

# 7 THE EMBODIED LANDSCAPE OF ROADS: THE CASE OF VIA EGNATIA IN MACEDONIAN GREECE

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## INTRODUCTION

Road history is an inter-disciplinary field of research involving academic disciplines with a variety of conceptual approaches. The distinction of road history in cultural studies (the concept of travel) and the history of road planning (the concept of transport) is often blurred. Historical studies of roads have first of all focused on the technological inventions of vehicles and on the functional aspects of road building principles and transportation systems (*i.e.* Lay, 1992; McNeil, 1990). Cultural studies of roads as a medium for human communication and as a structuring condition in defining social space (*i.e.* “the car culture”), have on the other hand become a large field of research within the humanities and the social sciences. Cultural studies of roads and landscape have especially been promoted within an Anglo-American scientific discourse (*i.e.*, Hindle, 1993; Jackson, 1984; Pregill & Volkman, 1999: 687-701). The landscape as a socio-cultural space has also lately been increasingly a thematic issue in different historical studies of roads in the Mediterranean region (Bekker-Nielsen, 2004, 2006; Laurence, 1999). However, there are few general studies of roads as a historical phenomenon in present landscapes (for exception, see Antrop, 2004).



**Figure 1:** The ancient arterial route between Rome and Constantinople (Istanbul). The case-area is near the city of Kavala in Macedonian Greece (source: IAESTE Macedonia, 2006).

This paper will focus on how the discipline of landscape archaeology can contribute to the discourse of road history and environmental planning.<sup>1</sup> From an archaeological landscape perspective, the construction of roads is one of the most monumental and extensive manifestations of material culture in present landscapes. The purpose of the paper is to examine how a typological characterisation of historical road-systems in a region could provide parameters in the analysis of social space and identity-making processes in landscapes. The object of study is the Egnatian arterial road system in Northern Greece. The arterial road expands through the districts of Thracia and Macedonia, from Istanbul in the east to Thessaloniki and the western shore of Greece connecting Europe and Asia Minor (Bakirtzis & Triantaphyllos, 1990). Our case study of the Egnatian arterial road lies in the rural landscape on the coastal plane east of the city of Kavala, not far from the Nestos River, which defines the border between the Thracian and Macedonian districts (Fig. 1).

### **MOBILITY AND SOCIAL SPACE**

In a classical or Enlightenment framework of knowledge, mobility is interpreted as an evolutionary history of speed, comfort, safety and economy: in other words, the history of technological advances and societal progress. The history of technology is thus the retrospective and self-legitimised history of how present civilisations have tamed nature and “savagism” (Ingold, 2002: 312-315). The epistemological approach within an Enlightenment framework of knowledge has been challenged in recent historical mobility studies, emphasising technological change in regard to cultural “difference and diversity” more than as a progressive development from cultural primitivism to supremacy (Ingold, 2002: 362-372; Qviström, 2003: 10, with references). Material culture is a basic component in defining social difference and diversity. The relationship between material culture (*i.e.* roads as physical form), social life and historical change has an interpretative, dialectic, and hermeneutic character. In landscape archaeological studies, hermeneutic phenomenology has provided a powerful theoretical approach for examining material culture as expressions of thoughts and (inter-) actions (Knapp & Ashmore, 1999; Layton & Ucko, 1999; Tilley, 1994; Tilley & Bennett, 2004: 1-31).

The concept of mobility is fundamental in a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as it deals with how people experience and perceive their surroundings socially and culturally. A social concept of mobility can be understood in terms of what landscape historians call a phenomenological “dwelling perspective” (Ingold, 2002: 189-208; Thomas, 1996; Tilley, 1994: 11-14; Wollan, 2003). This perspective refers to the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s reflections on identity and dwelling (Heidegger, 1993). In Heidegger’s terminology, the concept of “being” (*dasein*) is a geographic

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measurement that defines people's ordinary space of actions. Heidegger is concerned about "dwelling" as different modes of being in the world, not as a substantive but as a verb: as an active and dynamic embodied praxis that structures, socialises, cultivates and, in the long run, creates identity. In other words, social modes of actions are connected to people's identification with places and landscapes. The verb to move or to travel is one kind of human action that contributes in defining a social concept of "being at home" in the landscape. The embodied experience of action, which defines modes of movement in the landscape, is a prime source of gaining knowledge of the world for the individuals.

