douane* in response to import regulations
imposing high customs dues on automobiles. The 1909 Convention had already provided the international traveling pass and fixed a set of four international traffic signs. The League’s Road Committee sought to elaborate on these prior achievements. During the Interbellum substantial agreement on the facilitation of private travel could be reached. Armed with an international driving license, an international road certificate and a triptyque, travelers could reach the corners of the continent in their car by the late 1920s and for most of the 1930s. The considerable problems previously caused by loosing one’s triptyque became a thing of the past through the 1931 agreement among customs administrations. Tourists’ vehicles became exempt from taxation for temporary importation abroad and on their way tourists increasingly found the same signs warning against danger on the road or indicating a parking lot. The signs did not become completely identical, but the bandwidth of divergence shrank considerably, a development, which continued in the period after the Second World War.

In this work the European cause remained somewhat behind the scenes, but it came explicitly to the fore at the 1931 Geneva Conference that was labeled exclusively European. The conference also symbolized the difficulty of coming to a multilateral agreement, which arranges international commercial road traffic in Europe, the most important item on the agenda of the conference. Comparable conventions had been concluded much earlier for most other modes of traffic. Divergent positions among the national governments in the coordination debate on the proper proportions between different modes of transport prevented an agreement on transport by road, which would have to wait until after the Second World War before it would receive similar treatment.

As a result international commercial road transport received disproportionate attention when diplomats and experts restarted their work on this theme after the Second World War. The conditions after the Second World War temporarily shoved the coordination debate aside, resulting in the freedom of the road agreements that liberalized commercial cross-border road transport to an extent unknown in the Interbellum. After some years this liberal regime gave way to a regime of regulated freedom. By then the first drafts of the E-road network, a new plan for continental roads, lay on the table. To a considerable degree it fused the ideas underlying the two contrasting Interbellum European road visions sketched above. Table 8.1 juxtaposes the E-road network with its Interbellum predecessors. The network combined the idea of long distance connections prevalent in the OIAR proposals with the idea of reaching areas in the interior from the Plan Delaisi. It did so by integrating various categories of road into a single European plan with motorways on the one hand and ordinary roads on the other. The most conspicu-
Oous feature of the network was that it was created overnight on 16 September 1950. Where finance had been a decisive factor in wrecking the Interbellum proposals, now the creation of a European network came at an incredibly low cost. Existing roads were simply re-baptized as E-roads from one day to another. While materially nothing changed and participating states had not yet spent a single penny on the network, the E-roads started to figure on maps and trickled down into the collective consciousness of their users.

The goal of the E-road scheme surpassed that of just putting a label. The ambition was to improve the designated roads to comply with neatly defined continent-wide minimum standards and forge them into a coherent whole. To increase its chances of success the 1950 Declaration stipulated that the stretches of E-road governments proposed for inclusion in the network should not only represent a European, but also a paramount national interest. On the basis of the national interest the roads represented, countries had to pay for the E-roads from their own resources as a rule of thumb. This can first of all be interpreted as a pragmatic move. Given the fact that the Interbellum plans that depended on thorough international cooperation had not materialized, national components were now made the pieces of the European puzzle.

The lack of a precise time schedule or funds earmarked for turning the virtual network into a reality worried the IRF, the post-war counterpart of OIAR. It feared that if individual states remained in charge of setting priorities and arranging finance, nothing remotely resembling the proposed E-roads would get off the ground any time soon. As a solution the IRF proposed a European Road Office overseeing a European Road Fund fed with money from participating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.1 – European road plans compared, 1930s-1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main IGO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main INGO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which Europe?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road Building</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unimodality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
states. Internationalizing the project’s execution was also the only way to secure it would become a reality in countries unable to finance their stretches on their own. The European Road Office and Fund never came into being. Did they founder on member states’ reticence to give away decision-making power on investment? Only research in national archives can provide definitive answers, but the persistent unwillingness to transfer infrastructure funds to the international level does suggest as much. In its stead the ECMT promoted the set-up of restricted groups to work bilaterally on the routing and finance for specific border crossings, more in line with the fact that the network was composed of national building blocks.

Yet part of the network’s appeal was precisely the fact that it entailed few obligations for participating states – basically none. It gave the network an unprecedented extension. Through inward densification E-road densities per country converged for the simple reason that average densities formed a benchmark and countries wanted to spare themselves the embarrassment of having the lowest figure. In the end construction and upgrading probably did not proceed as swiftly as the IRF would have wanted, but chapter six clearly shows that the network improved substantially over time.

The network also fulfilled a function in serving as a springboard for launching European projects of more limited scope, like the Circular Highway in the Balkans. Here the road question was taken up within the context of the ECE’s concern for the development of its members in South-Eastern Europe, reminiscent of Delaisi’s concern for the development of Eastern Europe as part of a European whole. The follow-up Trans-European Motorway fulfilled a similar purpose, but in this project some of the socialist states took the lead. It points out perhaps the most important characteristic of the network, namely that through its loose character it had, above all, the ability to connect Europe across the Iron Curtain under Cold War conditions. In combination with the fact that the ECE administered the network it helps to explain why the Soviet satellites and the Soviet Union itself eventually all submitted their stretches of road as part of a European whole.

The fact that the E-roads effortlessly connected both sides of the Iron Curtain on the map did not automatically imply that vehicles could indeed cross borders unhindered. More so than before the Second World War some aspects of the regime governing the use of roads across borders were taken up within the context of the discussion on the E-road network, although the connection between them always remained somewhat loose. International commercial road transport had remained as the primary battleground for which the creation of a European regime was set as a target after the war. The grand vision was that the E-roads should become the long-distance corridors for the transport of passengers and goods as a
crucial element in the economic integration of Europe. This also meant the discus-
sion was conducted among Western European countries only.

In the context of this debate agreement on a coherent network of long-distance
bus lines was posited as a crucial element for the transport of passengers, while a
common European standard for trucks was deemed an essential part of the regime
for the transport of goods. Both topics were fiercely debated in the 1950s, but as
chapter seven points out agreement was not reached. The ECE abandoned its quest
for a coherent network of bus lines in 1955. The ECMT ministers adopted a resolu-
tion on a common truck standard in 1960, but rejection by Italy, the Netherlands
and Switzerland struck a major blow against it. And yet the lack of a coherent
network of long-distance bus line services did not prevent that a European web of
such services did emerge. The sources suggest this did not happen primarily on a
multilateral, but rather on a bilateral basis along lines similar to the ‘bilateraliza-
tion’ of the E-road network in restricted groups. Neither did the fact that a com-
mon European truck standard did not come about until much later put an end to
the exponential growth of commercial road traffic across European borders.