For landscape archaeologists, the physical records of historical roads are vital links to gaining knowledge about the landscape as a human reference system, or, more precisely to study how people at different times in history, and by different patterns, orientate and define themselves in relation to the landscape (Tilley, 1994: 27-31). The material manifestations of roads reflect distinct ways of moving between places and are thereby structuring space, and more specific a social travelling space. Landscape historical analyses of travelling spaces can thus link mobility to a socially and cultural-historically specific definition of a home-valued space. Could different road systems define different embodied modes of "being" as interpretative, experiential frameworks? And if this is the case: how is such a travelling mode of "being in the world" reflected as a home-valued or differentiated social space in the landscape?

## **THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EGNATIAN ARTERIAL ROAD**

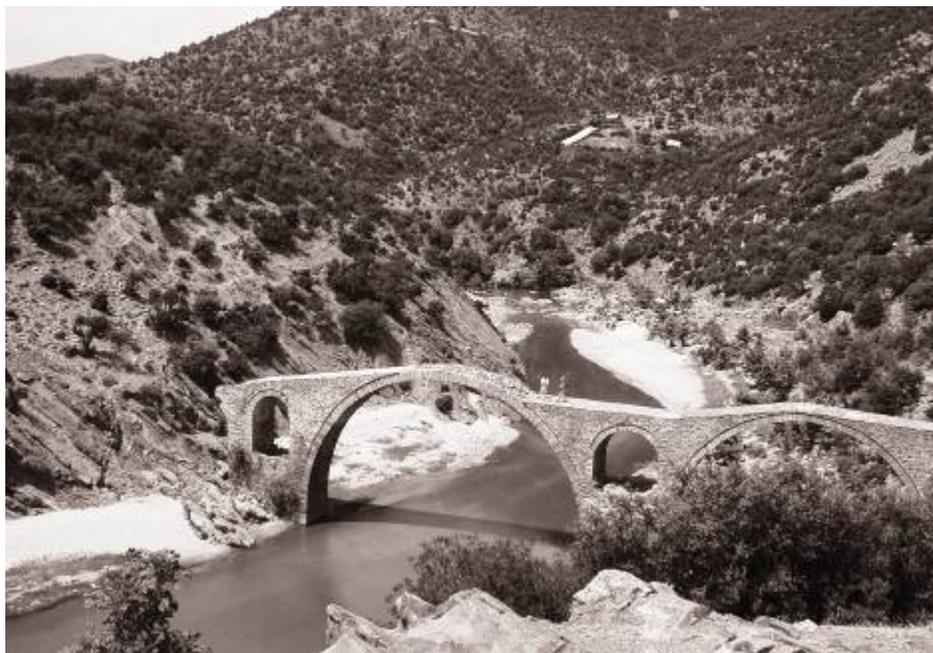
I will bring about a brief theoretical framework described above in the further analysis of different modes of travel in the case area by developing an analytical toolbox based on concepts familiar within landscape theory and road planning. Three main categories are singled out as important analytical issues as regards examining the roads: to define (a) types of road constructions, (b) the road type's relation to the landscape, and (c) to characterize types of social modes of travel. The first issue is to investigate what kinds of trans-regional or arterial road types are present in the case area.

### **Pre-industrial roads**

Pre-industrial roads are first of all defined by their function as a human and animal powered transportation system. Road building within this mode of travel is for pedestrians and vehicles pulled by humans or animals. The East-western Egnatian travelling route has a long tradition as a trans-regional transportation network (Bekker-Nielsen, 2004; O'Sullivan, 1972). The road was formed in pre-Roman times of the local Macedonian and Thracian tribes and kingdoms. When the Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. built the stone paved road *Via Egnatia* as part of the extension of the Roman Empire to the East, they made use of and improved an already existing ancient travelling route (Madsbakken, 2000; 17, 111-112). The Roman road was later, in the Byzantine and Ottoman period, in use as a trans-regional arterial route between East and

West (see Inalcik, 1999: 220-221). And still, during the Turkish hegemony of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was the road used as a camel route for the postal service between Istanbul and Thessaloniki (Heywood, 2002, chapter XI: 130).