Apparently it did not matter so much that allegedly essential parts of the
European framework could not be brought about. Moreover countries did agree
on certain other aspects of the framework regulating European commercial road
transport, as the brief mention of the TIR scheme and the European pallet imply.
Advances in personal motorized mobility across Europe formed an even bigger
contrast. Much of the work in this field concerned the paperwork required for
international traveling. The driving license provides an example that clarifies the
different phases with regard to the necessary documentation.

In a first phase national licenses were introduced, but the various national
regulations were not always compatible. Some countries did not create a driving
license at all and the requirements for obtaining one differed from one country to
another. Depending on the itinerary, tourists sometimes had to obtain multiple
licenses. The 1909 Convention simplified matters in a second phase by creating
an international traveling pass on top of national documents. Its application was
largely confined to European countries. In 1926 it was split into a separate inter-
national driving license and an international circulation permit. As the ‘European’
international driving license was spreading over the globe, European countries
entered a third phase in which they abolished the requirement of an international
license on top of a national one. They substituted it by the mutual recognition of
national licenses that complied with a set of minimum requirements, pretty much
in the same form as the AIACR had proposed (also for circulation permits) in the
mid-1930s. Currently we witness a fourth phase, in which the European Union
seeks to put its stamp. The European Commission recently proposed to replace national driving licenses by a European one.17

Western European countries thus remained always one step ahead in terms of the regime for international tourist travel. European add-on agreements achieved the same result in the field of road safety. Thus, when overseeing the entire century of the car, the European regime for international personal travel and for road safety seemed to run more smoothly than the one for international cross-border commercial traffic.18 How can we account for the difference?

The fact that most diplomats who negotiated the arrangements on occasion experienced the troubles at the border themselves may be of some influence here. Another important factor is that post-Second World War arrangements were able to build upon the achievements of the Interbellum for personal travel. An institutional interpretation may clarify why this was so. The INGOs lobbying for easing individual international travel emerged before the First World War, earlier than professional organizations representing the business user of the road. During the Interbellum the ICC represented their interests, usually seeking coalitions with the automobile and touring clubs when this was feasible and useful. A more powerful and specialized professional road lobby appeared after the Second World War. Moreover, agreeing on arrangements for international commercial traffic was also hard due to divergent opinions on the position of road transport within the transport sector as a whole. France or Germany desperately tried to guard the railways against further losses.

To conclude, it may be useful to sketch a brief overall image of ‘Europe’ as it has emerged from the bits and pieces of this manuscript. We have seen that many organizations adhered to the European cause. For some of the organizations this was an explicit and inherent characteristic of their work, for others it was a reality that emerged from their day-to-day work. In these organizations European road plans and European regimes for their use were discussed. Different sets of countries adhered to the individual plans or regimes that were devised. For a trucker transporting his goods Europe and European integration were something different than for the tourist driving his car from Berlin to Barcelona. This multitude of juxtaposed overlapping conceptions of the continent resulted in a patchwork of roads and regulations in continuous flux. Where we usually think of European integration as a process moving in the direction of unity, on the basis of the evidence presented

18 For road safety issues, it should be underlined that agreement on traffic signs was easier to achieve than agreement on the rules of the road.
here we should instead conclude that the process is one of inherent and deep fragmenta-
tion, but also that this fragmentation has not precluded real achievements with regard to European road networks and regimes for their use.19

The road ahead

The exploration of the intersection of road infrastructures and European integra-
tion presented in this thesis is embedded in a broader scholarly endeavor to under-
derstand the relation between infrastructures and Europe. This ongoing academic effort will certainly not come to a hold with the publication of this thesis. This section suggests some directions that could fruitfully build upon the work presented here.

This thesis has explicitly focused on the work of international organizations as a research strategy. The focus on international organizations and their European visions has entailed that generally more attention has been devoted to visions of European road networks and regimes governing their operation in a multilateral context than to actual construction and use. The use of archives of international organizations has also somewhat shifted the focus away from the nation-state, as explained in the introduction. An alternative strategy would be to look at Europe as an emergent outcome of a set of actual construction practices and patterns of use rather than to depart from such high-flown ideals. This strategy would more clearly spotlight the role of the individual states that have actually financed and constructed road infrastructures throughout the twentieth century. Such a strategy would also allow investigating bilateralism more closely, which has always been a powerful alternative to multilateralism.

From an institutional perspective it is imperative to develop a clearer understand-
ing of the role of the French government in shaping international transport organizations. It is striking how many key officials in these institutions were Frenchmen. The 1909 and 1926 Conventions were drawn up under auspices of the French government. The ECMT was in large part the result of an initiative of the French transport minister Morice.20 In short, France played a key role at so many critical junctures that it seems reasonable to assume that the archives of the Quai

19 On the inherent fragmentation of European integration, see Schot, "Transnational."
d’Orsay and the French transport ministry hold the key to several open questions on the institutional level.

More along the lines of the strategy pursued in this thesis, it seems worthwhile to research the role of smaller-scale, sub-regional IGOs in transport matters. Just as it was thought to be easier to agree on a European level before engaging in global discussions, it was generally easier to agree among a smaller set of European countries than for all European countries together. The cooperation among Scandinavian countries is a shining example. During the Interbellum Scandinavia coalesced, choosing a common position on various road transport related issues. Together they opposed the League of Nations’ traffic signs and put forward their common alternative of using a single sign for all dangers on the road. They led the way in mutually recognizing each other’s driving licenses. They inspired other countries by easing frontier formalities for traffic originating in fellow Scandinavian countries after the Second World War. The Nordic Council, established in 1953, would be an obvious place to investigate the Scandinavian position in-depth. The Benelux is another such organization.

With regard to the roads themselves, this thesis has clearly demonstrated to what extent road network proposals have on various occasions been imbued with European ideals. An aim behind the proposed European road networks was often to overcome petty nationalism. Yet we need to observe that just as roads do not stop at national borders, they do not stop at those of Europe either. A next step would be to investigate the connections of Europe’s roads with the world beyond. How did Europe spread its infrastructural tentacles? It would be fascinating to investigate this from a colonial angle. We only need to think of Hermann Sörgel’s fantastic prospect for the creation of Atlantropa, the fusion of Africa and Europe through damming the Strait of Gibraltar, sinking the Mediterranean and using the power generated by the dam as an endless energy source for the prosperity of all.21 For roads and motorized traffic, the ways in which France, Italy, and Spain, all with colonies right across the Mediterranean, penetrated the Sahara seems particularly interesting.

A 1962 editorial in *Road International* underscored the importance of interlinking the continental road networks of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe.22 Entitled “Roads across Frontiers” it enthusiastically noted the proliferation of such networks across the globe. It points in another direction for further research,

---

namely that of cross-continental comparisons between the European experience and those elsewhere. The Pan American Highway is an obvious candidate, being of the same age as the first European designs. It drew on an earlier proposal for the Pan American, or Three Americas Railway from the Bering Sea to the Strait of Magellan, which had been on the agenda ever since Pan American Road Congresses started in 1925 as part of the work of the Organization of American States. The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East proposed an Asian Highway network in the image of the E-road network in 1960. In the latter case connections to its European counterpart formed an important concern from the start.

An alternative method for studying networks is to investigate specific long-distance transnational corridors. It allows examining actual connections across borders. Such an approach also gives the opportunity to study several modes along the same corridor. Indeed, the corridor concept itself refers to bundles of transport infrastructures rather than single-mode networks. This would have the advantage of being more in line with the plea to increase multimodal work in Mobility History. The introduction has indicated that mobility on the road cannot be properly understood without viewing it as part of a transport system encompassing all modes of transport. Consequently other modes of transport, particularly railroads, have occasionally made their appearance in this dissertation. Nevertheless this thesis has remained largely single-moded. Broadening it might deliver a firmer grasp of the complex cooperative-competitive relation among the various modes of transport.

When we move on to regimes for the use of networks, it can be claimed that the representatives of business, particularly the ICC but also other INGOs, have

25 Similar endeavors would include in-depth studies of particular bottlenecks or nodes in the network, or borderlands. Indeed, cross-fertilization between the historical investigation of infrastructure and the academic sub-discipline of border studies seems a particularly enriching undertaking. A useful starting point is Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, "Toward a comparative history of borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 211-242.
received ample attention in this thesis. An addition that merits further exploration is the experience of individual road hauler firms or long-distance bus companies engaged in international traffic in Europe. Such an undertaking can highlight more clearly the problems experienced in using Europe’s roads in a much more direct way. In this thesis their perspective has sounded through mainly through the mediation of INGOs. Yet the archival holdings of an organization like the IRF, of which many companies were members, is not sufficiently rich or complete to allow making the role of such firms visible. Individual company archives, if accessible, seem to be a more promising site in terms of archival holdings. Harp demonstrates this in a masterful, thorough study of the French (car) tire manufacturer Michelin, which shows the amazing web of activities such companies can become engaged in, to the extent that one almost forgets all was originally intended to boost the sale of tires.27

Perhaps the most interesting research opportunities become visible when we zoom out of road history and look beyond it. Many research opportunities present themselves by way of spillover into related fields concerning infrastructures on the one hand and Europe on the other. The work of the many technical committees of the League of Nations, the ECE and all other organizations presents countless opportunities for further investigating on intergovernmental cooperation in Europe, and beyond. Now would be the right moment for such an undertaking. Every day the EU gains in power, the other European organizations retrocede further into obscurity. Reductions in their resources may put them under pressure to reduce their archival holdings. With many significant personalities from their past still alive, oral history might be an attractive research method to employ alongside archival work.28 Now is the time for such a worthy endeavor.

Chapter 9
Epilogue – all quiet in Brussels?

“Roads are in physical terms essential links for a Europe that is growing ever closer together.”

Martin Bangemann (1992)1

The black stork is a rare appearance among European birds. Though more than half of the global population breeds in Europe, today its numbers in Europe hover somewhere between 8,000 and 12,000.2 The secretive animal thrives best in damp primeval forests of the kind found in the valley of the rivulet Rospuda in North-Eastern Poland. Together with other endangered species like the short-toed snake-eagle and the white-backed woodpecker, the cousin of the better-known and more widespread white stork turns the Rospuda valley into a unique peat land that makes the heart of many nature conservationists beat faster.

The exceptional status of the area did not, however, deter the Polish government from approving the construction of a motorway right through the Rospuda Valley as part of the Via Baltica (E67) running from Prague to Finland.3 The European Commission had no intention of allowing such an affront to its Natura 2000 network to which the valley belonged. It had designated the valley as a Special Protection Area under the Wild Birds Directive, and it had also protected it under the Habitat Directive. In March 2007 the European Court of Justice forbade the intended construction through the valley. The Polish Kaczynski government temporarily complied with the verdict by a building stop for the length of the breeding season ending on 1 August. As July neared its end the Polish Ministry

---

3 On the Via Baltica, see http://www.viabalticanordica.com. Groups opposing motorways construction through the Rospuda Valley put a website in the air to protest against it, see http://www.viabalticainfo.org/-en-. 
of Transport prepared for the resumption of construction. Irritated, the European Commission threatened to impose a multi-million fine by cutting its Via Baltica subsidy to Poland. What could have become the first time a member state ignored a European Court of Justice verdict, ended with Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski’s indefinite suspension of the E67 extension through the valley.4

The standoff between Brussels and Warsaw aptly illustrates Poland’s position within the EU as a “notorious producer of dissonants in the European concert” under the Kaczynski government.5 The episode clearly relates to the debate on the relationship between the EU and its member states. The relation between the EU and its citizens is at stake too. The inhabitants of Augustow, who now experience the daily congestion resulting from heavy traffic through their town centre, are the prime victims of the unfinished Via Baltica. Fearing further delays they thus had their own reasons to vigorously oppose the EU’s interference. In addition the ‘Rospuda incident’ demonstrates the potential for conflicting interests in EU infrastructure development today. It is a clear example of the clash between EU environmental and nature conservation policies with those for continent-wide infrastructures.

Above all the episode illustrates the current reach of Brussels’ arms when it comes to infrastructure development in the Union, a topic well worth an afterthought. The E67 is part of the ECE-administered E-road network, and the European Union now actively interferes with it. The Rospuda controversy shows that the assertive European Court of Justice has become one of the strongest supranational institutions and it gives an impression of the EU’s financial leverage, which has empowered it to influence road network developments in member states. At the same time the episode reveals some of the inherent tensions between Community projects and the position of the nation-state as their executor. The E67 or Via Baltica is undoubtedly a European project, yet its precise route is decided in Warsaw.