The archaeological remains of pre-industrial roads in the region are present in both rural and urban contexts and from a variety of periods. In a pre-industrial road system, there is little difference between a local and a trans-regional mobility pattern. Ancient cities and villages, rest stations, road monuments and milestones along the Egnatian road define the geographic-temporal experience of travelling on a road that to a large extent uses and follows the natural curvatures in the landscape.



**Figure 2:** The remains of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bridge at Polyanthos over the Nestos River represent an animal and human powered transportation network within an ancient or pre-industrial road network that goes far back in history (photo: T. S. Guttormsen).

### **Industrial roads**

The introduction of a motor powered transportation system in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century defines a new mode of travel in the region. Prior to the Second World War, the rural roads in Northern Greece, as well as in the rest of Europe in general, were in bad shape, and automobile traffic was first of all a phenomenon in and around major cities (Lay, 1992: 305-313; Pregill & Volkman, 1999: 687-688, 690). The Egnatian road played at that time a minor role as a trans-regional arterial route. The early industrial road network was built of crushed stone unable to support ordinary traffic and heavy trucks in any number without constant repair. In addition to sea transport it was first of all the newly developed railway line between Thessaloniki and Istanbul that became the

major trans-regional East-western transportation network from late 1800 and onwards (Ekdotike Athenon, 2006; Faroqi, McGowan, Quataert, & Inalcik, 1999: 798-823). The introduction of a railway line gave rise to a new social mode of travel in the region, which in a historical perspective defines early modern inter-city travel through rural landscapes: a non-stop transportation system whose primary function is to facilitate mobility among urban centres.

From the 1950s, efforts were stepped up to improve communications and roads in the region. The regional and national road management in Greece was speeding up in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Egnatian arterial road was upgraded for motorized traffic. The development went in accordance to growing prosperity among the Greeks, which led to a major increase in car ownership between 1977 and 1998, from 67 vehicles per 1000 people to 348 (Encarta, 2006). A two-lane motorway was built with an asphalt surface on top of a well-drained foundation. Local dirt and gravel roads directly intersect with the motorway. Animals and humans can cross or walk on the motorway with no hindrance, and vehicles can enter the motorway at any junction. In other words, the motorway has free control of access, which defines movement for all types of vehicles, and it is thereby used for mixed traffic, for both local and regional travellers. The local farmers still today use the industrial road network for animal powered transportation.

The modernization of the Egnatian Motorway caused an upgrading of the existing road network, more than defining a distinct new road structure. Although the Egnatian Motorway of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many aspects defines a change in travel mode caused by the introduction of motorized transportation, it defines a “continuation” of the ancient or pre-industrial road network where the temporal experience is defined by landform and historical nodes in the landscape. The Egnatian Motorway of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is in many aspects synonymous with a “traditional mobility pattern”. Many of the ancient cities, regular checkpoints and milestones along the pre-industrial Egnatian road correspond to a great extent to the course of the two-lane industrial motorway.



**Figure 3:** The ancient gate at Anastasiopoli with the industrial road on top of the pre-industrial road (photo: T. S. Guttormsen).

### **Post-industrial roads**

The building of a trans-regional four-lane motorway is now entering the historical landscape in Northern Greece. Apart from the new road's value as a fast East-West corridor, it will offer vital new roads linking the motorway to neighbouring Balkan countries. The Egnatia Odos Road project is part of the EU-financed program The Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), which serves to improve the transportation network at a European scale (Parsons Corporation, 2006; The European Commission, 2002, 2005). The four-lane post-industrial motorway defines a new road structure and marks a different mobility pattern compared to the previous road systems in the region. It is a fully controlled-access arterial road where the primary function is to serve high-speed traffic between major cities. In other words, the motorway excludes local rural traffic and mobility in the rural landscape. Local roads over- and underpass the new motorway (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4:** The construction of a new four-lane motorway trespasses the rural landscape in Macedonian Greece (source: Parsons Corporation, 2006).