The anecdote serves to illustrate an important development with regard to European mobility on the road. After the European Coal and Steel Community


5 “Polen stelt geduld Europa op de proef,” commentaar, De Volkskrant, 6 September 2007. As an aside, it should be noted that the European Court of Justice has its seat in Luxembourg, not in Brussels. Consequently the incident could also be described as a standoff between Luxembourg and Warsaw.
became a reality in 1952, transport was expected to become the next policy area in the integration process. This did not happen at that moment in time, nor did it happen only in the institutions of the European Economic Community (EEC). As this thesis has shown, there were many more international players. Some already existed before the creation of the EEC was even discussed. Several commanded more leverage than Brussels in their heyday.

Today this is changing rapidly. Since the mid-1980s Brussels is taking over. The trans-European transport networks program (TEN-T) epitomized this development in the field of infrastructures. When Brussels’ bureaucrats take up an issue, they leave little room for other IGOs to fulfill a meaningful role. Various organizations have played their part in shaping the first century of the car in Europe. History cannot foretell the future, but the signs today indicate that in the twenty-first century the EU will largely take over this task. Where previously there was room for the co-existence of several IGOs without one of them being dominant, today the EU increasingly overshadows its rivals and absorbs their prior achievements.

The situation was still very different in the early 1980s. In 1985 the European Court of Justice passed its infamous inactivity verdict condemning the Council of Ministers for not having developed a common transport policy. In the same year ECMT secretary-general Jan Terlouw underlined that Brussels’ policies should take into account the position of the European countries that were not (yet) members of the European Community. He stated

“Just as an excellent motorway can be spoiled by one road block, the entire European transport system can be made inefficient if a few countries are not party to the agreements being made.”

The claim was repeated in the prefaces of the annual reports in subsequent years. Terlouw’s feeling became particularly palpable after the Fall of the Berlin Wall. In what Davies has called the avalanche of the *annis mirabilis* Terlouw now claimed “it becomes clearer each year that Europe is larger than the EC.” He might have added that Europe was also larger than the ECMT itself. The Soviet satellites had remained excluded from many European organizations. With the change of regime came an opportunity to welcome them in these institutional settings. After 1989 IGO membership expanded tremendously (see Table 9.1). Growth was relatively modest in the case of the ECE, which already had an extensive Eastern

---

European membership before 1989. Nevertheless its membership grew by more than 40%, making the ECE the most encompassing European organization by the early twenty-first century. The ECMT and the Council of Europe too quickly expanded. Most new members joined in the early 1990s. Simultaneously many accession countries also applied for EU membership, but the hurdles to join the latter were larger. Membership of alternative European organizations provided a means to reconnect to Europe whilst staying in the EU waiting room.8

These organizational dynamics provide an *explanans* for the spatial stretching of Europe through the recent Central Asian additions to the E-roads. The question why the E-road network currently runs to the borders of China has two different answers. For the Central Asian republics it is a way of becoming part of Europe with few de facto obligations. For the ECE participation of non-EU member states gives the organization a purpose in an EU-dominated Europe. Nevertheless as the EU grows larger and becomes increasingly assertive on a broad array of topics, other organizations are slowly plunging into an unprecedented existential crisis. The ECE’s pan-European character had been a distinctive characteristic since its inception and the ECMT always included at least a couple of members that did not belong to the European Economic Community club too. This distinctiveness has decreased with each new member joining the EU. After the landslide enlargement of the European Union on 1 May 2004 Terlouw’s remarks have certainly lost some of their power. In addition, Brussels’ bureaucracy is better equipped to undertake transport policy initiatives than any of the other organizations. Moreover, it has developed a more active stance towards third countries. Connections to third countries formed a special concern in the TEN-T program.9 In terms of geographic scope the projects included the 1995 accession countries Austria, Finland

---


and Sweden, but no Central and Eastern European countries. A High-Level Group chaired by former Transport (and Competition) Commissioner Karel van Miert delivered a report in 2003 concerning the extension of the TEN-T to the accession countries.  

As the accession date of the ten new member states approached, the interconnection of Eastern and Western Europe became an increasingly important consideration. Under the title “Heading East” a 2001 brochure identified transport as a key area for integrating the EU and the accession countries, while also underlining the vital importance of strategically planning multi-modal corridors to close existing gaps in the networks of these countries. The list of priority projects within the TEN-T program reflected these concerns. The December 1994 European Council in Essen (Germany) had specified fourteen projects of common interest, but after a major revision to make the networks ‘enlargement proof’ the list expanded to thirty projects, bringing the total costs of the TEN-T at 225 billion euros (600 billion including non-priority projects). The European Parliament adopted the list only one week after the Council of Ministers had approved it and just six months after the European Commission had proposed it. The swift action of all institutions demonstrated according to Transport Commissioner and EC Vice-President Loyola de Palacio the “genuine wish to make enlargement a success and is a warm welcome to the new Member States who will join the Union in a couple of days.”

To facilitate accession in infrastructural terms the EU had put an encompassing pre-accession program in place. The program included financial help for, amongst other things, infrastructures. In addition EU programs also covered non-accession Eastern European and central Asian countries through the Technical Assistance to the commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) program, which had a component for developing infrastructure networks. The latest act in the

---

11 European Commission, European transport networks: Results from the transport research program (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Commission, 2001), 5.
production has been a set of recommendations by a High Level Group chaired by
now former commissioner Loyola de Palacio. In calling the infrastructure exten-
sions it proposed “networks for peace and development” the Group wrapped its
report in a lofty discourse of the kind that will by now sound familiar.16

Due to Brussels’ gained weight INGOs are redirecting their strategic efforts
towards the EU. Lobbies and interest groups swarm round Brussels’ institutions,
underlining the EU’s primacy in drawing up European transport policies today.17
Formerly non-Brussels based lobby organizations are moving part of their activi-
ties to the capital of Europe. The IRF forms a clear example. In 1964 it closed offices
in London and Paris and fused them in a new office in Geneva, showing its wish
to establish close cooperation with the ECE.18 In 1995, however, the IRF set up an
office in Brussels named the European Union Road Federation (ERF), confirming
that the EU was moving up on its priority list.19 In Brussels the ERF aims to be The
Voice of the European Road, incidentally also the title of its electronic newsletter.

As a sign of Brussels’ growing force of attraction, the IRF has now supplanted
its previous devotion to the E-road network by flashy proposals tailored to the EU
for high-quality intelligent motorways for the Europe of tomorrow. In collabora-
tion with the IRU the IRF sought to catch Brussels’ attention for its Advanced
Integrated Motorway System in Europe (AIMSE) in 1990.20 AIMSE would fill the
gaps the European road network still suffered and give peripheral regions a chance
to truly participate in the European adventure. In its emphasis on the need to de-
velop intelligent motorways the IRF portrayed AIMSE as a harbinger of high tech-
nology, an aspect that had been important in the TEN-T project from the start.
It underscored that AIMSE could turn into a motor for European integration.
Between 1991 and 1993 the IRF had actively participated in the Motorway Working
Group of the European Commission’s Transport Infrastructure Committee, which
would come to play a key role in drawing up the Trans-European Road Network.

---

16 European Commission, Networks for peace and development: Extension of the major trans-European
transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions, report from the High Level Group chaired by Loyola
de Palacio (November 2005); European Commission, Building bridges: Extension of the major trans-European
transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of
the European Communities, 2007).
17 Stevens, Transport, 31.
18 “Statutory meeting IRF in Geneva,” communiqué de presse, Liège 5–6 November 1964; “Statutory meet-
ing IRF in Geneva,” communiqué de presse, 2 December 1964, IRF.
19 Sources at the IRF indicate that the ERF was initially established as a separate organisation, much to the
dismay of the IRF. The IRF feared it might loose members to the ERF or that the latter would successfully
make inroads into IRF lobby of the EU. It is unclear how the ERF then became part of the IRF, hence it is a
theme deserving further investigation.
as part of the TEN-T. In 1995 the IRF launched EUROVIA as the IRF’s European program for the twenty-first century. It was a follow-up to AIMSE, which it closely resembled.

The road lobby’s clamor for more and better roads in Europe has aroused colorful protest. In 2000 the Amsterdam-based Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development (A SEED Europe) issued a Map of Activities on Transport in Europe (MATE) in close collaboration with Car Busters, an anti-automobile group in Prague. The map informed activists of excellent protest opportunities at TEN-T sites across Europe. Although the MATE project targeted the TEN-T as such, it protested most vociferously against the motorway parts. Although the TEN-T can certainly not be simply equated with roads, this type of colorful protest shows that it attracts a disproportionate amount of attention among environmental activists.

Such groups have remained marginal, but recently some of their themes have become more main-stream. An omen that change is in the air is the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change together with Al Gore, the former American vice-president spreading the inconvenient truth of our planetary doom if we don’t change our unsustainable ways of using the earth’s natural resources. With oil reserves facing depletion somewhere in the twenty-first century, it seems that the days of the automobile as we know it today are numbered. Sociologist John Urry has predicted a tipping or turning point somewhere this century, when we will start to consider the “steel and petroleum car system” as

“a dinosaur (a bit like the Soviet empire, early freestanding PCs or im-mobile phones). When it is so seen then it will be dispatched for good and
no one will comprehend how such a large, wasteful and planet-destructing creature could have ruled the earth. Suddenly the system of automobility will disappear and become like a dinosaur, housed in museums, and we will wonder what all the fuss was about."  

In response to these concerns the EU has championed the battle against climate change and set itself ambitious targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. By 2020 they should be 20% less than what they were in 1990. Such ambitions resonate well with environmental and anarchistic action groups that hold the automobile industry in particular responsible for a large part of the climate change problems facing our planet. In 2007 the German automobile producers BMW, Daimler and Porsche won the Worst EU Lobbying Award. In coalition with the German national government and Germany's European Commissioner for Industry Günther Verheugen these multinationals successfully lobbied against the mandatory CO₂ emission standards proposed by Verheugen's environmental colleague Dimas. From an initial 120 gr/km the target was changed into 130 gr/km to be reached by 2012.  

The current emphasis on climate change and the environment has tainted road projects to a certain degree. Indeed, the ERF has already complained about the railway prioritization in the 2005 Loyola de Palacio report. Yet change will not be easy to achieve. The European masses still hop into their cars to get themselves to work, drop off the children at school, or do the weekly groceries at the supermarket. A 2005 survey showed that 75% of all personal movement happened by automobile. It seems highly unlikely that such an overwhelming figure can drop to insignificant levels anywhere soon.  

Yet in any future scenario the EU is bound to be the protagonist in shaping European transport infrastructure, relegating all other international organizations to secondary status. Who will remember the legacy on which the EU builds and expands today in a few years time? Who will remember that the ECMT was a key instigator of the pan-European conferences in the 1990s that defined the main

28 Again, the imagery is marvelous, see http://www.worstlobby.eu/2007/vote/info/4/worstlobby_en. The cartoon supporting the nomination of the three automobile manufacturers displayed a melting earth with three cars on top of it, representing the three firms mentioned. Their roaring motors produced a big cloud of exhaust fumes, while the texts accompanying the cartoon accused the multi-nationals of having a “burning desire for more, more, more,” despite the fact that they already made “red, hot profits.”
European corridors now integrated in the TEN-T? Who will remember that the ECE discussed infrastructure matters with its Eastern European members when the EU’s direct predecessors only counted a meager six member states? Who will remember the international driving license easing European travel in the Interbellum long before the EU sought to Europeanize the current driving licenses into a symbolic document through which it desperately tries to establish a bond with its citizens? To understand everything the EU does today when it comes to road infrastructures and their use, we need to look beyond Brussels’ machinery to the legacy of other IGOs. Whatever Brussels may do in the twenty-first century, it was they who built the first century of the car on the European continent.
Bibliography

Archival sources

European Conference of Ministers of Transport, Paris (ECMT)
  Annual reports
  Council of Deputies, minutes of meetings (CS/M)
  Council of Ministers, minutes of meetings (CM/M)
  Resolutions

Fondation Marius Berliet, Lyon
  Private collection

Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence (HAEU)
  OEEC, Files Tourism Committee
  OEEC, Files Council
  OEEC, Files Executive Committee

International Chamber of Commerce, Paris (ICC)
  Private collection
  ICC Council, minutes

International Labour Organisation Archives, Geneva (ILO)
  Cabinet Albert Thomas
  Files series D600/1000/294/* – Highways International congresses, 1931-1932

International Road Federation, Geneva (IRF)
  Private collection

League of Nations Archives, Geneva (LoN)
  Registry file 9A: Transit
  Registry file 9F: Communications and Transit Section, Road Traffic
  Registry file 14A: International Transit Conference
  Registry file 14: Transit
  Communications and Transit Committee, minutes of meetings
  Road Committee, minutes of meetings
  Transit Section files

Marshall Foundation, Lexington, Virginia
  Benjamin H. Nolte Collection
  C. Ben Wright Kennan Biography Project
Driving Europe

European Recovery Plan Commemoratives
Harry B. Price Papers
Marshall Papers
'NARA Declassified,' George C. Marshall Research Library Papers