### **Road typology and the landscape: the case of Petropigi**

The village of Petropigi is situated as a local rural node by the Egnatian arterial road between the cities of Kavala and Komotini. The road typology in the area illustrates a common situation in the region as well as in local rural landscapes in Europe, in general. It is a close relationship between the pre-industrial and the industrial arterial roads, where the latter are located next to or on top of the older road structures. The ancient road monuments are located as a row of pearls along the industrial road. Where the road passes Petropigi lie the ruins of a Byzantine *statio* that later became a caravanserai in the Ottoman period (Fig. 5). The ruin was a fortress where ancient travellers took a rest on their journey on the Egnatian road (Sande, 2004: 88-92; The University of Oslo, 2006). Magnetic surveys have also traced structures that were probably a Roman villa covered under the agricultural fields near the fortress. Just above the graveyard of the village of Petropigi, the old village with ruins from Byzantine time is still visible on the terraced hillside. The historical rural landscape is easy to perceive and the location of the ancient and traditional Egnatian arterial roads has a meaningful relation to the local rural matrix.



**Figure 5:** The entrance of the Byzantine/Ottoman fortress of Petropigi (photo: T. S. Guttormsen).

The newly constructed four-lane post-industrial motorway divides and frames the local rural landscape of Petropigi in a new fashion. The new road cuts through the mountain and divides the village in two parts: the historical, or old village, and the village graveyard at one side of the motorway, and the present village square surrounded with residential houses on the other side of the motorway. The two parts of the village are connected by a local bridge that overpasses the new motorway (Fig. 6). The post-industrial road is in other words designed in a deviational scale compared to the previous roads in the area.



**Figure 6:** A local road overpasses the post-industrial arterial road, connecting the old and the new parts of the village of Petropigi (photo: T. S. Guttormsen).

### Conclusions of the road typological survey

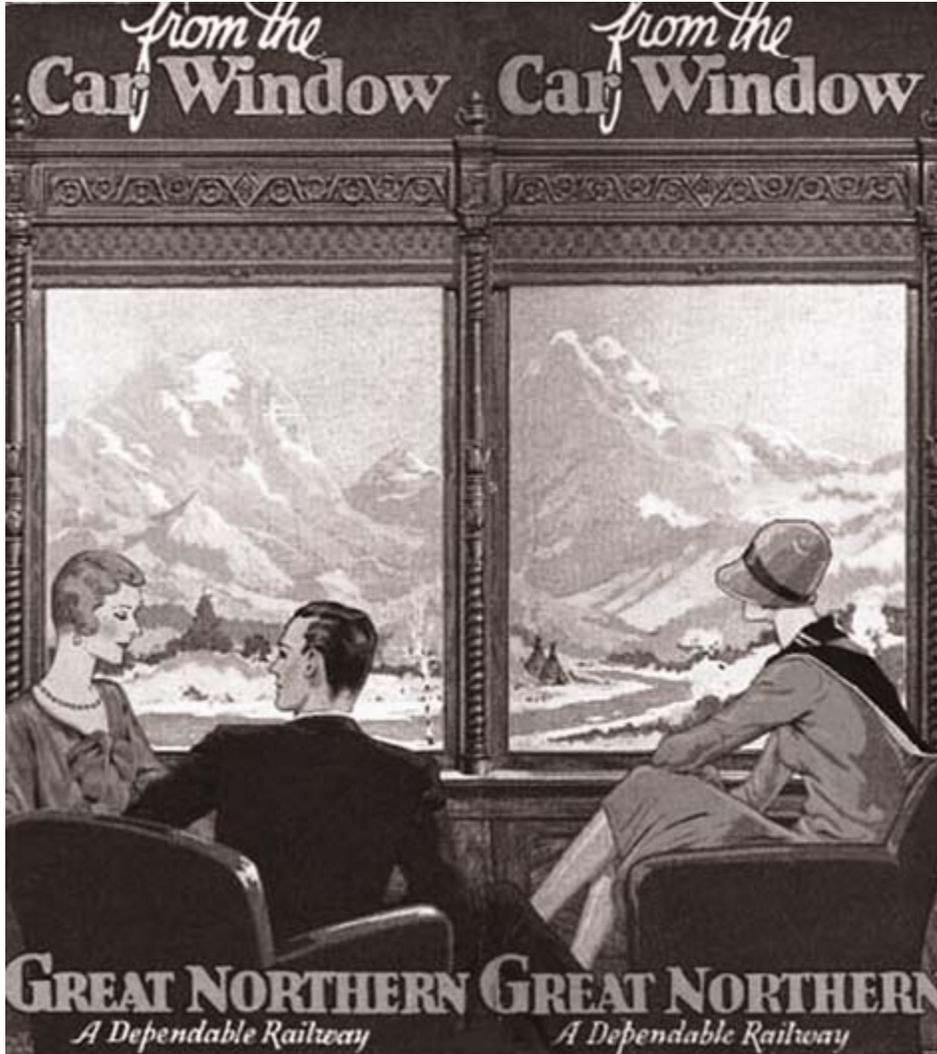
The present archaeology of the Egnatian arterial roads can be classified as pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial road types (see Table 1). The three categories of roads define different types of construction and of moving in the landscape that can be conceptually linked to comparable travelling spaces. The pre-industrial and industrial road types define respectively an ancient and a traditional mobility structure that are closely interrelated. Together they represent a “rural-historical mode of travel”. Land formations, slow and moderate movement and visual experience of the local rural landscape define the rural-historical travelling space. The geographical-temporal nodes in the rural landscape – which are defined by villages, historical monuments and places – are important structuring factors. To move on the pre-industrial or the industrial road, between the variety of historical identity marks, is to move within the local labouring landscape where a home-space is in many aspects identical to a local population’s definition of a rural homeland.

**Table 1:** Historical classification of the Egnatian arterial road (source: T. S. Guttormsen).

Class of arterial road	Pre-industrial	Industrial	Post-industrial
<b>Road construction</b>			
System of transportation	Human/animal powered	Human/animal powered, motor powered	Motor powered
Traffic	Slow speeded multiple type of traffic	Medium, mixed speeded multiple type of traffic	Fast speeded single type of traffic
Access	Free controlled	Free controlled	Fully controlled
Primary design dimension	One and two lanes, intersections at same levels (at-grade)	Two lanes, intersections at same levels (at-grade)	Four lanes, over- and underpasses
<b>Relation to landscape</b>			
Landform	Landform defines the road	Landform defines the road, change on landform at minor scale	Road defines the landscape, change on landform at large scale
Visual impact in landscape	Minimal	Moderate	Large
Visual experience from the road	3-dimensional	3- and 2-dimensional	2-dimensional
<b>Social travelling space</b>			
Geographical temporality	Small-scale, local linkages	Small-scale, local linkages	Large-scale, intercity / trans-regional linkages
Historical temporality	Ancient, archaeological	Traditional, early modern (19th and 20th century)	Late modern (21th century)
Function, users	Rural and urban travel	Rural and urban travel	Urban travel – transit rural landscapes
Social mode	Rural-historical	Rural-historical	Urban-historical

The construction of a post-industrial road divides and frames the local rural landscape in a new fashion and introduces a distinct new mode of road travel in the region. Within this road type the landscape is shaped by planned facilities that fulfil present road standards for high-speed traffic. The result is a division of land and visual references in the local rural landscape. However, to make roads for high-speed traffic has a long tradition. The post-industrial motorway system can be traced back to the early development of the European motorway systems such as the German *Autobahn* and the Italian *Autostrada*, as well as the American highway system from the 1930s, which is

constructed primarily for high-speed traffic between urban centres that transit rural landscapes (Lay, 1992: 315-320). This type of transitory movement is identical to “an urban-historical mode of travel”. Urban mentality defines in different ways a mode of “being at home” in the landscape. Uniform nodes by the road such as gas stations, restaurants and road signs refer to a familiar urban setting. The post-industrial motorway acts as a “city in motion”. Urban networks trespass national and cultural borders and connect distant cities. As a fully controlled high-speed road does, post-industrial inter-city motorways compare with the two-dimensional experience of train travel. The present inter-city motorway runs through the historical rural landscape, and the “urban way” of perceiving the local landscape by train or by car is primarily to travel by and look outside and in – as cinematic scenery and rural image (Fig. 7).