National Archives at College Park, Maryland, United States
Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State
Record Group 84: Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State
Record Group 469: Records of US Foreign Assistance Agencies

Truman Library, Independence, Missouri
Clark M. Clifford Papers
Paul G. Hoffman Papers
President's Committee on Foreign Aid 1947
William L. Clayton Papers

United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)
File GIX: Communications and Transit
File Accession of Retired Records (ARR) 14, number 1360: Files of Office of Executive Secretary Gunnar Myrdal (1947-1957)
ITC, Annual Reports to ECE
ECE, Annual Reports to ECOSOC

Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, New Haven, Connecticut
Private collection

Newspaper and magazine articles

Bulletin de l'AIPCR
“Commission Internationale Permanente des Congrès de la Route (Procès-verbal de la séance tenue à Paris le 21 Juin 1920).” Vol. 9, no. 16 (1920): 141-163.
"Le Téléphone au Service des Usagers de la Route." Vol. 20, no. 73 (1931): 46.

L'Européen
ICC News
“Pallet Pools.” Vol. 25, no. 5-6 (July-August 1959).

L’Illustration: Le Tourisme et l’Automobile

International Organization
“Resolution of the Economic and Social Council Creating the Economic Commission for

IRF London Bulletin

Journal of the International Chamber of Commerce
“Programme of the Congress, Special Question III, Transportation, sub 1, Motor

New York Times
“Automobile Race Accidents Increase – Europe Horrified over Fatalities in French Speed
Contest – Spain Prohibits a Continuance of the Awful Run – Casualties Show Six Dead
and Thirteen Injured.” 26 May 1903.
“Automobilist Renault Dead.” 28 May 1903.

Le Poids Lourd

Revue Générale des Routes et de la Circulation Routière
Thomas, Jacques, “Le 1er Congrès International des Autoroutes (Genève, 31 Août, 1er et 2
Septembre 1931).” Vol. 6, no. 69 (1931): 303-315.
—. “La Question des Autoroutes au Congrès Économique Européen (Bruxelles – 15-17 mai

Road International
“Austin Across Europe: How a 7 ton Austin takes 9 ton of frozen chickens from Rotterdam to

1 The journal bore this title until May 1940; subsequently it was called Revue Générale des Routes et des
Aérodromes until 1996, and then simply Revue Générale des Routes.
Driving Europe


Rai et Route


Routes du Monde


Le Strade


Transmondia (continuation of Rail et Route)


The Transport Situation in Europe


Verkeer en Vervoer


De Volksrant


—. “Pools Premier Stopt Wegaanleg door Bijzonder Natuurgebied.” 1 August 2007.

“Polen Stelt Geduld Europa op de Proef,” Commentaar. 6 September 2007.
Bibliography 293

Wegen

World Trade
"Containers." Vol. 5, no. 7 (July 1933): 32.

Zeitschrift Pan-Europa
Conversation between a Paneuropean (Paneuropäer) and an Anti-European (Antieuropäer).
Vol. 1, no. 7 (1924).
"Wo Liegt die Ostgrenze Europas?” Vol. 11, no. 10 (December 1935): 318-322.
Zeitschrift Pan-Europa 7, no.9 (1931): 270-277

Published documentation

ECMT documents

EU(-related) documents
—–. Decision no. 1692/96/EC, 23 July 1996.


**ICC documents**


**IRF documents**


**League of Nations documents**

League of Nations, *First General Conference on Freedom of Communications and Transit: Preparatory Documents*. [1921],

— —. *Barcelona Conference: Introduction and Complete Text of Conventions and*
Recommendations Adopted. Lausanne: Payot, 1921.

—. General Transport Situation in 1921: Statements Submitted by the States which Took Part in the First General Conference on Communications and Transit Held in March-April 1921 with an Introduction by Professor Tajani, Engineer, Professor of the Royal Polytechnic College, Milan, 2 vols. Geneva: LoN, 1922.


—. Handbook of International Organisations (Associations, Bureaux, Committees, etc.). Geneva: LoN, 1929.


—. European Conference on Road Traffic – Preparatory Documents, LoN doc ser. Confi/CR/1, 30 September 1930.

—. Records and Texts of the European Conference on Road Traffic, 6 July 1931.

—. Supplement to Handbook of International Organisations (Associations, Bureaux, Committees, etc.). Geneva: LoN, 1931.


OEEC and CEEC documents


United Nations documents


Other


Motor Pullman Travel brochure. 1929.


President’s Committee on Foreign Aid. *European Recovery and American Aid – A Report by the President’s Committee on Foreign Aid*. Washington D.C., 7 November 1947.


Films

1...2...3...: A *Monthly Report from Europe*, no. 4. Film 306.103D, 1952-1953, NACP.


*Clearing the Lines*. Wessex Film Productions, London, for ECA/OSR, 1951, film 111-MSA-1135, NACP.


Scholarly books, articles and dissertations


—. In Search of a Railway Europe: Transnational Railway Developments in Interwar Europe. Amsterdam: Aksant, forthcoming.


Carreras, Albert, Andrea Giuntini, and Michèle Merger, eds. *European Networks, 19th-20th Centuries: New Approaches to the Formation of a Transnational Transport and
Driving Europe


Masaryk, Tomáš G. L'Europe Nouvelle. 1918.


—. “Inter-artifactual Technology Transfer: Road Building Technology in the Netherlands and the Competition between Bricks, Macadam, Asphalt and Concrete.” *History and Technology* 20, no. 1 (2004): 75-96.


Summary

This book concerns the relation between European integration and plans for the construction and use of continental road networks. In linking these two phenomena it draws on recent scholarly work that looks at the ‘hidden integration’ of Europe, a process in which large-scale infrastructure development has played a key role. A core assumption of this approach is that European infrastructural integration was largely organized outside the European Union and its predecessors and began before the Second World War. The thesis unravels which European highway networks were proposed, by whom and why. It also analyzes ideas about the operation of such networks across national borders. Above all, it scrutinizes the political and economic visions underpinning such plans and proposals. The focus on European road network development makes a transnational contribution to the available literature, which usually remains restricted to national developments and does not analyze how infrastructures function across borders.

The book basically covers the entire twentieth century, but devotes most attention to 1920-1960, a period that was unusually rich in proposals of the kind this research seeks to understand. The thesis identifies a set of international organizations, called ‘Europe’s system builders,’ as crucial actors for European infrastructure development and a strategic research site offering the archival holdings that allow investigating the relation between roads and Europe. The empirical part of the thesis is built around two parallel sets of chapters entitled ‘Setting the Stage’ (chapters two and five), ‘Roads to Europe’ (chapters three and six), and ‘Driving Europe’ (chapters four and seven).