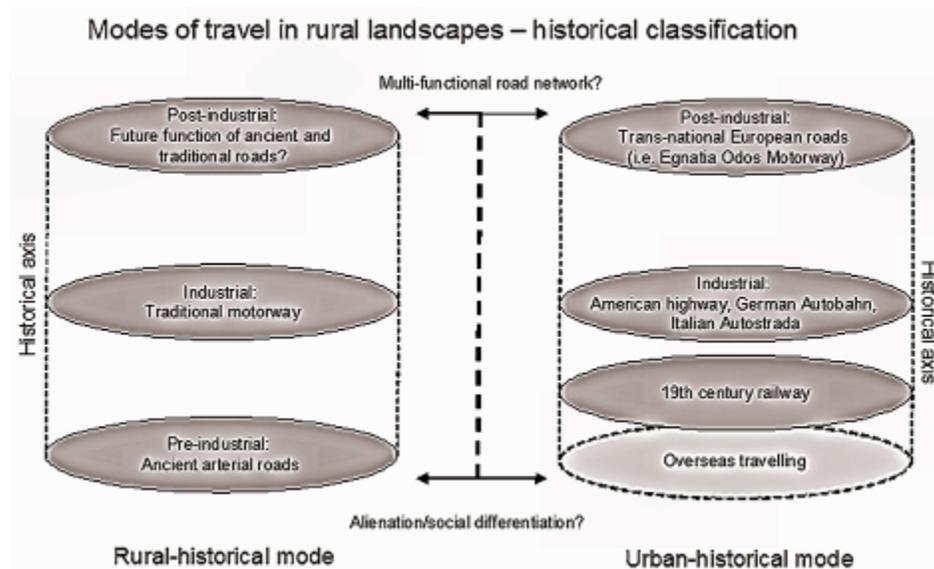


**Figure 7:** Landscape as cinematic scenery and rural image. A 1929 booklet in “art vintage” is illustrating the urban-historical mode of travel (source: Doyle, 2006).

## **DISCUSSION: HISTORICAL ROAD CLASSIFICATION AND PLANNING**

The concept of landscape identity is complex. A highly debated issue in the discourse of landscape identity is the division of place attachment and mobility - between “roots” and “routes” (Gustafson, 2001). Place “...has often been considered to be crucial for individual well-being and for social cohesion, whereas mobility has been regarded as a deviation, associated with uprooted individuals and lacking social integration” (Gustafson, 2001: 668-669). This distinction seems to be too simple, as both categories are interrelated aspects of human experience and valuation of social space (*ibid*, p. 681). Mobility or movement defines space of action, and is thereby an important aspect of the identity-making process that takes place in the landscape. Different road systems are experiential media for memories, collective histories and the personal experience that defines people’s values in and belonging to places and landscapes. In the Egnatian case, the space of action in the rural landscape distinguishes a “local labouring space” in contrast to a “transitory scenic space” that representatively contradict a rural-historical and an urban-historical mode of travel (see Table 2). The two main historical modes of travel in the region define a basic structuring framework for the identity making processes in the landscape. The contradiction in historical modes of travel defines potential “tension” between rural and urban, as well as between local, regional and National-European worldviews, norms and values. But this does not necessarily mean that the social identity has a 1:1 relation to these two main historical modes of experiencing the landscape. The point stressed here is that landscape identity, as a variable social dimension, is interpreted within the framework of existing mobility structures situated in the same landscape. These interpretations will geographically be expressed differently and be a valuable source of knowledge in environmental planning.

**Table 2:** The historical classification of roads defines two distinct experiential frameworks and modes of movement in rural landscapes (source: T. S. Guttormsen).



The large-scale planning of trans-European road-networks within the European Union raises several important issues related to how sustainable local landscapes can be maintained (see The European Commission, 2002: 6, with a map of the new arterial road projects). However, political bodies established within conventional organisational frameworks would not be able to confront environmental problems whose scale dimensions are not adequately addressed by existing institutions (Meadowcroft, 2002). Traditional political and administrative systems show few links between rural and urban policies and strategies. As a result, regional approaches to sustainable local landscapes that take into account rural-urban relations are stressed in recent studies of European spatial planning strategies (Nordregio, 2000). Trans-European road projects, such as the Egnatia Odos project, have been criticised for splitting the project into multiple stretches and for not making use of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) methodologies (Bina, Briggs, & Bunting, 1997). In isolation, the environmental impact of short sections of strategic routes can result in major problems because of lack of an overview. Therefore, strategic assessments at a regional geographical scale are important for better understanding of interrelated and chain-related environmental impacts and a “big-picture”, *i.e.*, environmental thinking is especially important when new road infrastructures are initiated.

Cultural heritage is, as in the Egnatia Odos project, normally processed in environmental impact assessments (EIAs), emphasising preservation and excavations of monuments and sites that come into direct conflict with the construction of new roads. The Egnatia Odos project has so far registered 270 historical sites and monuments along the road axis, and more than 45 archaeological sites have been excavated (Egnatia Odos, 2006). Special environmental protection issues in the Egnatian road project

concern landscape areas related to the brown bear habitat and the Nestos River wetland, which is protected under the RAMSAR convention. However, there is little attention given to the definition and evaluation of cultural environments as local values from a European perspective, such as described in The European Landscape Convention (cf. Fairclough, 2002). In addition, little attention is given to the spatial relationship between natural and cultural heritage as interrelated value-added issues in regard to rural sustainable development. At a European level, the focus in road planning is first and foremost on the issue of the protection of natural heritage areas, whereas with respect to the cultural heritage, "...the structural or systematical levels of the heritage are rarely investigated – although these are of strategic importance. It is therefore a (...) challenge to introduce cultural heritage in Strategic Environmental Assessments." (Westerlind, 2000: 215). At the same time, there is a need for more thorough historical research of urban-rural relations: "It is necessary to systematise and make typologies of the various degrees of urban/rurality characterising different regions and to look closely at the trends which are currently relevant for the development of this relationship" (Nordregio, 2000: 5). Instead of just having a single focus on archaeological objects and sites to "dig up" the past where this comes into direct conflict with the construction of new roads, more attention should be given to the landscape dimension, highlighting historical connections between roads, monuments and sites in regional studies. Road history and a phenomenological approach to historical roads are important elements in the effort to gain better understanding of local-regional structures and urban-rural relations.

How can local landscapes be valued at a European level in spatial planning? Can the concept of multi-functionality be a methodological tool in trans-European road planning? The concept of multi-functionality is used especially in natural and social science both as an analytical concept, in order to understand landscape change, and as a management tool, and the interpretation of the concept is given a variety of meanings (Brandt & Vejre, 2004). The discussion of multi-functional linear space has however been given little attention in road planning, despite the fact that this issue was a central theme in the initiation period of planning inter-city travel. The so-called "Futurama" Exhibit by Norman Bel Geddes at General Motor's New York World's Fair building, pronounced as early as in 1939 the multi-functional role of linear road space (Pregill & Volkman, 1999: 694). The variations in travel modes were illustrated by a giant model that depicted a comprehensive road network used for different types of movement and speed in the same landscape. The Egnatian road network is an example of the Futurama-model "in the real world". The balance of making old and new road systems work together in a multi-functional network implies a strategic approach. Before and after arterial road projects are carried out it is important to incorporate landscape historical analysis of roads as a strategic impact assessment tool. The massive building of a new Egnatian road system has raised an important issue regarding for whom rural living conditions and travelling spaces are shaped. A focus on the multi-functional role of rural-historical and urban-historical modes of travel will gain better knowledge of the

value-added aspects in the landscape. Documentations of rural-historical and urban-historical travelling modes in regional contexts and of the use value of local history within a multi-functional travelling space should be given more attention in environmental strategies and management in the effort to develop sustainable local landscapes.

## CONCLUSIONS

This brief landscape historical analysis of the arterial road network of Via Egnatia highlights some important aspects for further investigation into the initiated and planned new trans-European arterial roads. There are great challenges in this initiation with regard to how sustainable local rural landscapes can be maintained. In my opinion, the challenge of environmental planning of local rural landscapes lies in developing comprehensive landscape analytical frameworks where historical continuity and change is included and where historical landscapes are investigated with regard to the complexity of social experience. This analysis of the Egnatian arterial route is an attempt to show how a phenomenological and multi-functional approach to the variations of existing road systems can be the key to managing the sustainability of local rural landscapes. Historical road systems in a region have a great potential for meeting the needs for different modes of travel and can ensure the stability of various social groups' identification of a home-valued space.

At present there is a lack of theories and methods for comprehensive studies of the phenomenology of roads. There is a need for more thorough analyses of the relationship between roads, landscape and identity in the effort to develop both sustainable mobility and sustainable local landscapes. Historical landscape analysis and qualitative characterisations of roads could constitute an important knowledge base and tool for European road management, as well as for spatial planners, in general.

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