Chapter two starts in the late nineteenth century. It demonstrates how a series of races between European capitals and early motorized tourism highlighted automobility as a phenomenon that cut across national borders. These activities soon lay bare several problems in the cross-border use of roads. Automobile and touring clubs were among the first to seriously attempt to tackle the problems individual motorists ran into. Although the First World War interrupted their activities, these organizations lay the groundwork for post-war discussions. The chapter ends by discussing the origins of the League of Nations. The Geneva organization has often been portrayed as a failed attempt at international cooperation. In contrast this thesis argues that such a portrayal is heavily biased towards the League’s political
work and does not sufficiently consider its so-called ‘technical’ work. The latter has barely received attention at all, a flaw this research has sought to mend with regard to the organization’s influence on road networks and traffic in Europe.

Various continental road network plans were discussed in Geneva in the Interbellum. Chapter three contrasts two types of road dreams that came in the wake of a bold proposal for European public works made by Albert Thomas, the active director of the International Labor Organization, in response to Briand’s well-known call for a European federation in 1929. The French economist Francis Delaisi inspired the first type. He sketched a plan for farm-to-market roads in Eastern Europe to endow it with the necessary infrastructures to be able to transport its agricultural produce to Western Europe. It thus sought to put an end to the division of the continent in what Delaisi called *Les deux Europes*. The second type formed a motorway vision of the continent, proposed by an emergent road lobby. The hugely expensive structures were discussed at two international conferences in 1931-1932. Neither plan prospered in the difficult economic and political circumstances of the 1930s. Nevertheless the proposals make clear that the European ideal was explicitly linked to infrastructure networks.

The League of Nations’ Committee on Road Traffic preferred tackling issues related to crossing borders by road to discussing expensive road networks, as chapter four demonstrates. The Committee argued that there was no use in talking about roads if diverging regulations curtailed their use across national borders. Having its own roots in a discussion about the international driving license the Committee took up a broad range of issues relating to road traffic. The overall results were poor for commercial motor transport, but more substantial for facilitating private travel. With regard to road safety the Committee found it easier to agree on the harmonization of road traffic signs than on the rules of the road. The mixed results suggest that although the outcomes of its work did not always equal the Committee’s wishes, they were not inconsequential either. In any case the investigation reveals that when we take the League’s technical work into account, the organization’s ‘failed’ image in secondary literature does not do justice to the real results of its work and should at the very least be nuanced.

Chapter five discusses what it calls the parade of organizations after the end of the Second World War. Institutional proliferation started during the war itself. The main aim of this chapter is to show the rich variety and complexity of organizations that were in large part dedicated to European integration in one way or another. This muddy complex in part antedated the institutions that stood at the root of the European Union. Infrastructure development stood high on the agenda of such organizations as the Economic Commission for Europe, the Organisation
for European Economic Cooperation, the Council of Europe, and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport. As road transport started to receive more attention than other modes of transport, it became a stake that all these organizations wanted to command.

The E-road network of main international traffic arteries was the main European road network proposal discussed in these settings. Chapter six shows that, although it has been the object of a limited amount of studies, the contours of the continent that lay hidden behind the green E-road signs and the change of its geographic scope over time have remained elusive. In integrating both motorways and ordinary roads into a single European whole, the network combined the two contrasting principles found in its Interbellum counterparts. Although the network consisted of building blocks proposed by the national governments and the centralization of the finance of the network in a European Road Office did not come about, the E-roads expanded and densified across the continent over time. It also gradually improved in quality. Given its loose character the network could become a symbol for European interconnection in Cold War Europe. This quality was particularly useful in the Balkans, as the short case study on road development in that area clearly demonstrates.

Chapter seven rounds off the empirical part of the thesis by scrutinizing the visions of network operation that the E-roads were supposed to support according to their proponents. After a brief period of liberalized international commercial road traffic under the ‘freedom of the road,’ most European governments wanted to move towards a regime of regulated freedom. The chapter zooms in on two specific issues within this regime deemed crucial in relation to the E-roads, namely a coherent network of long-distance line services of buses, and a European truck standard. By the mid-1950s the first endeavor foundered on member states’ reluctance to agree on bus licenses in a multilateral setting. Although the European Conference of Ministers of Transport managed to agree upon a common standard in 1960, important countries like Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland did not adhere to it. The difficult negotiations on these specific subjects contrasted with agreement on other subjects and, above all, with the great strides made in facilitating private travel.

This book demonstrates that the analysis of the work of Europe’s system builders is a fruitful way to study the relation between roads and Europe. The relatively high incidence of border crossings turned Europe into an area of intense international negotiations concerning continental road plans and cross-border road traffic regulations. The research shows the work of alternative institutional settings that co-existed with the organizations that now dominate the literature on
European integration should be taken seriously when we consider infrastructure development. This is a crucial observation, as infrastructures provide the material substructures for any process of integration. Intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations alike played a major role in shaping infrastructures in Europe in the course of the twentieth century. Moreover this book clearly shows that European integration cannot be limited to a post-war process, but that viewed through the lens of road infrastructures its roots need to be pushed back well before the Second World War.
## List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Automobile Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>American Automobile Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Automobile-Club de France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIACR</td>
<td>Association Internationale des Automobile-Clubs Reconnus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIMSE</td>
<td>Advanced Integrated Motorway System in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPCR</td>
<td>Association Internationale Permanente des Congrès de la Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>Alliance International du Tourisme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANWB</td>
<td>Algemene Nederlandsche Wielrijders-Bond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SEED</td>
<td>Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIAR</td>
<td>Bureau International des Autoroutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIT</td>
<td>Bureau International du Travail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPR</td>
<td>Bureau of Public Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Compagnie des Autoroutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Cabinet Albert Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>(Advisory and Technical) Committee for Communications and Transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEEC</td>
<td>Committee for European Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEEU</td>
<td>Commission of Enquiry for European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERN</td>
<td>Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHF</td>
<td>Swiss franc's currency code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTP</td>
<td>Common Transport Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Economic Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECITO</td>
<td>European Central Inland Transport Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECMT</td>
<td>European Conference of Ministers of Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECSC</td>
<td>European Coal and Steel Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EECE</td>
<td>Emergency Economic Committee for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECAFE</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO</td>
<td>European Coal Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERF</td>
<td>European Road Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURATOM</td>
<td>European Atomic Energy Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIA</td>
<td>Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBRD</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAC</td>
<td>International Federation of Automobile-Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGO</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRF</td>
<td>International Road Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRU</td>
<td>International Road Transport Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Standardisation Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>Inland Transport Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIAT</td>
<td>Ligue Internationale des Associations Touristes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LoN</td>
<td>League of Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTS</td>
<td>Large Technical System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATE</td>
<td>Map of Activities on Transport in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACP</td>
<td>National Archives at College Park, Maryland, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIWO</td>
<td>Nederlandse Internationale Wegtransport Organisatie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEEC</td>
<td>Organisation for European Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSR</td>
<td>Office of the Special Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTA</td>
<td>Organisation Mondiale du Tourisme et de l'Automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIARC</td>
<td>Permanent International Association of Road Congresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RG</td>
<td>Record Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TACIT</td>
<td>Technical Advisory Committee on Inland Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCF</td>
<td>Touring-Club de France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEM</td>
<td>Trans-European North/South Motorway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEN</td>
<td>Trans-European Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEN-T</td>
<td>Trans-European Transport Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIR</td>
<td>Transports Internationaux Routiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTT</td>
<td>Travaux Publics, Transports et Tourisme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UIC</td>
<td>Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNECE</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOG</td>
<td>United Nations Office at Geneva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRRA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URF</td>
<td>Union des Services Routiers des Chemins de Fer Européens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of tables and figures

Tables

2.1 – Customs, driving licenses, circulation permits, various countries, 1907  61
3.1 – Roads in the Plan Delaisi  97
3.2 – National public works projects submitted to the 1933 London Conference  101
3.3 – People employed in the construction of European motorways, 1932  110
3.4 – Length of the European motorway network in various countries, 1932  111
3.5 – European motorway network proposals compared, 1930s  119
4.1 – Automobile nationality signs observed near the Dutch-Belgian and Dutch-German borders, 1935 and 1938, per day  123
4.2 – General conferences on communications and transit, 1921-1931  129
4.3 – Meetings held by the Sub-Committee on Road Traffic, 1924-1938  136
4.4 – Road signaling practice in various European countries, 1927  143
6.1 – Road categories 1950 declaration  195
6.2 – Absolute and relative lengths of the E-road network, 1955  197
6.3 – E-road lengths, selected countries, 1955-1985  202
6.4 – E-road Length in final form and future totals (km), selected countries, 1967, 1975  203
6.5 – Adequacy of E-roads in selected countries, 1967, 1975  205
6.6 – Yugoslav roads classified by surface, 1939-1970  211
6.7 – Traffic by transport modes, percentage of total, 1960-1970  215
7.1 – International legal instruments, ECE region, 1947-2007  223
8.1 – European road plans compared, 1930s-1990s  270
9.1 – Membership of selected European IGOs, 1989 and 2007  282
Figures

Cartoon by Alexander Badenoch for the TIE-project website  6
2.1 – Route Paris-Berlin race, 1901  50
2.2 – Leaving the weighing at the start of the Paris-Madrid race, 1903  51
2.3 – Miltoun’s Grand Tour by Automobile, 1907  58
2.4 – Carnet de Passages en Douanes, 1911  62
2.5 – Mild dust cloud at PIARC conference tour near Authion, 1908, detail  65
2.6 – ISO Nationality plate standard based on the 1909 convention, 1948  67
3.1 – Committee structure relevant for public works, 1930s  92
3.2 – Albert Thomas, Director International Labour Office, 1919-1932  93
3.4 – Organizational set-up of the BIAR/OIAR, 1931-1932  107
3.5 – European network map adopted at the First Congress, 1931  108
3.6 – European network map adopted at the Second Congress, 1932  109
3.7 – Rome-Berlin Motorway, 1936  114
4.1 – Internal set-up Committee for Communications and Transit  128
4.2 – Membership of the Committee on Road Traffic, 1924-1938  135
4.3 – Danger signs  138
4.4 – Prohibition signs  145
4.5 – Ratifications of and accessions to 1931 instruments, 1931-1937  151
5.1 – Georges Gallienne, chairman of the IRF, 1950s  176
5.2 – Chateau de la Muette, Paris  179
5.3 – Two competitive institutional complexes  183
6.1 – IRF scholarships to European countries, 1949-1975  190
6.2 – Early representation of the E-Road network in formation, 1948  192
6.3 – Proposed E-road sign in Turkey  194
6.4 – Frontispiece of map of the E3, around 1970  206
6.5 – Circular highway project, 1956  213
7.1 – Austin advertisement appearing in Road International, 1960  221
7.2 – See Europe the right way: AAA escorted tour advertisement, 1953  233
7.3 – Europabus operated by Société Générale des Transports Départementaux, mid-1950s  236
7.4 – Bus line networks for Europabus and private companies, 1952  237
8.1 – Overview of road related IGOs, 1924-2007  264
8.2 – Overview of road related INGOs, 1898-2007  266
Frank Schipper (1976) received his master’s degree in Languages and Cultures of Latin America (specialization in history) from Leiden University in 2003. His thesis investigated the process of state building in a silver mining region in northern Chile in the period 1830-1841. He spent several months in Chile, working in the Archivo Nacional de Chile in Santiago de Chile and the Museo Regional de Atacama in Copiapó. In the same year he obtained his master’s degree in Political Science (specialization in comparative politics). Inspired by the work of Arend Lijphart, he wrote a thesis on political institutions and democratic stability in Colombia, Costa Rica and Venezuela.

From September 2003 he subsequently worked on a Ph.D. project at Eindhoven University of Technology and the Foundation for the History of Technology (SHT). His research concerned the intersection of road networks, their projected use and European integration. This project formed part of the broader Transnational Infrastructures and the Rise of Contemporary Europe project (www.tie-project.nl).

His research brought him to archives and organizations in Brussels, Florence, Paris, and most of all Geneva. On the basis of his investigations he co-authored an article appearing in 2007 in Contemporary European History.1 In 2005 he received a Marshall/Baruch fellowship from the Marshall Foundation (Lexington, VA, United States) to study the relation between the Marshall Plan and road building in Europe. It allowed him to explore archives in Independence, Lexington, New Haven, and Washington D.C. His research trip to the United States resulted in an article in the Journal of Transport History.2 He was appointed International Scholar for the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) for 2005-2007.

Since May 2008 he works as a post-doc at Eindhoven University of Technology. His project “Exploring the international dimensions of infrastructures: A historical perspective” forms part of the Next Generation Infrastructures program (www.nginfra.nl).
